

Oxford Study Edition

The  
New  
English  
Bible  
with  
the Apocrypha



# The New English Bible with the Apocrypha Oxford Study Edition

This new edition combines a brilliant modern translation with special study helps which reflect the finest in Bible scholarship and are presented in a clear, nontechnical way for the student who has little or no experience in Bible study.

It is highly recommended for church and school courses at the high school, college, and adult level, for the person wishing to study the Bible on his own, and for home and library reference.

The text is *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha*. When this entirely new translation from the original languages into contemporary English was published in complete form in 1970, it received high praise from religious leaders of all faiths, and from scholars, teachers, and laymen.

Now an interfaith group of scholars has collaborated in producing *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha: Oxford Study Edition*. The three editors and twenty-six contributors, among the brightest names in the field of biblical scholarship today, represent a broad spectrum of religious affiliation. They have provided factual material without doctrinal commentary.

The special supplementary aids in the *Oxford Study Edition* include: *introductions*, which describe the contents and give known historical facts for each Bible book; *annotations*, which furnish literary, historical, geographical, biographical, and archaeological background; and *cross references*, which indicate related scriptural passages.

Four *special articles* discuss: how to approach the Scriptures for their full meaning; the five different kinds of books within the Bible—narrative, poetic, prophetic, epistolary, and apocalyptic; personalities and events and their relation to Bible lands; and how the passage of time was measured.

The *select index* lists approximately 1,000 key names, places, and subjects and gives thousands of references; and *full-color maps* provide up-to-date information based on the most recent archaeological discoveries.

**Some Comments on**

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Robert M. Grant,

*The New York Times Book Review*

# The New English Bible with the Apocrypha Oxford Study Edition

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THE NEW  
ENGLISH BIBLE

WITH THE APOCRYPHA  
OXFORD STUDY EDITION

THE BIBLE  
A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*Directed by Representatives of*

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR WALES

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THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY

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*The publication of the books of the Apocrypha in this translation prepared under the auspices of the Joint Committee on the New Translation of the Bible does not imply that the bodies represented on the Joint Committee hold a common opinion upon the canonical status of these books.*

# THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

WITH THE APOCRYPHA  
OXFORD STUDY EDITION

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M. JACK SUGGS  
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ARNOLD J. TKACIK  
APOCRYPHA EDITOR

*Introductions, Annotations, Cross-References*  
*Special Articles, Maps, and Indexes*



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# CONTENTS

The Editors' Preface	vii
Preface to The New English Bible	ix
The Names and Order of the Books of the Bible	xii
Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible in Alphabetical Order	xiv
Miscellaneous Abbreviations	xvi

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

Contents	xviii
Introduction to the Old Testament	xix
The Pentateuch	xxiii
Translators' Footnotes	xxiv
Marginal Numbers	xxiv
The Books of the Old Testament	1
Appendix	1035

## THE APOCRYPHA

Contents	ii
Introduction to the Apocrypha	iii
The Place of the Apocrypha	vi
Marginal Numbers	viii
The Books of the Apocrypha	1

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

Contents	ii
Introduction to the New Testament	iii
Marginal Numbers	vi
The Books of the New Testament	3

## SPECIAL ARTICLES

Reading the Bible	3
Literary Forms of the Bible	7
A Sketch of the History and Geography of the Lands of the Bible	25
Reckoning Time	35

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

*The New Oxford Bible Maps with Index*

1. 1941  
2. 1942  
3. 1943  
4. 1944  
5. 1945  
6. 1946  
7. 1947  
8. 1948  
9. 1949  
10. 1950  
11. 1951  
12. 1952  
13. 1953  
14. 1954  
15. 1955  
16. 1956  
17. 1957  
18. 1958  
19. 1959  
20. 1960  
21. 1961  
22. 1962  
23. 1963  
24. 1964  
25. 1965  
26. 1966  
27. 1967  
28. 1968  
29. 1969  
30. 1970  
31. 1971  
32. 1972  
33. 1973  
34. 1974  
35. 1975  
36. 1976  
37. 1977  
38. 1978  
39. 1979  
40. 1980  
41. 1981  
42. 1982  
43. 1983  
44. 1984  
45. 1985  
46. 1986  
47. 1987  
48. 1988  
49. 1989  
50. 1990  
51. 1991  
52. 1992  
53. 1993  
54. 1994  
55. 1995  
56. 1996  
57. 1997  
58. 1998  
59. 1999  
60. 2000  
61. 2001  
62. 2002  
63. 2003  
64. 2004  
65. 2005  
66. 2006  
67. 2007  
68. 2008  
69. 2009  
70. 2010  
71. 2011  
72. 2012  
73. 2013  
74. 2014  
75. 2015  
76. 2016  
77. 2017  
78. 2018  
79. 2019  
80. 2020  
81. 2021  
82. 2022  
83. 2023  
84. 2024  
85. 2025  
86. 2026  
87. 2027  
88. 2028  
89. 2029  
90. 2030  
91. 2031  
92. 2032  
93. 2033  
94. 2034  
95. 2035  
96. 2036  
97. 2037  
98. 2038  
99. 2039  
100. 2040

1941-1945

1. 1941  
2. 1942  
3. 1943  
4. 1944  
5. 1945

1946-1950

1. 1946  
2. 1947  
3. 1948  
4. 1949  
5. 1950

1951-1955

1951

# THE EDITORS' PREFACE

The New English Bible is distinctive for its clarity and readability. But more than that, a concern for accuracy in rendering the Hebrew and Greek languages into our tongue has resulted in an achievement rare in translations—the retention of the tone and feeling of the original writings.

Yet there are matters that call for explanation. The introductions and annotations, dealing with the literary, historical, theological, geographical, and archaeological aspects of the text, and the cross-references from one passage to another, provide the reader with ready information that should heighten his appreciation and understanding of the Scriptures.

Both in brevity and in deliberate avoidance of the highly personal viewpoint, the explanations here differ from those found in what is usually called a commentary. There is a splendid array of just such penetrating commentaries available to the student and scholar, but these often reflect special theories or dispositions of the authors. Such characteristics do not occur in this edition, or at least not as a central point. Rather, the explanations bear on findings of recent decades, as provided in published studies of the text, the biblical languages, and biblical archaeology.

Special articles by competent scholars in the field of biblical knowledge yield further data to enhance the reading and study of the Bible.

In our times the scholarly study of the Bible cuts across sectarian lines; hence, both the editors and the contributors represent a diversity of religious persuasions and traditions.

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The editors have followed the British spelling (such as labour) only where Scripture is cited (in the introductions, in the annotations, and in the special articles); the American spelling (e.g. labor) is used elsewhere. Also, the editors utilized capitalization for Temple and Law, but retained THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE usage of temple and law in citations of the biblical text.

The Bishop of Worcester, Massachusetts, the Most Reverend Bernard J. Flanagan, has graciously given THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE: OXFORD STUDY EDITION, his *imprimatur*. The editors and the publisher are also grateful for the advice and help of the Reverend William Van Etten Casey, S.J., College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts.

# PREFACE

## TO THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

In May 1946 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland received an overture from the Presbytery of Stirling and Dunblane, where it had been initiated by the Reverend G. S. Hendry, recommending that a translation of the Bible be made in the language of the present day, inasmuch as the language of the Authorized Version, already archaic when it was made, had now become even more definitely archaic and less generally understood. The General Assembly resolved to make an approach to other Churches, and, as a result, delegates of the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational Churches met in conference in October. They recommended that the work should be undertaken; that a completely new translation should be made, rather than a revision, such as had earlier been contemplated by the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge; and that the translators should be free to employ a contemporary idiom rather than reproduce the traditional 'biblical' English.

In January 1947 a second conference, held like the first in the Central Hall, Westminster, included representatives of the University Presses. At the request of this conference, the Churches named above appointed representatives to form the Joint Committee on the New Translation of the Bible. This Committee met for the first time in July of the same year. By January 1948, when its third meeting was held, invitations to be represented had been sent to the Presbyterian Church of England, the Society of Friends, the Churches in Wales, the Churches in Ireland, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the National Bible Society of Scotland: these invitations were accepted. At a much later stage the hierarchies of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Scotland accepted an invitation to appoint representatives, and these attended as observers.

The Joint Committee provided for the actual work of translation from the original tongues by appointing three panels, to deal, respectively, with the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. Their members were scholars drawn from various British universities, whom the Committee believed to be representative of competent biblical scholarship at the present time. Apprehending, however, that sound scholarship does not necessarily carry with it a delicate sense of English style, the Committee appointed a fourth panel, of trusted literary advisers, to whom all the work of the translating panels was to be submitted for scrutiny. It should be said that denominational considerations played no part in the appointment of the panels.

The Joint Committee issued general directions to the panels, in pursuance of the aims which the enterprise had in view. The translating panels adopted the following procedure. An individual was invited to submit a draft translation of a particular book, or group of books. Normally he would be a member of the

panel concerned. Very occasionally a draft translation was invited from a scholar outside the panel, who was known to have worked specially on the book in question. The draft was circulated in typescript to members of the panel for their consideration. They then met together and discussed the draft round a table, verse by verse, sentence by sentence. Each member brought his view about the meaning of the original to the judgement of his fellows, and discussion went on until they reached a common mind. There are passages where, in the present state of our knowledge, no one could say with certainty which of two (or even more) possible meanings is intended. In such cases, after careful discussion, alternative meanings have been recorded in footnotes, but only where they seemed of sufficient importance. There is probably no member of a panel who has not found himself obliged to give up, perhaps with lingering regret, a cherished view about the meaning of this or that difficult passage, but in the end the panel accepted corporate responsibility for the interpretation set forth in the translation adopted.

The resultant draft was now remitted to the panel of literary advisers. They scrutinized it, once again, verse by verse, sentence by sentence, and took pains to secure, as best they could, the tone and level of language appropriate to the different kinds of writing to be found in the Bible, whether narrative, familiar discourse, argument, law, rhetoric or poetry. The translation thus amended was returned to the translating panel, who examined it to make sure that the meaning intended had not been in any way misunderstood. Passages of peculiar difficulty might on occasion pass repeatedly between the panels. The final form of the version was reached by agreement between the translators concerned and the literary advisers. It was then ready for submission to the Joint Committee.

Since January 1948 the Joint Committee has met regularly twice a year in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, with four exceptions during 1954–5 when the Langham Room in the precincts of the Abbey was kindly made available. At these meetings the Committee has received reports on the progress of the work from the Conveners of the four panels, and its members have had in their hands typescripts of the books so far translated and revised. They have made such comments and given such advice or decisions as they judged to be necessary, and from time to time they have met members of the panels in conference.

Of the original members of the panels most have happily been able to stay with the work all through, though some have been lost, through death or otherwise, and their places have been filled by fresh appointments.

The Committee has warmly appreciated the courteous hospitality of the Dean of Westminster and of the Trustees of the Central Hall. We owe a great debt to the support and the experienced counsel of the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge. We recognize gratefully the service rendered to the enterprise by the Reverend Dr. G. S. Hendry and the Reverend Professor J. K. S. Reid, who have successively held the office of Secretary to the Committee. To those who have borne special responsibility, as Chairmen of the Joint Committee, we owe more than could readily be told. Dr. J. W. Hunkin, Bishop of Truro, our first Chairman, brought to the work an exuberant vigour and initiative without which the formidable project might hardly have got off the ground at all. On

his lamented death in 1950 he was succeeded by Dr. A. T. P. Williams, then Bishop of Durham and subsequently Bishop of Winchester, who for eighteen years guided our enterprise with judicious wisdom, tact, and benign firmness, but who to our sorrow died when the end of the task was in sight. To both of these we would put on record the gratitude of the Committee and of all engaged in the enterprise.

If we embarked on mentioning the names of those who have served on the various committees and panels, the list would be a long one; and if we mentioned some and not others, the selection would be an invidious one. There are, nevertheless, three names the omission of which would be utterly wrong. As Vice-Chairman and Director, Dr. C. H. Dodd has from start to finish given outstanding leadership and guidance to the project, bringing to the work scholarship, sensitivity, and an ever watchful eye. Professor Sir Godfrey Driver, Joint Director since 1965, has also brought to the work a wealth of knowledge and wisdom; to his enthusiasm, tenacity of purpose, and unflagging devotion the whole enterprise is greatly indebted. Professor W. D. McHardy, Deputy Director since 1968, has made an invaluable contribution particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the sphere of the Apocrypha. It is right that the names of these three scholars should always be associated with The New English Bible. Our debt to them is incalculably great.

DONALD EBOR

*Chairman of the Joint Committee*

*Since publication of THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland joined as sponsors. In addition, since the above Preface was written The Congregational Church in England and Wales and The Presbyterian Church of England have united under the name of The United Reformed Church.*

# The Names and Order of the Books of the Bible

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	1	Ecclesiastes	708
Exodus	55	The Song of Songs	717
Leviticus	100	The Book of the Prophet Isaiah	724
Numbers	135	The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah	805
Deuteronomy	181	Lamentations	878
The Book of Joshua	223	The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel	886
The Book of Judges	250	The Book of Daniel	945
Ruth	277	Hosea	964
The First Book of Samuel	282	Joel	977
The Second Book of Samuel	318	Amos	982
The First Book of Kings	349	Obadiah	992
The Second Book of Kings	385	Jonah	994
The First Book of the Chronicles	418	Micah	997
The Second Book of the Chronicles	451	Nahum	1005
The Book of Ezra	490	Habakkuk	1009
The Book of Nehemiah	503	Zephaniah	1013
Esther	520	Haggai	1017
The Book of Job	529	Zechariah	1019
Psalms	569	Malachi	1030
Proverbs	675		

## THE APOCRYPHA

The First Book of Esdras	1	Baruch	176
The Second Book of Esdras	19	A Letter of Jeremiah	182
Tobit	53	The Song of the Three	185
Judith	67	Daniel and Susanna	188
The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther	84	Daniel, Bel, and the Snake	191
The Wisdom of Solomon	97	The Prayer of Manasseh	193
Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach	115	The First Book of the Maccabees	195
		The Second Book of the Maccabees	232



THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel According to Matthew	3	The Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	258
The Gospel According to Mark	42		
The Gospel According to Luke	67	The First Letter of Paul to Timothy	261
The Gospel According to John	108		
Acts of the Apostles	141	The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy	267
The Letter of Paul to the Romans	183		
The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	201	The Letter of Paul to Titus	271
The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	218	The Letter of Paul to Philemon	274
The Letter of Paul to the Galatians	230	A Letter to Hebrews	276
The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians	237	A Letter of James	289
The Letter of Paul to the Philippians	243	The First Letter of Peter	294
The Letter of Paul to the Colossians	249	The Second Letter of Peter	299
The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	254	The First Letter of John	302
		The Second Letter of John	307
		The Third Letter of John	308
		A Letter of Jude	309
		The Revelation of John	313

Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible  
in Alphabetical Order

		PAGE			PAGE
<i>Acts</i> NT	Acts of the Apostles	141	<i>Jn.</i> NT	John	108
<i>Amos</i> OT	Amos	982	<i>1 Jn.</i> NT	1 John	302
<i>Bar. Apoc.</i>	Baruch	176	<i>2 Jn.</i> NT	2 John	307
<i>1 Chr.</i> OT	1 Chronicles	418	<i>3 Jn.</i> NT	3 John	308
<i>2 Chr.</i> OT	2 Chronicles	451	<i>Job</i> OT	Job	529
<i>Col.</i> NT	Colossians	249	<i>Joel</i> OT	Joel	977
<i>1 Cor.</i> NT	1 Corinthians	201	<i>Jonah</i> OT	Jonah	994
<i>2 Cor.</i> NT	2 Corinthians	218	<i>Josh.</i> OT	Joshua	223
<i>Dan.</i> OT	Daniel	945	<i>Jude</i> NT	Jude	309
<i>Dan. &amp; Bel. Apoc.</i>	Daniel, Bel, and the Snake	191	<i>Judg.</i> OT	Judges	250
<i>Dan. &amp; Su. Apoc.</i>	Daniel and Susanna	188	<i>1 Kgs.</i> OT	1 Kings	349
<i>Deut.</i> OT	Deuteronomy	181	<i>2 Kgs.</i> OT	2 Kings	385
<i>Eccles.</i> OT	Ecclesiastes	708	<i>Lam.</i> OT	Lamentations	878
<i>Ecclus. Apoc.</i>	Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach	115	<i>Let. Jer. Apoc.</i>	A Letter of Jeremiah	182
<i>Eph.</i> NT	Ephesians	237	<i>Lev.</i> OT	Leviticus	100
<i>1 Esd. Apoc.</i>	1 Esdras	1	<i>Lk.</i> NT	Luke	67
<i>2 Esd. Apoc.</i>	2 Esdras	19	<i>1 Macc. Apoc.</i>	1 Maccabees	195
<i>Esther</i> OT	Esther	520	<i>2 Macc. Apoc.</i>	2 Maccabees	232
<i>Exod.</i> OT	Exodus	55	<i>Mal.</i> OT	Malachi	1030
<i>Ezek.</i> OT	Ezekiel	886	<i>Mic.</i> OT	Micah	997
<i>Ezra</i> OT	Ezra	490	<i>Mk.</i> NT	Mark	42
<i>Gal.</i> NT	Galatians	230	<i>Mt.</i> NT	Matthew	3
<i>Gen.</i> OT	Genesis	1	<i>Nahum</i> OT	Nahum	1005
<i>Hab.</i> OT	Habakkuk	1009	<i>Neh.</i> OT	Nehemiah	503
<i>Hag.</i> OT	Haggai	1017	<i>Num.</i> OT	Numbers	135
<i>Heb.</i> NT	Hebrews	276	<i>Obad.</i> OT	Obadiah	992
<i>Hos.</i> OT	Hosea	964	<i>1 Pet.</i> NT	1 Peter	294
<i>Isa.</i> OT	Isaiah	724	<i>2 Pet.</i> NT	2 Peter	299
<i>Jas.</i> NT	James	289	<i>Phil.</i> NT	Philippians	243
<i>Jdt. Apoc.</i>	Judith	67	<i>Philem.</i> NT	Philemon	274
<i>Jer.</i> OT	Jeremiah	805	<i>Pr. M. Apoc.</i>	The Prayer of Manasseh	193
			<i>Prov.</i> OT	Proverbs	675

*Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible in Alphabetical Order*

		PAGE			PAGE
<i>Ps(s)</i> . OT	Psalms	569	<i>1 Th.</i> NT	1 Thessalonians	254
<i>Rest of Est.</i> Apoc.	The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther	84	<i>2 Th.</i> NT	2 Thessalonians	258
<i>Rev.</i> NT	Revelation of John	313	<i>Ti.</i> NT	Titus	271
<i>Rom.</i> NT	Romans	183	<i>1 Tim.</i> NT	1 Timothy	261
<i>Ruth</i> OT	Ruth	277	<i>2 Tim.</i> NT	2 Timothy	267
<i>1 Sam.</i> OT	1 Samuel	282	<i>Tob.</i> Apoc.	Tobit	53
<i>2 Sam.</i> OT	2 Samuel	318	<i>Wis.</i> Apoc.	Wisdom of Solomon	97
<i>S. of S.</i> OT	Song of Solomon	717	<i>Zech.</i> OT	Zechariah	1019
<i>S. of Three</i> Apoc.	Song of the Three	185	<i>Zeph.</i> OT	Zephaniah	1013

## Miscellaneous Abbreviations

<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, Flavius (37–95 A.D.), <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i> : a paraphrase of the Old Testament by the Jewish writer
<i>Apoc.</i>	Apocrypha
<i>Aram.</i>	Aramaic (text or word)
<i>B.J.</i>	<i>The Jewish War</i> : another paraphrase of the Old Testament by Josephus
<i>ch(s).</i>	chapter(s)
<i>cp.</i>	compare
<i>Gk.</i>	Greek
<i>Heb.</i>	Hebrew (text or word)
<i>Lat.</i>	Latin version
<i>lit.</i>	literally
<i>mng.</i>	meaning
<i>MS(S).</i>	manuscript(s)
<i>MT</i>	Massoretic Text: Hebrew of the Old Testament in the form transmitted by Jews
<i>n(n).</i>	note(s)
<i>NT</i>	New Testament
<i>om.</i>	omit(s)
<i>OT</i>	Old Testament
<i>Pesh.</i>	Peshitta: version of Scripture in the Syriac language
<i>poss.</i>	possible
<i>prob.</i>	probable
<i>Sam.</i>	Samaritan: version of the Hebrew Scriptures preserved by the Samaritans
<i>rdg.</i>	reading
<i>Sept.</i>	Septuagint: Greek version of the Old Testament
<i>Syr.</i>	The language, kindred to Aramaic, in which the Peshitta version occurs. Other Syriac portions of Scripture have been preserved
<i>Tfn.</i>	translators' footnote(s)
<i>Tg.</i>	Targum: Aramaic version of the Old Testament preserved by Jews
<i>Vg.</i>	Vulgate: Latin version, from older or Latin rendering, of the Old Testament
<i>v(v).</i>	verse(s)
<i>Vs(s)</i>	Version(s)
<i>Or</i>	indicates an alternative interpretation
[. . .]	In the text itself square brackets are used to indicate words that are probably late additions to the Hebrew text

THE NEW  
ENGLISH BIBLE

THE OLD TESTAMENT  
OXFORD STUDY EDITION

# CONTENTS

Introduction to the Old Testament	xix	Proverbs	675
The Pentateuch	xxiii	Ecclesiastes	708
Translators' Footnotes	xxiv	The Song of Songs	717
Marginal Numbers	xxiv	The Book of the Prophet Isaiah	724
		The Book of the	
Genesis	1	Prophet Jeremiah	805
Exodus	55	Lamentations	878
Leviticus	100	The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel	886
Numbers	135	The Book of Daniel	945
Deuteronomy	181		
The Book of Joshua	223	THE TWELVE PROPHETS	
The Book of Judges	250	Hosea	964
Ruth	277	Joel	977
The First Book of Samuel	282	Amos	982
The Second Book of Samuel	318	Obadiah	992
The First Book of Kings	349	Jonah	994
The Second Book of Kings	385	Micah	997
The First Book of the Chronicles	418	Nahum	1005
The Second Book		Habakkuk	1009
of the Chronicles	451	Zephania	1013
The Book of Ezra	490	Haggai	1017
The Book of Nehemiah	503	Zechariah	1019
Esther	520	Malachi	1030
The Book of Job	529		
Psalms	569	Appendix	1035

# INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament as here translated consists of a body of literature spread over a period extending from the twelfth to the second century B.C.; this literature is written in classical Hebrew, except some brief portions which are in Aramaic, a cognate or sister language (Ezra 4.8–6.18 and 7.12–26, Jeremiah 10.11, Daniel 2.4–7.28). No manuscripts of the Old Testament from the earlier part of this period have been preserved; indeed much of it must have been handed down by oral tradition from generation to generation. The impetus to collect, edit and make copies of the national literature may well have come from the disaster of 587/6 B.C., when the Babylonians captured and burnt Jerusalem and carried off many of its inhabitants into exile.

The earliest known Hebrew manuscripts containing any parts of the Old Testament are among the Scrolls (commonly called the Dead Sea Scrolls) found in caves at Qumran near the north-western end of the Dead Sea; they may be dated in the last two centuries B.C., though some may be a little earlier and others somewhat later. They include two copies of Isaiah, one complete and another badly damaged, a commentary containing most of the text of the first two chapters of Habakkuk, and fragments of every other Old Testament book, except Esther. The text which they present is to a large extent identical with that in our Hebrew Bibles.

In the second century A.D. or even earlier the Rabbis, the Jewish religious leaders, compiled a text from such manuscripts as had survived the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and on this basis was established the traditional or Massoretic text, so called from the Hebrew word *massorah* 'tradition'. This text incorporated the mistakes of generations of copyists, and, in spite of the care bestowed on it, many errors of later copyists also found their way into it. The earliest surviving manuscripts of this text date from the ninth to eleventh centuries A.D.; and it is this text, as printed in R. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (3rd edition, 1937), which has been used for the present translation.

The traditional text was originally written only in consonants, but in order to preserve what they regarded as the correct pronunciation of the words the Rabbis added vowel-signs to the text. Of the various systems of vowel-signs which were devised, that developed at Tiberias in the fifth to sixth centuries A.D. ultimately prevailed and is still used in our printed Bibles. The vowels are here represented by means of strokes and dots added to the consonantal text, and this method of vocalization made it possible for the Rabbis to indicate variant readings which they preferred, without meddling with the consonants: they put in the margin of their manuscript the consonants of the reading which they wished to adopt and added the vowel-signs of this reading to the consonants in the text which they were rejecting. The reader knew that he was to pronounce the consonants in the margin with the vowels in the text.

One variation of this convention is of special importance, inasmuch as it affects the divine name. This personal proper name, written with the consonants *YHWH*, was considered too sacred to be uttered; so the vowels for the words 'my Lord' or 'God' were added to the consonants *YHWH*, and the reader was warned by these vowels that he must substitute other consonants. This change having to be made so frequently, the Rabbis did not consider it necessary to put the consonants of the new reading in the margin. In course of time the true pronunciation of the divine name, probably *Yahweh*, passed into oblivion, and *YHWH* was read with the intruded vowels, the vowels of an entirely different word, namely 'my Lord' or 'God'. In late medieval times this mispronunciation became current as *Jehova*, and it was taken over as *Jehovah* by the Reformers in Protestant Bibles. The present translators have retained this incorrect but customary form in the text of passages where the name is explained with a note on its pronunciation (e.g. Exodus 3.15) and in four place-names of which it forms a constituent element; elsewhere they have followed ancient translators in substituting 'LORD' or 'GOD', printed as here in capital letters, for the Hebrew name.

So much for the text of the Hebrew Old Testament as it lies before us; but it is certain that this does not always represent what was originally written. The translator must often go behind the traditional text to discover the writer's meaning. For this purpose he may have recourse first to the Scrolls; but these cover only a very small part of the Old Testament writings. Secondly he may have recourse to the Samaritan Pentateuch, which, though extant only in late manuscripts, the earliest being dated about the eleventh century A.D., may be somewhat earlier than the Scrolls and represents the text of the five books of the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy) which the Samaritans took with them when they seceded from Judaism. It differs from the traditional Hebrew text in a considerable number of small and mostly unimportant points.

For further help the translator may turn to the ancient versions. Of these the earliest is the Old Testament in Greek, designed to meet the needs of Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the third and second centuries B.C. According to tradition the Pentateuch was translated by seventy-two elders, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and so the Greek version of the Old Testament came to be called the Septuagint, from the Latin *septuaginta* 'seventy'. Clearly it is the work of a number of translators of unequal skill; their rendering is now literal, now paraphrastic, and now interpretative. Not infrequently it contains absurd mistranslations. Yet it is valuable for the recovery of the original Hebrew, because it is based on an underlying Hebrew text older than the Massoretic, and it often preserves the correct reading in passages where our Hebrew manuscripts are manifestly in error, or the true interpretation where this has been obscured in the traditional text. Its defects, however, were patent, and early in the Christian era several scholars, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, tried to improve on it; other scholars produced fresh recensions of it, among which the text associated with the name of Lucian is commonly included.

The Greek-speaking Christians adopted the Septuagint as their Scriptures, but with the spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean world there arose in time the need for a Latin translation. This, the Old Latin version, made from the Septuagint by unknown translators, was so unsatisfactory that towards the end



of the fourth century Jerome produced a new translation. In the books with which we are here concerned he worked directly from the Hebrew text, and he had the help of Jewish scholars. His translation is idiomatic and forceful, and is specially helpful in recovering the form and sense of the Hebrew text. Jerome's new version is commonly called the Vulgate; it may be noted, however, that the Vulgate Psalter is not his translation from the Hebrew, but an earlier revision he had made of the Old Latin Psalms.

As the knowledge of Hebrew died out among the Jews, the reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue had to be followed by a translation of the passages into Aramaic, the language which had supplanted Hebrew. Such renderings, known as Targums (Aramaic *targum*, 'translation'), tended to become traditional and stereotyped and finally were written down. Some of them contain pre-Christian material. There are Targums to every book of the Old Testament except Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, but only one, on the Pentateuch, is a straightforward translation.

Between the first and third centuries A.D. a Syriac translation, known as the Peshitta (i.e. 'simple') Version, was made; some parts of it are more literal than others, and, though it agrees in the main with the Hebrew text, it bears traces of the influence of the Septuagint. Other versions in various languages appeared between the third and thirteenth centuries A.D., but they are of little value for the recovery and interpretation of the Hebrew text.

In spite of this wealth of ancient versions, and even when the earliest known form of the text has been established, many obscurities still remain in the Hebrew Scriptures. The classical Hebrew vocabulary as known today is small, with the consequence that the meaning of an unusually large number of words is uncertain or unknown. In such cases recourse may be had to the cognate languages. Already medieval scholars had begun to use the Arabic language for this purpose, and in later centuries Syriac and Ethiopic also were used. In more recent times scholars have had access to the vast literature in Babylonian, Assyrian, and kindred dialects which has been preserved on cuneiform tablets. Archaeology, too, has at times been helpful in clearing up an obscurity in the Hebrew text. But in the last resort, the translator may have to arrive at the sense of a word from the context alone, or he may even have to emend what is demonstrably faulty; such corrections of the text, except when only the vowels are affected, are recorded in the notes of the present translation.

The paragraphs in this translation are a modified form of those in the Authorized and Revised Versions, and the present translators have added headings to the main sections into which the text falls. Sometimes, for what seemed sufficient reasons, the order of the verses has been changed, as will be seen from the verse-numbering. Occasionally passages have been brought together if a common refrain or other evidence shows that they have been wrongly separated; such changes are recorded in the notes.

The headings of the Psalms, consisting partly of musical instructions, of which the meanings have mostly been lost, and partly of historical notices, deduced (sometimes incorrectly) from the individual Psalms, have been omitted; they are almost certainly not original. On the other hand, the designations of the speakers in the Song of Songs, though absent from the Hebrew text, have been

introduced, with occasional corrections, from two manuscripts of the Septuagint.

A major difficulty in translating the Old Testament lies in the difference of time and place. Palestine differs greatly from the Western world in its physical aspects, in its plants, birds and beasts, its arts and crafts, as it did also in its social, administrative and religious, institutions, so that no English words exist to represent much about which the Old Testament speaks. The modern translator then must be content to use paraphrase or even to transliterate certain Hebrew words. The present translators have transliterated the Hebrew words for technical terms, where verbal exactness has seemed essential, while in other passages they have allowed themselves a paraphrase to bring out the general sense, where no technical problem requiring particularization is involved; but they have adopted such devices as rarely as possible.

Finally, the translators have endeavoured to avoid anachronisms and expressions reminiscent of foreign idioms. They have tried to keep their language as close to current usage as possible, while avoiding words and phrases likely soon to become obsolete. They have made every effort not only to make sense but also to offer renderings that will meet the needs of readers with no special knowledge of the background of the Old Testament.

G. R. D.

## The Pentateuch

The Pentateuch (literally, the “five scrolls”; popularly, the Five Books of Moses) is the final edition of the traditions about her early history which Israel considered important for her self-identity. It contains the following themes: the summoning of the patriarchs to form an obedient community, made necessary by mankind’s previous rebellions (Gen.); the deliverance from Egyptian bondage and the grateful acceptance of the LORD’s covenant (Exod. and Lev.); the preservation of Israel despite her generation-long rebellion in the Wilderness (Num.); and warnings about ingratitude during the affluent life in the “promised land” (Deut.).

The earliest summary of the traditions may have been little more than a sentence (as in 1 Sam.12.8) or paragraph (Josh.24.2–10), formulated soon after the settlement in Canaan (thirteenth century B.C.) for recital in the cult.

It was perhaps during the reign of Solomon (tenth century B.C.) that many of the local cultic recitations, histories, songs, and law codes were first gathered and edited into a sustained account (the earliest skeleton underlying Gen.–1 Kgs. ch. 2). Its purpose was to suggest that the Israelite Kingdom was the fulfillment of the ancient promises to the patriarchs. Modern scholars call this work “J,” because it uses for the deity the name Jehovah (Heb. *Yahweh*), and was produced by Judean theologians; they believe that it was soon supplemented by other ancient traditions preserved in Ephraim, and called “E” because the divine term *Elohim* is used.

When Judah was threatened religiously from within and militarily from without (eighth–seventh centuries), the old traditions were expanded and interpreted in contemporary terms (“D”). D is contained primarily in the book of Deuteronomy.

The destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) and the necessity to live under Babylonian and Persian domination (sixth–fifth centuries) produced a final stage of collection and reflection upon the ancient traditions, generally called the Priestly Code (“P”). The P Code itself seems composite and a result of growth, containing a somewhat older Priestly section (Lev. chs. 17–26) known as the “Holiness Code.” While J–E went beyond Genesis–Deuteronomy, and extended through Joshua–1 Kings ch. 2, the Priests effected a division between Genesis–Deuteronomy and the ensuing material. As a result of this separation, the Pentateuch emerged as an entity.

Accordingly, the Pentateuch, beginning in oral stages, grew with the generations. The product of communal insight and authorship, with new reflections placed beside older ones, the Pentateuch reached its present written form after the Babylonian Exile.

Since it was Moses who relayed God’s word to Israel at Sinai, later generations spoke of “the law of Moses” (2 Chr.30.16). Later, when the entirety of Genesis–Deuteronomy was called “the Law” (Preface to Eccclus.), it became an accepted conclusion that he had recorded this totality (Jn.1.45).

## Translators' Footnotes

The footnotes in this edition of the Old Testament serve (*a*) to give cross-references to parallel passages, chiefly in the historical books, (*b*) to indicate where verses or parts of verses have been transposed, (*c*) to give the meaning of proper names where it appears to be reflected in the context, (*d*) to give an alternative interpretation where the Hebrew is capable of such, and (*e*) to indicate places where the translators have adopted what seemed to them the most probable correction of the text where the Hebrew and the ancient versions cannot be convincingly translated as they stand.

Unless otherwise indicated by its wording, a note refers to the single word against which the reference is placed.

## Marginal Numbers

The conventional verse divisions in the Old Testament are based on those in Hebrew manuscripts. Nevertheless any system of division into numbered verses is foreign to the spirit of this translation, which is intended to convey the meaning in natural English—the prose in paragraphs, the poetic passages in lines corresponding to the structure of the Hebrew.

For purposes of reference, and of comparison with other translations, verse numbers are placed in the margin opposite the line in which the first word belonging to the verse in question appears. Sometimes, however, successive verses are combined in a continuous translation, so that the precise point where a new verse begins cannot be fixed; in these cases the verse numbers, joined by a hyphen, are placed at the point where the passage begins.

# GENESIS

GENESIS, meaning "beginning," contains two major parts: the primeval history (chs. 1-11), which tells how man's self-assertion brought the world to the brink of destruction; and the history of the patriarchs (chs. 12-50), which relates how the LORD, in an awesome and inexplicable act of grace, chose the clan of Abraham as the instrument for the rehabilitation of mankind. Yet for a variety of reasons, whether perceptible or hidden, the divine promise was not immediately realized. Even the existence of the next generation (i.e. Israel herself) was often uncertain. And as Genesis concludes, the clan has been delivered from famine through divine providence, only to become enslaved in Egypt.

When succeeding generations heard this part of their story freshly interpreted in light of new experiences (see Introduction to the Pentateuch), they understood that the crises of the present were not unique and were enabled to hope that the ancient promise would yet be realized.

The patriarchal material differs from the account of primeval time in that it can be placed within the context of the known history of the Ancient Near East (2000-1500 B.C.).

## *The creation of the world*

1 **I**N THE BEGINNING OF CREATION, WHEN  
2 God made heaven and earth,<sup>a</sup> the  
earth was without form and void,  
with darkness over the face of the abyss,  
and a mighty wind that swept<sup>b</sup> over the  
3 surface of the waters. God said, 'Let  
4 there be light', and there was light; and  
God saw that the light was good, and  
5 he separated light from darkness. He  
called the light day, and the darkness  
night. So evening came, and morning  
came, the first day.  
6 God said, 'Let there be a vault between  
the waters, to separate water  
7 from water.' So God made the vault,  
and separated the water under the vault  
from the water above it, and so it was;  
8 and God called the vault heaven.  
Evening came, and morning came, a  
second day.  
9 God said, 'Let the waters under  
heaven be gathered into one place, so  
that dry land may appear'; and so it  
10 was. God called the dry land earth, and  
the gathering of the waters he called  
seas; and God saw that it was good.  
11 Then God said, 'Let the earth produce  
fresh growth, let there be on the earth  
plants bearing seed, fruit-trees bearing

fruit each with seed according to its  
kind.' So it was; the earth yielded fresh  
12 growth, plants bearing seed according  
to their kind and trees bearing fruit  
each with seed according to its kind;  
and God saw that it was good. Evening  
13 came, and morning came, a third day.

God said, 'Let there be lights in  
14 the vault of heaven to separate day from  
night, and let them serve as signs both  
for festivals and for seasons and years.  
Let them also shine in the vault of  
15 heaven to give light on earth.' So it was;  
God made the two great lights, the  
16 greater to govern the day and the lesser  
to govern the night; and with them he  
made the stars. God put these lights in  
17 the vault of heaven to give light on  
earth, to govern day and night, and to  
18 separate light from darkness; and God  
saw that it was good. Evening came,  
19 and morning came, a fourth day.

God said, 'Let the waters teem with  
20 countless living creatures, and let birds  
fly above the earth across the vault of  
heaven.' God then created the great  
21 sea-monsters and all living creatures  
that move and swarm in the waters,  
according to their kind, and every kind

<sup>a</sup> Or In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

<sup>b</sup> Or and the spirit of God hovering.

1.1-2.4: The creation account, composed by priests. Order evolves from chaos by divine command, followed by God's resting, in example, on the Sabbath. 1: That *creation* arose out of nothing—that is, not out of materials at hand—became the usual understanding of this verse; see 2 Macc.7.28. 2: *Abyss*: in Ancient Near Eastern thought, the sea, personified as a dragon, fathered the great sea serpents. *Wind*: in non-Hebrew epics, the wind-god was the creator. Here, however, sea and wind are portrayed as creations, subject to God. 5: *Evening . . . morning*: day began at sundown and hence the order given here. 6: *Vault*: a solid dome (Job 37.18), retaining the upper waters whence the rains come (Gen.7.11-12). 14: *Lights*: Israel's neighbors regarded the celestial bodies as deities (see Deut.4.19). Here, they are mere results of God's creation. 20: *Living creatures*: hence, the worship of animals as gods, by Israel's neigh-

of bird; and God saw that it was good.  
 22 So he blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds increase on land.'  
 23 Evening came, and morning came, a fifth day.  
 24 God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kind: cattle, reptiles, and wild animals, all according to their kind.' So it was;  
 25 God made wild animals, cattle, and all reptiles, each according to its kind; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that  
 27 crawl upon the earth.' So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female  
 28 he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the  
 29 earth.' God also said, 'I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food.  
 30 All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living  
 31 creature.' So it was; and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and morning came, a sixth day.  
 2 Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng. On the sixth day God completed all the work he had been doing, and on the seventh day he ceased from all his

work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he ceased from all the work he had set himself to do.

This is the story of the making of heaven and earth when they were created.

*The beginnings of history*

WHEN THE LORD GOD MADE EARTH AND heaven, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the LORD God had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground. A flood<sup>c</sup> used to rise out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed a man<sup>d</sup> from the dust of the ground<sup>e</sup> and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus the man became a living creature. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden away to the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. The LORD God made trees spring from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food; and in the middle of the garden he set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

There was a river flowing from Eden to water the garden, and when it left the garden it branched into four streams. The name of the first is Pishon, that is the river which encircles all the land of Havilah, where the gold<sup>f</sup> is. The gold<sup>f</sup> of that land is good; bdellium<sup>g</sup> and cornelians are also to be

<sup>c</sup> Or mist.      <sup>d</sup> Heb. adam.      <sup>e</sup> Heb. adamah.  
<sup>f</sup> Or frankincense.      <sup>g</sup> Or gum resin.

bors, was foolish. 26: The plural *us* (3.22; 11.7) may be a majestic plural, or else refer to the minor divine beings thought to surround God, like courtiers of a human king (1 Kgs.22.19-22; Job 1.6). *Image*: most often used to denote a physical thing, its meaning here is not precisely stated. 28: To *subdue* the earth is to be free from nature's tyranny and from idolizing mere objects.

2.5-3.24: A second account of primeval time. This account is generally regarded as more ancient than 1.1-2.4. Man does not accept the limits placed on his existence and disrupts God's intended harmony. 5: *LORD God*: a compound designation (Introduction, p. xx) largely confined to this section. 6: *Flood*: the earth was thought to be suspended upon the abyss (Ps. 24.2), which could break through with great force (Gen.7.11). 7: *Dust*: an idea derived from the observation of bones in the tomb. A pun is present, linking man and earth; see Tfn. *d* and *e*. *Living creature*: not a duality of "body" and "soul" (a Greek idea), but rather a unity animated by God's creative act. The animals are also designated by the same term for "living" (1.20, 24). 8: *Eden*: originally not a place name, it means "plain," "steppe," and is equivalent to "delight." In ancient polytheism, the idea that the gods inhabit a fertile garden is widely attested; most often it lies in the east where the life-giving sun rises. 9: *Tree of life*: the notion that immortality could be attained by eating a magic plant is found elsewhere, also, in antiquity. 13: *Cush*: the

13 found there. The name of the second river is Gihon; this is the one which  
 14 encircles all the land of Cush. The name of the third is Tigris; this is the river which runs east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and  
 16 care for it. He told the man, 'You may eat from every tree in the garden, but  
 17 not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for on the day that you  
 18 eat from it, you will certainly die.' Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for  
 19 the man to be alone. I will provide a partner for him.' So God formed out  
 20 of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of heaven. He brought  
 21 them to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever the man called  
 22 each living creature, that was its name. Thus the man gave names to all cattle,  
 23 to the birds of heaven, and to every wild animal; but for the man himself  
 no partner had yet been found. And so the LORD God put the man into a  
 trance, and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed the flesh over the  
 place. The LORD God then built up the rib, which he had taken out of the man,  
 into a woman. He brought her to the man, and the man said:

'Now this, at last—  
 bone from my bones,  
 flesh from my flesh!—  
 this shall be called woman,<sup>h</sup>  
 for from man<sup>i</sup> was this taken.'

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and  
 25 the two become one flesh. Now they were both naked, the man and his wife, but they had no feeling of shame towards one another.

THE SERPENT WAS MORE CRAFTY THAN 3  
 any wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat from any tree in the garden?' The 2  
 woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, except for the tree in the 3  
 middle of the garden; God has forbidden us either to eat or to touch the fruit of that; if we do, we shall die.' The serpent said, 'Of course you will 4  
 not die. God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods<sup>j</sup> knowing both 5  
 good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and that it was pleasing to the eye and tempting to contemplate, she took some and ate it. She also gave her husband some and he ate it. Then the 7  
 eyes of both of them were opened and they discovered that they were naked; so they stitched fig-leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

The man and his wife heard the 8  
 sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze and hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD 9  
 God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' He replied, 'I heard 10  
 the sound as you were walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.' God answered, 11  
 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I forbade you?' The man said, 'The 12  
 woman you gave me for a companion, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate it.' Then the LORD God said to the 13  
 woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent

<sup>h</sup> Heb. ishshah.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. ish.

<sup>j</sup> Or God.

land of the Kassites, to the east, in Mesopotamia. 14: The headwaters of the *Tigris* and *Euphrates* were sacred to the Assyrians. The other two of the four "original" rivers are unknown. 17: *On the day that*: idiomatic for "when." *Certainly die*: become mortal. 22: The selection of the *rib* may be the result of borrowing a pun from the ancient Sumerians; the same word means both "rib" and "to make alive" in Sumerian (see 3.20). 24: A folk explanation is given for the origin of the sexual urge. 3.1: *Serpent*: an ancient extrabiblical story tells how a serpent stole the plant which would have given immortality to man. It was believed that when the snake shed his skin, he was rejuvenated. *Crafty*: there is a pun in the Hebrew words for *crafty* and *naked*. *Had made*: a phrase deliberately used to show that he was only one among God's many creatures. The idea of the serpent as a primeval adversary of God, indeed, the Devil, arose much later (see Wis.2.24); so too the fixing of blame on the *woman* arose at a much later time (Ecclus.25.24). 7: *Naked*: not intrinsically shameful, nakedness became so as the result of

14 tricked me, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the serpent:

'Because you have done this you are accursed more than all cattle and all wild creatures.

On your belly you shall crawl, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and hers. They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel.'

16 To the woman he said:

'I will increase your labour and your groaning, and in labour you shall bear children. You shall be eager<sup>k</sup> for your husband, and he shall be your master.'

17 And to the man he said:

'Because you have listened to your wife and have eaten from the tree which I forbade you, accursed shall be the ground on your account.

With labour you shall win your food from it all the days of your life.

18 It will grow thorns and thistles for you, none but wild plants for you to eat.  
19 You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, to dust you shall return.'

20 The man called his wife Eve'

because she was the mother of all who live. The LORD God made tunics of skins for Adam and his wife and clothed them. He said, 'The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; what if he now reaches out his hand and takes fruit from the tree of life also, eats it and lives for ever?' So the LORD God drove him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken. He cast him out, and to the east of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and a sword whirling and flashing to guard the way to the tree of life.

The man lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the LORD I have brought a man into being.' Afterwards she had another child, his brother Abel. Abel was a shepherd and Cain a tiller of the soil. The day came when Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as a gift to the LORD; and Abel brought some of the first-born of his flock, the fat portions of them.<sup>m</sup> The LORD received Abel and his gift with favour; but Cain and his gift he did not receive. Cain was very angry and his face fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you so angry and cast down?'

If you do well, you are accepted;<sup>n</sup> if not, sin is a demon crouching at the door.

It shall be eager for you, and you will be mastered by it.<sup>o</sup>

Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go into the open country.' While they were there, Cain attacked his brother

*k* Or feel an urge. *l* That is Life.

*m* Or some of the first-born, that is the sucklings, of his flock.

*n* Or you hold your head up.

*o* Or but you must master it.

man's sin and alienation from God. 14-19: A series of originally independent folk explanations is woven together: Why is mankind hostile to serpents? Why is childbirth painful? Why is woman's social position subordinate? Why must man work? These explanations serve in context to show that the world as now encountered is of man's making rather than remaining the divine ideal. 20: *Eve*: see 2.22 n. 21: *Adam*: the word "man" occurs here for the first time without the definite article, becoming a name (see 2.7, Tfn. *d*). 22: *Us*: see 1.26 n. 24: *Cherubim*: winged semidivine creatures, half-human and half-lion (Ezek.41.19), often the guardians of sacred areas (1 Kgs.8.6-7).

4.1-26: The first offspring. Cain and Abel may personify a culture conflict between the settled farmer and the seminomadic shepherd. *Cain*: "smith," "metallurgist." *Abel*: "herdsman." 4-5: The preference for Abel's offering reflects the view of the deity's full freedom (see



9 Abel and murdered him. Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' Cain answered, 'I do not know.  
10 Am I my brother's keeper?' The LORD said, 'What have you done? Hark! your brother's blood that has been shed is crying out to me from the ground.  
11 Now you are accursed, and banished from<sup>p</sup> the ground which has opened its mouth wide to receive your brother's blood, which you have shed. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield you its wealth. You shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on earth.' Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is heavier than I can bear; thou hast driven me today from the ground, and I must hide myself from thy presence. I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on earth, and anyone who meets me can kill me.' The LORD answered him, 'No: if anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold.' So the LORD put a mark on Cain, in order that anyone meeting him should not kill him. Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod<sup>q</sup> to the east of Eden.  
17 Then Cain lay with his wife; and she conceived and bore Enoch. Cain was then building a city, which he named Enoch after his son. Enoch begot Irad; Irad begot Mehujael; Mehujael begot Methushael; Methushael begot Lamech.  
19 Lamech married two wives, one named Adah and the other Zillah.  
20 Adah bore Jabal who was the ancestor of herdsmen who live in tents; and his brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of those who play the harp and pipe.  
22 Zillah, the other wife, bore Tubal-cain, the master of all copper-smiths and blacksmiths, and Tubal-

cain's sister was Naamah. Lamech 23 said to his wives:

'Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, mark what I say: I kill a man for wounding me, a young man for a blow. Cain may be avenged seven times, 24 but Lamech seventy-seven.'

Adam lay with his wife again. She 25 bore a son, and named him Seth,<sup>r</sup> 'for', she said, 'God has granted me another son in place of Abel, because Cain killed him.' Seth too had a son, whom 26 he named Enosh. At that time men began to invoke the LORD<sup>s</sup> by name.

THIS IS THE RECORD OF THE DESCENDANTS 5 of Adam. On the day when God created man he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, 2 and on the day when he created them, he blessed them and called them man.

Adam was one hundred and thirty 3 years old when he begot a son in his likeness and image, and named him Seth. After the birth of Seth he lived 4 eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. He lived nine 5 hundred and thirty years, and then he died.

Seth was one hundred and five years 6 old when he begot Enosh. After the 7 birth of Enosh he lived eight hundred and seven years, and had other sons and daughters. He lived nine hundred 8 and twelve years, and then he died.

<sup>p</sup> and banished from: or more than (cp. 3. 17).

<sup>q</sup> That is Wandering.

<sup>r</sup> and settled . . . Nod: or and he lived as a wanderer in the land.

<sup>s</sup> That is Granted.

<sup>t</sup> This represents the Hebrew consonants YHWH, probably pronounced Yahweh, but traditionally read as Jehovah.

Exod.33.19). 10: *Blood* was regarded as the seat of the life-force (see Deut.12.23-24). 14: *Anyone*: this passage presupposes an established society; possibly this account was once independent of 2.5-3.24 and only after the two accounts were joined were Cain and Abel regarded as the offspring of Adam and Eve (v. 1). 15: *Mark*: devotees of deities wore distinctive emblems. Cain is designated here as a ward of the LORD. 17: *Wife*: her mention is a surprise, for whence did she come? Perhaps we have here a fragment of a once independent tradition; see v. 14 n. 19-22: The development of human culture is depicted. 23-24: An ancient boast is used to illustrate the growing pride and callousness of mankind. 26: *Enosh* is another word for "man." This is possibly a fragment of a once separate, primitive genealogy. *At that time*: the worship of the LORD by some groups within Israel began much later (see Exod.3.13-15; 6.3 n.).

5.1-32: *Adam's descendants*. In form and content this section is a self-contained unit, related to 1.1-2.4, inserted here to bridge a narrative gap between earliest creation and the later deluge (7.1ff.). 4: *Eight hundred*: Ancient Near Eastern peoples attributed great longevity to their remote ancestors. The biblical writers steadily decrease man's life span, symbolizing the con-

9<sup>u</sup> Enosh was ninety years old when he  
 10 begot Kenan. After the birth of Kenan  
 he lived eight hundred and fifteen  
 years, and had other sons and  
 11 daughters. He lived nine hundred and  
 five years, and then he died.

12 Kenan was seventy years old when he  
 13 begot Mahalalel. After the birth of  
 Mahalalel he lived eight hundred  
 and forty years, and had other sons and  
 14 daughters. He lived nine hundred and  
 ten years, and then he died.

15 Mahalalel was sixty-five years old  
 16 when he begot Jared. After the birth  
 of Jared he lived eight hundred and  
 thirty years, and had other sons and  
 17 daughters. He lived eight hundred and  
 ninety-five years, and then he died.

18 Jared was one hundred and sixty-  
 two years old when he begot Enoch.  
 19 After the birth of Enoch he lived eight  
 hundred years, and had other sons and  
 20 daughters. He lived nine hundred and  
 sixty-two years, and then he died.

21 Enoch was sixty-five years old when  
 22 he begot Methuselah. After the birth  
 of Methuselah, Enoch walked with  
 God for three hundred years, and had  
 23 other sons and daughters. He lived  
 three hundred and sixty-five years.  
 24 Having walked with God, Enoch was  
 seen no more, because God had taken  
 him away.

25 Methuselah was one hundred and  
 eighty-seven years old when he begot  
 26 Lamech. After the birth of Lamech he  
 lived for seven hundred and eighty-  
 two years, and had other sons and  
 27 daughters. He lived nine hundred and  
 sixty-nine years, and then he died.

28 Lamech was one hundred and  
 eighty-two years old when he begot a  
 29 son. He named him Noah, saying, "This  
 boy will bring us relief from our work,  
 and from the hard labour that has come

upon us because of the LORD's curse  
 upon the ground.' After the birth of 30  
 Noah, he lived for five hundred and  
 ninety-five years, and had other sons  
 and daughters. Lamech lived seven 31  
 hundred and seventy-seven years, and  
 then he died. Noah was five hundred 32  
 years old when he begot Shem, Ham  
 and Japheth.

*The flood and the tower of Babel*

WHEN MANKIND BEGAN TO INCREASE 6  
 and to spread all over the earth and  
 daughters were born to them, the sons 2  
 of the gods saw that the daughters of  
 men were beautiful; so they took for  
 themselves such women as they chose.  
 But the LORD said, 'My life-giving 3  
 spirit shall not remain in man for ever;  
 he for his part is mortal flesh: he shall  
 live for a hundred and twenty years.'

In those days,<sup>v</sup> when the sons of the 4  
 gods had intercourse with the daughters  
 of men and got children by them, the  
 Nephilim<sup>w</sup> were on earth. They were the  
 heroes of old, men of renown.

When the LORD saw that man had 5  
 done much evil on earth and that his  
 thoughts and inclinations were always  
 evil, he was sorry that he had made man 6  
 on earth, and he was grieved at heart.  
 He said, 'This race of men whom I have 7  
 created, I will wipe them off the face of  
 the earth—man and beast, reptiles and  
 birds. I am sorry that I ever made 8  
 them.' But Noah had won the LORD's  
 favour.

This is the story of Noah. Noah was 9  
 a righteous man, the one blameless  
 man of his time; he walked with God.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 9-32: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 2-4.  
<sup>v</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and also afterwards (cp. Num.  
 13. 33).  
<sup>w</sup> Or giants.

sequences of man's sin. 29: *Relief*: by folk etymology, the name "Noah" is derived from the verb "to rest." Perhaps his cultivation of the vineyard and his wine making (9.20) are alluded to.

6.1-4: *The birth of the Nephilim* is an ancient fragment, a folk explanation for a race of giants. It is used here to illustrate man's growing wickedness, to explain the decreasing life span, and to set the stage for the deluge. 1: *Sons of the gods*: a term of Canaanite origin for members of the pantheon ("assembly of the gods"). Later these were viewed as fallen angels (Jude 6-7). 3: *Mortal*: in ancient belief, sexual contact between gods and men transmitted the qualities of the former. Here, however, man has overstepped his bounds as creature, so that divine correction is needed; compare 11.1-9. *A hundred and twenty years*: a round number (Num.7.86; 1 Kgs. 9.14; 10.10); see 5.4 n.

6.5-8.22: *The great deluge*. God's judgment takes the form of a punishing flood, while his grace takes the form of preserving a remnant through whom a new beginning can take place.

10 He had three sons, Shem, Ham and  
 11 Japheth. Now God saw that the whole  
 world was corrupt<sup>x</sup> and full of violence.  
 12 In his sight the world had become  
 corrupted, for all men had lived  
 13 corrupt lives on earth. God said to  
 Noah, 'The loathsomeness<sup>y</sup> of all  
 mankind has become plain to me, for  
 through them the earth is full of  
 violence. I intend to destroy them, and  
 14 the earth with them. Make yourself an  
 ark with ribs of cypress; cover it with  
 reeds and coat it inside and out with  
 15 pitch. This is to be its plan: the length  
 of the ark shall be three hundred  
 cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its  
 16 height thirty cubits. You shall make a  
 roof for the ark, giving it a fall of one  
 cubit when complete; and put a door  
 in the side of the ark, and build three  
 17 decks, upper, middle, and lower. I  
 intend to bring the waters of the flood  
 over the earth to destroy every human  
 being under heaven that has the spirit  
 of life; everything on earth shall perish.  
 18 But with you I will make a covenant,  
 and you shall go into the ark, you and  
 your sons, your wife and your sons'  
 19 wives with you. And you shall bring  
 living creatures of every kind into the  
 ark to keep them alive with you, two  
 of each kind, a male and a female;  
 20 two of every kind of bird, beast, and  
 reptile, shall come to you to be kept  
 alive. See that you take and store every  
 kind of food that can be eaten; this  
 shall be food for you and for them.'  
 22 Exactly as God had commanded him,  
 so Noah did.  
 7 The LORD said to Noah, 'Go into  
 the ark, you and all your household;  
 for I have seen that you alone are  
 righteous before me in this generation.  
 2 Take with you seven pairs, male and  
 female, of all beasts that are ritually  
 clean, and one pair, male and female,  
 3 of all beasts that are not clean; also  
 seven pairs, male and female, of every  
 bird—to ensure that life continues on  
 4 earth. In seven days' time I will send

rain over the earth for forty days and  
 forty nights, and I will wipe off the  
 face of the earth every living thing that  
 I have made.' Noah did all that the 5  
 LORD had commanded him. He was 6  
 six hundred years old when the waters  
 of the flood came upon the earth.

And so, to escape the waters of the 7  
 flood, Noah went into the ark with his  
 sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. And 8-9  
 into the ark with Noah went one pair,  
 male and female, of all beasts, clean  
 and unclean, of birds and of everything  
 that crawls on the ground, two by two,  
 as God had commanded. Towards the 10  
 end of seven days the waters of the  
 flood came upon the earth. In the year 11  
 when Noah was six hundred years old,  
 on the seventeenth day of the second  
 month, on that very day, all the springs  
 of the great abyss broke through, the  
 windows of the sky were opened, and 12  
 rain fell on the earth for forty days and  
 forty nights. On that very day Noah 13  
 entered the ark with his sons, Shem,  
 Ham and Japheth, his own wife, and  
 his three sons' wives. Wild animals of 14  
 every kind, cattle of every kind, reptiles  
 of every kind that move upon the  
 ground, and birds of every kind—all 15  
 came to Noah in the ark, two by two  
 of all creatures that had life in them.  
 Those which came were one male and 16  
 one female of all living things; they  
 came in as God had commanded  
 Noah, and the LORD closed the door  
 on him. The flood continued upon the 17  
 earth for forty days, and the waters  
 swelled and lifted up the ark so that it  
 rose high above the ground. They 18  
 swelled and increased over the earth,  
 and the ark floated on the surface of the  
 waters. More and more the waters 19  
 increased over the earth until they  
 covered all the high mountains every-  
 where under heaven. The waters in- 20  
 creased and the mountains were  
 covered to a depth of fifteen cubits.  
 Every living creature that moves on 21

x Or ripe for destruction. y Or end.

The story was adapted from the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, itself possibly the "explanation" of a local but catastrophic flood in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. 9-22: The story was transmitted in several versions; on being combined in the text as we now have it, some duplication and divergence have ensued. 15: *Cubits*: see Appendix, p. 1035. 7.2: *Seven*: a round number (21.28; Num.28.11). 4: *Forty*: another round number (Exod.16.35; 2 Sam.5.4; Jonah 3.4). 11: *Springs*: 2.6 n. *Windows*: 1.6 n. The earth was threatened with a return to the pre-creation

earth perished, birds, cattle, wild animals, all reptiles, and all mankind. 22 Everything died that had the breath of life in its nostrils, everything on dry 23 land. God wiped out every living thing that existed on earth, man and beast, reptile and bird; they were all wiped out over the whole earth, and only Noah and his company in the ark survived.

24 When the waters had increased over the earth for a hundred and fifty days, 8 God thought of Noah and all the wild animals and the cattle with him in the ark, and he made a wind pass over the earth, and the waters began to subside. 2 The springs of the abyss were stopped up, and so were the windows of the sky; the downpour from the skies was 3 checked. The water gradually receded from the earth, and by the end of a hundred and fifty days it had disappeared. On the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark grounded on a 5 mountain in Ararat. The water continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains could be seen.

6 After forty days Noah opened the trap-door that he had made in the 7 ark, and released a raven to see whether the water had subsided, but the bird continued flying to and fro until the water on the earth had dried 8 up. Noah waited for seven days,<sup>2</sup> and then he released a dove from the ark to see whether the water on the earth 9 had subsided further. But the dove found no place where she could settle, and so she came back to him in the ark, because there was water over the whole surface of the earth. Noah stretched out his hand, caught her and took 10 her into the ark. He waited another seven days and again released the dove 11 from the ark. She came back to him towards evening with a newly plucked olive leaf in her beak. Then Noah knew for certain that the water on the earth had subsided still further. He waited 12 yet another seven days and released the dove, but she never came back. And so it came about that, on the first 13 day of the first month of his six hundred and first year, the water had dried up on the earth, and Noah removed the hatch and looked out of the ark. The surface of the ground was dry.

By the twenty-seventh day of the 14 second month the whole earth was dry. And God said to Noah, 'Come 15,16 out of the ark, you and your wife, your sons and their wives. Bring out 17 every living creature that is with you, live things of every kind, bird and beast and every reptile that moves on the ground, and let them swarm over the earth and be fruitful and increase there.' So Noah came out with his sons, 18 his wife, and his sons' wives. Every wild 19 animal, all cattle, every bird, and every reptile that moves on the ground, came out of the ark by families. Then Noah 20 built an altar to the LORD. He took ritually clean beasts and birds of every kind, and offered whole-offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelt the 21 soothing odour, he said within himself, 'Never again will I curse the ground because of man, however evil his inclinations may be from his youth upwards. I will never again kill every living creature, as I have just done.

While the earth lasts 22 seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall never cease.'

GOD BLESSED NOAH AND HIS SONS AND 9 said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and dread 2 of you shall fall upon all wild animals on earth, on all birds of heaven, on everything that moves upon the ground and all fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Every creature that 3

<sup>2</sup> Noah . . . days: *prob. rdg., cp. verse 10; Heb. om.*

chaos (1.2). 24: *One hundred and fifty days*: this precise number may reflect an effort to bind the events to a liturgical calendar. 8.4: *Ararat* was in upper Mesopotamia, an area from which some of Israel's ancestors migrated (11.27-12.5). 21: *Again*: the earth had been cursed earlier (3.17-19). God's mercy will no longer depend upon man's response.

9.1-17: *The covenant with Noah*. 1: The blessing given at creation (1.28) is renewed. 3-4: Man's eating of meat is sanctioned but possibly regarded as undesirable (see 1.29-30). *Blood*:

- lives and moves shall be food for you; I give you them all, as once I gave you all green plants. But you must not eat the flesh with the life, which is the blood, still in it. And further, for your life-blood I will demand satisfaction; from every animal I will require it, and from a man also I will require satisfaction for the death of his fellow-man.
- He that sheds the blood of a man, for that man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.
- But you must be fruitful and increase, swarm throughout the earth and rule<sup>a</sup> over it.<sup>6</sup>
- God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him: 'I now make my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, all birds and cattle, all the wild animals with you on earth, all that have come out of the ark. I will make my covenant with you: never again shall all living creatures be destroyed by the waters of the flood, never again shall there be a flood to lay waste the earth.'
- God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I establish between myself and you and every living creature with you, to endless generations:
- My bow I set in the cloud, sign of the covenant between myself and earth.
- When I cloud the sky over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud.
- Then will I remember the covenant which I have made between myself and you and living things of every
- kind. Never again shall the waters become a flood to destroy all living creatures. The bow shall be in the cloud; when I see it, it will remind me of the everlasting covenant between God and living things on earth of every kind.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between myself and all that lives on earth.'
- The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth; Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and their descendants spread over the whole earth.
- Noah, a man of the soil, began the planting of vineyards. He drank some of the wine, became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. When Ham, father of Canaan, saw his father naked, he told his two brothers outside. So Shem and Japheth took a cloak, put it on their shoulders and walked backwards, and so covered their father's naked body; their faces were turned the other way, so that they did not see their father naked. When Noah woke from his drunken sleep, he learnt what his youngest son had done to him, and said:
- 'Cursed be Canaan, slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.'
- And he continued:
- 'Bless, O LORD, the tents of Shem;<sup>b</sup> may Canaan be his slave. May God extend<sup>c</sup> Japheth's bounds,

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1. 28; Heb. increase.  
<sup>b</sup> Bless... Shem: prob. rdg.; Heb. Blessed is the LORD the God of Shem. <sup>c</sup> Heb. japhth.

see 4.10 n. 6: The violence of the preceding age is restrained by law basic to the creation (1.26) and enforced by punishment; the passage explains the origin of blood revenge, but without approving it. 8-9: The covenant was made with all mankind (vv. 18-19); other covenants were with individuals or the Hebrew people. 13: In ancient mythology the [rain]bow was a weapon of the deity (Hab.3.9). Folk explanation regarded it as a sign of divine victory. Here it is interpreted as divine reassurance to man.

9.18-27: The curse upon Canaan. 20: The origin of wine making is attributed to Noah (5.29 n.). The story likely is an attack on the Canaanite farming life-style (see 4.1-26 n.). 25: The story makes its point by shifting the blame from Ham to Canaan, the ancestor whose name signified his descendants; see 10.6 n. 26: Shem is the eponymous ("name-giving") ancestor of the Semites, including Israel (10.21-25; 11.18-26); the verse attempts to explain the later conquest of Canaan (see Josh.-Judg.) in theological terms. The sexual liberties of the later Canaanites offended the Israelites (see 19.5 n.; Lev.18.3, 6-30). 27. Japheth: the ancestor of peoples from

let him dwell in the tents of Shem, may Canaan be their slave.'

28 After the flood Noah lived for three  
29 hundred and fifty years, and he was  
nine hundred and fifty years old when  
he died.

10 These are the descendants of the sons  
of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, the  
sons born to them after the flood.

2<sup>d</sup> The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog,  
Madai, Javan,<sup>e</sup> Tubal, Meshech and  
3 Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz,  
4 Riphath and Togarmah. The sons of  
Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim<sup>f</sup> and  
5 Rodanim. From these the peoples of  
the coasts and islands separated into  
their own countries, each with their  
own language, family by family, nation  
by nation.

6<sup>g</sup> The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim,<sup>h</sup>  
7 Put and Canaan. The sons of Cush:  
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and  
Sabtecha. The sons of Raamah: Sheba  
8 and Dedan. Cush was the father of  
Nimrod, who began to show himself a  
9 man of might on earth; and he was a  
mighty hunter before the LORD, as the  
saying goes, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty  
10 hunter before the LORD.' His kingdom  
in the beginning consisted of Babel,  
Erech, and Accad, all of them in the  
11 land of Shinar. From that land he  
migrated to Asshur and built Nineveh,  
12 Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, a  
great city between Nineveh and Calah.

13<sup>i</sup> From Mizraim sprang the Lydians,  
Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,  
14 Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caph-  
torites, from whom the Philistines were  
descended.

15 Canaan was the father of Sidon, who  
16 was his eldest son, and Heth,<sup>j</sup> the  
Jesubites, the Amorites, the Girga-

shites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the 17  
Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, 18  
and the Hamathites. Later the  
Canaanites spread, and then the 19  
Canaanite border ran from Sidon  
towards Gerar all the way to Gaza;  
then all the way to Sodom and  
Gomorrhah, Admah and Zeboyim as  
far as Lasha. These were the sons of 20  
Ham, by families and languages with  
their countries and nations.

Sons were born also to Shem, elder 21  
brother of Japheth, the ancestor of all  
the sons of Eber. The sons of Shem: 22<sup>k</sup>  
Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud<sup>l</sup> and  
Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, 23  
Gether and Mash. Arphaxad was the  
father of Shelah, and Shelah the father 24  
of Eber. Eber had two sons: one was  
named Peleg,<sup>m</sup> because in his time the 25  
earth was divided; and his brother's  
name was Joktan. Joktan was the 26  
father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazar-  
moth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 27  
Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah 28,29  
and Jobab. All these were sons of  
Joktan. They lived in the eastern hill- 30  
country, from Mesha all the way to  
Sephar. These were the sons of Shem, 31  
by families and languages with their  
countries and nations.

These were the families of the sons of 32  
Noah according to their genealogies,  
nation by nation; and from them came  
the separate nations on earth after the  
flood.

ONCE UPON A TIME ALL THE WORLD 11  
spoke a single language and used the  
same<sup>n</sup> words. As men journeyed in the 2

*d* Verses 2-4: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 5-7. *e* Or Greece.

*f* Or Tarshish of the Kittians.

*g* Verses 6-8: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 8-10. *h* Or Egypt.

*i* Verses 13-18: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 11-16. *j* Or the Hittites.

*k* Verses 22-29: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 17-23. *l* Or the Lydians.

*m* That is Division. *n* Or used few.

the Aegean Sea; among these were the Philistines who settled in Palestine during the thirteenth century.

10.1-32: The "Table of the Nations." This chapter is a composite work, the latest editing of which intends it as a continuation of 5.32. By means of eponymous ("name-giving") ancestors, it shows the spread of mankind after the deluge. Ch. 11 offers a different explanation for the spread and diversity of mankind. 6: *Ham*: the Egyptian political orbit; Canaan was under Egyptian control, about 1500-1200 B.C. *Cush*: sometimes this term denotes Ethiopia, as here, or else the land of the Kassites (v. 8; 2.13 n.). 21: *Eber* is an eponymous ("name-giving") ancestor of the *'ibrim*, "the Hebrews." This designation was used by the local population for waves of invaders and migrants around 1500-1200 B.C. Israelites understood the term as a designation of a people, namely, of themselves (14.13 n.).

11.1-9: The tower of Babel. An ancient story explaining the origin of diverse languages of mankind; here, it is another illustration of man's refusal to accept limitations (2.5-3.24 n.; 6.3 n.). It sets the stage for the true climax of chs. 1-11, namely, the divine choice of Abram

east, they came upon a plain in the land  
 3 of Shinar and settled there. They said  
 to one another, 'Come, let us make  
 bricks and bake them hard'; they used  
 4 bricks for stone and bitumen for  
 mortar. 'Come,' they said, 'let us build  
 ourselves a city and a tower with its  
 top in the heavens, and make a name  
 for ourselves; or we shall be dispersed  
 5 all over the earth.' Then the LORD  
 came down to see the city and tower  
 6 which mortal men had built, and he  
 said, 'Here they are, one people with a  
 single language, and now they have  
 started to do this; henceforward  
 nothing they have a mind to do will be  
 7 beyond their reach. Come, let us go  
 down there and confuse their speech,  
 so that they will not understand what  
 8 they say to one another.' So the LORD  
 dispersed them from there all over the  
 earth, and they left off building the  
 9 city. That is why it is called Babel,<sup>o</sup>  
 because the LORD there made a babble  
 of the language of all the world; from  
 that place the LORD scattered men all  
 over the face of the earth.

10<sup>p</sup> This is the table of the descendants  
 of Shem. Shem was a hundred years  
 old when he begot Arphaxad, two years  
 11 after the flood. After the birth of  
 Arphaxad he lived five hundred years,  
 and had other sons and daughters.  
 12 Arphaxad was thirty-five years old  
 when he begot Shelah. After the birth  
 13 of Shelah he lived four hundred and  
 three years, and had other sons and  
 daughters.

14 Shelah was thirty years old when he  
 15 begot Eber. After the birth of Eber he  
 lived four hundred and three years, and  
 had other sons and daughters.

16 Eber was thirty-four years old when  
 17 he begot Peleg. After the birth of Peleg  
 he lived four hundred and thirty years,  
 and had other sons and daughters.

Peleg was thirty years old when he  
 18 begot Reu. After the birth of Reu he  
 19 lived two hundred and nine years, and  
 had other sons and daughters.

Reu was thirty-two years old when  
 20 he begot Serug. After the birth of Serug  
 21 he lived two hundred and seven years,  
 and had other sons and daughters.

Serug was thirty years old when he  
 22 begot Nahor. After the birth of Nahor  
 23 he lived two hundred years, and had  
 other sons and daughters.

Nahor was twenty-nine years old  
 24 when he begot Terah. After the birth of  
 25 Terah he lived a hundred and nineteen  
 years, and had other sons and  
 daughters.

Terah was seventy years old when he  
 26 begot Abram, Nahor and Haran.

This is the table of the descendants of  
 27 Terah. Terah was the father of Abram,  
 Nahor and Haran. Haran was the  
 28 father of Lot. Haran died in the  
 presence of his father in the land of his  
 birth, Ur of the Chaldees. Abram and  
 29 Nahor married wives; Abram's wife  
 was called Sarai, and Nahor's Milcah.  
 She was Haran's daughter; and he was  
 also the father of Milcah and of Iscah.  
 Sarai was barren; she had no child.  
 30 Terah took his son Abram, his grand-  
 31 son Lot the son of Haran, and his  
 daughter-in-law Sarai Abram's wife,  
 and they set out from Ur of the Chal-  
 dees for the land of Canaan. But when  
 they reached Harran, they settled there.  
 Terah was two hundred and five years  
 32 old when he died in Harran.

### Abraham and Isaac

THE LORD SAID TO ABRAM, 'LEAVE YOUR  
 12 own country, your kinsmen, and your  
 father's house, and go to a country

<sup>o</sup> That is Babylon.  
<sup>p</sup> Verses 10-26: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 24-27.

(12.1ff.). 2: *Shinar*: Sumeria (see 10.10). 4: *Tower*: the center of the Mesopotamian city was a complex of buildings including a pyramidal temple, extending upward toward a "gate" in the heavens through which the gods came down to reveal themselves. 8: Probably the observation of vast temple ruins elicited this theological explanation by those to whom this culture was alien. 9: *Babel*: this term, which for the Babylonians meant "the gate of the gods," is punned on through the verb *balal*, "to confuse," "make babble."

11.10-32: *Abram's genealogy*. This material connects the deluge and the call of Israel's ancestor. Its insertion at this point heightens the effect of God's gracious but unexplained election of Abraham. 20-27: Several of the names are personified cities. 28: *Chaldees*: here the name is an anachronism; Chaldeans did not occupy lower Mesopotamia until much later.

12.1-9: *The call of Abram*. His migration may have been part of a population movement

2 that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you and make your name so great that it shall be used in blessings:  
 3 Those that bless you I will bless, those that curse you, I will execrate. All the families on earth will pray to be blessed as you are blessed.’  
 4 And so Abram set out as the LORD had bidden him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the property they had collected, and all the dependants they had acquired in Harran, and they started on their journey to Canaan.  
 6 When they arrived, Abram passed through the country to the sanctuary at Shechem, the terebinth-tree of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites lived in this land. There the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘I give this land to your descendants.’ So Abram built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. Thence he went on to the hill-country east of Bethel and pitched his tent between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the LORD by name. Thus Abram journeyed by stages towards the Negeb.  
 10 There came a famine in the land, so severe that Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while. When he was approaching Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, ‘I know very well that you are a beautiful woman, and that when the Egyptians see you, they will say, “She is his wife”; then they will kill me but let you live. Tell them that you are my sister, so that all may go well with me because of you and my life may be spared on your account.’ When Abram

arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was indeed very beautiful. Pharaoh’s courtiers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into Pharaoh’s household. He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram came to possess sheep and cattle and asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels. But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with grave diseases on account of Abram’s wife Sarai. Pharaoh summoned Abram and said to him, ‘Why have you treated me like this? Why did you not tell me that she is your wife? Why did you say that she was your sister, so that I took her as a wife? Here she is: take her and be gone.’ Then Pharaoh gave his men orders, and they sent Abram away with his wife and all that he had.

Abram went up from Egypt into the Negeb, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot went with him. Abram was now very rich in cattle and in silver and gold. From the Negeb he journeyed by stages to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where he had pitched his tent in the beginning, where he had set up an altar on the first occasion and had invoked the LORD by name. Now Lot was travelling with Abram, and he too possessed sheep and cattle and tents. The land could not support them both together; for their livestock were so numerous that they could not settle in the same district, and there were quarrels between Abram’s herdsmen and Lot’s. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were then living in the land. So Abram said to Lot, ‘Let there be no quarrelling between us, between my herdsmen and yours; for we are close kinsmen. The whole country is there in front of you; let us part company. If you go left, I will go right; if you go right, I will go

(known to modern scholars) in the early second millennium B.C. 3: A traditional interpretation is: “Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” The call of Abram marks a culmination of the deity’s efforts to restore the harmony of creation. 7: *Altar*: the account attributes to Israel’s ancestor the founding of an ancient Canaanite sanctuary. 9: *Negeb*: “south,” the barren area between Beersheba and the Gulf of Aqabah.

12.10–13.1: *Abram in Egypt*. God’s promise to Abram (vv. 2–3) encounters its first challenge. Abram is here found wanting, for he is willing to sacrifice the future ancestress of Israel for self-security. But God’s grace does not depend upon human worthiness, so that Sarai is preserved anyway. That the incident is repeated in 20.1–18; 26.6–11 reflects the bringing together of independent traditions in the editorial growth of the Pentateuch.

13.2–18: *Abram and Lot*. 4: *First occasion*: 12.8. 11: *Chose*: through human freedom, God’s



10 left.' Lot looked up and saw how well-watered the whole Plain of the Jordan was; all the way to Zoar it was like the Garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. This was before the LORD had  
11 destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose all the Plain of the Jordan and took the road on the east side. Thus  
12 they parted company. Abram settled in the land of Canaan; but Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and  
13 pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

14 After Lot and Abram had parted, the LORD said to Abram, 'Raise your eyes and look into the distance from the place where you are, north and south,  
15 east and west. All the land you can see I will give to you and to your descendants  
16 your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants countless as the dust of the earth; if anyone could count the dust upon the ground, then he could count  
17 your descendants. Now go through the length and breadth of the land, for I give it to you.' So Abram moved his  
18 tent and settled by the terebinths of Mamre at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the LORD.

14 IT WAS IN THE TIME OF AMRAPHEL KING of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal  
2 king of Goyim. They went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim, and the king of Bela, that is Zoar.  
3 These kings joined forces in the valley of Siddim, which is now the Dead Sea.  
4 They had been subject to Kedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth  
5 year they rebelled. Then in the fourteenth year Kedorlaomer and his confederate kings came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in  
6 Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in

the hill-country from Seir<sup>q</sup> as far as El-paran on the edge of the wilderness. On their way back they came to En-mishpat, which is now Kadesh, and laid waste all the country of the Amalekites and also that of the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar. Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah,  
8 Admah, Zeboyim, and Bela, which is now Zoar, marched out and drew up their forces against them in the valley of Siddim, against Kedorlaomer king of  
9 Elam, Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. Now  
10 the valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into them, but the rest escaped to the hill-country. The  
11 four kings captured all the flocks and herds of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions, and went away. They  
12 also carried off Lot, Abram's nephew, who was living in Sodom, and with him his flocks and herds. But a fugitive came  
13 and told Abram the Hebrew, who at that time was dwelling by the terebinths of Mamre the Amorite. This Mamre was the brother of Eshcol and Aner, who were allies of Abram. When  
14 Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken prisoner, he mustered his retainers, men born in his household, three hundred and eighteen of them, and pursued as far as Dan. Abram and  
15 his followers surrounded the enemy by night, attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus; he then brought back all the flocks and  
16 herds and also his kinsman Lot with his flocks and herds, together with the women and the other captives. On his  
17 return from this defeat of Kedorlaomer and his confederate kings, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh, which is now the King's Valley.

<sup>q</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb. in their hill-country, Seir.*

promise of the land (12.7) begins to be fulfilled; i.e. by Lot's choice, the land of the promise was left to Abram. 18: *Terebinth*: the exact species of tree is uncertain.

14.1-24: The defeat of the four eastern kings. Style and content indicate a one-time independent tradition. Its function may be to suggest that the Canaanite cult at Jerusalem, later assimilated and legitimized by David (2 Sam. chs. 6 and 24), had long previously been legitimized by Abram. 1-2: Some of the personal names are attested in extrabiblical materials from the early second millennium B.C. This supports the basic historical reliability of the account, although a specific date cannot be assigned. 13: *Hebrew*: "migrant"; see 10.21 n. This passage may have

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought food and wine. He was priest  
19 of God Most High, and he pronounced this blessing on Abram:

‘Blessed be Abram  
by God Most High,  
creator<sup>r</sup> of heaven and earth.  
20 And blessed be God Most High,  
who has delivered your enemies into  
your power.’

Abram gave him a tithe of all the booty.

21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the people, and you can take  
22 the property’; but Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I lift my hand and  
23 swear by the LORD, God Most High, creator of heaven and earth: not a  
thread of a shoe-string will I accept of anything that is yours. You shall never  
24 say, “I made Abram rich.” I will accept nothing but what the young men have  
eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Aner, Eshcol, and  
Mamre shall have their share.’

15 AFTER THIS THE WORD OF THE LORD came to Abram in a vision. He said, ‘Do  
not be afraid, Abram, I am giving you a  
2 very great reward.’<sup>s</sup> Abram replied, ‘Lord GOD, what canst thou give me?  
I have no standing among men, for the heir to my household is Eliezer of  
3 Damascus.’ Abram continued, ‘Thou hast given me no children, and so my  
heir must be a slave born in my house.’  
4 Then came the word of the LORD to him: ‘This man shall not be your heir;  
your heir shall be a child of your own  
5 body.’ He took Abram outside and

said, ‘Look up into the sky, and count the stars if you can. So many’, he said, ‘shall your descendants be.’

Abram put his faith in the LORD, 6 and the LORD counted that faith to him as righteousness; he said to him, ‘I am 7 the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to occupy.’ Abram said, ‘O Lord 8 GOD, how can I be sure that I shall occupy it?’ The LORD answered, ‘Bring 9 me a heifer three years old, a she-goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtle-dove, and a fledgling.’ He 10 brought him all these, halved the animals down the middle and placed each piece opposite its corresponding piece, but he did not halve the birds. When the birds of prey swooped down 11 on the carcasses, Abram scared them away. Then, as the sun was going 12 down, a trance came over Abram and great fear came upon him. The LORD 13 said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that your descendants will be aliens living in a land that is not theirs; they will be slaves, and will be held in oppression there for four hundred years. But I will punish that nation 14 whose slaves they are, and after that they shall come out with great possessions. You yourself shall join your 15 fathers in peace and be buried in a good old age; and the fourth generation 16 shall return here, for the Amorites will not be ripe for punishment till then.’ The sun went down and it was dusk, 17 and there appeared a smoking brazier and a flaming torch passing between

<sup>r</sup> Or owner.

<sup>s</sup> I am giving . . . reward: or I am your shield, your very great reward.

played a role in giving the term its “ethnic” meaning. 18: *Salem*: a variant name for Jerusalem (Ps.76.2). *God Most High*: a divine name, attested in antiquity in both this and the shorter form, “the Most High” (Isa.14.14; Ps.9.2). Here the Most High is identified with the LORD (Yahweh) of Israel (v. 22).

15.1–21: The covenant with Abram. 2–3: The Nuzi Texts (from Mesopotamia, about fourteenth century B.C.) stipulate that a *slave* can be adopted in case of childlessness. 7: A separate tradition now begins, concerned with the promise of land (12.7). The covenant ceremony has parallels in the Mari Texts from Mesopotamia, eighteenth century B.C. By means of it, the LORD replaces Abram’s human associates (14.13); Abram has rejected the gifts of the king of Sodom (14.22–24). 10: The covenanting parties walked between the sliced parts of the animals, swearing to keep the stipulations lest they likewise be dismembered; see Jer.34.18, and compare, obliquely, 1 Sam.11.7 and Judg.19.29–30. 12: Dreams were often regarded as the medium of divine revelation (20.3–7; Mt.2.19–23). 13–14: The period of oppression in Egypt is given as an illustration of how the “promise” may be delayed, and serves to exhort future generations to maintain their faith. 16: The *punishment* was to be the conquest of the Amorites, who were Canaanites, in the time of Joshua. 17: *Torch*: the presence of the deity is often symbolized by fire (Exod.3.2; 13.21; 19.18). 18: The boundaries given generally conform to those of the Davidic period (2 Sam.8.1–12; 1 Kgs.4.21; 8.65), this an indication of the date at which this

18 the divided pieces. That very day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, and he said, 'To your descendants I give this land from the River of Egypt to the Great River, the river Euphrates, 19 the territory of the Kenites, Kenizzites, 20 Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites.'

16 Abram's wife Sarai had borne him no children. Now she had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and she said to Abram, 'You see that the LORD has not allowed me to bear a child. Take my slave-girl; perhaps I shall found a family through her.' Abram agreed to what his wife said; 3 so Sarai, Abram's wife, brought her slave-girl, Hagar the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife.<sup>t</sup> When this happened Abram had 4 been in Canaan for ten years. He lay with Hagar and she conceived; and when she knew that she was with child, 5 she despised her mistress. Sarai said to Abram, 'I have been wronged and you must answer for it. It was I who gave my slave-girl into your arms, but since she has known that she is with child, she has despised me. May the LORD see justice done between you and me.' Abram replied to Sarai, 'Your slave-girl is in your hands; deal with her as you will.' So Sarai ill-treated her and she ran away.

7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness 8 on the way to Shur, and he said, 'Hagar, Sarai's slave-girl, where have you come from and where are you going?' She answered, 'I am running 9 away from Sarai my mistress.' The

angel of the LORD said to her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her ill-treatment.' The angel also said, 'I will 10 make your descendants too many to be counted.' And the angel of the LORD 11 said to her:

'You are with child and will bear a son.

You shall name him Ishmael,<sup>u</sup> because the LORD has heard of your ill-treatment.

He shall be a man like the wild ass, 12 his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with<sup>v</sup> all his kinsmen.'

She called the LORD who was speaking 13 to her by the name El-Roi,<sup>w</sup> for she said, 'Have I indeed seen God and still live<sup>x</sup> after that vision?' That is why 14 men call the well Beer-lahai-roi;<sup>y</sup> it lies between Kadesh and Bered. Hagar 15 bore Abram a son, and he named the child she bore him Ishmael. Abram 16 was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael.

When Abram was ninety-nine years 17 old, the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty. Live always in my presence and be perfect, so that 2 I may set my covenant between myself and you and multiply your descendants.' Abram threw himself down on his face, 3 and God spoke with him and said, 'I 4 make this covenant, and I make it with you: you shall be the father of a host of nations. Your name shall no longer be 5

<sup>t</sup> Or concubine. <sup>u</sup> That is God heard.

<sup>v</sup> Or live to the east of . . .

<sup>w</sup> That is God of a vision.

<sup>x</sup> God and still live: prob. rdg.: Heb. hither.

<sup>y</sup> That is the Well of the Living One of Vision.

material was gathered. 21: *Jebusites*: an ancient designation for the inhabitants of Jerusalem (2 Sam.5.6).

16.1-16: **The birth of Ishmael.** 1: The gap between promise and realization (see Introduction) is here reflected for a didactic ("teaching") purpose. 2: The Nuzi Texts (15.2-3 n.) stipulate that a barren wife must provide her husband with a slave woman in order to insure his posterity (see 30.3,9). 4-5: Ancient law codes provide for punishment if a pregnant female slave claimed equality with her mistress. 6-14: Sarai has exceeded the limit of justice, and the God of Israel, ever concerned with the oppressed (Exod.3.7-10), comes to Hagar's aid. 7: *Angel*: a messenger of the divine council (1.26 n.). Depicted in human form, angels usually mediate between the deity and man. They both symbolize and mitigate the extreme loftiness of the deity. But sometimes "angel" is used as a manifestation of the deity himself, as here (v. 13). 12: Ishmael is regarded as the ancestor of the Bedouin. 13-14: *El-Roi* is an epithet, or name, of the deity of this sacred spring; the writer identifies him with Israel's God (14.18 n.).

17.1-27: **Second account of the covenant with Abram.** In contrast to the earlier tradition (ch. 15), this late, Priestly account stresses the eternal nature of the covenant. 1: *God Almighty*: lit. "the God of the Mountain(s)," an epithet possibly brought from Mesopotamia. It is here

Abram,<sup>z</sup> your name shall be Abraham,<sup>a</sup> for I make you father of a host of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; I will make nations out of you, and kings shall spring from you. I will fulfil my covenant between myself and you and your descendants after you, generation after generation, an everlasting covenant, to be your God, yours and your descendants' after you. As an everlasting possession I will give you and your descendants after you the land in which you now are aliens, all the land of Canaan, and I will be God to your descendants.'

God said to Abraham, 'For your part, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation by generation. This is how you shall keep my covenant between myself and you and your descendants after you; circumcise yourselves, every male among you. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between us. Every male among you in every generation shall be circumcised on the eighth day, both those born in your house and any foreigner, not of your blood but bought with your money. Circumcise both those born in your house and those bought with your money; thus shall my covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. Every uncircumcised male, everyone who has not had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised, shall be cut off from the kin of his father. He has broken my covenant.'

God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife; you shall call her not Sarai,<sup>b</sup> but Sarah.<sup>c</sup> I will bless her and give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall be the mother of nations; the kings of many people shall spring from her.' Abraham threw himself down on his face; he laughed and said to

himself, 'Can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah bear a son when she is ninety?' He said to God, 'If only Ishmael might live under thy special care!' But God replied, 'No. Your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall call him Isaac.<sup>d</sup> With him I will fulfil my covenant, an everlasting covenant with his descendants after him. I have heard your prayer for Ishmael. I have blessed him and will make him fruitful. I will multiply his descendants; he shall be father of twelve princes, and I will raise a great nation from him. But my covenant I will fulfil with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.' When he had finished talking with Abraham, God ascended and left him.

Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, everyone who had been born in his household and everyone bought with money, every male in his household, and he circumcised them that very same day in the flesh of their foreskins as God had told him to do. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. Both Abraham and Ishmael were circumcised on the same day, and all the men of his household, born in the house or bought with money from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

THE LORD APPEARED TO ABRAHAM BY the terebinths of Mamre. As Abraham was sitting at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day, he looked up and saw three men standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the opening of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. 'Sirs,'

<sup>z</sup> That is High Father.    <sup>a</sup> That is Father of a Multitude.  
<sup>b</sup> That is Mockery.    <sup>c</sup> That is Princess.  
<sup>d</sup> That is He laughed.

applied to the God of Israel (see Exod. 6.2-3). 5: A person entering a new relationship or achieving a new status may receive an appropriate new name. Compare 32.28. Abram and Abraham are probably dialectical variants of the same name. 9-14: Circumcision is an ancient rite; by it the writer seeks to give Israel a new sense of tradition and focus for identity, as the external *sign* of membership in the eternal covenant community. The Noachian covenant (9.9-17), which comes from the same tradition, was with all mankind; the Abrahamic covenant is limited to Abraham's descendants. 15: Again, the names are dialectical variants. 19: *Isaac*: explanations of the name are also given in 18.12 and 21.6, which are part of older traditions. The meaning is joy, in that the parent rejoices at the newborn child.

18.1-33: Abraham intercedes for Sodom. 2: Abraham addresses his visitors sometimes in the

he said, 'if I have deserved your favour, do not pass by my humble self without  
 4 a visit. Let me send for some water so that you may wash your feet and rest  
 5 under a tree; and let me fetch a little food so that you may refresh yourselves. Afterwards you may continue the journey which has brought you my way.' They said, 'Do by all means as  
 6 you say.' So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Take three measures of flour quickly, knead it  
 7 and make some cakes.' Then Abraham ran to the cattle, chose a fine tender calf and gave it to a servant, who  
 8 hurriedly prepared it. He took curds and milk and the calf he had prepared, set it before them, and waited on them himself under the tree while they ate.  
 9 They asked him where Sarah his wife was, and he said, 'There, in the tent.'  
 10 The stranger said, 'About this time next year I will be sure to come back to you, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.' Now Sarah was listening at the opening of the tent, and he was close  
 11 beside it. Both Abraham and Sarah had grown very old, and Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. So Sarah laughed to herself and said, 'I am past bearing children now that I am out of my time, and my husband is old.'  
 12 The LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child when I am old?" Is anything impossible for the LORD? In due season I will come back to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall  
 13 have a son.' Sarah lied because she was frightened, and denied that she had laughed; but he said, 'Yes, you did laugh.'  
 14 The men set out and looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham went with them to start them on their way.  
 15 The LORD thought to himself, 'Shall I conceal from Abraham what I intend to do? He will become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on  
 16 earth will pray to be blessed as he is blessed. I have taken care of him on  
 17 purpose that he may charge his sons and family after him to conform to the way of the LORD and to do what is right and just; thus I shall fulfil all that I have promised for him.' So the LORD  
 18 said, 'There is a great outcry over Sodom and Gomorrah; their sin is very grave. I must go down and see whether  
 19 their deeds warrant the outcry which has reached me. I am resolved to know the truth.' When the men turned and  
 20 went towards Sodom, Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Abraham drew near him and said,  
 21 'Wilt thou really sweep away good and bad together? Suppose there are fifty  
 22 good men in the city; wilt thou really sweep it away, and not pardon the place because of the fifty good men? Far be  
 23 it from thee to do this—to kill good and bad together; for then the good would suffer with the bad. Far be it from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?' The LORD said, 'If I find  
 24 in the city of Sodom fifty good men, I will pardon the whole place for their sake.' Abraham replied, 'May I presume to speak to the Lord, dust and  
 25 ashes that I am: suppose there are five short of the fifty good men? Wilt thou destroy the whole city for a mere five men?' He said, 'If I find forty-five there I will not destroy it.' Abraham spoke  
 26 again, 'Suppose forty can be found there?'; and he said, 'For the sake of the forty I will not do it.' Then  
 27 Abraham said, 'Please do not be angry, O Lord, if I speak again: suppose thirty can be found there?' He answered, 'If I find thirty there I will not do it.' Abraham continued, 'May  
 28 I presume to speak to the Lord: suppose twenty can be found there?' He replied, 'For the sake of the twenty I will not destroy it.' Abraham said,  
 29 'I pray thee not to be angry, O Lord, if I speak just once more: suppose ten  
 30  
 31  
 32

singular, sometimes in the plural, and the responses likewise shift in number. 11-12: This tradition shows no knowledge of the similar one immediately before it (17.15-22); it abstains from explaining the name of the child as due to Sarah's laughter. 21: The human qualities, including the lack of knowledge attributed to the deity, reflect a sophisticated dramatic literary style, and by no means a primitive stage of religious development. 23-33: A basic Ancient Near Eastern belief held that the wickedness of the few contaminated the entire community and rendered it liable to punishment. This account, applying the principle in reverse, marks a major development in Israel's religious thought. See 19.4 n.

can be found there?' He said, 'For the sake of the ten I will not destroy it.'

33 When the LORD had finished talking with Abraham, he left him, and Abraham returned home.

19 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them he rose to meet them and bowed low

2 with his face to the ground. He said, 'I pray you, sirs, turn aside to my humble home, spend the night there and wash your feet; you can rise early and continue your journey.' 'No,' they answered, 'we will spend the night in the street.' But Lot was so insistent that they did turn aside and enter his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking unleavened cakes, and they ate them.

4 Before they lay down to sleep, the men of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house—everyone without

5 exception. They called to Lot and asked him where the men were who had entered his house that night. 'Bring them out,' they shouted, 'so that we can have intercourse with them.'

6 Lot went out into the doorway to

7 them, closed the door behind him and said, 'No, my friends, do not be so

8 wicked. Look, I have two daughters, both virgins; let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them; but do not touch these men, because they have come under the

9 shelter of my roof.' They said, 'Out of our way! This man has come and settled here as an alien, and does he now take it upon himself to judge us? We will treat you worse than them.' They crowded in on the man Lot and pressed close to smash in the door.

10 But the two men inside reached out, pulled Lot in, and closed the door.

11 Then they struck the men in the doorway with blindness, both small and great, so that they could not find the door.

The two men said to Lot, 'Have you 12 anyone else here, sons-in-law, sons, or daughters, or any who belong to you in the city? Get them out of this place, because we are going to destroy it. The outcry against it has been so great that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.' So 14 Lot went out and spoke to his intended sons-in-law.<sup>e</sup> He said, 'Be quick and leave this place; the LORD is going to destroy the city.' But they did not take him seriously.

As soon as it was dawn, the angels 15 urged Lot to go, saying, 'Be quick, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.' When 16 he lingered, they took him by the hand, with his wife and his daughters, and, because the LORD had spared him, led him on until he was outside the city. When they had brought them out, they 17 said, 'Flee for your lives; do not look back and do not stop anywhere in the Plain. Flee to the hills or you will be swept away.' Lot replied, 'No, sirs. You 18,19 have shown your servant favour and you have added to your unflinching care for me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the hills; I shall be overtaken by the disaster, and die. Look, here is a 20 town, only a small place, near enough for me to reach quickly. Let me escape to it—it is very small—and save my life.' He said to him, 'I grant your 21 request: I will not overthrow this town you speak of. But flee there quickly, 22 because I can do nothing until you are there.' That is why the place was called Zoar.<sup>f</sup> The sun had risen over the 23 land as Lot entered Zoar; and then the 24 LORD rained down fire and brimstone from the skies on Sodom and Gomorrah. He overthrew those cities 25 and destroyed all the Plain, with everyone living there and everything growing

<sup>e</sup> Or his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters.  
<sup>f</sup> That is Small.

**19.1–29: The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.** This is a theological explanation of the ancient destruction of cities on the south shore of the Dead Sea; in Gen.14.2, the cities number five. 4: The entire population (see 18.23–33 n.), is here depicted as surrounding Lot's house. 5: The intent is to illustrate the sexual excesses of the Canaanites, warning Israel not to participate in them; see 9.26 n. From the episode comes the term "sodomy." 6–8: In traditional fashion, Lot places the welfare of his guests above all else. Once a guest has eaten in the house, the Near Eastern host must guarantee his safety. See Judg.19.16–24. 24: *Brimstone*: sulphur, a flammable element found in the area. 26: *Pillar*: a folk explanation for an oddly shaped column in the area, one of which is still today associated with Lot's wife.

26 in the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

27 Next morning Abraham rose early and went to the place where he had

28 stood in the presence of the LORD. He looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and all the wide extent of the Plain, and there he saw thick smoke rising high from the earth like the smoke of a lime-kiln. Thus, when God

29 destroyed the cities of the Plain, he thought of Abraham and rescued Lot from the disaster, the overthrow of the cities where he had been living.

30 Lot went up from Zoar and settled in the hill-country with his two daughters, because he was afraid to stay in Zoar; he lived with his two

31 daughters in a cave. The elder daughter said to the younger, 'Our father is old and there is not a man in the country

32 to come to us in the usual way. Come now, let us make our father drink wine and then lie with him and in this way keep the family alive through our

33 father.' So that night they gave him wine to drink, and the elder daughter came and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down and when

34 she got up. Next day the elder said to the younger, 'Last night I lay with my father. Let us give him wine to drink again tonight; then you go in and lie with him. So we shall keep the

35 family alive through our father.' So they gave their father wine to drink again that night, and the younger daughter went and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down and

36 when she got up. In this way both Lot's daughters came to be with child by their

37 father. The elder daughter bore a son and called him Moab; he was the ancestor of the present Moabites. The

38 younger also bore a son, whom she called Ben-ammi; he was the ancestor of the present Ammonites.

## 20 ABRAHAM JOURNEYED BY STAGES FROM

there into the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur, living as an alien in Gerar. He said that Sarah his wife was his sister, and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took her. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said, 'You shall die because of this woman whom you have taken. She is a married woman.' Now Abimelech had not gone near her; and he said, 'Lord, wilt thou destroy an innocent people? Did he not tell me himself that she was his sister, and she herself said that he was her brother. It was with a clear conscience and in all innocence that I did this.' God said to him in the dream, 'Yes: I know that you acted with a clear conscience. Moreover, it was I who held you back from committing a sin against me: that is why I did not let you touch her. Send back the man's wife now; he is a prophet, and he will intercede on your behalf, and you shall live. But if you do not send her back, I tell you that you are doomed to die, you and all that is yours.' So Abimelech rose early in the morning, summoned all his servants and told them the whole story; the men were terrified. Abimelech then summoned Abraham and said to him, 'Why have you treated us like this? What harm have I done to you that you should bring this great sin on me and my kingdom? You have done a thing that ought not to be done.' And he asked Abraham, 'What was your purpose in doing this?' Abraham answered, 'I said to myself, There can be no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me for the sake of my wife. She is in fact my sister, she is my father's daughter though not by the same mother; and she became my wife. When God set me wandering from my father's house, I said to her, "There is a duty towards me which you must loyally fulfil: wherever we go, you must say that I am your brother."' Then Abimelech took sheep and cattle,

19.30-38: The origin of the Moabites and Ammonites. The previous episode leads to this story of the unflattering origin of the two traditional enemies of Israel.

20.1-18: Abraham and Sarah at Gerar. God continues to deliver the ancestress of Israel, so that the promise can be realized (see 12.10-13.1 n.). 1: From there: Mamre (18.1; 19.27); 19.30-38 seem to have been added intrusively. 12: Marriage to a half-sister (2 Sam.13.13) was later forbidden (Lev.18.11). The Nuzi Texts (15.2-3 n.) mention that one's wife may be legally

and male and female slaves, gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him. Abimelech said, 'My country lies before you; settle wherever you please.' To Sarah he said, 'I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver, so that your own people may turn a blind eye on it all, and you will be completely vindicated.' Then Abraham interceded with God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his slave-girls, and they bore children; for the LORD had made every woman in Abimelech's household barren on account of Abraham's wife Sarah.

**21** The LORD showed favour to Sarah as he had promised, and made good what he had said about her. She conceived and bore a son to Abraham for his old age, at the time which God had appointed. The son whom Sarah bore to him, Abraham named Isaac.<sup>g</sup> When Isaac was eight days old Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born. Sarah said, 'God has given me good reason to laugh, and everybody who hears will laugh with me.' She said, 'Whoever would have told Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son for his old age.' The boy grew and was weaned, and on the day of his weaning Abraham gave a feast. Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham laughing at him, and she said to Abraham, 'Drive out this slave-girl and her son; I will not have this slave-girl's son sharing the inheritance with my son Isaac.' Abraham was vexed at this on his son Ishmael's account, but God said to him, 'Do not be vexed on account of the boy and the slave-girl. Do what Sarah says, because you shall have descendants through Isaac. I will make a great nation of the slave-girl's

son too, because he is your own child.'

Abraham rose early in the morning, took some food and a waterskin full of water and gave it to Hagar; he set the child on her shoulder and sent her away, and she went and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was finished, she thrust the child under a bush, and went and sat down some way off, about two bowshots away, for she said, 'How can I watch the child die?' So she sat some way off, weeping bitterly. God heard the child crying, and the<sup>h</sup> angel of God called from heaven to Hagar, 'What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid: God has heard the child crying where you laid him. Get to your feet, lift the child up and hold him in your arms, because I will make of him a great nation.' Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well full of water; she went to it, filled her waterskin and gave the child a drink. God was with the child, and he grew up and lived in the wilderness of Paran. He became an archer, and his mother found him a wife from Egypt.

Now about that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, addressed Abraham in these terms: 'God is with you in all that you do. Now swear an oath to me in the name of God, that you will not break faith with me, my offspring, or my descendants. As I have kept faith with you, so shall you keep faith with me and with the country where you have come to live as an alien.' Abraham said, 'I swear.' It happened that Abraham had a complaint against Abimelech about a well which Abimelech's men had seized. Abimelech said, 'I do not know who did this. You never told me, and I have heard nothing about it till now.' So Abraham took sheep and cattle and

<sup>g</sup> That is He laughed. <sup>h</sup> Or an.

adopted as a sister. **18:** Only in the final verse is the LORD identified with the deity of the story (see 14.18 n.; 16.13 n.; 17.1 n.).

**21.1-7:** The birth of Isaac. The extraordinary miracle of Israel's emergence and survival continues to be emphasized.

**21.8-21:** The expulsion of Ishmael. The account may be a variant of 16.1-12. **10:** Ancient Near Eastern law stipulated that the offspring of a slave wife could either inherit with the children of the free woman or be set free. Sarah demands the latter option. **17:** *God has heard:* a pun on the name Ishmael; see 16.11 and Tfn. *u* there.

**21.22-34:** Abraham's dispute with Abimelech. The patriarch obtains property rights in the vicinity of Beersheba, where the origin of an ancient sanctuary is attributed to him (see 12.7 n.).



gave them to Abimelech; and the two  
 28 of them made a pact. Abraham set  
 29 seven ewe-lambs apart, and when  
 Abimelech asked him why he had set  
 30 these lambs apart, he said, 'Accept  
 these from me in token that I dug this  
 31 well.' Therefore that place was called  
 Beersheba,<sup>4</sup> because there the two of  
 32 them swore an oath. When they had  
 made the pact at Beersheba, Abimelech  
 and Phicol the commander of his army  
 returned at once to the country of the  
 33 Philistines, and Abraham planted a  
 strip of ground<sup>7</sup> at Beersheba. There he  
 invoked the LORD, the everlasting God,  
 34 by name, and he lived as an alien in the  
 country of the Philistines for many a  
 year.

**22** THE TIME CAME WHEN GOD PUT ABRAHAM  
 to the test. 'Abraham', he called, and  
 2 Abraham replied, 'Here I am.' God  
 said, 'Take your son Isaac, your only  
 son, whom you love, and go to the land  
 of Moriah. There you shall offer him as  
 a sacrifice on one of the hills which I will  
 3 show you.' So Abraham rose early in  
 the morning and saddled his ass, and  
 he took with him two of his men and  
 his son Isaac; and he split the firewood  
 for the sacrifice, and set out for the  
 4 place of which God had spoken. On  
 the third day Abraham looked up and  
 5 saw the place in the distance. He said  
 to his men, 'Stay here with the ass  
 while I and the boy go over there;  
 6 and when we have worshipped we will  
 come back to you.' So Abraham took  
 the wood for the sacrifice and laid it  
 on his son Isaac's shoulder; he himself  
 carried the fire and the knife, and the  
 7 two of them went on together. Isaac  
 said to Abraham, 'Father', and he  
 answered, 'What is it, my son?' Isaac  
 said, 'Here are the fire and the wood,  
 but where is the young beast for the  
 8 sacrifice?' Abraham answered, 'God  
 will provide himself with a young beast

for a sacrifice, my son.' And the two of  
 them went on together and came to the  
 9 place of which God had spoken. There  
 Abraham built an altar and arranged  
 the wood. He bound his son Isaac and  
 laid him on the altar on top of the  
 wood. Then he stretched out his hand  
 10 and took the knife to kill his son; but  
 11 the angel of the LORD called to him  
 from heaven, 'Abraham, Abraham.'  
 He answered, 'Here I am.' The angel  
 12 of the LORD said, 'Do not raise your  
 hand against the boy; do not touch  
 him. Now I know that you are a God-  
 fearing man. You have not withheld  
 from me your son, your only son.'  
 Abraham looked up, and there he saw  
 13 a ram caught by its horns in a thicket.  
 So he went and took the ram and  
 offered it as a sacrifice instead of his  
 son. Abraham named that place Je-  
 14 hovah-jireh;<sup>k</sup> and to this day the say-  
 ing is: 'In the mountain of the LORD it  
 was provided.' Then the angel of the  
 15 LORD called from heaven a second time  
 to Abraham, 'This is the word of the  
 16 LORD: By my own self I swear: inas-  
 much as you have done this and have  
 not withheld your son, your only son,  
 I will bless you abundantly and greatly  
 17 multiply your descendants until they  
 are as numerous as the stars in the sky  
 and the grains of sand on the sea-shore.  
 Your descendants shall possess the  
 cities of their enemies. All nations on  
 18 earth shall pray to be blessed as your  
 descendants are blessed, and this be-  
 cause you have obeyed me.'

Abraham went back to his men, and  
 19 together they returned to Beersheba;  
 and there Abraham remained.

After this Abraham was told, 'Milcah  
 20 has borne sons to your brother Nahor:  
 Uz his first-born, then his brother Buz,  
 21 and Kemuel father of Aram, and  
 22 Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph and

<sup>i</sup> That is Well of Seven and Well of an Oath.

<sup>j</sup> Or planted a tamarisk.

<sup>k</sup> That is the LORD will provide.

**31:** Two explanations for the name of the place have been combined; see Tfn. *i*. **32:** *Philistines:* an anachronism, for they settled in Palestine only later; see 9.27 n. **33:** *The everlasting God:* an ancient epithet, probably from the pre-Israelite cult at Beersheba, is here applied to the LORD.

**22.1-19:** *The testing of Abraham.* At the very moment when the future of Israel seems finally established (21.1-7), it receives its most serious challenge, namely, can Israel continue to keep its identity despite adverse circumstance? **2:** The earliest form of this story may have been directed against child *sacrifice*, proposing that the deity desires the substitution of animals. **14:** *Jehovah:* see Introduction, p. xx.

**22.20-24:** *Abraham's Aramaean relatives.* A league of twelve tribes paralleling the descendants

23 Bethuel; and a daughter, Rebecca, has been born to Bethuel.' These eight Milcah bore to Abraham's brother  
 24 Nahor. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore him sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah.  
 23 Sarah lived for a hundred and  
 2 twenty-seven years, and died in Kiriath-arba, which is Hebron, in Canaan. Abraham went in to mourn over Sarah  
 3 and to weep for her. At last he rose and left the presence of the dead. He said  
 4 to the Hittites, 'I am an alien and a settler among you. Give me land enough for a burial-place, so that I can  
 5 give my dead proper burial.' The Hittites answered Abraham, 'Do, pray,  
 6 listen to what we have to say, sir. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the best grave we have. There is not one of us who will deny  
 7 you his grave or hinder you from burying your dead.' Abraham stood  
 8 up and then bowed low to the Hittites, the people of that country. He said to them, 'If you are willing to let me give my dead proper burial, then listen to me and speak for me to Ephron son of  
 9 Zohar, asking him to give me the cave that belongs to him at Machpelah, at the far end of his land. Let him give it to me for the full price, so that I may take possession of it as a burial-place  
 10 within your territory.' Ephron the Hittite was sitting with the others, and he gave Abraham this answer in the hearing of everyone as they came into  
 11 the city gate: 'No, sir; hear what I have to say. I will make you a gift of the land and I will also give you the cave which is on it. In the presence of all my kinsmen I give it to you; so bury your  
 12 dead.' Abraham bowed low before the people of the country and said to Ephron in their hearing, 'If you really mean it—but do listen to me! I give you the price of the land: take it and I  
 14 will bury my dead there.' And Ephron answered, 'Do listen to me, sir: the

land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. But what is that between you and me? There you may bury your dead.' Abraham came to an agreement  
 16 with him and weighed out the amount that Ephron had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of the standard recognized by mer-  
 17 chants. Thus the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah to the east of Mamre, the plot, the cave that is on it, every tree on the plot, within the whole  
 18 area, became the legal possession of Abraham, in the presence of all the Hittites as they came into the city gate. After this Abraham buried his wife  
 19 Sarah in the cave on the plot of land at Machpelah to the east of Mamre, which is Hebron, in Canaan. Thus the  
 20 plot and the cave on it became Abraham's possession as a burial-place, by purchase from the Hittites.

BY THIS TIME ABRAHAM HAD BECOME A  
 24 very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in all that he did. Abraham  
 2 said to his servant, who had been long in his service and was in charge of all his possessions, 'Put your hand under my thigh: I want you to swear by the  
 3 LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the women of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell; you must go to my  
 4 own country and to my own kindred to find a wife for my son Isaac.' The  
 5 servant said to him, 'What if the woman is unwilling to come with me to this country? Must I in that event take your son back to the land from which you came?' Abraham said to  
 6 him, 'On no account are you to take my son back there. The LORD the God  
 7 of heaven who took me from my father's house and the land of my birth, the LORD who swore to me that he would give this land to my descendants—he will send his angel before you, and from there you shall take a

of Ishmael (25.13-15) and Jacob (29.31-30.24; 35.16-20,23-26) is presented. The list here differs from the Aramaean genealogy in 10.23.

23.1-20: The tomb of the patriarchs. 3: The Hittites, originally from Asia Minor, were part of the pre-Israelite population of Canaan (10.15, Tfn. j). 11-18: This marks another development in the patriarchal claim to the land (see 21.22-34 n.).

24.1-67: The marriage of Isaac. 2: The thigh may be a euphemism for the male organ. The significance of the act, accompanying the most solemn of oaths (see 47.29), is not clear. 3: The fear is not that of the mixing of people but of religious deterioration; see Exod. 34.15-16;

8 wife for my son. If the woman is unwilling to come with you, then you will be released from your oath to me; but you must not take my son back there.’  
 9 So the servant put his hand under his master Abraham’s thigh and swore an oath in those terms.  
 10 The servant took ten camels from his master’s herds, and also all kinds of gifts from his master; he set out for Aram-naharaim<sup>1</sup> and arrived at the city where Nahor lived. Towards evening, the time when the women come out to draw water, he made the camels kneel down by the well outside the city. He said, ‘O LORD God of my master Abraham, give me good fortune this day; keep faith with my master Abraham. Here I stand by the spring, and the women of the city are coming out to draw water. Let it be like this: I shall say to a girl, “Please lower your jar so that I may drink”; and if she answers, “Drink, and I will water your camels also”, that will be the girl whom thou dost intend for thy servant Isaac. In this way I shall know that thou hast kept faith with my master.’  
 15 Before he had finished praying silently, he saw Rebecca coming out with her water-jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, who had had no intercourse with a man. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.  
 17 Abraham’s servant hurried to meet her and said, ‘Give me a sip of water from your jar.’ ‘Drink, sir’, she answered, and at once lowered her jar on to her hand to let him drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, ‘Now I will draw water for your camels until they have had enough.’ So she quickly emptied her jar into the water-trough, hurried again to the well to draw water and watered all the camels.  
 21 The man was watching quietly to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold nose-ring weighing half a shekel,

and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels, also of gold, and said, ‘Tell me, please, whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?’ She answered, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor and Milcah; and we have plenty of straw and fodder and also room for you to spend the night.’ So the man bowed down and prostrated himself to the LORD. He said, ‘Blessed be the LORD the God of my master Abraham, who has not failed to keep faith and truth with my master; for I have been guided by the LORD to the house of my master’s kinsman.’

The girl ran to her mother’s house and told them what had happened. Now Rebecca had a brother named Laban; and, when he saw the nose-ring, and also the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and heard his sister Rebecca tell what the man had said to her, he ran out to the man at the spring. When he came to him and found him still standing there by the camels, he said, ‘Come in, sir, whom the LORD has blessed. Why stay outside? I have prepared the house, and there is room for the camels.’ So he brought the man into the house, unloaded the camels and provided straw and fodder for them, and water for him and all his men to wash their feet. Food was set before him, but he said, ‘I will not eat until I have delivered my message.’ Laban said, ‘Let us hear it.’ He answered, ‘I am the servant of Abraham. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become a man of power. The LORD has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and asses. My master’s wife Sarah in her old age bore him a son, to whom he has given all that he has. So my master made me swear an oath, saying, “You shall not take a wife for my son from the women of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell; but you shall go to my father’s house and to my family to find a wife for him.”

<sup>1</sup> That is Aram of Two Rivers.

Deut. 7.3-4. 10: *Aram-naharaim*: central Mesopotamia. 14: It was a common ancient assumption that the deity would reveal his will through such possible incidents; see 1 Sam.14.6-10; Judg.

39 So I said to my master, "What if the  
 40 woman will not come with me?" He  
 answered, "The LORD, in whose pres-  
 ence I have lived, will send his angel  
 with you and will make your journey  
 successful. You shall take a wife for my  
 41 son from my family and from my  
 father's house; then you shall be  
 released from the charge I have laid  
 upon you. But if, when you come to my  
 family, they will not give her to you,  
 you shall still be released from the  
 42 charge." So I came to the spring today,  
 and I said, "O LORD God of my  
 master Abraham, if thou wilt make my  
 43 journey successful, let it be like this.  
 Here I stand by the spring. When a  
 young woman comes out to draw  
 water, I shall say to her, 'Give me a  
 44 little water to drink from your jar.' If  
 she answers, 'Yes, do drink, and I will  
 draw water for your camels as well', she  
 is the woman whom the LORD intends  
 45 for my master's son." Before I had  
 finished praying silently, I saw Rebecca  
 coming out with her water-jar on her  
 shoulder. She went down to the spring  
 and drew some water, and I said to her,  
 46 "Please give me a drink." She quickly  
 lowered her jar from her shoulder and  
 said, "Drink; and I will water your  
 camels as well." So I drank, and she  
 47 also gave my camels water. I asked her  
 whose daughter she was, and she said,  
 "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son  
 of Nahor and Milcah." Then I put the  
 ring in her nose and the bracelets on  
 48 her wrists, and I bowed low and  
 prostrated myself before the LORD. I  
 blessed the LORD the God of my master  
 Abraham, who had led me by the right  
 road to take my master's niece for his  
 49 son. Now tell me if you will keep faith  
 and truth with my master. If not, say  
 so, and I will turn elsewhere.'  
 50 Laban and Bethuel answered, "This  
 is from the LORD; we can say nothing  
 51 for or against. Here is Rebecca herself;  
 take her and go. She shall be the wife  
 of your master's son, as the LORD has  
 52 decreed.' When Abraham's servant  
 heard what they said, he prostrated  
 himself on the ground before the LORD.

Then he brought out gold and silver 53  
 ornaments, and robes, and gave them  
 to Rebecca, and he gave costly gifts to  
 her brother and her mother. He and 54  
 his men then ate and drank and spent  
 the night there. When they rose in the  
 morning, he said, 'Give me leave to go  
 back to my master.' Her brother and 55  
 her mother said, 'Let the girl stay with  
 us for a few days, say ten days, and  
 then she shall go.' But he said to them, 56  
 'Do not detain me, for the LORD has  
 granted me success. Give me leave to  
 return to my master.' They said, 'Let 57  
 us call the girl and see what she says.'  
 They called Rebecca and asked her if 58  
 she would go with the man, and she  
 said, 'Yes, I will go.' So they let their 59  
 sister Rebecca and her nurse go with  
 Abraham's servant and his men. They 60  
 blessed Rebecca and said to her:

'You are our sister, may you be the  
 mother of myriads;  
 may your sons possess the cities of  
 their enemies.'

Then Rebecca and her companions 61  
 mounted their camels at once and  
 followed the man. So the servant took  
 Rebecca and went his way.

Isaac meanwhile had moved on as 62  
 far as Beer-lahai-roi and was living in  
 the Negeb. One evening when he had 63  
 gone out into the open country hoping  
 to meet them,<sup>m</sup> he looked up and saw  
 camels approaching. When Rebecca 64  
 raised her eyes and saw Isaac, she  
 slipped hastily from her camel, saying 65  
 to the servant, 'Who is that man walk-  
 ing across the open towards us?' The ser-  
 vant answered, 'It is my master.' So she  
 took her veil and covered herself. The 66  
 servant related to Isaac all that had hap-  
 pened. Isaac conducted her into the 67  
 tent<sup>n</sup> and took her as his wife. So she  
 became his wife, and he loved her and  
 was consoled for the death of his mother.

ABRAHAM MARRIED ANOTHER WIFE, 25:°  
 whose name was Keturah. She bore 2

*m* hoping . . . them: or to relieve himself.  
*n* Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds Sarah his mother.  
*o* Verses 1-4: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 32, 33.

6.36-37. 57-58: Nuzi Texts (see 15.2-3 n.) show that the consent of the girl was necessary among the people of this area. 62: Beer-lahai-roi: see 16.13-14 n.; see there Tfn. y.

25.1-18: The death of Abraham. 1-6: This section may be out of place, for Abraham in 24.1

him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian,  
 3 Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan became  
 the father of Sheba and Dedan. The  
 sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letush-  
 4 im and Leummin, and the sons of  
 Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Enoch,  
 Abida and Eldaah. All these were  
 descendants of Keturah.

5 Abraham had given all that he had  
 6 to Isaac; and he had already in his  
 lifetime given presents to the sons of  
 his concubines, and had sent them away  
 eastwards, to a land of the east, out of  
 7 his son Isaac's way. Abraham had  
 lived for a hundred and seventy-five  
 8 years when he breathed his last. He  
 died at a good old age, after a very long  
 life, and was gathered to his father's  
 9 kin. His sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried  
 him in the cave at Machpelah, on the  
 land of Ephron son of Zohar the  
 10 Hittite, east of Mamre, the plot which  
 Abraham had bought from the Hittites.  
 There Abraham was buried with his  
 11 wife Sarah. After the death of Abra-  
 ham, God blessed his son Isaac, who  
 settled close by Beer-lahai-roi.

12 This is the table of the descendants  
 of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom  
 Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's slave-girl,  
 13<sup>p</sup> bore to him. These are the names of the  
 sons of Ishmael named in order of their  
 birth: Nebaioth, Ishmael's eldest son,  
 14 then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma,  
 15 Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Teman, Jetur,  
 16 Naphish and Kedemah. These are the  
 sons of Ishmael, after whom their  
 hamlets and encampments were named,  
 twelve princes according to their tribal  
 17 groups. Ishmael had lived for a hundred  
 and thirty-seven years when he breathed  
 his last. So he died and was gathered  
 18 to his father's kin. Ishmael's sons  
 inhabited the land from Havilah to  
 Shur, which is east of Egypt on the  
 way to Asshur, having settled to the  
 east of his brothers.

19 THIS IS THE TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS  
 of Abraham's son Isaac. Isaac's father  
 was Abraham. When Isaac was forty  
 20 years old he married Rebecca the  
 daughter of Bethuel the Aramaean  
 from Paddan-aram and the sister of  
 21 Laban the Aramaean. Isaac appealed  
 to the LORD on behalf of his wife  
 because she was barren; the LORD  
 yielded to his entreaty, and Rebecca  
 22 conceived. The children pressed hard  
 on each other in her womb, and she  
 said, 'If this is how it is with me, what  
 does it mean?' So she went to seek  
 23 guidance of the LORD. The LORD said  
 to her:

'Two nations in your womb,  
 two peoples, going their own ways  
 from birth!

One shall be stronger than the other;  
 the older shall be servant to the  
 younger.'

When her time had come, there were  
 24 indeed twins in her womb. The first  
 25 came out red, hairy all over like a hair-  
 cloak, and they named him Esau.<sup>q</sup>  
 Immediately afterwards his brother  
 26 was born with his hand grasping  
 Esau's heel, and they called him Jacob.<sup>r</sup>  
 Isaac was sixty years old when they  
 were born. The boys grew up; and  
 27 Esau became skilful in hunting, a man  
 of the open plains, but Jacob led a  
 settled life and stayed among the tents.  
 Isaac favoured Esau because he kept  
 28 him supplied with venison, but Rebecca  
 favoured Jacob. One day Jacob pre-  
 29 pared a broth and when Esau came in  
 from the country, exhausted, he said to  
 30 Jacob, 'I am exhausted; let me swallow  
 some of that red broth'; this is why he  
 was called Edom.<sup>s</sup> Jacob said, 'Not till  
 31

<sup>p</sup> Verses 13-16: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 29-31.

<sup>q</sup> That is Covering.

<sup>r</sup> That is He caught by the heel.

<sup>s</sup> That is Red.

is already a very old man, and in 25.8 seems to be on his deathbed. 9-10: *Machpelah*: see 23.8-20. 16: The *sons* number twelve; see 22.20-24 n.

25.19-34: The third patriarch and the rivalry between Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom). 20: *Paddan-aram*: a variant of Aram-naharaim; see 24.10 n. 21: The repetition of the barrenness motif is another means of emphasizing the difficulties Israel would encounter in realizing the divine promise. 23: The firstborn had exclusive rights of inheritance, and hence an unexpected reversal is here proposed. 25: The Heb. word for red (*admoni*) is a play on Edom (v. 30), as hairy (*se'ar*) is on Seir (32.3). 26: *Jacob* is explained by folk etymology. The name may actually have meant "Let (God) protect." 27: The two typify the ways of life of the peoples whom they represent. 30: In actuality, the name Edom may derive from the characteristic redness of the

you sell me your rights as the first-born.' Esau replied, 'I am at death's door; what use is my birthright to me?' Jacob said, 'Not till you swear!'; so he swore an oath and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and the lentil broth, and he ate and drank and went away without more ado. Thus Esau showed how little he valued his birthright.

26 There came a famine in the land—not the earlier famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelech the Philistine king at Gerar. The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt, but stay in this country as I bid you. Stay in this country and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands. Thus shall I fulfil the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky; I will give them all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will pray to be blessed as they are blessed—all because Abraham obeyed me and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.' So Isaac lived in Gerar.

When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he told them that she was his sister; he was afraid to say that Rebecca was his wife, in case they killed him because of her; for she was very beautiful. When they had been there for some considerable time, Abimelech the Philistine king looked down from his window and saw Isaac and his wife Rebecca laughing together. He summoned Isaac and said, 'So she is your wife, is she? What made you say she was your sister?' Isaac answered, 'I thought I should be killed because of her.' Abimelech said, 'Why have you treated us like this? One of the people might easily have gone to bed with your wife, and then you would have made us liable to retribution.'

11 So Abimelech warned all the people,

threatening that whoever touched this man or his wife would be put to death. Isaac sowed seed in that land, and that year he reaped a hundredfold, and the LORD blessed him. He became more and more powerful, until he was very powerful indeed. He had flocks and herds and many slaves, so that the Philistines were envious of him. They had stopped up all the wells dug by the slaves in the days of Isaac's father Abraham, and filled them with earth. Isaac dug them again, all those wells dug in his father Abraham's time, and stopped up by the Philistines after his death, and he called them by the names which his father had given them.

Then Abimelech said to him, 'Go away from here; you are too strong for us.' So Isaac left that place and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and stayed there. Then Isaac's slaves dug in the valley and found a spring of running water, but the shepherds of Gerar quarrelled with Isaac's shepherds, claiming the water as theirs. He called the well Esek,<sup>u</sup> because they made difficulties for him. His men then dug another well, but the others quarrelled with him over that also, so he called it Sitnah.<sup>v</sup> He moved on from there and dug another well, but there was no quarrel over that one, so he called it Rehoboth,<sup>w</sup> saying, 'Now the LORD has given us plenty of room and we shall be fruitful in the land.'

Isaac went up country from there to Beersheba. That same night the LORD appeared to him there and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham. Fear nothing, for I am with you. I will bless you and give you many descendants for the sake of Abraham my servant.' So Isaac built an altar there and invoked the LORD by name. Then he pitched his tent there, and there also his slaves dug a well. Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his

<sup>t</sup> Verse 18 transposed to follow 15. <sup>u</sup> That is Difficulty. <sup>v</sup> That is Enmity. <sup>w</sup> That is Plenty of room.

soil of the area. 31: Specifically, the *birthright* included a double share of the inheritance (Deut. 21.15–17). 33: The intent is to explain how, in the mystery of God's providence, Israel flourished while their close kinsmen, the Edomites, did not. The latter, subdued by David (2 Sam. 8.13–14), were apparently securely established in their area before Israel (Num. 20.14–21; compare Gen.36.31).

26.1–33: Isaac at Gerar. 1: *Earlier famine*: 12.10. 7–11: Again, the ancestress is rescued, and

friend and Phicol the commander of  
 27 his army. Isaac said to them, 'Why  
 have you come here? You hate me and  
 28 you sent me away.' They answered,  
 'We have seen plainly that the LORD is  
 with you, so we thought, "Let the two  
 of us put each other to the oath and  
 29 make a treaty that will bind us." We  
 have not attacked you, we have done  
 you nothing but good, and we let you  
 go away peaceably. Swear that you will  
 do us no harm, now that the LORD has  
 30 blessed you.' So Isaac gave a feast and  
 31 they ate and drank. They rose early in  
 the morning and exchanged oaths.  
 Then Isaac bade them farewell, and  
 32 they parted from him in peace. The  
 same day Isaac's slaves came and told  
 him about a well that they had dug:  
 33 'We have found water', they said. He  
 named the well Shibah.<sup>x</sup> This is why  
 the city is called Beersheba<sup>y</sup> to this day.  
 34 When Esau was forty years old he  
 married Judith daughter of Beeri the  
 Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon  
 35 the Hittite; this was a bitter grief to  
 Isaac and Rebecca.

#### Jacob and Esau

27 WHEN ISAAC GREW OLD AND HIS EYES  
 became so dim that he could not see, he  
 called his elder son Esau and said to  
 him, 'My son', and he answered, 'Here I  
 2 am.' Isaac said, 'Listen now: I am old  
 3 and I do not know when I may die. Take  
 your hunting gear, your quiver and  
 your bow, and go out into the country  
 4 and get me some venison. Then make  
 me a savoury dish of the kind I like,  
 and bring it to me to eat so that I may  
 5 give you my blessing before I die.' Now  
 Rebecca was listening as Isaac talked  
 to his son Esau. When Esau went off  
 into the country to find some venison  
 6 and bring it home, she said to her son  
 Jacob, 'I heard your father talking to  
 7 your brother Esau, and he said, "Bring  
 me some venison and make it into a  
 savoury dish so that I may eat it and  
 bless you in the presence of the LORD  
 8 before I die." Listen to me, my son,

and do what I tell you. Go to the flock 9  
 and pick me out two fine young kids,  
 and I will make them into a savoury  
 dish for your father, of the kind he likes.  
 Then take them in to your father, and 10  
 he will eat them so that he may bless  
 you before he dies.' Jacob said to 11  
 his mother Rebecca, 'But my brother  
 Esau is a hairy man, and my skin is  
 smooth. Suppose my father feels me, 12  
 he will know I am tricking him and I  
 shall bring a curse upon myself instead  
 of a blessing.' His mother answered 13  
 him, 'Let the curse fall on me, my son,  
 but do as I say; go and bring me the  
 kids.' So Jacob fetched them and 14  
 brought them to his mother, who made  
 them into a savoury dish of the kind  
 that his father liked. Then Rebecca 15  
 took her elder son's clothes, Esau's best  
 clothes which she kept by her in the  
 house, and put them on her younger  
 son Jacob. She put the goatskins on 16  
 his hands and on the smooth nape of  
 his neck; and she handed her son 17  
 Jacob the savoury dish and the bread  
 she had made. He came to his father  
 and said, 'Father.' He answered, 'Yes, 18  
 my son; who are you?' Jacob answered 19  
 his father, 'I am Esau, your elder son. I  
 have done as you told me. Come, sit up  
 and eat some of my venison, so that  
 you may give me your blessing.' Isaac 20  
 said to his son, 'What is this that you  
 found so quickly?', and Jacob answered,  
 'It is what the LORD your God put in  
 my way.' Isaac then said to Jacob, 21  
 'Come close and let me feel you, my  
 son, to see whether you are really my  
 son Esau.' When Jacob came close to 22  
 his father, Isaac felt him and said, 'The  
 voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands  
 are the hands of Esau.' He did not 23  
 recognize him because his hands were  
 hairy like Esau's, and that is why he  
 blessed him. He said, 'Are you really 24  
 my son Esau?', and he answered, 'Yes.'  
 Then Isaac said, 'Bring me some of 25  
 your venison to eat, my son, so that I  
 may give you my blessing.' Then Jacob  
 brought it to him, and he ate it; he  
 brought wine also, and he drank it.

<sup>x</sup> That is Oath.      <sup>y</sup> That is Well of an Oath.

the promise is kept alive; see 12.10–13.1 n. 28–31: The promise of 12.3 is further realized in that the patriarchal claim to the land is widened. 33: *Shibah*: there is a duplicate tradition in 21.31.

27.1–45: Jacob obtains his father's blessing. 4: Deathbed blessings play an important role in

26 Then his father Isaac said to him,  
 27 'Come near, my son, and kiss me.' So  
 he came near and kissed him, and  
 when Isaac smelt the smell of his  
 clothes, he blessed him and said:

'Ah! The smell of my son is like the  
 smell of open country  
 blessed by the LORD.

28 God give you dew from heaven  
 and the richness of the earth,  
 corn and new wine in plenty!

29 Peoples shall serve you,  
 nations bow down to you.

Be lord over your brothers;  
 may your mother's sons bow down to  
 you.

A curse upon those who curse you;  
 a blessing on those who bless you!

30 Isaac finished blessing Jacob; and  
 Jacob had scarcely left his father  
 Isaac's presence, when his brother Esau  
 31 came in from his hunting. He too made  
 a savoury dish and brought it to his  
 father. He said, 'Come, father, and eat  
 some of my venison, so that you may  
 32 give me your blessing.' His father Isaac  
 said, 'Who are you?' He said, 'I am  
 33 Esau, your elder son.' Then Isaac be-  
 came greatly agitated<sup>z</sup> and said, 'Then  
 who was it that hunted and brought me  
 venison? I ate it all before you came in  
 and I blessed him, and the blessing will  
 34 stand.' When Esau heard what his  
 father said, he gave a loud and bitter  
 35 cry and said, 'Bless me too, father.' But  
 Isaac said, 'Your brother came treach-  
 erously and took away your blessing.'  
 36 Esau said, 'He is rightly called Jacob.<sup>a</sup>  
 This is the second time he has sup-  
 planted me. He took away my right as  
 the first-born and now he has taken  
 away my blessing. Have you kept back  
 37 any blessing for me?' Isaac answered,  
 'I have made him lord over you, and I  
 have given him all his brothers as  
 slaves. I have bestowed upon him corn  
 and new wine for his sustenance. What  
 is there left that I can do for you, my  
 38 son?' Esau asked his father, 'Had you

then only one blessing, father? Bless  
 me too, my father.' And Esau cried  
 bitterly. Then his father Isaac answered: 39

'Your dwelling shall be far from the  
 richness of the earth,  
 far from the dew of heaven above.  
 By your sword shall you live, 40  
 and you shall serve your brother;  
 but the time will come when you  
 grow restive  
 and break off his yoke from your  
 neck.'

Esau bore a grudge against Jacob 41  
 because of the blessing which his father  
 had given him, and he said to himself,  
 'The time of mourning for my father  
 will soon be here; then I will kill my  
 brother Jacob.' When Rebecca was 42  
 told what her elder son Esau was  
 saying, she called her younger son  
 Jacob, and she said to him, 'Esau your  
 brother is threatening to kill you. Now, 43  
 my son, listen to me. Slip away at once  
 to my brother Laban in Harran. Stay 44  
 with him for a while until your brother's  
 anger cools. When it has subsided and 45  
 he forgets what you have done to him,  
 I will send and fetch you back. Why  
 should I lose you both in one day?'

Rebecca said to Isaac, 'I am weary to 46  
 death of Hittite women! If Jacob  
 marries a Hittite woman like those who  
 live here, my life will not be worth  
 living.' Isaac called Jacob, blessed him 28  
 and gave him instructions. He said,  
 'You must not marry one of these  
 women of Canaan. Go at once to the 2  
 house of Bethuel, your mother's father,  
 in Paddan-aram, and there find a wife,  
 one of the daughters of Laban, your  
 mother's brother. God Almighty bless 3  
 you, make you fruitful and increase  
 your descendants until they become a  
 host of nations. May he bestow on you 4  
 and your offspring the blessing of  
 Abraham, and may you thus possess  
 the country where you are now living,  
 the land which God gave to Abraham!'

<sup>z</sup> Or incensed.    <sup>a</sup> That is He supplanted.

the literature of ancient Israel (48.10-20; 49.1-27). 33-35: Blessing or curse, once uttered, could not be revoked. 40: During the Solomonic period (1 Kgs.11.14-25), Edom revolted against Israelite domination.

27.46-28.22: Jacob's flight and dream at Bethel. The origin of this ancient Canaanite sanctuary is in this section traced to Israel's ancestor, Jacob (12.7 n.; 21.22-34 n.). 28.1-2: See 24.3 n.



5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramaean, and brother to Rebecca the mother of Jacob and Esau.  
 6 Esau discovered that Isaac had given Jacob his blessing and had sent him away to Paddan-aram to find a wife there; and that when he blessed him he had forbidden him to marry a woman of Canaan, and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and gone to Paddan-aram. Then Esau, seeing that his father disliked the women of Canaan, went to Ishmael, and, in addition to his other wives, he married Mahalath sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael.  
 10 Jacob set out from Beersheba and went on his way towards Harran. He came to a certain place and stopped there for the night, because the sun had set; and, taking one of the stones there, he made it a pillow for his head and lay down to sleep. He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of God were going up and down upon it. The LORD was standing beside him<sup>b</sup> and said, 'I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. This land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. They shall be countless as the dust upon the earth, and you shall spread far and wide, to north and south, to east and west. All the families of the earth shall pray to be blessed as you and your descendants are blessed. I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done all that I have promised.' Jacob woke from his sleep and said, 'Truly the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.' Then he was afraid and said, 'How fearsome is this place! This is no other than the house of God, this is the gate

of heaven.' Jacob rose early in the morning, took the stone on which he had laid his head, set it up as a sacred pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He named that place Beth-El;<sup>c</sup> but the earlier name of the city was Luz.

Thereupon Jacob made this vow: 'If God will be with me, if he will protect me on my journey and give me food to eat and clothes to wear, and I come back safely to my father's house, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up as a sacred pillar shall be a house of God. And of all that thou givest me, I will without fail allot a tenth part to thee.'

JACOB CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY AND came to the land of the eastern tribes. There he saw a well in the open country and three flocks of sheep lying beside it, because the flocks were watered from that well. Over its mouth was a huge stone, and all the herdsmen used to gather there and roll it off the mouth of the well and water the flocks; then they would put it back in its place over the well. Jacob said to them, 'Where are you from, my friends?' 'We are from Harran,' they replied. He asked them if they knew Laban the grandson of Nahor. They answered, 'Yes, we do.' 'Is he well?' Jacob asked; and they answered 'Yes, he is well, and here is his daughter Rachel coming with the flock.' Jacob said, 'The sun is still high, and the time for folding the sheep has not yet come. Water the flocks and then go and graze them.' But they replied, 'We cannot, until all the herdsmen have gathered together and the stone is rolled away from the mouth of the well; then we can water our flocks.' While he was talking to them, Rachel came up with her father's flock, for she was a shepherdess. When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his

<sup>b</sup> Or on it or by it.    <sup>c</sup> That is House of God.

12: In ancient belief, deities revealed themselves by dream at sacred sites (see 1 Sam.3.1-14). Mesopotamians described their temple towers in similar terms; see 11.4 n. 13: The LORD is here identified both as the traditional deity of the site and as the deity of the patriarchs (see Exod. 3.15). 18: The pouring of oil on an object or person conferred extraordinary, often sacred, status. 19: *Beth-El*, the name of an ancient Canaanite deity (Jer.48.13), is likely the actual source of the place name, rather than the folk etymology given here.

29.1-31.55: **Jacob at Harran.** 1: *Eastern tribes*: a general designation for Mesopotamia. 7: *Folding*: gathering together in preparation for the night. 8: Bedouin custom demanded that all rightful parties be present when the well was opened, so that the water would be

mother's brother, with Laban's flock, he stepped forward, rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered Laban's sheep. He kissed Rachel, and was moved to tears. He told her that he was her father's kinsman and Rebecca's son; so she ran and told her father. When Laban heard the news of his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him, embraced him, kissed him warmly and welcomed him to his home. Jacob told Laban everything, and Laban said, 'Yes, you are my own flesh and blood.' So Jacob stayed with him for a whole month.

Laban said to Jacob, 'Why should you work for me for nothing simply because you are my kinsman? Tell me what your wages ought to be.' Now Laban had two daughters: the elder was called Leah, and the younger Rachel. Leah was dull-eyed, but Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel and he said, 'I will work seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.' Laban replied, 'It is better that I should give her to you than to anyone else; stay with me.' So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like a few days because he loved her. Then Jacob said to Laban, 'I have served my time. Give me my wife so that we may sleep together.' So Laban gathered all the men of the place together and gave a feast. In the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob slept with her. At the same time Laban gave his slave-girl Zilpah to his daughter Leah. But when morning came, Jacob saw that it was Leah and said to Laban, 'What have you done to me? Did I not work for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?' Laban answered, 'In our country it is not right to give the younger sister in marriage before the elder. Go through with the seven days' feast for the elder, and the younger shall be given you in return for a further seven years' work.' Jacob agreed, and completed the seven days for Leah.

Then Laban gave Jacob his daughter

Rachel as wife; and he gave his slave-girl Bilhah to serve his daughter Rachel. Jacob slept with Rachel also; he loved her rather than Leah, and he worked for Laban for a further seven years. When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he granted her a child; but Rachel was childless. Leah conceived and bore a son; and she called him Reuben,<sup>d</sup> for she said, 'The LORD has seen my humiliation; now my husband will love me.' Again she conceived and bore a son and said, 'The LORD, hearing that I am not loved, has given me this child also'; and she called him Simeon.<sup>e</sup> She conceived again and bore a son; and she said, 'Now that I have borne him three sons my husband and I will surely be united.' So she called him Levi.<sup>f</sup> Once more she conceived and bore a son; and she said, 'Now I will praise the LORD'; therefore she named him Judah.<sup>g</sup> Then for a while she bore no more children.

When Rachel found that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister and said to Jacob, 'Give me sons, or I shall die.' Jacob said angrily to Rachel, 'Can I take the place of God, who has denied you children?' She said, 'Here is my slave-girl Bilhah. Lie with her, so that she may bear sons to be laid upon my knees, and through her I too may build up a family.' So she gave him her slave-girl Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob lay with her. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, 'God has given judgement for me; he has indeed heard me and given me a son', so she named him Dan.<sup>h</sup> Rachel's slave-girl Bilhah again conceived and bore Jacob another son. Rachel said, 'I have played a fine trick on my sister, and it has succeeded'; so she named him Naphtali.<sup>i</sup> When Leah found that she was bearing no more children, she took her slave-girl Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife, and Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Leah said, 'Good fortune has come', and she

*d* That is See, a son.      *e* That is Hearing.  
*f* That is Union.      *g* That is Praise.  
*h* That is He has given judgement.      *i* That is Trickery.

distributed fairly. 23: Likely, the deception was possible because of a veil (24. 65). 29.31–30.24: The fourth generation of the Hebrews emerged in the form of twelve tribes, indeed as a league of them; see 22.20–24 n. Each name is explained by folk etymology involving a word play

12 named him Gad.<sup>j</sup> Zilpah, Leah's slave-  
13 girl, bore Jacob another son, and Leah  
said, 'Happiness has come, for young  
women will call me happy.' So she  
named him Asher.<sup>k</sup>

14 In the time of wheat-harvest Reuben  
went out and found some mandrakes  
in the open country and brought them  
to his mother Leah. Then Rachel asked  
Leah for some of her son's mandrakes,  
15 but Leah said, 'Is it so small a thing to  
have taken away my husband, that you  
should take my son's mandrakes as  
well?' But Rachel said, 'Very well, let  
him sleep with you tonight in exchange  
16 for your son's mandrakes.' So when  
Jacob came in from the country in the  
evening, Leah went out to meet him and  
said, 'You are to sleep with me tonight;  
I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.'  
17 That night he slept with her,  
and God heard Leah's prayer, and she  
18 conceived and bore a fifth son. Leah  
said, 'God has rewarded me, because  
I gave my slave-girl to my husband.'  
19 So she named him Issachar.<sup>l</sup> Leah again  
conceived and bore a sixth son. She  
20 said, 'God has endowed me with a  
noble dowry. Now my husband will  
treat me in princely style, because I have  
borne him six sons.' So she named him  
21 Zebulun.<sup>m</sup> Later she bore a daughter  
22 and named her Dinah. Then God  
thought of Rachel; he heard her  
23 prayer and gave her a child; so she  
conceived and bore a son and said,  
'God has taken away my humiliation.'  
24 She named him Joseph,<sup>n</sup> saying, 'May  
the LORD add another son!'

25 When Rachel had given birth to  
Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Let me  
go, for I wish to return to my own home  
26 and country. Give me my wives and  
my children for whom I have served  
you, and I will go; for you know what  
27 service I have done for you.' Laban  
said to him, 'Let me have my say, if you  
please. I have become prosperous and  
the LORD has blessed me for your sake.  
28 So now tell me what I owe you in wages,  
29 and I will give it you.' Jacob answered,  
'You must know how I have served

you, and how your herds have prospered  
under my care. You had only a few when  
I came, but now they have increased  
beyond measure, and the LORD brought  
blessings to you wherever I went. But  
is it not time for me to provide for my  
family?' Laban said, 'Then what shall I  
give you?', but Jacob answered, 'Give me  
nothing; I will mind your flocks<sup>o</sup> as  
before, if you will do what I suggest.  
Today I will go over your flocks and  
pick out from them every black lamb,  
and all the brindled and the spotted  
goats, and they shall be my wages. This  
is a fair offer, and it will be to my own  
disadvantage later on, when we come to  
settling my wages: every goat amongst  
mine that is not spotted or brindled  
and every lamb that is not black will  
have been stolen.' Laban said, 'Agreed;  
let it be as you have said.' But that day  
he removed the he-goats that were  
striped and brindled and all the spotted  
and brindled she-goats, all that had  
any white on them, and every ram that  
was black, and he handed them over  
to his own sons. Then he put a distance  
of three days' journey between himself  
and Jacob, while Jacob was left tending  
those of Laban's flocks that remained.  
Thereupon Jacob took fresh rods of  
white poplar, almond, and plane tree,  
and peeled off strips of bark, exposing  
the white of the rods. Then he fixed the  
peeled rods upright in the troughs at  
the watering-places where the flocks  
came to drink; they faced the she-goats  
that were on heat when they came to  
drink. They felt a longing for the rods  
and they gave birth to young that were  
striped and spotted and brindled. As  
for the rams, Jacob divided them, and  
let the ewes run only with such of the  
rams in Laban's flock as were striped  
and black; and thus he bred separate  
flocks for himself, which he did not add  
to Laban's sheep. As for the goats,  
whenever the more vigorous were on

*j That is Good Fortune. k That is Happy.*

*l That is Reward. m That is Prince.*

*n The name may mean either He takes away or May he add. o Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds I will watch.*

(Tfn. *d-n*). 30.14: In antiquity these plants were widely regarded as "aphrodisiacs," that is, they stimulated passion. The word in Hebrew resembles the Hebrew word for "love." 27: *For your sake*: an echo of the promise in 12.3. 32: Since sheep in the area are usually white and goats are usually black, Laban quickly agreed to a deal so obviously to his advantage. 39: Many

heat, he put the rods in front of them at the troughs so that they would long for the rods; he did not put them there for the weaker goats. Thus the weaker came to be Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. So Jacob increased in wealth more and more until he possessed great flocks, male and female slaves, camels, and asses.

**31** JACOB LEARNT THAT LABAN'S SONS WERE saying, 'Jacob has taken everything that was our father's, and all his wealth has come from our father's property.'

2 He also noticed that Laban was not so well disposed to him as he had once been. Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land of your fathers and to your kindred. I will be with you.' So Jacob sent to fetch Rachel and Leah to his flocks out in the country and said to them, 'I see that your father is not as well disposed to me as once he was; yet the God of my father has been with me. You know how I have served your father to the best of my power, but he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times over. Yet God did not let him do me any harm. If Laban said, "The spotted ones shall be your wages", then all the flock bore spotted young; and if he said, "The striped ones shall be your wages", then all the flock bore striped young. God has taken away your father's property and has given it to me. In the season when the flocks were on heat, I had a dream: I looked up and saw that the he-goats mounting the flock were striped and spotted and dappled. The angel of God said to me in my dream, "Jacob", and I replied, "Here I am", and he said, "Look up and see: all the he-goats mounting the flock are striped and spotted and dappled. I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel where you anointed a sacred pillar and where you made your vow. Now leave this country at once and return to the land of your birth.'" Rachel and Leah answered him,

'We no longer have any part or lot in our father's house. Does he not look on us as foreigners, now that he has sold us and spent on himself the whole of the money paid for us? But all the wealth which God has saved from our father's clutches is ours and our children's. Now do everything that God has said.' Jacob at once set his sons and his wives on camels, and drove off all the herds and livestock which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in Canaan.

When Laban the Aramaean had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods, and Jacob deceived Laban, keeping his departure secret. So Jacob ran away with all that he had, crossed the River and made for the hill-country of Gilead. Three days later, when Laban heard that Jacob had run away, he took his kinsmen with him, pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill-country of Gilead. But God came to Laban in a dream by night and said to him, 'Be careful to say nothing to Jacob, either good or bad.'

When Laban overtook him, Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill-country of Gilead, and Laban pitched his in the company of his kinsmen in the same hill-country. Laban said to Jacob, 'What have you done? You have deceived me and carried off my daughters as though they were captives taken in war. Why did you slip away secretly without telling me? I would have set you on your way with songs and the music of tambourines and harps. You did not even let me kiss my daughters and their children. In this you were at fault. It is in my power to do you an injury, but yesterday the God of your father spoke to me; he told me to be careful to say nothing to you, either good or bad. I know that you went away because you were homesick and pining for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?'

Jacob answered, 'I was afraid; I 31

people, ancient and modern, have believed that a fetus can be affected by the visual impressions of the mother. **31.14-16:** Ancient law, such as the Hurrrian, provided for part of the bride payment to be reserved for the woman herself. **19:** Possession of the *household gods* insured the right of inheritance; hence, Rachel may have sought compensation for the loss of the bride payment. **21:** *The River:* Euphrates. **35:** The ancient, humorous story now becomes a sarcastic

32 thought you would take your daughters from me by force. Whoever is found in possession of your gods shall die for it. Let our kinsmen here be witnesses: point out anything I have that is yours, and take it back.' Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods. So 33 Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and that of the two slave-girls, but he found nothing. When he came out of Leah's tent he went into 34 Rachel's. Now she had taken the household gods and put them in the camel-bag and was sitting on them. Laban went through everything in the 35 tent and found nothing. Rachel said to her father, 'Do not take it amiss, sir, that I cannot rise in your presence: the common lot of woman is upon me.' So for all his search Laban did not find his household gods.

36 Jacob was angry, and he expostulated with Laban, exclaiming, 'What have I done wrong? What is my offence, that you have come after me in hot pursuit 37 and gone through all my possessions? Have you found anything belonging to your household? If so, set it here in front of my kinsmen and yours, and let them judge between the two of us. 38 In all the twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she-goats have never miscarried; I have not eaten the rams of your flocks; I have never 39 brought to you the body of any animal mangled by wild beasts, but I bore the loss myself; you claimed compensation from me for anything stolen by day or 40 by night. This was the way of it: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and sleep deserted me. For 41 twenty years I have been in your household. I worked for you fourteen years to win your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed 42 my wages ten times over. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my labour and my hardships, and last night he rebuked you.'

Laban answered Jacob, 'The daughters 43 are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks; all that you see is mine. But as for my daughters, what can I do today about them and the children they have borne? 44 Come now, we will make an agreement, you and I, and let it stand as a witness between us.' So Jacob chose a great 45 stone and set it upright as a sacred pillar. Then he told his kinsmen to 46 gather stones, and they took them and built a cairn, and there beside the cairn they ate together. Laban called it 47 Jegar-sahadutha,<sup>p</sup> and Jacob called it Gal-ed.<sup>q</sup> Laban said, 'This cairn is 48 witness today between you and me.' For this reason it was named Gal-ed; it was also named Mizpah,<sup>r</sup> for Laban 49 said, 'May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are parted from each other's sight. If you ill-treat my 50 daughters or take other wives beside them when no one is there to see, then God be witness between us.' Laban said 51 further to Jacob, 'Here is this cairn, and here the pillar which I have set up between us. This cairn is witness and the 52 pillar is witness: I for my part will not pass beyond this cairn to your side, and you for your part shall not pass beyond this cairn and this pillar to my side to do an injury, otherwise the 53 God of Abraham and the God of Nahor will judge between us.' And Jacob swore this oath in the name of the Fear of Isaac his father. He 54 slaughtered an animal for sacrifice, there in the hill-country, and summoned his kinsmen to the feast. So they ate together and spent the night there.

Laban rose early in the morning, 55 kissed his daughters and their children, blessed them and went home again. Then Jacob continued his journey and 32 was met by angels of God. When he 2 saw them, Jacob said, 'This is the company of God', and he called that place Mahanaim.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>p</sup> Aramaic for Cairn of Witness.

<sup>q</sup> Hebrew for Cairn of Witness.

<sup>r</sup> That is Watch-tower. <sup>s</sup> That is Two Companies.

attack on idolatry; the "gods" have been stolen, hidden, and soiled by menstrual blood (see Lev.15.19-20). 39: *Mangled*: on responsibility in such cases, see Exod. 22.10-13. 42: *Fear*: an unusual divine name. 43: The custom of Laban's homeland is reflected, by which the husband moves into the wife's household. 46: *Cairn*: a heap of stones.

32.1-33.20: *Jacob's return and reconciliation with Esau*. 1: *Angels of God*: see Ps.91.11.

3 Jacob sent messengers on ahead to  
 4 his brother Esau to the district of Seir  
 5 in the Edomite country, and this is what  
 6 he told them to say to Esau, 'My lord,  
 7 your servant Jacob says, I have been  
 8 living with Laban and have stayed  
 9 there till now. I have oxen, asses, and  
 10 sheep, and male and female slaves, and  
 11 I have sent to tell you this, my lord, so  
 12 that I may win your favour.' The  
 13 messengers returned to Jacob and said,  
 14 'We met your brother Esau already on  
 15 the way to meet you with four hundred  
 16 men.' Jacob, much afraid and dis-  
 17 tressed, divided the people with him,  
 18 as well as the sheep, cattle, and camels,  
 19 into two companies, thinking that, if  
 20 Esau should come upon one company  
 21 and destroy it, the other company  
 22 would survive. Jacob said, 'O God of  
 23 my father Abraham, God of my father  
 24 Isaac, O LORD at whose bidding I came  
 25 back to my own country and to my  
 26 kindred, and who didst promise me  
 27 prosperity, I am not worthy of all the  
 28 true and steadfast love which thou hast  
 29 shown to me thy servant. When I  
 30 crossed the Jordan, I had nothing but  
 31 the staff in my hand; now I have two  
 32 companies. Save me, I pray, from my  
 33 brother Esau, for I am afraid that he  
 34 may come and destroy me, sparing  
 35 neither mother nor child. But thou  
 36 didst say, I will prosper you and will  
 37 make your descendants like the sand of  
 38 the sea, which is beyond all counting.'

39 Jacob spent that night there; and as a  
 40 present for his brother Esau he chose  
 41 from the herds he had with him two  
 42 hundred she-goats, twenty he-goats,  
 43 two hundred ewes and twenty rams,  
 44 thirty milch-camels with their young,  
 45 forty cows and ten young bulls, twenty  
 46 she-asses and ten he-asses. He put  
 47 each herd separately into the care of a  
 48 servant and said to each, 'Go on ahead  
 49 of me, and leave gaps between the  
 50 herds.' Then he gave these instructions  
 51 to the first: 'When my brother Esau  
 52 meets you and asks you to whom you  
 53 belong and where you are going and

who owns these beasts you are driving,  
 you are to say, "They belong to your  
 servant Jacob; he sends them as a  
 present to my lord Esau, and he is  
 behind us.'" He gave the same in-  
 structions to the second, to the third,  
 and all the drovers, telling them to say  
 the same thing to Esau when they met  
 him. And they were to add, 'Your  
 servant Jacob is behind us'; for he  
 thought, 'I will appease him with the  
 present that I have sent on ahead, and  
 afterwards, when I come into his  
 presence, he will perhaps receive me  
 kindly.' So Jacob's present went on  
 ahead of him, but he himself spent that  
 night at Mahaneh.

During the night Jacob rose, took  
 his two wives, his two slave-girls, and  
 his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of  
 Jabbok. He took them and sent them  
 across the gorge with all that he had.  
 So Jacob was left alone, and a man  
 wrestled with him there till<sup>r</sup> daybreak.  
 When the man saw that he could not  
 throw Jacob, he struck him in the  
 hollow of his thigh, so that Jacob's hip  
 was dislocated as they wrestled. The  
 man said, 'Let me go, for day is  
 breaking', but Jacob replied, 'I will not  
 let you go unless you bless me.' He  
 said to Jacob, 'What is your name?',  
 and he answered, 'Jacob.' The man  
 said, 'Your name shall no longer be  
 Jacob, but Israel,<sup>u</sup> because you strove  
 with God and with men, and prevailed.'  
 Jacob said, 'Tell me, I pray, your name.'  
 He replied, 'Why do you ask my  
 name?', but he gave him his blessing  
 there. Jacob called the place Peniel,<sup>v</sup>  
 'because', he said, 'I have seen God  
 face to face and my life is spared.' The  
 sun rose as Jacob passed through  
 Penuel, limping because of his hip.  
 This is why the Israelites to this day do  
 not eat the sinew of the nerve that runs  
 in the hollow of the thigh; for the man  
 had struck Jacob on that nerve in the  
 hollow of the thigh.

<sup>r</sup> Or at.

<sup>u</sup> That is God strove.

<sup>v</sup> That is Face of God (elsewhere Penuel).

9: *God of my father Abraham*: see 31.42. 20: compare Prov. 21.14. 24–26: In keeping with much ancient folklore, the phantom visitor vanished with the sunrise. He may have been, in the earliest circulation of the story, either a border guardian or the "spirit" of the river. In context, his "blessing" helps to authenticate Jacob's right to the land. 27–32: Folk explanations are given for the names *Israel* and *Peniel*/*Penuel*, and also for a food taboo (v.32), mentioned only here.

33 Jacob raised his eyes and saw Esau coming towards him with four hundred men; so he divided the children between Leah and Rachel and the two slave-girls. He put the slave-girls with their children in front, Leah with her children next, and Rachel with Joseph last. He then went on ahead of them, bowing low to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. Esau ran to meet him and embraced him; he threw his arms round him and kissed him, and they wept. When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, 'Who are these with you?' Jacob replied, 'The children whom God has graciously given to your servant.' The slave-girls came near, each with her children, and they bowed low. Then Leah with her children came near and bowed low, and afterwards Joseph and Rachel came near and bowed low also. Esau said, 'What was all that company of yours that I met?' And he answered, 'It was meant to win favour with you, my lord.' Esau answered, 'I have more than enough. Keep what is yours, my brother.' But Jacob said, 'On no account: if I have won your favour, then, I pray, accept this gift from me; for, you see, I come into your presence as into that of a god, and you receive me favourably. Accept this gift which I bring you; for God has been gracious to me, and I have all I want.' So he urged him, and he accepted it.

12 Then Esau said, 'Let us set out, and I will go at your pace.' But Jacob answered him, 'You must know, my lord, that the children are small; the flocks and herds are suckling their young and I am concerned for them, and if the men overdrive them for a single day, all my beasts will die. I beg you, my lord, to go on ahead, and I will go by easy stages at the pace of the children and of the livestock that I am driving, until I come to my lord in

Seir.' Esau said, 'Let me detail some of my own men to escort you,' but he replied, 'Why should my lord be so kind to me?' That day Esau turned back towards Seir, but Jacob set out for Succoth; and there he built himself a house and made shelters for his cattle. Therefore he named that place Succoth.<sup>w</sup>

On his journey from Paddan-aram, Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem in Canaan and pitched his tent to the east of it. The strip of country where he had pitched his tent he bought from the sons of Hamor father of Shechem for a hundred sheep.<sup>x</sup> There he set up an altar and called it El-Elohey-Israel.<sup>y</sup>

DINAH, THE DAUGHTER WHOM LEAH HAD borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the country, and Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite the local prince, saw her; he took her, lay with her and dishonoured her. But he remained true to Jacob's daughter Dinah; he loved the girl and comforted her. So Shechem said to his father Hamor, 'Get me this girl for a wife.' When Jacob heard that Shechem had violated his daughter Dinah, his sons were with the herds in the open country, so he said nothing until they came home. Meanwhile Shechem's father Hamor came out to Jacob to discuss it with him. When Jacob's sons came in from the country and heard, they were grieved and angry, because in lying with Jacob's daughter he had done what the Israelites held to be an outrage, an intolerable thing. Hamor appealed to them in these terms: 'My son Shechem is in love with this girl; I beg you to let him have her as his wife. Let us ally ourselves in marriage; you shall give us your daughters, and you shall take ours in exchange. You must settle

<sup>w</sup> That is Shelters.

<sup>x</sup> Or pieces of money (cp. Josh. 24. 32; Job 42. 11).

<sup>y</sup> That is God the God of Israel.

On a new name, see 17.5 n. 33.20: *El* was the chief god of the Canaanites, apparently worshiped at Shechem before the introduction of the cult of the LORD.

34.1-31: **The rape of Dinah.** This is an ancient, once independent account of relations between the tribes of Simeon and Levi and their Canaanite neighbors, the tribes being represented by eponymous ("name-giving") ancestors. The episode is mentioned in 49.5-7, as the basis for the decline of these tribes in the tribal confederation. Simeon goes unmentioned in the list of tribes given in Deut. ch. 33, a passage from a later time.

among us. The country is open to you; make your home in it, move about freely and acquire land of your own.'

11 And Shechem said to the girl's father and brothers, 'I am eager to win your favour and I will give whatever you ask. Fix the bride-price and the gift as high as you like, and I will give whatever you ask; but you must give me the girl in marriage.'

13 Jacob's sons gave a dishonest reply to Shechem and his father Hamor, laying a trap for them because Shechem had violated their sister Dinah: 'We cannot do this,' they said; 'we cannot give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised; for we look on that as a disgrace. There is one condition on which we will consent: if you will follow our example and have every male among you circumcised, we will give you our daughters and take yours for ourselves. Then we can live among you, and we shall all become one people. But if you refuse to listen to us and be circumcised, we will take the girl and go away.' Their proposal pleased Hamor and his son Shechem; and the young man, who was held in respect above anyone in his father's house, did not hesitate to do what they had said, because his heart was taken by Jacob's daughter.

20 So Hamor and Shechem went back to the city gate and addressed their fellow-citizens: 'These men are friendly to us; let them live in our country and move freely in it. The land has room enough for them. Let us marry their daughters and give them ours. But these men will agree to live with us and become one people on this one condition only: every male among us must be circumcised as they have been. Will not their herds, their livestock, and all their chattels then be ours? We need only consent to their condition, and then they are free to live with us.' All the able-bodied men agreed with Hamor and Shechem, and every single one of them was circumcised, every able-bodied male. Then two days later, while they were still in great pain,

Jacob's two sons Simeon and Levi, full brothers to Dinah, armed themselves with swords, boldly entered the city and killed every male. They cut down Hamor and his son Shechem and took Dinah from Shechem's house and went off with her. Then Jacob's other sons came in over the dead bodies and plundered the city, to avenge their sister's dishonour. They seized flocks, cattle, asses, and everything, both inside the city and outside in the open country; they also carried off all their possessions, their dependants, and their women, and plundered everything in the houses.

Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me, you have made my name stink among the people of the country, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few; if they muster against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, I and my household with me.' They answered, 'Is our sister to be treated as a common whore?'

GOD SAID TO JACOB, 'GO UP TO BETHEL and settle there; build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were running away from your brother Esau.' So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Rid yourselves of the foreign gods which you have among you, purify yourselves, and see your clothes are mended.<sup>2</sup> We are going to Bethel, so that I can set up an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress, and who has been with me all the way that I have come.' So they handed over to Jacob all the foreign gods in their possession and the rings from their ears, and he buried them under the terebinth-tree near Shechem. Then they set out, and the cities round about were panic-stricken, and the inhabitants dared not pursue the sons of Jacob. Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz, that is Bethel, in Canaan. There he built an altar, and he called the place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed him-

<sup>2</sup> Or change your clothes.

35.1-15: Variant traditions about the founding of Bethel. Given Jacob's prior visit (28.18-19) and the importance of the place in Israel's religious heritage, some duplication and even misplacement have resulted. 2: A change of garment was a necessary part of ceremonial purification



8 self to him when he was running away from his brother. Rebecca's nurse Deborah died and was buried under the oak below Bethel, and he named it Allon-bakuth.<sup>a</sup>

9 God appeared again to Jacob when he came back from Paddan-aram and 10 blessed him. God said to him:

'Jacob is your name,  
but your name shall no longer be  
Jacob:  
Israel shall be your name.'

11 So he named him Israel. And God said to him:

'I am God Almighty.  
Be fruitful and increase as a nation;  
a host of nations shall come from  
you,  
and kings shall spring from your  
body.

12 The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I give to you;  
and to your descendants after you I give this land.'

13,14 God then left him, and Jacob erected a sacred pillar in the place where God had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he offered a drink-offering over it and poured oil on it. Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

16 They set out from Bethel, and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrathah, Rachel was in labour and her pains were severe. While her pains were upon her, the midwife said, 'Do not be afraid, this is another son for you.' Then with her last breath, as she was dying, she named him Benoni,<sup>b</sup> but his father called him Benjamin.<sup>c</sup> So Rachel died and was buried by the side of the road to Ephrathah,

that is Bethlehem. Jacob set up a sacred 20 pillar over her grave; it is known to this day as the Pillar of Rachel's Grave. Then Israel journeyed on and 21 pitched his tent on the other side of Migdal-eder. While Israel was living in 22 that district, Reuben went and lay with his father's concubine Bilhah, and Israel came to hear of it.

The sons of Jacob were twelve. The 23 sons of Leah: Jacob's first-born Reuben, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sons of 24 Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Rachel's slave-girl Bilhah: Dan 25 and Naphtali. The sons of Leah's slave-girl Zilpah: Gad and Asher. These were Jacob's sons, born to him 26 in Paddan-aram. Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre by Kiriath-arba, that is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. Isaac had lived for a 28 hundred and eighty years when he breathed his last. He died and was 29 gathered to his father's kin at a very great age, and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

THIS IS THE TABLE OF THE DESCENDANTS 36 of Esau: that is Edom. Esau took 2 Canaanite women in marriage, Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite and Oholibamah daughter of Anah son of Zibeon the Horite,<sup>d</sup> and Basemath, 3 Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth.

Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau; Ba- 4 semath bore Reuel, and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These 5 were Esau's sons, born to him in Canaan. Esau took his wives, his sons 6 and daughters and everyone in his household, his herds, his cattle, and all the chattels that he had acquired in

*a* That is Oak of Weeping.  
*b* That is Son of my ill luck.  
*c* That is Son of good luck or Son of the right hand.  
*d* Prob. rdg. (cp. verses 20, 21); Heb. Hivite.  
*e* Verses 4, 5, 9-13: cp. I Chr. I. 35-37.

(Exod. 19.10). 9-10: A variant version of 32.24-28. 11-12: An extension to Jacob of the promise to Abraham and Isaac. It might have been better placed after Jacob's return from Harran and his new name. 13-15: A variant of 28.16-19.

35.16-22: The birth of Benjamin. The name (see end of Tfn. c) likely refers to a geographical location south (i.e. "right") of Ephraim. 22: An incomplete fragment, it explains the tribe's later loss of prestige (49.3-4) and of numbers (Deut. 33.6).

35.23-29: The death of Isaac. In 27.1, Isaac was already an old man at the point of death; this passage reflects an independent tradition.

36.1-43: The genealogy of Esau. Relations between Israel and Edom were usually better than between most neighbors in the area; the Edomites are never accused of idolatry. Perhaps that is why this non-Israelite material was preserved. 2: This verse differs from a similar tradition in

Canaan, and went to the district of Seir out of the way of his brother  
 7 Jacob, because they had so much stock that they could not live together; the land where they were staying could not support them because of their herds.  
 8 So Esau lived in the hill-country of Seir. Esau is Edom.  
 9 This is the table of the descendants of Esau father of the Edomites in the hill-country of Seir.  
 10 These are the names of the sons of Esau: Eliphaz was the son of Esau's wife Adah. Reuel was the son of Esau's wife Basemath. The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and Kenaz. Timna was concubine to Esau's son Eliphaz, and she bore Amalek to him. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Adah. These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.  
 14 These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah daughter of Anah son of Zibeon. She bore him Jeush, Jalam and Korah.  
 15 These are the chiefs descended from Esau. The sons of Esau's eldest son Eliphaz: chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in Edom. These are the descendants of Adah.  
 17 These are the sons of Esau's son Reuel: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom. These are the descendants of Esau's wife Basemath.  
 18 These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs born to Oholibamah daughter of Anah wife of Esau.  
 19 These are the sons of Esau, that is Edom, and these are their chiefs.  
 20<sup>f</sup> These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the original inhabitants of the land:  
 21 Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in Edom.

The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam, and Lotan had a sister named Timna.

These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who found some mules in the wilderness while he was tending the asses of his father Zibeon. These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

These are the children of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zavan and Akan. These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs that were descended from the Horites according to their clans in the district of Seir.

These are the kings who ruled over Edom before there were kings in Israel: Bela son of Beor became king in Edom, and his city was named Dinhabah; when he died, he was succeeded by Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah. When Jobab died, he was succeeded by Husham of Teman. When Husham died, he was succeeded by Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in Moabite country. His city was named Avith. When Hadad died, he was succeeded by Samlah of Masrekah. When Samlah died, he was succeeded by Saul of Rehoboth on the River. When Saul died, he was succeeded by Baal-hanan son of Akbor. When Baal-hanan died, he was succeeded by Hadar.<sup>h</sup> His city was named Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred a woman of Me-zahab.<sup>i</sup>

These are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families, their places, by name: chief Timna, chief Alvan, chief Jetheth, chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief 41

<sup>f</sup> Verses 20-28: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 38-42.  
<sup>g</sup> Verses 31-43: cp. 1 Chr. 1. 43-54.  
<sup>h</sup> Or Hadad; cp. 1 Chr. 1. 50.  
<sup>i</sup> Or daughter of Mezahab.

26.34 and 28.9. 10: The list is drawn from different sources and repeats matters given in other verses; see v. 4. 31: See 25.33 n.

42 Pinon, chief Kenaz, chief Teman,  
43 chief Mibzar, chief Magdiel, and chief Iram: all chiefs of Edom according to their settlements in the land which they possessed. (Esau is the father of the Edomites.)

### Joseph in Egypt

37 SO JACOB LIVED IN CANAAN, THE COUNTRY in which his father had settled. And this is the story of the descendants of Jacob.

When Joseph was a boy of seventeen, he used to accompany his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, when they were in charge of the flock; and he brought their father a bad report of them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was a child of his old age, and he made him a long, sleeved robe. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not say a kind word to him.

Joseph had a dream; and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him still more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I have had. We were in the field binding sheaves, and my sheaf rose on end and stood upright, and your sheaves gathered round and bowed low before my sheaf.' His brothers answered him, 'Do you think you will one day be a king and lord it over us?' and they hated him still more because of his dreams and what he said. He had another dream, which he told to his father and his brothers. He said, 'Listen: I have had another dream. The sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' When he told it to his father and his brothers, his father took him to task: 'What is this dream of yours?' he said. 'Must we come and bow low to the ground before you, I and your mother and your brothers?'

His brothers were jealous of him, but his father did not forget.

Joseph's brothers went to mind their father's flocks in Shechem. Israel said to him, 'Your brothers are minding the flocks in Shechem; come, I will send you to them,' and he said, 'I am ready.' He said to him, 'Go and see if all is well with your brothers and the sheep, and bring me back word.' So he sent off Joseph from the vale of Hebron and he came to Shechem. A man met him wandering in the open country and asked him what he was looking for. He replied, 'I am looking for my brothers. Tell me, please, where they are minding the flocks.' The man said, 'They have gone away from here; I heard them speak of going to Dothan.' So Joseph followed his brothers and he found them in Dothan. They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to each other, 'Here comes that dreamer. Now is our chance; let us kill him and throw him into one of these pits and say that a wild beast has devoured him. Then we shall see what will come of his dreams.' When Reuben heard, he came to his rescue, urging them not to take his life. 'Let us have no bloodshed', he said. 'Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but do him no bodily harm.' He meant to save him from them so as to restore him to his father. When Joseph came up to his brothers, they stripped him of the long, sleeved robe which he was wearing, took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty and had no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat some food and, looking up, they saw an Ishmaelite caravan coming in from Gilead on the way down to Egypt, with camels carrying gum tragacanth and balm and myrrh. Judah said to his brothers, 'What shall we gain by killing our brother and concealing his death? Why not sell him to the Ishmaelites? Let us

37.1-36: Joseph is sold into Egypt. This material sets the stage for the Egyptian bondage, and hence for their deliverance and realization of the divine promise (12.1-3). Chs. 37, 39-47, 50 constitute a single literary unit, although composed out of earlier independent elements. Chs. 48-49 are later additions. Ch. 38 is an extraneous fragment. 7: *Bowed low*: his future status in Egypt is foreshadowed (42.6; 50.18). 9: *Eleven stars*: the zodiac is possibly meant, since the number of constellations in it agrees with that of the members of the tribal league. 18-30: Variations from Reuben to Judah, and from Ishmaelites to Midianites, suggest that diverse

do him no harm, for he is our brother, our own flesh and blood'; and his brothers agreed with him. Meanwhile some Midianite merchants passed by and drew Joseph up out of the pit. They sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, and they brought Joseph to Egypt. When Reuben went back to the pit, Joseph was not there. He rent his clothes and went back to his brothers and said, 'The boy is not there. Where can I go?' Joseph's brothers took his robe, killed a goat and dipped it in the goat's blood. Then they tore the robe, the long, sleeved robe, brought it to their father and said, 'Look what we have found. Do you recognize it? Is this your son's robe or not?' Jacob did recognize it, and he replied, 'It is my son's robe. A wild beast has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces.' Jacob rent his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned his son for a long time. His sons and daughters all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, 'I will go to my grave mourning for my son.' Thus Joseph's father wept for him. Meanwhile the Midianites had sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's eunuchs, the captain of the guard.

**38** ABOUT THAT TIME JUDAH LEFT HIS brothers and went south and pitched his tent in company with an Adullamite named Hirah. There he saw Bathshua the daughter of a Canaanite and married her. He slept with her, and she conceived and bore a son, whom she called Er. She conceived again and bore a son whom she called Onan. Once more she conceived and bore a son whom she called Shelah, and she ceased to bear children<sup>k</sup> when she had given birth to him. Judah found a wife for his eldest son Er; her name was Tamar. But Judah's eldest son Er was wicked in the LORD's sight, and the LORD took his life. Then Judah told Onan to sleep with his brother's wife, to do his duty as the husband's brother and raise up issue for his brother. But Onan knew that the issue would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he spilled his seed on the ground so as not to raise up issue for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight, and the LORD took his life. Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, 'Remain as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up'; for he was afraid that he too would die like his brothers. So Tamar went and stayed in her father's house.

Time passed, and Judah's wife Bathshua died. When he had finished mourning, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went up to Timnath at sheep-shearing. When Tamar was told that her father-in-law was on his way to shear his sheep at Timnath, she took off her widow's weeds, veiled her face, perfumed herself and sat where the road forks in two directions on the way to Timnath. She did this because she knew that Shelah had grown up and she had not been given to him as a wife. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, although she had veiled her face. He turned to her where she sat by the roadside and said, 'Let me lie with you,' not knowing that she was his daughter-in-law. She said 'What will you give me to lie with me?' He answered, 'I will send you a kid from my flock,' but she said, 'Will you give me a pledge until you send it?' He asked what pledge he should give her, and she replied, 'Your seal and its cord, and the staff which you hold in your hand.' So he gave them to her and lay with her, and she conceived. She then rose and went home, took off her veil

*j* Or executioner. *k* ceased . . . children: or was at Kezib.

accounts have been combined. **36:** *Eunuch*: the basic meaning of the Heb. word seems to be "official," and this might include emasculated guards of the harem. In either case, marriage was permissible (see 39.7, where Potiphar's wife is mentioned).

**38.1-30:** Judah and Tamar. After the tribe of Judah rose to prominence as the tribe of king David, its traditions received special preservation. The account here interrupts the flow of the Joseph narrative. When the latter resumes (ch. 39) Judah is still a member of his father's household. **7:** In the absence of alternatives, divine causation was assumed. **8:** *Duty*: levirate ("brother-in-law") marriage (Deut. 25.5-10), to insure the perpetuity of family name and property. **10:** The offense was in the unwillingness of Onan to insure posterity for the deceased.

and resumed her widow's weeds.  
 20 Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite in order to recover the pledge from the woman, but he could not find her. He asked the men of that  
 21 place, 'Where is that temple-prostitute, the one who was sitting where the road forks?', but they answered, 'There is no temple-prostitute here.' So he went  
 22 back to Judah and told him that he had not found her and that the men of the place had said there was no such  
 23 prostitute there. Judah said, 'Let her keep my pledge, or we shall get a bad name. I did send a kid, but you could  
 24 not find her.' About three months later Judah was told that his daughter-in-law Tamar had behaved like a common  
 prostitute and through her wanton conduct was with child. Judah said, 'Bring her out so that she may be  
 25 burnt.' But when she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law and said, 'The father of my child is the man to whom these things belong. See if you  
 recognize whose they are, the engraving on the seal, the pattern of the cord, and  
 26 the staff.' Judah recognized them and said, 'She is more in the right than I am, because I did not give her to my son Shelah.' He did not have intercourse  
 27 with her again. When her time was come, there were twins in her womb,  
 28 and while she was in labour one of them put out a hand. The midwife took a scarlet thread and fastened it round the wrist, saying, 'This one appeared  
 29 first.' No sooner had he drawn back his hand, than his brother came out and the midwife said, 'What! you have  
 broken out first!' So he was named Perez.<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards his brother  
 30 was born with the scarlet thread on his wrist, and he was named Zerah.<sup>m</sup>

39 WHEN JOSEPH WAS TAKEN DOWN TO Egypt, he was bought by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's eunuchs, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian. Potiphar

bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. The LORD was  
 2 with Joseph and he prospered. He lived in the house of his Egyptian  
 3 master, who saw that the LORD was  
 4 with him and was giving him success in all that he undertook. Thus Joseph  
 5 found favour with his master, and he became his personal servant. Indeed,  
 6 his master put him in charge of his household and entrusted him with all  
 7 that he had. From the time that he put  
 8 him in charge of his household and all his property, the LORD blessed the  
 9 Egyptian's household for Joseph's sake. The blessing of the LORD was on all that  
 10 was his in house and field. He left  
 11 everything he possessed in Joseph's care, and concerned himself with nothing but the food he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking, and a time came when  
 7 his master's wife took notice of him and said, 'Come and lie with me.' But  
 8 he refused and said to her, 'Think of my master. He does not know as much  
 9 as I do about his own house, and he has entrusted me with all he has. He has  
 10 given me authority in this house second only to his own, and has withheld  
 11 nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How can I do  
 12 anything so wicked, and sin against God?' She kept asking Joseph day  
 13 after day, but he refused to lie with her and be in her company. One day he  
 14 came into the house as usual to do his work, when none of the men of the  
 household were there indoors. She  
 15 caught him by his cloak, saying, 'Come and lie with me', but he left the cloak  
 16 in her hands and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak  
 17 in her hands and had run out of the house, she called out to the men of the  
 household, 'Look at this! My husband has brought in a Hebrew to make a  
 18 mockery of us. He came in here to lie

<sup>1</sup> That is Breaking out. <sup>m</sup> That is Redness.

14: Weeds: mourning garments. 21: Hirah, to preserve Judah from embarrassment, suggests that the woman he seeks is not a common whore (v. 15) but one respected in the Canaanite worship. On sacred prostitutes, see 1 Kgs. 14.24; 2 Kgs. 23.7; Hos. 4.13-14. 26: Since no brother was alive to carry out the levirate ("brother-in-law") obligation, the father-in-law might have done so, and hence Tamar acted quite legally. 28: On the importance of determining the first-born, see 25.31 n.

39.1-23: Joseph's temptation and imprisonment. The account follows on 37.36. The story has a very close Egyptian parallel, "The Story of the Two Brothers."

with me, but I gave a loud scream.  
 15 When he heard me scream and call out, he left his cloak in my hand and ran off.' She kept his cloak with her until  
 16 his master came home, and then she repeated her tale. She said, 'That Hebrew slave whom you brought in to make a mockery of me, has been here  
 18 with me. But when I screamed for help and called out, he left his cloak in my hands and ran off.' When Joseph's  
 19 master heard his wife's story of what his slave had done to her, he was furious.  
 20 He took Joseph and put him in the Round Tower, where the king's prisoners were kept; and there he stayed in the Round Tower. But the LORD was with Joseph and kept faith with him, so that he won the favour of the governor of the Round Tower. He put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the tower and of all their work. He ceased to concern himself with anything entrusted to Joseph, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in everything.

40 It happened later that the king's butler and his baker offended their master the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with these two eunuchs, the chief butler and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the Round Tower where Joseph was imprisoned.  
 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph as their attendant, and he waited on them. One night, when they had been in prison for some time, they both had dreams, each needing its own interpretation—the king of Egypt's butler and his baker who were imprisoned in the Round Tower. When Joseph came to them in the morning,  
 7 he saw that they looked dejected. So he asked these eunuchs, who were in custody with him in his master's house, why they were so downcast that day.  
 8 They replied, 'We have each had a dream and there is no one to interpret it for us.' Joseph said to them, 'Does not interpretation belong to God? Tell me your dreams.' So the chief butler told Joseph his dream: 'In my dream',

he said, 'there was a vine in front of me. On the vine there were three branches, and as soon as it budded, it blossomed and its clusters ripened into grapes. Now I had Pharaoh's cup in my hand, and I plucked the grapes, crushed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.' Joseph said to him, 'This is the interpretation. The three branches are three days: within three days Pharaoh will raise you and restore you to your post, and then you will put the cup into Pharaoh's hand as you used to do when you were his butler. But when things go well with you, if you think of me, keep faith with me and bring my case to Pharaoh's notice and help me to get out of this house. By force I was carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and I have done nothing here to deserve being put in this dungeon.'

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favourable interpretation, he said to him, 'I too had a dream, and in my dream there were three baskets of white bread on my head. In the top basket there was every kind of food which the baker prepares for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating out of the top basket on my head.' Joseph answered, 'This is the interpretation. The three baskets are three days: within three days Pharaoh will raise you and hang you up on a tree, and the birds of the air will eat your flesh.'

The third day was Pharaoh's birthday and he gave a feast for all his servants. He raised the chief butler and the chief baker in the presence of his court. He restored the chief butler to his post, and the butler put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker. All went as Joseph had said in interpreting the dreams for them. Even so the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Nearly two years later Pharaoh had a dream: he was standing by the Nile, and there came up from the river seven

<sup>n</sup> Or stolen.

40.1-23: The dreams of Pharaoh's servants. 19: Will raise you: the expression is the same as in v. 13, but here it is given a gruesome turn.

41.1-57: Pharaoh's dreams, which provide the opportunity for Joseph to become an Egyptian

3 cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed on the reeds. After them seven other cows came up from the river, gaunt and lean, and stood on the river-bank beside 4 the first cows. The cows that were gaunt and lean devoured the cows that were sleek and fat. Then Pharaoh woke 5 up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: he saw seven ears of corn, full and ripe, growing on one 6 stalk. Growing up after them were seven other ears, thin and shrivelled by the east wind. The thin ears swallowed 7 up the ears that were full and ripe. Then Pharaoh woke up and knew that it was 8 a dream. When morning came, Pharaoh was troubled in mind; so he summoned all the magicians and sages of Egypt. He told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them for 9 him. Then Pharaoh's chief butler spoke up and said, 'It is time for me to recall 10 my faults. Once Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of 11 the captain of the guard. One night we both had dreams, each needing its own 12 interpretation. We had with us a young Hebrew, a slave of the captain of the guard, and we told him our dreams and he interpreted them for us, giving each man's dream its own interpretation. 13 Each dream came true as it had been interpreted to us: I was restored to my position, and he was hanged.'

14 Pharaoh thereupon sent for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon. He shaved and changed his clothes, and came in to Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to him, 'I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it to me. I have heard it said that you can understand and interpret dreams.'

16 Joseph answered, 'Not I, but God, will answer for Pharaoh's welfare.' Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'In my dream I 17 was standing on the bank of the Nile, and there came up from the river seven 18 cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed on the reeds. After them seven other cows 19 came up that were poor, very gaunt and lean; I have never seen such gaunt 20 creatures in all Egypt. These lean,

gaunt cows devoured the first cows, the fat ones. They were swallowed up, but 21 no one could have guessed that they were in the bellies of the others, which looked as gaunt as before. Then I woke 22 up. After I had fallen asleep again, I saw in a dream seven ears of corn, full and ripe, growing on one stalk. Grow- 23 ing up after them were seven other ears, shrivelled, thin, and blighted by the east wind. The thin ears swallowed 24 up the seven ripe ears. When I told all this to the magicians, no one could explain it to me.'

Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's 25 dreams are one dream. God has told Pharaoh what he is going to do. The 26 seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears of corn are seven years. It is all one dream. The seven 27 lean and gaunt cows that came up after them are seven years, and the empty ears of corn blighted by the east wind will be seven years of famine. It is as I 28 have said to Pharaoh: God has let Pharaoh see what he is going to do. There are to be seven years of great 29 plenty throughout the land. After 30 them will come seven years of famine; all the years of plenty in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ruin the country. The good years will not be 31 remembered in the land because of the famine that follows; for it will be very severe. The doubling of Pharaoh's 32 dream means that God is already resolved to do this, and he will very soon put it into effect. Pharaoh should 33 now look for a shrewd and intelligent man, and put him in charge of the country. This is what Pharaoh should 34 do: appoint controllers over the land, and take one fifth of the produce of Egypt during the seven years of plenty. They should collect all this food pro- 35 duced in the good years that are coming and put the corn under Pharaoh's control in store in the cities, and keep it under guard. This food will be a reserve 36 for the country against the seven years of famine which will come upon Egypt. Thus the country will not be devastated by the famine.'

official. 6: *East wind*: a seasonal wind (*hamsin*) from the desert which destroys the vegetation (Ps.103.15-16; Ezek.17.10; 19.12). 8: The scorn here of the Egyptian magicians becomes more

37 The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his  
 38 courtiers, and he said to them, 'Can we  
 find a man like this man, one who has  
 39 the spirit of a god<sup>o</sup> in him?' He said to  
 Joseph, 'Since a god<sup>p</sup> has made all this  
 known to you, there is no one so  
 40 shrewd and intelligent as you. You shall  
 be in charge of my household, and all  
 my people will depend on your every  
 word. Only my royal throne shall make  
 41 me greater than you.' Pharaoh said to  
 Joseph, 'I hereby give you authority  
 42 over the whole land of Egypt.' He took  
 off his signet-ring and put it on Joseph's  
 finger, he had him dressed in fine linen,  
 and hung a gold chain round his neck.  
 43 He mounted him in his viceroy's  
 chariot and men cried 'Make way!'  
 before him. Thus Pharaoh made him  
 44 ruler over all Egypt and said to him, 'I  
 am the Pharaoh. Without your consent  
 no man shall lift hand or foot through-  
 45 out Egypt.' Pharaoh named him Zaphenath-  
 paneah, and he gave him as wife  
 Asenath the daughter of Potiphara  
 priest of On. And Joseph's authority  
 extended over the whole of Egypt.  
 46 Joseph was thirty years old when he  
 entered the service of Pharaoh king of  
 Egypt. When he took his leave of the  
 king, he made a tour of inspection  
 47 through the country. During the seven  
 years of plenty there were abundant  
 48 harvests, and Joseph gathered all the  
 food produced in Egypt during those  
 years and stored it in the cities, putting  
 in each the food from the surrounding  
 49 country. He stored the grain in huge  
 quantities; it was like the sand of the  
 sea, so much that he stopped measuring:  
 it was beyond all measure.  
 50 Before the years of famine came, two  
 sons were born to Joseph by Asenath  
 the daughter of Potiphara priest of On.  
 51 He named the elder Manasseh,<sup>q</sup> 'for,'  
 he said, 'God has caused me to forget  
 all my troubles and my father's family.'  
 52 He named the second Ephraim,<sup>r</sup> 'for,'  
 he said, 'God has made me fruitful in  
 53 the land of my hardships.' When the  
 seven years of plenty in Egypt came to  
 54 an end, seven years of famine began, as

Joseph had foretold. There was famine  
 in every country, but throughout Egypt  
 there was bread. So when the famine  
 55 spread through all Egypt, the people  
 appealed to Pharaoh for bread, and he  
 ordered them to go to Joseph and do  
 as he told them. In every region there  
 56 was famine, and Joseph opened all the  
 granaries and sold corn to the Egypt-  
 57 tians, for the famine was severe. The  
 whole world came to Egypt to buy corn  
 from Joseph, so severe was the famine  
 everywhere.

42 WHEN JACOB SAW THAT THERE WAS CORN  
 in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do  
 you stand staring at each other? I have  
 2 heard that there is corn in Egypt. Go  
 down and buy some so that we may  
 keep ourselves alive and not starve.'  
 So Joseph's brothers, ten of them, went  
 3 down to buy grain from Egypt, but  
 4 Jacob did not let Joseph's brother  
 Benjamin go with them, for fear that he  
 might come to harm.

So the sons of Israel came down with  
 5 everyone else to buy corn, because of  
 the famine in Canaan. Now Joseph was  
 6 governor of all Egypt, and it was he  
 who sold the corn to all the people of  
 the land. Joseph's brothers came and  
 bowed to the ground before him, and  
 7 when he saw his brothers, he recognized  
 them but pretended not to know them  
 and spoke harshly to them. 'Where do  
 you come from?' he asked. 'From  
 Canaan,' they answered, 'to buy food.'  
 Although Joseph had recognized his  
 8 brothers, they did not recognize him.  
 He remembered also the dreams he had  
 9 had about them; so he said to them,  
 'You are spies; you have come to spy  
 out the weak points in our defences.'  
 They answered, 'No, sir: your servants  
 10 have come to buy food. We are all sons  
 11 of one man. Your humble servants are  
 honest men, we are not spies.' 'No,' he  
 12 insisted, 'it is to spy out our weaknesses  
 that you have come.' They answered  
 13 him, 'Sir, there are twelve of us, all

<sup>o</sup> Or of God.    <sup>p</sup> Or God.  
<sup>q</sup> That is Causing to forget.    <sup>r</sup> That is Fruit.

fully developed in the account of the ten plagues (Exod. chs. 7-12). 42: The ring would give Pharaoh's authority to Joseph, since it could be used to stamp the Pharaoh's "signature."  
 45: Potiphara is apparently a fuller form of Potiphar (37.36), but is a different person.

42.1-38: Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt. 6: Bowed: thus fulfilling Joseph's dream (37.5-11).



brothers, sons of one man in Canaan. The youngest is still with our father, and one has disappeared.' But Joseph said again to them, 'No, as I said before, you are spies. This is how you shall be put to the proof: unless your youngest brother comes here, by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place. Send one of your number to bring your brother; the rest will be kept in prison. Thus your story will be tested, and we shall see whether you are telling the truth. If not, then, by the life of Pharaoh, you must be spies.' So he kept them in prison for three days.

On the third day Joseph said to the brothers, 'Do what I say and your lives will be spared; for I am a God-fearing man: if you are honest men, your brother there shall be kept in prison, and the rest of you shall take corn for your hungry households and bring your youngest brother to me; thus your words will be proved true, and you will not die.'<sup>8</sup>

They said to one another, 'No doubt we deserve to be punished because of our brother, whose suffering we saw; for when he pleaded with us we refused to listen. That is why these sufferings have come upon us.' But Reuben said, 'Did I not tell you not to do the boy a wrong? But you would not listen, and his blood is on our heads, and we must pay.' They did not know that Joseph understood, because he had used an interpreter. Joseph turned away from them and wept. Then, turning back, he played a trick on them. First he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes; then he gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to return each man's silver, putting it in his sack, and to give them supplies for the journey. All this was done; and they loaded the corn on to their asses and went away. When they stopped for the night, one of them opened his sack to give fodder to his ass, and there he saw his silver at the top of the pack. He said to his brothers, 'My silver has been returned to me, and here it is in my pack.' Bewildered and trembling, they said to each other,

'What is this that God has done to us?'

When they came to their father Jacob in Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, 'The man who is lord of the country spoke harshly to us and made out that we were spies. We said to him, "We are honest men, we are not spies. There are twelve of us, all brothers, sons of one father. One has disappeared, and the youngest is with our father in Canaan." This man, the lord of the country, said to us, "This is how I shall find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers with me, take food for your hungry households and go. Bring your youngest brother to me, and I shall know that you are not spies, but honest men. Then I will restore your brother to you, and you can move about the country freely."' But on emptying their sacks, each of them found his silver inside, and when they and their father saw the bundles of silver, they were afraid. Their father Jacob said to them, 'You have robbed me of my children. Joseph has disappeared; Simeon has disappeared; and now you are taking Benjamin. Everything is against me.' Reuben said to his father, 'You may kill both my sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my charge, and I shall bring him back.' But Jacob said, 'My son shall not go with you, for his brother is dead and he alone is left. If he comes to any harm on the journey, you will bring down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.'

The famine was still severe in the country. When they had used up the corn they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, 'Go back and buy a little more corn for us to eat.' But Judah replied, 'The man plainly warned us that we must not go into his presence unless our brother was with us. If you let our brother go with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not let him, we will not go; for the man said to us, "You shall not come into my presence, unless

<sup>8</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and they did so.*

**15:** Joseph's purpose is to discomfit his half-brothers (see v. 21) by demanding to see Benjamin, his only full brother.

**43.1-34:** The second journey to Egypt. Jacob reluctantly lets Benjamin accompany his brothers.

6 your brother is with you.” Israel said, ‘Why have you treated me so badly? Why did you tell the man that you had yet another brother?’ They answered, ‘He questioned us closely about ourselves and our family: “Is your father still alive?” he asked, “Have you a brother?’, and we answered his questions. How could we possibly know that he would tell us to bring our brother to Egypt?’ Judah said to his father Israel, ‘Send the boy with me; then we can start at once. By doing this we shall save our lives, ours, yours, and our dependants’, and none of us will starve. I will go surety for him and you may hold me responsible. If I do not bring him back and restore him to you, you shall hold me guilty all my life. If we had not wasted all this time, by now we could have gone back twice over.’ Their father Israel said to them, ‘If it must be so, then do this: take in your baggage, as a gift for the man, some of the produce for which our country is famous: a little balsam, a little honey, gum tragacanth, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Take double the amount of silver and restore what was returned to you in your packs; perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother with you and go straight back to the man. May God Almighty make him kindly disposed to you, and may he send back the one whom you left behind, and Benjamin too. As for me, if I am bereaved, then I am bereaved.’ So they took the gift and double the amount of silver, and with Benjamin they started at once for Egypt, where they presented themselves to Joseph.

16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his steward, ‘Bring these men indoors, kill a beast and make dinner ready, for they will eat with me at noon.’ He did as Joseph told him and brought the men into the house. When they came in they were afraid, for they thought, ‘We have been brought in here because of that affair of the silver which was replaced in our packs the first time. He means to trump up some charge against us and victimize

us, seize our asses and make us his slaves.’ So they approached Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the door of the house. They said, ‘Please listen, my lord. After our first visit to buy food, when we reached the place where we were to spend the night, we opened our packs and each of us found his silver in full weight at the top of his pack. We have brought it back with us, and have added other silver to buy food. We do not know who put the silver in our packs.’ He answered, ‘Set your minds at rest; do not be afraid. It was your God, the God of your father, who hid treasure for you in your packs. I did receive the silver.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them.

The steward brought them into Joseph’s house and gave them water to wash their feet, and provided fodder for their asses. They had their gifts ready when Joseph arrived at noon, for they had heard that they were to eat there. When Joseph came into the house, they presented him with the gifts which they had brought, bowing to the ground before him. He asked them how they were and said, ‘Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?’ They answered, ‘Yes, my lord, our father is still alive and well.’ And they bowed low and prostrated themselves. Joseph looked and saw his own mother’s son, his brother Benjamin, and asked, ‘Is this your youngest brother, of whom you told me?’, and to Benjamin he said, ‘May God be gracious to you, my son!’ Joseph was overcome; his feelings for his brother mastered him, and he was near to tears. So he went into the inner room and wept. Then he washed his face and came out; and, holding back his feelings, he ordered the meal to be served. They served him by himself, and the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who were at dinner were also served separately; for Egyptians hold it an abomination to eat with Hebrews. The brothers were seated in his presence, the eldest first according to his age and so on down to the

**8-10:** Judah is here the spokesman; it was Reuben in 42.37. See 37.18-30 n. **26-28:** *Bowed:* 42.6 n. **32:** *Hebrews:* 10.21 n.

- youngest: they looked at one another in  
 34 astonishment. Joseph sent them each a  
 portion from what was before him, but  
 Benjamin's was five times larger than  
 any of the other portions. Thus they  
 drank with him and all grew merry.
- 44 Joseph gave his steward this order:  
 'Fill the men's packs with as much food  
 as they can carry and put each man's  
 2 silver at the top of his pack. And put my  
 goblet, my silver goblet, at the top of  
 the youngest brother's pack with the  
 silver for the corn.' He did as Joseph  
 3 said. At daybreak the brothers were  
 allowed to take their asses and go on  
 4 their journey; but before they had gone  
 very far from the city, Joseph said to  
 his steward, 'Go after those men at  
 once, and when you catch up with  
 them, say, "Why have you repaid good  
 5 with evil? Why have you stolen the  
 silver goblet? It is the one from which  
 my lord drinks, and which he uses for  
 divination. You have done a wicked  
 6 thing.'" When he caught up with them,  
 7 he repeated all this to them, but they  
 replied, 'My lord, how can you say  
 such things? No, sir, God forbid that  
 8 we should do any such thing! You  
 remember the silver we found at the  
 top of our packs? We brought it back  
 to you from Canaan. Why should we  
 9 steal silver or gold from your master's  
 house? If any one of us is found with  
 the goblet, he shall die; and, what is  
 more, my lord, we will all become your  
 10 slaves.' He said, 'Very well, then; I  
 accept what you say. The man in whose  
 possession it is found shall be my slave,  
 11 but the rest of you shall go free.' Each  
 man quickly lowered his pack to the  
 12 ground and opened it. The steward  
 searched them, beginning with the  
 eldest and finishing with the youngest,  
 and the goblet was found in Benjamin's  
 pack.
- 13 At this they rent their clothes; then  
 each man loaded his ass and they  
 14 returned to the city. Joseph was still in  
 the house when Judah and his brothers  
 came in. They threw themselves on the  
 15 ground before him, and Joseph said,  
 'What have you done? You might have  
 known that a man like myself would  
 practise divination.' Judah said, 'What  
 16 shall we say, my lord? What can we say  
 to prove our innocence? God has found  
 out our sin. Here we are, my lord, ready  
 to be made your slaves, we ourselves as  
 well as the one who was found with the  
 goblet.' Joseph answered, 'God forbid  
 17 that I should do such a thing! The one  
 who was found with the goblet shall  
 become my slave, but the rest of you  
 can go home to your father in peace.'
- Then Judah went up to him and said,  
 18 'Please listen, my lord. Let me say a  
 word to your lordship, I beg. Do not  
 be angry with me, for you are as great  
 as Pharaoh. You, my lord, asked us  
 19 whether we had a father or a brother.  
 We answered, "We have an aged  
 20 father, and he has a young son born in  
 his old age; this boy's full brother is  
 dead and he alone is left of his mother's  
 children, he alone, and his father loves  
 him." Your lordship answered, "Bring  
 21 him down to me so that I may set eyes  
 on him." We told you, my lord, that  
 22 the boy could not leave his father, and  
 that his father would die if he left  
 him. But you answered, "Unless your  
 23 youngest brother comes here with you,  
 you shall not enter my presence again."  
 We went back to your servant our  
 24 father, and told him what your lordship  
 had said. When our father told us to  
 25 go and buy food, we answered, "We  
 26 cannot go down; for without our  
 youngest brother we cannot enter the  
 man's presence; but if our brother is  
 with us, we will go." Our father, my  
 27 lord, then said to us, "You know that  
 my wife bore me two sons. One left me,  
 28 and I said, 'He must have been torn to  
 pieces.' I have not seen him to this day.  
 29 If you take this one from me as well,  
 and he comes to any harm, then you  
 will bring down my grey hairs in  
 30 trouble to the grave." Now, my lord,  
 when I return to my father without the  
 boy—and remember, his life is bound  
 up with the boy's—what will happen  
 31 this: he will see that the boy is not with  
 us and will die, and your servants will  
 have brought down our father's grey

44.1-34: Joseph further discomfits his brothers. 15: He implies that the theft was discovered through *divination*. 17: Joseph wants to see if his brothers will, as previously, sell one of their own into slavery.

32 hairs in sorrow to the grave. Indeed, my lord, it was I who went surety for the boy to my father. I said, "If I do not bring him back to you, then you shall hold me guilty all my life." Now, my lord, let me remain in place of the boy as your lordship's slave, and let him go with his brothers. How can I return to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the misery which my father would suffer.'

45 Joseph could no longer control his feelings in front of his attendants, and he called out, 'Let everyone leave my presence.' So there was nobody present when Joseph made himself known to his brothers, but so loudly did he weep that the Egyptians and Pharaoh's household heard him. Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph; can my father be still alive?' His brothers were so dumbfounded at finding themselves face to face with Joseph that they could not answer. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer', and so they came close. He said, 'I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be distressed or take it amiss that you sold me into slavery here; it was God who sent me ahead of you to save men's lives. For there have now been two years of famine in the country, and there will be another five years with neither ploughing nor harvest. God sent me ahead of you to ensure that you will have descendants on earth, and to preserve you all, a great band of survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God, and he has made me a father<sup>1</sup> to Pharaoh, and lord over all his household and ruler of all Egypt. Make haste and go back to my father and give him this message from his son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen and be near me, you, your sons and your grandsons, your flocks and herds and all that you have. I will take care of you there, you and your household and all that you have, and see that you are not reduced

to poverty; there are still five years of famine to come." You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is Joseph himself who is speaking to you. Tell my father of all the honour which I enjoy in Egypt, tell him all you have seen, and make haste to bring him down here.' Then he threw his arms round his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin too embraced him weeping. He kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and afterwards his brothers talked with him.

When the report that Joseph's brothers had come reached Pharaoh's house, he and all his courtiers were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Say to your brothers: "This is what you are to do. Load your beasts and go to Canaan. Fetch your father and your households and bring them to me. I will give you the best that there is in Egypt, and you shall enjoy the fat of the land." You shall also tell them: "Take wagons from Egypt for your dependants and your wives and fetch your father and come. Have no regrets at leaving your possessions, for all the best that there is in Egypt is yours.'" The sons of Israel did as they were told, and Joseph gave them wagons, according to Pharaoh's orders, and food for the journey. He provided each of them with a change of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing. Moreover he sent his father ten asses carrying the best that there was in Egypt, and ten she-asses loaded with grain, bread, and provisions for his journey. So he dismissed his brothers, telling them not to quarrel among themselves on the road, and they set out. Thus they went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in Canaan. There they gave him the news that Joseph was still alive and that he was ruler of all Egypt. He was stunned and could not believe it, but they told him all that Joseph had said; and when he

<sup>1</sup> Or counsellor.

45.1-28: Joseph discloses his identity. 5-8: A central teaching of the Joseph story now unfolds: despite the evil intent of the brothers, God has worked to insure the realization of his promise. Thus, ultimate judgment cannot be passed upon momentarily unfavorable events. 16-20: Ancient Egyptian sources relate the arrival of Asiatic nomads by such means.

saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to take him away, his spirit revived. 28 Israel said, 'It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive; I will go and see him before I die.'

46 SO ISRAEL SET OUT WITH ALL THAT HE had and came to Beersheba where he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. God said to Israel in a vision by night, 'Jacob, Jacob', and he answered, 'I am here.' God said, 'I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I myself will bring you back again without fail; and Joseph shall close your eyes.' So Jacob set out from Beersheba. Israel's sons conveyed their father Jacob, their dependants, and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry them. They took the herds and the stock which they had acquired in Canaan and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him, his sons and their sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters: he brought all his descendants to Egypt.

84 These are the names of the Israelites who entered Egypt: Jacob and his sons, as follows: Reuben, Jacob's eldest son. 9 The sons of Reuben: Enoch, Pallu, 10 Hezron and Carmi. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Saul, who was the son of a 11 Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi: 12 Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerach; of these Er and Onan died 13 in Canaan. The sons of Perez were 14 Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Issachar: Tola, Pua, Iob and Shimron. The 15 sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon and 16 Jahleel. These are the sons of Leah whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, and there was also his daughter Dinah. His sons and daughters numbered thirty-three in all.

16 The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. 17 The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah,

Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel. These are the descendants of 18 Zilpah whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; sixteen in all, born to Jacob.

The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: 19 Joseph and Benjamin. Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph in Egypt. Asenath daughter of Potiphera priest of On bore them to him. The 21 sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher and Ashbel; and the sons of Bela: Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard. These are the descendants of 22 Rachel; fourteen in all, born to Jacob.

The son<sup>o</sup> of Dan, Hushim. The sons 23,24 of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem. These are the descendants of 25 Bilhah whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel; seven in all, born to Jacob.

The persons belonging to Jacob who 26 came to Egypt, all his direct descendants, not counting the wives of his sons, were sixty-six in all. Two sons 27 were born to Joseph in Egypt. Thus the house of Jacob numbered seventy when it entered Egypt.

Judah was sent ahead that he might 28 appear before Joseph in Goshen, and so they entered Goshen. Joseph had 29 his chariot made ready and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. When they met, he threw his arms round him and wept, and embraced him for a long time, weeping. Israel said to Joseph, 30 'I have seen your face again, and you are still alive. Now I am ready to die.' Joseph said to his brothers and to his 31 father's household, 'I will go and tell Pharaoh; I will say to him, "My brothers and my father's household who were in Canaan have come to 32 me."' Now his brothers were shepherds, 33 men with their own flocks and herds, and they had brought them with them, their flocks and herds and all that they possessed. So Joseph said, 'When 34 Pharaoh summons you and asks you 35 <sup>u</sup> Verses 8-25: cp. Exod. 6.14-16; Num. 26.5-50; 1 Chr. 4. 1, 24; 5. 3; 6. 1; 7. 1, 6, 13, 30; 8. 1-5. <sup>v</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. sons.

46.1-47.12: Jacob and his family settle in Egypt. The stage is now set for the subsequent enslavement and deliverance. 4: *You*: here the "you" is the corporate Israel, not the single patriarch himself, for Jacob died in Egypt (49.33-50.3). 27: *Seventy*: usually a round number (Exod.15.27; 24.1; 2 Sam.24.15; for other such numbers see 7.2 n.; 7.4 n.). The previous list (vv. 8-25) has

- 34 what your occupation is, you must say, “My lord, we have been herdsmen all our lives, as our fathers were before us.” You must say this if you are to settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians.’
- 47 Joseph came and told Pharaoh, ‘My father and my brothers have arrived from Canaan, with their flocks and their cattle and all that they have, and they are now in Goshen.’ Then he chose five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh, who asked them what their occupation was, and they answered, ‘My lord, we are shepherds, we and our fathers before us, and we have come to stay in this land; for there is no pasture in Canaan for our sheep, because the famine there is so severe. We beg you, my lord, to let us settle now in Goshen.’ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘So your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is yours; settle them in the best part of it. Let them live in Goshen, and if you know of any capable men among them, make them chief herdsmen over my cattle.’
- 7 Then Joseph brought his father in and presented him to Pharaoh, and Jacob gave Pharaoh his blessing.
- 8, 9 Pharaoh asked Jacob his age, and he answered, ‘The years of my earthly sojourn are one hundred and thirty; hard years they have been and few, not equal to the years that my fathers lived in their time.’ Jacob then blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence. So Joseph settled his father and his brothers, and gave them lands in Egypt, in the best part of the country, in the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered. He supported his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with all the food they needed.
- 13 There was no bread in the whole country, so very severe was the famine, and Egypt and Canaan were laid low by it. Joseph collected all the silver in Egypt and Canaan in return for the corn which the people bought, and deposited it in Pharaoh’s treasury. When all the silver in Egypt and Canaan had been used up, the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, ‘Give us bread, or we shall die before your eyes. Our silver is all spent.’ Joseph said, ‘If your silver is spent, give me your herds and I will give you bread in return.’ So they brought their herds to Joseph, who gave them bread in exchange for their horses, their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and their asses. He maintained them that year with bread in exchange for their herds. The year came to an end, and the following year they came to him again and said, ‘My lord, we cannot conceal it from you: our silver is all gone and our herds of cattle are yours. Nothing is left for your lordship but our bodies and our lands. Why should we perish before your eyes, we and our land as well? Take us and our land in payment for bread, and we and our land alike will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed-corn to keep us alive, or we shall die and our land will become desert.’ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh, because the Egyptians sold all their fields, so severe was the famine; the land became Pharaoh’s. As for the people, Pharaoh set them to work as slaves from one end of the territory of Egypt to the other. But Joseph did not buy the land which belonged to the priests; they had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on this, so that they had no need to sell their land.
- Joseph said to the people, ‘Listen; I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Here is seed-corn for you. Sow the land, and give one fifth of the crop to Pharaoh. Four fifths shall be yours to provide seed for your fields and food for yourselves, your households, and your dependants.’ The people said, ‘You have saved our lives. If it please your lordship, we will be

undergone several adjustments and harmonizations. 47.9: *One hundred and thirty*: Abraham lived to one hundred and seventy-five (25.7), Isaac to one hundred and eighty (35.28); see 5.4 n. 11: *District of Rameses*: a synonym for Goshen (45.10), it is also the name of a city built by Hebrew slaves (see Exod. 1.11).

47.13-26: *Joseph’s economic policies*. The story may reflect the actual affairs in Egypt (such as the Pharaoh’s property rights at a given age) at the beginning of the New Kingdom.

26 Pharaoh's slaves.' Joseph established it as a law in Egypt that one fifth should belong to Pharaoh, and this is still in force. It was only the priests' land that did not pass into Pharaoh's hands.

27 Thus Israel settled in Egypt, in Goshen; there they acquired land, and were fruitful and increased greatly.

28 Jacob stayed in Egypt for seventeen years and lived to be a hundred and

29 forty-seven years old. When the time of his death drew near, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him, 'If I may now claim this favour from you, put your hand under my thigh and swear by the LORD that you will deal loyally and truly with me and not bury me in

30 Egypt. When I die like my forefathers, you shall carry me from Egypt and bury me in their grave.' He answered,

31 'I will do as you say'; but Jacob said, 'Swear it.' So he swore the oath, and Israel sank down over the end of the bed.

48 The time came when Joseph was told that his father was ill, so he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob heard that his son Joseph was coming to him, and he summoned his strength and sat up on the bed. Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in Canaan and blessed me. He said to me, "I will make you fruitful and increase your descendants until they become a host of nations. I will give this land to your descendants after you as a perpetual possession." Now, your two sons, who were born to you in Egypt before I came here, shall be counted as my sons; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine as Reuben and

6 Simeon are. Any children born to you after them shall be counted as yours, but in respect of their tribal territory they shall be reckoned under their elder

7 brothers' names. As I was coming from Paddan-aram I was bereaved of Rachel your mother on the way, in Canaan,

whilst there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there by the road to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem.'

When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he 8 said, 'Who are these?' Joseph replied 9 to his father, 'They are my sons whom God has given me here.' Israel said,

'Bring them to me, I beg you, so that I may take them on my knees.'<sup>w</sup> Now 10

Israel's eyes were dim with age, and he could not see; so Joseph brought the boys close to his father, and he kissed them and embraced them. He said to 11

Joseph, 'I had not expected to see your face again, and now God has granted me to see your sons also.' Joseph took 12

them from his father's knees and bowed to the ground. Then he took the two of 13

them, Ephraim on his right at Israel's left and Manasseh on his left at Israel's right, and brought them close to him. Israel stretched out his right 14

hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, although he was the younger, and, crossing his hands, laid his left hand on Manasseh's head; but Manasseh was 15

the elder. He blessed Joseph and said:

'The God in whose presence my forefathers lived,

my forefathers Abraham and Isaac, the God who has been my shepherd all my life until this day,

the angel who ransomed me from all 16

misfortune, may he bless these boys;

they shall be called by my name, and by that of my forefathers, Abraham and Isaac;

may they grow into a great people on earth.'

When Joseph saw that his father was 17

laying his right hand on Ephraim's head, he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's.

<sup>w</sup> Or may bless them.

47.27-48.22: Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. 29: *Thigh*: see 24.2 n. 48.5: *My sons*: the account seems to suggest that these two tribes were not among the early members of the league of twelve tribes specified in 49.1-27, but later came to be included (see Deut.33.17). The prose account here is younger than the poem in ch. 49. The fading away of Simeon (see 34.1-31 n.) kept the total number at twelve. 9: *On my knees*: a formal part of an adoption procedure. 14: *Elder*: preceded in military prominence (see Num.26.28-37 n.). 17-19: The later emergence of Ephraim to a position of great power in Israel is explained. It was, like events both before

- 18 He said, 'That is not right, my father. This is the elder; lay your right hand on his head.' But his father refused; he said, 'I know, my son, I know. He too shall become a people; he too shall become great, but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall be a whole nation in themselves.' That day he blessed them and said:
- 'When a blessing is pronounced in Israel,  
men shall use your names and say,  
God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh',
- thus setting Ephraim before Manasseh.
- 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, 'I am dying. God will be with you and will bring you back to the land of your fathers. I give you one ridge of land more than your brothers: I took it from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.'
- 49 JACOB SUMMONED HIS SONS AND SAID, 'Come near, and I will tell you what will happen to you in days to come.
- 2 Gather round me and listen, you sons of Jacob;  
listen to Israel your father.
- 3 Reuben, you are my first-born,  
my strength and the first fruit of my vigour,  
excelling in pride, excelling in might,
- 4 turbulent as a flood, you shall not excel;  
because you climbed into your father's bed;  
then you defiled his concubine's couch.
- 5 Simeon and Levi are brothers,  
their spades became weapons of violence.
- My soul shall not enter their council,  
my heart shall not join their company;  
for in their anger they killed men,  
wantonly they hamstrung oxen.  
A curse be on their anger because it was fierce;  
a curse on their wrath because it was ruthless!  
I will scatter them in Jacob,  
I will disperse them in Israel.  
Judah, your brothers shall praise you,  
your hand is on the neck of your enemies.  
Your father's sons shall do you homage.  
Judah, you lion's whelp,  
you have returned from the kill,  
my son,  
and crouch and stretch like a lion;  
and, like a lion,<sup>x</sup> who dare rouse you?  
The sceptre shall not pass from Judah,  
nor the staff from his descendants,  
so long as tribute is brought to him  
and the obedience of the nations is his.  
To the vine he tethers his ass,  
and the colt of his ass to the red vine;  
he washes his cloak in wine,  
his robes in the blood of grapes.  
Darker than wine are his eyes,  
his teeth whiter than milk.
- Zebulun dwells by the sea-shore,  
his shore is a haven for ships,  
and his frontier rests on Sidon.
- Issachar, a gelded ass  
lying down in the cattle-pens,  
saw that a settled home was good  
and that the land was pleasant,

x Or lioness.

and after, a manifestation of God's mysterious freedom. 20: The blessing seems to be another version of that in vv. 15-16. 21: *Bring you back*: see Exod.13.19. 22: *Ridge*: in Heb., *sh'chem*; there is a pun here on the place name Shechem. There may be some historical allusion, an obscure one, which is at variance with the peaceful settlement suggested in 33.18-20.

49.1-27: The "Blessing of Jacob." The patriarch portrays the character and destiny of the tribes, these represented by their ancestors. 3-4: A leading tribe in the early period, *Reuben* had acted indecisively (Judg.5.15-16) and dwindled in numbers (Deut.33.6). See 35.22 n. 5-7: On their attack against Shechem, here alluded to, see 34.1-31 n. *Simeon* was later absorbed into the tribe of Judah while the *Levites* assumed a religious status, losing their political character (Deut.10.8-9). 8-12: The passage seems to allude to the reign of David; this provides a clue to the date of the composition of the chapter, which, however, uses earlier material. 14-15: The writer utilizes a folk etymology, whereby *Issachar* means "hired man," in order to explain the



- so he bent his back to the burden  
and submitted to perpetual forced  
labour.
- 16 Dan—how insignificant his people,  
lowly as any tribe in Israel!<sup>y</sup>
- 17 Let Dan be a viper on the road,  
a horned snake on the path,  
who bites the horse's fetlock  
so that the rider tumbles backwards.
- 18 For thy salvation I wait in hope,  
O LORD.
- 19 Gad is raided by raiders,  
and he raids them from the rear.
- 20 Asher shall have rich food as daily  
fare,  
and provide dishes fit for a king.
- 21 Naphtali is a spreading terebinth  
putting forth lovely boughs.
- 22 Joseph is a fruitful tree<sup>z</sup> by a spring  
with branches climbing over the wall.
- 23 The archers savagely attacked him,  
they shot at him and pressed him  
hard,  
24 but their bow was splintered by the  
Eternal  
and the sinews of their arms were  
torn apart  
by the power of the Strong One of  
Jacob,  
by the name of the Shepherd<sup>a</sup> of  
Israel,
- 25 by the God of your father—so may  
he help you,  
by God Almighty—so may he bless  
you  
with the blessings of heaven above,  
the blessings of the deep that lurks  
below.
- 26 The blessings of breast and womb  
and the blessings of your father  
are stronger  
than the blessings of the everlasting  
pools<sup>b</sup>  
and the bounty of the eternal hills.  
They shall be on the head of  
Joseph,
- on the brow of the prince among<sup>c</sup>  
his brothers.
- Benjamin is a ravaging wolf: 27  
in the morning he devours the  
prey,  
in the evening he snatches a share  
of the spoil.'
- These, then, are the twelve tribes of 28  
Israel, and this is what their father  
Jacob said to them, when he blessed  
them each in turn. He gave them his 29  
last charge and said, 'I shall soon be  
gathered to my father's kin; bury me  
with my forefathers in the cave on the  
plot of land which belonged to Ephron  
the Hittite, that is the cave on the plot 30  
of land at Machpelah east of Mamre  
in Canaan, the field which Abraham  
bought from Ephron the Hittite for  
a burial-place. There Abraham was 31  
buried with his wife Sarah; there Isaac  
and his wife Rebecca were buried; and  
there I buried Leah. The land and the 32  
cave on it were bought from the  
Hittites.' When Jacob had finished 33  
giving his last charge to his sons, he  
drew his feet up on to the bed, breathed  
his last, and was gathered to his father's  
kin.
- Then Joseph threw himself upon his 50  
father, weeping and kissing his face.  
He ordered the physicians in his ser- 2  
vice to embalm his father Israel, and  
they did so, finishing the task in forty 3  
days, which was the usual time for  
embalming. The Egyptians mourned  
him for seventy days; and then, when 4  
the days of mourning for Israel were  
over, Joseph approached members of  
Pharaoh's household and said, 'If I can  
count on your goodwill, then speak for 5  
me to Pharaoh; tell him that my  
father made me take an oath, saying,

<sup>y</sup> Or Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.

<sup>z</sup> Or a fruitful ben-tree.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds stone.

<sup>b</sup> Or hills. <sup>c</sup> the prince among; or the one cursed by.

tribe's subordination, possibly to Canaanites. The animal is a domesticated beast. 16–17: The Heb. word for "shall judge" (Tfn. *y*), *yadin*, involves a play on the tribal name. 18: Possibly an invocation, used when the material was read in public. 19: Situated east of the Jordan River, *Gad* was often subject to raids from the east by desert tribes. 20: The fertile Mediterranean coast north of Carmel is meant (see Deut.33.24). 21: *Naphtali* was situated in the beautiful territory around Lake Tiberias. 22: *Joseph*: this tradition is relatively early, since Ephraim and Manasseh have not yet emerged as significant political entities (see 48.5 n.). 25: *Deep*: see 2.6 n.

49.28–50.26: The deaths of Jacob and Joseph. 50.3: *Forty*: 7.4 n. *Seventy*: other sources say that the Egyptians mourned their kings for seventy-two days. Because of Joseph's position, his

- “I am dying. Bury me in the grave that I bought<sup>d</sup> for myself in Canaan.” Ask him to let me go up and bury my father, and afterwards I will return.’
- 6 Pharaoh answered, ‘Go and bury your father, as he has made you swear to do.’
- 7 So Joseph went to bury his father, accompanied by all Pharaoh’s courtiers, the elders of his household, and all
- 8 the elders of Egypt, together with all Joseph’s own household, his brothers, and his father’s household; only their dependants, with the flocks and herds,
- 9 were left in Goshen. He took with him chariots and horsemen; they were a
- 10 very great company. When they came to the threshing-floor of Atad beside the river Jordan, they raised a loud and bitter lament; and there Joseph observed seven days’ mourning for his
- 11 father. When the Canaanites who lived there saw this mourning at the threshing-floor of Atad, they said, ‘How bitterly the Egyptians are mourning!’; accordingly they named the place beside the Jordan Abel-mizraim.<sup>e</sup>
- 12 Thus Jacob’s sons did what he had
- 13 told them to do. They took him to Canaan and buried him in the cave on the plot of land at Machpelah, the land which Abraham had bought as a burial-place from Ephron the Hittite,
- 14 to the east of Mamre. Then, after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him.
- 15 When their father was dead Joseph’s brothers were afraid and said, ‘What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us out for all the harm that we

did to him?’ They therefore approached 16 Joseph with these words: ‘In his last words to us before he died, your father gave us this message for you: “I ask 17 you to forgive your brothers’ crime and wickedness; I know they did you harm.” So now forgive our crime, we beg; for we are servants of your father’s God.’ When they said this to him, Joseph wept. His brothers also wept<sup>f</sup> 18 and prostrated themselves before him; they said, ‘You see, we are your slaves.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be 19 afraid. Am I in the place of God? You 20 meant to do me harm; but God meant to bring good out of it by preserving the lives of many people, as we see to-day. Do not be afraid. I will provide 21 for you and your dependants.’ Thus he comforted them and set their minds at rest.

Joseph remained in Egypt, he and 22 his father’s household. He lived there to be a hundred and ten years old and 23 saw Ephraim’s children to the third generation; he also recognized as his the children of Manasseh’s son Machir. He said to his brothers, ‘I am dying; 24 but God will not fail to come to your aid and take you from here to the land which he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ He made the 25 sons of Israel take an oath, saying, ‘When God thus comes to your aid, you must take my bones with you from here.’ So Joseph died at the age of a 26 hundred and ten. He was embalmed and laid in a coffin in Egypt.

<sup>d</sup> Or dug.

<sup>e</sup> That is Mourning (or Meadow) of Egypt.

<sup>f</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. came.

father is given a royal funeral. 10–11: *Atad*: an unknown location, seemingly not Machpelah of vv. 12–13 (see ch. 23). 18: *Prostrated*: the story concludes by hearkening back to a motif presented at its beginning (37.5–11). 20: *God meant*: see 45.5–8 n. 23: *Recognized as his*: lit. “were born upon the knees of Joseph.” This adoption procedure (see 48.9 n.) signifies the admission of the clans of Machir (Judg.5.14; Num.32.39–40) into the Israelite confederation.

# EXODUS

The migration of Jacob's family to Egypt, undertaken with high expectation and understood as an act of God's grace (Gen. chs. 37-50), becomes the occasion for bondage to the Pharaoh. The promise (Gen.12.1-3; 15.1-21; 17.1-8) now seemed but a delusion. Yet, the day arrived when Israel escaped and survived in the Wilderness. At a sacred mountain she reflected upon the meaning of God's past redemption, and pledged to become a community obedient only to the LORD's will. (The account was handed down in several versions, which were then combined into the present form; see Introduction to the Pentateuch). When subsequent generations heard the stirring story, they found parallels to the disappointments of their times, and also hope for the future.

The book has two major parts: chs. 1-18, relating the oppression, the manner of deliverance and the arrival at the sacred mountain under the leadership of Moses; and chs. 19-40, giving various accounts of the covenant regulations by means of which the community was to govern her life and worship.

Literary and archaeological evidence points to the period of the Nineteenth Egyptian Dynasty (about 1300 B.C.) as the most likely setting for the events.

## *Israel enslaved in Egypt*

1 **T**Hese are the names of the Israelites who entered Egypt with Jacob, each with his household:  
2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah;  
3,4 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan  
5 and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. There were seventy of them all told, all direct descendants of Jacob. Joseph was already in Egypt.  
6 In course of time Joseph died, he and all his brothers and that whole  
7 generation. Now the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they increased in numbers and became very powerful,<sup>a</sup> so that the country was overrun by  
8 them. Then a new king ascended the throne of Egypt, one who knew nothing  
9 of Joseph. He said to his people, 'These Israelites have become too many  
10 and too strong for us. We must take precautions to see that they do not increase any further; or we shall find that, if war breaks out, they will join the enemy and fight against us, and they will become masters of the country.'  
11 So they were made to work in gangs with officers set over them, to break their spirit with heavy labour. This is how Pharaoh's store-cities, Pithom  
12 and Rameses, were built. But the more harshly they were treated, the more

their numbers increased beyond all bounds, until the Egyptians came to loathe the sight of them. So they treated their Israelite slaves with ruthless severity, and made life bitter for them  
13 with cruel servitude, setting them to work on clay and brick-making, and all sorts of work in the fields. In short they made ruthless use of them as slaves in every kind of hard labour.

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah. 'When you are attending the Hebrew women in child-birth', he told them, 'watch as the child is delivered and if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.' But they were God-fearing women. They did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do, but let the boys live. So he summoned those Hebrew midwives and asked them why they had done this and let the boys live. They told Pharaoh that Hebrew women were not like Egyptian women. When they were in labour they gave birth before the midwife could get to them. So God made the midwives prosper, and the people increased in numbers and in strength. God gave the midwives homes and families of their own, because they feared him. Pharaoh then ordered all

<sup>a</sup> Or numerous.

1.1-22: The bondage in Egypt begins. 5: *Seventy*: a round number (Gen.46.27 n.). 7: *Were fruitful*: in keeping with the divine command at creation (Gen.1.28) and with the promise to Abraham (Gen.15.5; 17.5-6). 8: The *new king* may be a member of the Nineteenth Dynasty, which came to power between 1320 and 1310 B.C. 10: The new dynasty, hoping to recover an Asiatic empire, regarded the alien Hebrews (Gen.10.21 n.) along its border as a security risk (compare Gen.42.9-12).

his people to throw every new-born Hebrew boy into the Nile, but to let the girls live.

2 A descendant of Levi married a  
 2 Levite woman who conceived and bore a son. When she saw what a fine child he was, she hid him for three months,  
 3 but she could conceal him no longer. So she got a rush basket for him, made it watertight with clay and tar, laid him in it, and put it among the reeds by the  
 4 bank of the Nile. The child's sister took her stand at a distance to see what  
 5 would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, while her ladies-in-waiting walked along the bank. She noticed the basket among the reeds and sent her slave-girl  
 6 for it. She took it from her and when she opened it, she saw the child. It was crying, and she was filled with pity for it. 'Why,' she said, 'it is a little Hebrew  
 7 boy.' Thereupon the sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and fetch one of the Hebrew women as a wet-nurse to suckle the child for you?'  
 8 Pharaoh's daughter told her to go; so the girl went and called the baby's  
 9 mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Here is the child, suckle him for me, and I will pay you for it myself.' So the woman took the child and  
 10 suckled him. When the child was old enough, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him and called him Moses,<sup>b</sup> 'because', she said, 'I drew<sup>c</sup> him out of the water.'

11 ONE DAY WHEN MOSES WAS GROWN UP, he went out to his own kinsmen and saw them at their heavy labour. He saw an Egyptian strike one of his fellow-  
 12 Hebrews. He looked this way and that, and, seeing there was no one about, he struck the Egyptian down and hid his

body in the sand. When he went out  
 next day, two Hebrews were fighting together. He asked the man who was in the wrong, 'Why are you striking him?'  
 'Who set you up as an officer and judge  
 over us?' the man replied. 'Do you mean to murder me as you murdered the Egyptian?' Moses was alarmed. 'The thing must have become known', he said to himself. When Pharaoh  
 heard of it, he tried to put Moses to death, but Moses made good his escape and settled in the land of Midian.

Now the priest of Midian had seven  
 daughters. One day as Moses sat by a well, they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's sheep. Some shepherds came and drove  
 them away; but Moses got up, took the girls' part and watered their sheep himself. When the girls came back to their  
 father Reuel, he asked, 'How is it that you are back so quickly today?' 'An  
 Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds', they answered; 'and he even drew the water for us and watered the sheep.' 'But where is he then?' he said  
 to his daughters. 'Why did you leave him behind? Go and invite him to eat with us.' So it came about that Moses  
 agreed to live with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She bore him a son, and  
 Moses called him Gershom, 'because', he said, 'I have become an alien<sup>d</sup> living in a foreign land.'

YEARS PASSED, AND THE KING OF EGYPT  
 died, but the Israelites still groaned in slavery. They cried out, and their appeal for rescue from their slavery rose up to God. He heard their groaning  
 and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; he saw the

*b* Heb. Moshah. *c* Heb. verb mashah. *d* Heb. ger.

2.1-10: The birth of Moses. 3: The theme of the exposed child who is rescued and rises to a position of fame is attested elsewhere in the ancient world. Quite similar is the legend of Sargon, king of Akkad (about 2300 B.C.), who was rescued from a bitumen-sealed rush basket. 4: Sister: Miriam (Num.26.59). 7-10: God uses Pharaoh's evil design to prepare for the deliverance of Israel. For a similar theme, see Gen.45.5-8 n. 10: A folk explanation for the child's name is given, in keeping with the details of the story. In reality, *Moses* is an Egyptian name meaning "has begotten a child." It may have been joined, originally, with the name of an Egyptian deity (as in Ra-moses, i.e. Rameses of 1.11).

2.11-22: Moses flees to Midian. 16: *Seven*: see Gen.7.2 n. 18: *Father*: see Judg.1.16.

2.23-4.17: The call of Moses. 23: The *king* may be Seti I, the founder of the Nineteenth Dynasty (1.8 n.), who ruled about fifteen years. The oppressive building programs were continued by his successors, notably Rameses II. 24: *Covenant*: Gen.12.1-3; 26.1-5; 28.13-15.

plight of Israel, and he took heed of it.

3 Moses was minding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, priest of Midian. He led the flock along the side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the  
2 mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in the flame of a burning bush. Moses noticed that, although the bush was on fire, it was  
3 not being burnt up; so he said to himself, 'I must go across to see this wonderful sight. Why does not the bush  
4 burn away?' When the LORD saw that Moses had turned aside to look, he called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses.' And Moses answered, 'Yes,  
5 I am here.' God said, 'Come no nearer; take off your sandals; the place where  
6 you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.' Moses covered his face, for he was afraid to gaze on God.  
7 The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their outcry against their slave-masters. I have taken heed of their  
8 sufferings, and have come down to rescue them from the power of Egypt, and to bring them up out of that country into a fine, broad land; it is a land flowing with milk and honey, the home of Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites,  
9 Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The outcry of the Israelites has now reached me; yes, I have seen the brutality of the  
10 Egyptians towards them. Come now; I will send you to Pharaoh and you shall bring my people Israel out of  
11 Egypt.' 'But who am I', Moses said to God, 'that I should go to Pharaoh, and

that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' God answered, 'I am<sup>e</sup> with you. 12 This shall be the proof that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall all worship God here on this mountain.'

Then Moses said to God, 'If I go to 13 the Israelites and tell them that the God of their forefathers has sent me to them, and they ask me his name, what shall I say?' God answered, 'I AM; that is who I am.<sup>f</sup> Tell them that I AM has sent you to them.' And God said further, 'You must tell the Israelites this, 14 that it is JEHOVAH<sup>g</sup> the God of their forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, who has sent you to them. This is my name for ever; this is my title in every generation. Go and assemble the elders of Israel and tell them that JEHOVAH the God of their forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to you and has said, "I have indeed turned my eyes towards you; I have marked all that has been done to you in Egypt, and I am resolved to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt, into the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." They will listen to you, and then you and the elders of Israel must go to the king of Egypt. Tell him, "It has happened that the LORD the God of the Hebrews met us. So now give us leave to go a three days' journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifice to the LORD our God." I know well that 19

<sup>e</sup> Or I will be; *Heb.* ehyeh.

<sup>f</sup> I AM . . . I am; or I will be what I will be.

<sup>g</sup> The Hebrew consonants are YHWH, probably pronounced Yahweh, but traditionally read Jehovah.

3.1: *Horeb* seems to be a local Midianite shrine, and hence the alien Moses is unaware of its sacred nature (v. 5). It is later to be the site of the giving of the Law (18.5–20.21) and is called Sinai in another version of the tradition (19.1–2). Its location is unknown, but post-Christian tradition placed it in the Sinai Peninsula. 2: *Flame*: on fire as a symbol for the divine presence, see Gen.15.17 n. 5: The removal of *sandals* before entering a sacred place was an ancient custom (Josh.5.15), continued by Muslims until the present. 6: *The God of your forefathers* is an ancient designation for the deity of one's ancestors (Gen.26.24; 49.25). Here, the patriarchal god is identified with Yahweh, the LORD. 8: *Milk and honey* were basic food for the semi-nomadic Israelites, and hence the term describes the desirability of the land to them. 12: *I am*: by folk explanation the divine name (Yahweh) is derived from the verb "to be." Thus, Israel understood the very essence of the deity to be expressed by his name. Actually, the form *YHWH* (v. 15, Tfn. *g*) would be third person ("he is"), but since the deity is depicted as explaining his own name in the first person, the explanation becomes "I am." See also 6.3. 14–15: The meaning of the divine name (v. 12) is repeated and expanded. God's freedom from and control of history are denoted by the phrase, "I will be what I will be" (Tfn. *f*). For another paraphrase, which also expresses the divine freedom, see 33.19. 18: *Three*: a commonly used round number

the king of Egypt will not give you  
 20 leave unless he is compelled. I shall  
 then stretch out my hand and assail the  
 Egyptians with all the miracles I shall  
 work among them. After that he will  
 21 send you away. Further, I will bring  
 this people into such favour with the  
 Egyptians that, when you go, you will  
 22 not go empty-handed. Every woman  
 shall ask her neighbour or any woman  
 who lives in her house for jewellery of  
 silver and gold and for clothing. Load  
 your sons and daughters with them,  
 and plunder Egypt.'

4 Moses answered, 'But they will never  
 believe me or listen to me; they will  
 say, "The LORD did not appear to  
 2 you."' The LORD said, 'What have you  
 there in your hand?' 'A staff', Moses  
 3 answered. The LORD said, 'Throw it on  
 the ground.' Moses threw it down and  
 it turned into a snake. He ran away  
 4 from it, but the LORD said, 'Put your  
 hand out and seize it by the tail.' He  
 did so and gripped it firmly, and it  
 turned back into a staff in his hand.  
 5 'This is to convince the people that the  
 LORD the God of their forefathers, the  
 God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,  
 the God of Jacob, has appeared to  
 6 you.' Then the LORD said, 'Put your  
 hand inside the fold of your cloak.'  
 He did so, and when he drew it out the  
 7 skin was diseased, white as snow. The  
 LORD said, 'Put it back again', and he  
 did so. When he drew it out this time  
 it was as healthy as the rest of his body.  
 8 'Now,' said the LORD, 'if they do not  
 believe you and do not accept the evi-  
 dence of the first sign, they may accept  
 9 the evidence of the second. But if they  
 are not convinced even by these two  
 signs, and will not accept what you say,  
 then fetch some water from the Nile  
 and pour it out on the dry ground, and  
 the water you take from the Nile will  
 turn to blood on the ground.'

10 But Moses said, 'O LORD, I have  
 never been a man of ready speech, never

in my life, not even now that thou hast  
 spoken to me; I am slow and hesitant  
 of speech.' The LORD said to him, 11  
 'Who is it that gives man speech? Who  
 makes him dumb or deaf? Who makes  
 him clear-sighted or blind? Is it not I,  
 the LORD? Go now; I will help your 12  
 speech and tell you what to say.' But 13  
 Moses still protested, 'No, Lord, send  
 whom thou wilt.' At this the LORD grew 14  
 angry with Moses and said, 'Have you  
 not a brother, Aaron the Levite? He,  
 I know, will do all the speaking. He is  
 already on his way out to meet you, and  
 he will be glad indeed to see you. You 15  
 shall speak to him and put the words  
 in his mouth; I will help both of you to  
 speak and tell you both what to do. He 16  
 will do all the speaking to the people  
 for you, he will be the mouthpiece, and  
 you will be the god he speaks for. But 17  
 take this staff, for with it you are to  
 work the signs.'

At length Moses went back to Jethro 18  
 his father-in-law and said, 'Let me  
 return to my kinsfolk in Egypt and see  
 if they are still alive.' Jethro told him  
 to go and wished him well.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES IN MIDIAN 19  
 and said to him, 'Go back to Egypt, for  
 all those who wished to kill you are  
 dead.' So Moses took his wife and 20  
 children, mounted them on an ass and  
 set out for Egypt with the staff of God  
 in his hand. The LORD said to Moses, 21  
 'While you are on your way back to  
 Egypt, keep in mind all the portents I  
 have given you power to show. You  
 shall display these before Pharaoh, but  
 I will make him obstinate and he will  
 not let the people go. Then tell Phar- 22  
 aoh that these are the words of the  
 LORD: "Israel is my first-born son. I 23  
 have told you to let my son go, so that  
 he may worship me. You have refused  
 to let him go, so I will kill your first-  
 born son."

During the journey, while they were 24

(Gen.30.36; 40.13; Exod.2.2). 21-22: See 11.2-3; 12.35-36. 4.1-9: God supplies Moses with three signs of authentication. Israelite tradition presents Moses as able to compete with and triumph over the magicians of Egypt (see 7.11; 8.16-19; 9.10-11).

4.18-31: Moses returns to Egypt. 20: *The staff of God*: see 4.17. 21: Since, in ancient Israelite belief, a human being could hardly defy the divine will, Pharaoh's reluctance must ultimately be a part of Yahweh's plan. 22: *First-born son*: an alternative way of expressing the election of Abraham (Gen.11.10-32 n.). 24-26: This obscure passage seems to be a fragment of a once independent tradition about how a divine being, perhaps the god of the Midianite clan,

encamped for the night, the LORD met  
 25 Moses, meaning to kill him, but Zip-  
 porah picked up a sharp flint, cut off  
 her son's foreskin, and touched him  
 with it, saying, 'You are my blood-  
 26 bridegroom.' So the LORD let Moses  
 alone. Then she said,<sup>h</sup> 'Blood-bride-  
 groom by circumcision.'

27 Meanwhile the LORD had ordered  
 Aaron to go and meet Moses in the  
 wilderness. Aaron went and met him at  
 the mountain of God, and he kissed  
 28 him. Then Moses told Aaron every-  
 thing, the words the LORD had sent him  
 to say and the signs he had commanded  
 29 him to perform. Moses and Aaron  
 went and assembled all the elders of  
 30 Israel. Aaron told them everything that  
 the LORD had said to Moses; he per-  
 formed the signs before the people,  
 31 and they were convinced. They heard  
 that the LORD had shown his concern  
 for the Israelites and seen their misery;  
 and they bowed themselves to the  
 ground in worship.

5 After this, Moses and Aaron came to  
 Pharaoh and said, 'These are the words  
 of the LORD the God of Israel: "Let  
 my people go so that they may keep  
 my pilgrim-feast in the wilderness."'  
 2 'Who is the LORD,' asked Pharaoh,  
 'that I should obey him and let Israel  
 go? I care nothing for the LORD: and  
 3 I tell you I will not let Israel go.' They  
 replied, 'It has happened that the God  
 of the Hebrews met us. So let us go  
 three days' journey into the wilderness  
 to offer sacrifice to the LORD our God,  
 4 or else he will attack us with pestilence  
 or sword.' But the king of Egypt said,  
 'Moses and Aaron, what do you mean  
 by distracting the people from their  
 5 work? Back to your labours! Your  
 people already outnumber the native  
 Egyptians; yet you would have them  
 stop working!'

6 That very day Pharaoh ordered the  
 people's overseers and their foremen

7 not to supply the people with the straw  
 used in making bricks, as they had done  
 hitherto. 'Let them go and collect their  
 own straw, but see that they produce  
 8 the same tally of bricks as before. On  
 no account reduce it. They are a lazy  
 people, and that is why they are clam-  
 ouring to go and offer sacrifice to their  
 9 god. Keep the men hard at work; let  
 them attend to that and take no notice  
 of a pack of lies.' The overseers and  
 10 foremen went out and said to the  
 people, 'Pharaoh's orders are that no  
 more straw is to be supplied. Go and  
 11 get it for yourselves wherever you can  
 find it; but there will be no reduction  
 in your daily task.' So the people scat-  
 12 tered all over Egypt to gather stubble  
 for straw, while the overseers kept  
 13 urging them on, bidding them com-  
 plete, day after day, the same quantity  
 as when straw was supplied. Then the  
 14 Israelite foremen were flogged because  
 they were held responsible by Phara-  
 oah's overseers, who asked them, 'Why  
 did you not complete the usual number  
 of bricks yesterday or today?' So the  
 15 foremen came and appealed to Phara-  
 oah: 'Why do you treat your servants  
 like this?' they said. 'We are given no  
 16 straw, yet they keep on telling us to  
 make bricks. Here are we being flogged,  
 but it is your people's fault.' But Phara-  
 17 oah replied, 'You are lazy, you are  
 lazy. That is why you talk about going  
 to offer sacrifice to the LORD. Now go;  
 18 get on with your work. You will be  
 given no straw, but you must produce  
 the tally of bricks.' When they were  
 19 told that they must not let the daily  
 tally of bricks fall short, the Israelite  
 foremen saw that they were in trouble.  
 As they came out from Pharaoh's  
 20 presence they found Moses and Aaron  
 waiting to meet them, and said, 'May  
 21 this bring the LORD's judgement down  
 upon you: you have made us stink in

<sup>h</sup> Or Therefore women say.

sought the life of Moses' child because he was uncircumcised. Ziporah performs the rite, proclaiming that the child is now a *blood-bridegroom* (perhaps an initiated member of the religious community). The name "Moses" does not occur in the MT; only because the passage appears in its present context is it he who appears to be threatened.

5.1-6.1: **The first audience with Pharaoh.** 1: *Pilgrim-feast*: see 3.18. 2: The gods of powerless foreigners (Hebrews) command little respect from the Pharaoh, who is himself deified in Egyptian religion. 7: Chopped *straw* was added to the wet clay to facilitate drying and bonding. 9: The request to observe the festival is regarded as a pretext to leave the country permanently.

the nostrils of Pharaoh and his subjects; you have put a sword in their hands to kill us.'

22 Moses went back to the LORD, and said, 'Why, O LORD, hast thou brought misfortune on this people? And why  
23 didst thou ever send me? Since I first went to Pharaoh to speak in thy name he has heaped misfortune on thy people and thou hast done nothing at all to  
6 rescue them.' The LORD answered, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. In the end Pharaoh will let them go with a strong hand, nay, will drive them from his country with an outstretched arm.'

2 God spoke to Moses and said, 'I am  
3 the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. But I did not let myself be known to  
4 them by my name JEHOVAH.<sup>i</sup> Moreover, I made a covenant with them to give them Canaan, the land where they  
5 settled for a time as foreigners. And now I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, enslaved by the Egyptians, and I have called my covenant to mind.  
6 Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the LORD. I will release you from your labours in Egypt. I will rescue you from slavery there. I will redeem you with arm outstretched and with mighty  
7 acts of judgement. I will adopt you as my people, and I will become your God. You shall know that I, the LORD, am your God, the God who releases  
8 you from your labours in Egypt. I will lead you to the land which I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it you for your possession. I am the LORD."'

9 Moses repeated these words to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him; they had become impatient because of their cruel slavery.

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and  
11 said, 'Go and tell Pharaoh king of

Egypt to set the Israelites free to leave his country.' Moses made answer in the presence of the LORD, 'If the Israelites do not listen to me, how will Pharaoh listen to such a halting speaker as I am?'

Thus the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them their commission to the Israelites and to Pharaoh, namely that they should bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

THESE WERE THE HEADS OF FATHERS' families:

Sons of Reuben, Israel's eldest son: Enoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these were the families of Reuben.

Sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Saul, who was the son of a Canaanite woman; these were the families of Simeon.

These were the names of the sons of Levi in order of seniority: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Levi lived to be a hundred and thirty-seven.

Sons of Gershon, family by family: Libni and Shimei.

Sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Kohath lived to be a hundred and thirty-three.

Sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi.

These were the families of Levi in order of seniority. Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived to be a hundred and thirty-seven.

Sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg and Zichri.

Sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan and Sithri.

Aaron married Elisheba, who was the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

Sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah and Ab-

<sup>i</sup> See note on 3. 15.

<sup>j</sup> Verses 14-16: cp. Gen. 46. 8-11; Num. 26. 5, 6, 12, 13.

6.2-7.7: An alternative account of Moses' commission (compare 3.1-4.17), editorially placed so that it now serves as a reaffirmation of his call after Pharaoh's negative response. 3: *God Almighty*: see Gen.17.1 n.; 49.25. According to some modern interpreters, the Israelite twelve-tribal league (Gen.29.31-30.24 n.) arose only after the conquest of Canaan, and included clans, escaped from Egypt, who previously had not worshiped Yahweh (3.14-15 n.), and other clans who traced their worship of him back to primeval time (Gen.4.26). Later, all Israel accepted the Exod. tradition as her own (1.1-5) and identified Yahweh with her former deities (3.12 n.). 7: *My people . . . your God*: the essence of the covenant relationship. 13-27: There is an alternate account of the commission of Moses in vv. 13,26-27; this brief account reflects almost nothing of the elaborate narrative in the preceding and ensuing chapters. The genealogy (vv. 14-25),



iasaph; these were the Korahite families.

25 Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These were the heads of the Levite families, family by family.

26 It was this Aaron, together with Moses, to whom the LORD said, 'Bring the Israelites out of Egypt, mustered in their tribal hosts.' These were the men who told Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites leave Egypt. It was this same Moses and Aaron.

28 WHEN THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES IN  
29 Egypt he said, 'I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.' Moses made answer in the presence of the LORD, 'I am a halting speaker; how will Pharaoh listen to me?' The LORD answered Moses, 'See now, I have made you like a god for Pharaoh, with your brother Aaron as  
2 your spokesman. You must tell your brother Aaron all I bid you say, and he will tell Pharaoh, and Pharaoh will let the Israelites go out of his country;  
3 but I will make him stubborn. Then will I show sign after sign and portent after portent in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not listen to you, so I will assert my power in Egypt, and with mighty acts of judgement I will bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt  
5 in their tribal hosts. When I put forth my power against the Egyptians and bring the Israelites out from them, then Egypt will know that I am the  
6 LORD.' So Moses and Aaron did exactly as the LORD had commanded.  
7 At the time when they spoke to Pharaoh, Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 8  
'If Pharaoh demands some portent 9  
from you, then you, Moses, must say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it down in front of Pharaoh, and it will turn into a serpent."' When Moses 10  
and Aaron came to Pharaoh, they did as the LORD had told them. Aaron threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and it turned into a serpent. At this, Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians too did the same thing by their spells. Every 12  
man threw his staff down, and each staff turned into a serpent; but Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs. Pharaoh, 13  
however, was obstinate; as the LORD had foretold, he would not listen to Moses and Aaron.

Then the LORD said to Moses, 14  
'Pharaoh is obdurate: he has refused to set the people free. Go to him in the morning on his way out to the river. Stand and wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take with you the staff that turned into a snake. Say this 16  
to him: "The LORD the God of the Hebrews sent me to bid you let his people go in order to worship him in the wilderness. So far you have not listened to his words; so now the LORD 17  
says, 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD.' With this rod that I have in my hand, I shall now strike the water in the Nile and it will be changed into blood. The fish will die and the 18  
river will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from the Nile." ' The LORD then told Moses to 19  
say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch your hand out over the waters

which seems pointed toward emphasizing the role of Aaron and his relation to Moses, was apparently once independent and self-contained. 7.3: *Stubborn*: see 4.21 n.

7.8-13: An alternative account of the first audience with Pharaoh, varying considerably in detail from 5.1-6.1. The miracles used to authenticate Moses to the people of Israel (4.1-9) are here understood as the means of his authentication to Pharaoh. As it now stands, the passage serves as introduction to the account of the even greater miracles (the ten plagues). It took its final shape when the Aaronite priesthood ruled Israel, and hence it enhances the role of Aaron.

7.14-11.10: The ten plagues. This section, inspired by and meant to serve as a preface for Israel's miraculous departure from Egypt (chs. 12-15), presents dramatic episodes in which Pharaoh alternately agrees and refuses to let Israel realize her destiny, typifying the reversals which Israel would experience throughout her history and encouraging the belief that the promise to the patriarchs will ultimately be realized. Although each plague may rest upon a natural phenomenon enhanced through cultic recitation, the literary purpose here is to ridicule the deities of Egypt as forces of nature under Yahweh's control.

7.14-25: The first plague is directed against the deified Nile upon which all life in Egypt depends. Its annual inundation replenishes (and fertilizes) the soil. 17: Pharaoh has professed

of Egypt, its rivers and its streams, and over every pool and cistern, to turn them into blood. There shall be blood throughout the whole of Egypt, blood even in their wooden bowls and jars of stone.' So Moses and Aaron did as the LORD had commanded. He lifted up his staff and struck the water of the Nile in the sight of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish died and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood everywhere in Egypt. But the Egyptian magicians did the same thing by their spells; and still Pharaoh remained obstinate, as the LORD had foretold, and did not listen to Moses and Aaron. He turned away, went into his house and dismissed the matter from his mind. Then the Egyptians all dug for drinking water round about the river, because they could not drink from the waters of the Nile itself. This lasted for seven days from the time when the LORD struck the Nile.

**8** The LORD then told Moses to go into Pharaoh's presence and say to him, 'These are the words of the LORD: "Let my people go in order to worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will plague the whole of your territory with frogs. The Nile shall swarm with them. They shall come up from the river into your house, into your bedroom and on to your bed, into the houses of your courtiers and your people, into your ovens and your kneading-troughs. The frogs shall clamber over you, your people, and your courtiers."' Then the LORD told Moses to say to Aaron, 'Take your staff in your hand and stretch it out over the rivers, streams, and pools, to bring up frogs upon the land of Egypt.' So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered all the land. The magicians did the same thing

by their spells: they too brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. 'Pray to the LORD', he said, 'to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.' Moses said, 'Of your royal favour, appoint a time when I may intercede for you and your courtiers and people, so that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, and none be left except in the Nile.' 'Tomorrow', Pharaoh said. 'It shall be as you say,' replied Moses, 'so that you may know there is no one like our God, the LORD. The frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, your courtiers, and your people: none shall be left except in the Nile.' Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh's presence, and Moses appealed to the LORD to remove the frogs which he had brought on Pharaoh. The LORD did as Moses had asked, and in house and courtyard and in the open the frogs all perished. They piled them into countless heaps and the land stank; but when Pharaoh found that he was given relief he became obdurate; as the LORD had foretold, he did not listen to Moses and Aaron.

The LORD then told Moses to say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust on the ground, and it will turn into maggots throughout the land of Egypt', and they obeyed. Aaron stretched out his staff and struck the dust, and it turned into maggots on man and beast. All the dust turned into maggots throughout the land of Egypt. The magicians tried to produce maggots in the same way by their spells, but they failed. The maggots were everywhere, on man and beast. 'It is the finger of God', said the magicians to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh remained obstinate; as the LORD had foretold, he did not listen to them.

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no such knowledge in 5.2. **19:** On Aaron's role, see 7.8-13 n. **22:** The feat of the magicians is an embellishment meant to heighten the contest between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt.

**8.1-15:** The second plague is directed against the frog-goddess Heqet. It follows naturally upon the first, since the mud of the Nile's overflow could serve as a breeding place. **8:** Thus Pharaoh indirectly acknowledges Yahweh's existence for the first time.

**8.16-19:** The third plague follows naturally from the previous plague, since vermin could breed in the decaying carcasses of the frogs. **18:** The failure of the magicians heightens the drama and leads us toward Yahweh's ultimate victory. **19:** The *finger* or "hand" of God is an Ancient Near Eastern idiom for a manifestation of divine power (Ps.8.3; Lk.11.20).

20 The LORD told Moses to rise early in the morning and stand in Pharaoh's path as he went out to the river and to say to him, 'These are the words of the LORD: "Let my people go in order to  
21 worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies upon you, your courtiers, your people, and your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with the swarms and so shall all the land they live in, but on that day I will make an exception of Goshen, the land where my people live: there shall be no swarms there. Thus you shall know that I, the  
22 LORD, am here in the land. I will make a distinction between my people and yours. Tomorrow this sign shall appear." ' The LORD did this; dense swarms of flies infested Pharaoh's house and those of his courtiers; throughout Egypt the land was threatened with ruin by the swarms. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'Go and sacrifice to your God, but in this country.' 'That we cannot do', replied Moses, 'because the victim we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God is an abomination to the Egyptians. If the Egyptians see us offer such an animal, will they not stone us to death? We must go a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he commands us.' 'I will let you go,' said Pharaoh, 'and you shall sacrifice to your God in the wilderness; only do not go far.  
29 Now intercede for me.' Moses answered, 'As soon as I leave you I will intercede with the LORD. Tomorrow the swarms will depart from Pharaoh, his courtiers, and his people. Only let not Pharaoh trifle any more with the people by preventing them from going to sacrifice to the LORD.' Then Moses left Pharaoh and interceded with the  
31 LORD. The LORD did as Moses had

said; he removed the swarms from Pharaoh, his courtiers, and his people; not one was left. But once again Pharaoh became obdurate and did not let the people go.

The LORD said to Moses, 'Go into Pharaoh's presence and say to him, "These are the words of the LORD the God of the Hebrews: 'Let my people go in order to worship me.' If you refuse to let them go and still keep your hold on them, the LORD will strike your grazing herds, your horses and asses, your camels, cattle, and sheep with a terrible pestilence. But the LORD will make a distinction between Israel's herds and those of the Egyptians. Of all that belong to Israel not a single one shall die.'" ' The LORD fixed a time and said, 'Tomorrow I will do this throughout the land.' The next day the LORD struck. All the herds of Egypt died, but from the herds of the Israelites not one single beast died. Pharaoh inquired and was told that not a beast from the herds of Israel had died; and yet he remained obdurate and did not let the people go.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Take handfuls of soot from a kiln. Moses shall toss it into the air in Pharaoh's sight, and it will turn into a fine dust over the whole of Egypt. All over Egypt it will become festering boils on man and beast.' They took the soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air and it produced festering boils on man and beast. The magicians were no match for Moses because of the boils, which attacked them and all the Egyptians. But the LORD made Pharaoh obstinate; as the LORD had foretold to Moses, he did not listen to Moses and Aaron.

The LORD then told Moses to rise early in the morning, present himself

8.20-32: The fourth plague is the mature larvae of the previous plague. 22: The exemption of Goshen demonstrates that the plagues are not natural catastrophes, and heightens the drama. 26-27: Whether the *abomination* represents an unstated Egyptian taboo, or whether it is a literary embellishment for dramatic effect, is unclear. Compare Gen.43.32; 46.34. 28: For Pharaoh's suspicions of Moses' true intent, see 5.9 n.

9.1-7: The fifth plague is directed, in part, against the bovine-deities Hathor and Apis. It may be connected with the previous plague as a disease spread by flies. 4: *Distinction*: see 8.22 n.

9.8-12: The sixth plague. This account may be a variant of the previous one. In any case, this plague does not seem to have been immediately consecutive; beasts presumably killed by the fifth plague are here afflicted as if anew.

before Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘These are the words of the LORD the God of the Hebrews: “Let my people go in order to worship me. This time I will strike home with all my plagues against you, your courtiers, and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. By now I could have stretched out my hand, and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have vanished from the earth. I have let you live only to show you my power and to spread my fame throughout the land. Since you still obstruct my people and will not let them go, tomorrow at this time I will send a violent hailstorm, such as has never been in Egypt from its first beginnings until now. Send now and bring your herds under cover, and everything you have out in the open field. If anything, whether man or beast, which happens to be in the open, is not brought in, the hail will fall on it, and it will die.”’ Those of Pharaoh’s subjects who feared the word of the LORD hurried their slaves and cattle into their houses. But those who did not take to heart the word of the LORD left their slaves and cattle in the open. The LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand towards the sky to bring down hail on the whole land of Egypt, on man and beast and every growing thing throughout the land.’ Moses stretched out his staff towards the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, with fire flashing down to the ground. The LORD rained down hail on the land of Egypt, hail and fiery flashes through the hail, so heavy that there had been nothing like it in all Egypt from the time that Egypt became a nation. Throughout Egypt the hail struck everything in the fields, both man and beast; it beat down every growing thing and shattered every tree. Only in

the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was there no hail.

Pharaoh sent and summoned Moses and Aaron. ‘This time I have sinned’, he said; ‘the LORD is in the right; I and my people are in the wrong. Intercede with the LORD, for we can bear no more of this thunder and hail. I will let you go; you need wait no longer.’ Moses said, ‘When I leave the city I will spread out my hands in prayer to the LORD. The thunder shall cease, and there shall be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s. But you and your subjects—I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God.’ (The flax and barley were destroyed because the barley was in the ear and the flax in bud, but the wheat and spelt were not destroyed because they come later.) Moses left Pharaoh’s presence, went out of the city and lifted up his hands to the LORD in prayer: the thunder and hail ceased, and no more rain fell. When Pharaoh saw that the downpour, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again, he and his courtiers, and became obdurate. So Pharaoh remained obstinate; as the LORD had foretold through Moses, he did not let the people go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go into Pharaoh’s presence. I have made him and his courtiers obdurate, so that I may show these my signs among them, and so that you can tell your children and grandchildren the story: how I made sport of the Egyptians, and what signs I showed among them. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.’ Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, ‘These are the words of the LORD the God of the Hebrews: “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go in order to worship me. If

9.13-35: The seventh plague. 15-16: An explanation for the persistence of the oppression is offered, meant to comfort later Israel in similar circumstances. 19: That herds abound, despite the fifth plague (see 9.8-12 n.), suggests that we do not have a unified chronicle of consecutive historical events. 20: Elements of the Egyptian people begin to acknowledge Yahweh’s lordship, emphasizing Pharaoh’s stubbornness and setting the stage for the climactic plague. 27: The narrative is advanced by the initial confession of failure by Pharaoh. 31-32: This comment, perhaps editorial, explains how, in the following plague, there was something left for the locusts to devour.

10.1-20: The eighth plague. Swarms of locusts were known and feared throughout the Ancient Near East.

5 you refuse to let my people go, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country. They shall cover the face of the land so that it cannot be seen. They shall eat up the last remnant left you by the hail. They shall devour every tree that grows in your country-side.  
 6 Your houses and your courtiers' houses, every house in Egypt, shall be full of them; your fathers never saw the like nor their fathers before them; such a thing has not happened from their time until now." He turned and left  
 7 Pharaoh's presence. Pharaoh's courtiers said to him, 'How long must we be caught in this man's toils? Let their menfolk go and worship the LORD their God. Do you not know by now that  
 8 Egypt is ruined?' So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, 'You may go and worship the LORD your God; but who exactly  
 9 is to go?' 'All,' said Moses, 'young and old, boys and girls, sheep and cattle; for we have to keep the LORD's pilgrim-  
 10 feast.' Pharaoh replied, 'Very well then; take your dependants with you when you go; and the LORD be with you. But beware, there is trouble in  
 11 store for you. No, your menfolk may go and worship the LORD, for that is all you asked.' So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.  
 12 Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over Egypt so that the locusts may come and invade the land and devour all the vegetation in it, everything the hail has left.'  
 13 Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD sent a wind roaring in from the east all that day and all that night. When morning came, the east wind had brought the  
 14 locusts. They invaded the whole land of Egypt, and settled on all its territory in swarms so dense that the like of them had never been seen before, nor  
 15 ever will be again. They covered the surface of the whole land till it was black with them. They devoured all

the vegetation and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had spared. There was no green left on tree or plant throughout all Egypt. Pharaoh hastily  
 16 summoned Moses and Aaron. 'I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you', he said. 'Forgive my sin,  
 17 I pray, just this once. Intercede with the LORD your God and beg him only to remove this deadly plague from me.'  
 18 Moses left Pharaoh and interceded with the LORD. The LORD changed the  
 19 wind into a westerly gale, which carried the locusts away and swept them into the Red Sea.<sup>k</sup> There was not a single  
 locust left in all the territory of Egypt. But the LORD made Pharaoh obstinate,  
 20 and he did not let the Israelites go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, 21  
 'Stretch out your hand towards the sky so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness that can be  
 22 felt.' Moses stretched out his hand towards the sky, and it became pitch  
 23 dark throughout the land of Egypt for three days. Men could not see one  
 24 another; for three days no one stirred from where he was. But there was no  
 darkness wherever the Israelites lived. Pharaoh summoned Moses. 'Go', he  
 25 said, 'and worship the LORD. Your dependants may go with you; but your  
 26 flocks and herds must be left with us.' But Moses said, 'No, you must your-  
 27 self supply us with animals for sacrifice and whole-offering to the LORD our  
 28 God; and our own flocks must go with us too—not a hoof must be left behind.  
 We may need animals from our own flocks to worship the LORD our God; we ourselves cannot tell until we are  
 29 there how we are to worship the LORD.' The LORD made Pharaoh obstinate,  
 and he refused to let them go. 'Out!  
 30 Pester me no more!' he said to Moses. 'Take care you do not see my face  
 again, for on the day you do, you die.' 'You are right,' said Moses; 'I shall  
 31 never see your face again.'

<sup>k</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

10.21–29: The ninth plague is possibly directed against the sun-god. 21: A darkness that can be felt adequately describes a "hamsin," a hot, dust-laden wind from the desert, covering the land with an eerie gloom during which breathing becomes difficult. But that there was no darkness where the Israelites dwelled (v. 23) suggests something supernatural. 28: With Pharaoh's threat, on the day you see my face again *you die*, it is obvious that the plagues are not endless; rather their climax is now at hand.

11 Then the LORD said to Moses, 'One last plague I will bring upon Pharaoh and Egypt. After that he will let you go; he will send you packing, as a man dismisses a rejected bride. Let the people be told that men and women alike should ask their neighbours for jewellery of silver and gold.' The LORD made the Egyptians well-disposed towards them, and, moreover, Moses was a very great man in Egypt in the eyes of Pharaoh's courtiers and of the people. 4 Moses then said, 'These are the words of the LORD: "At midnight I will go out among the Egyptians. 5 Every first-born creature in the land of Egypt shall die: the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, the first-born of the slave-girl at the hand-mill, and all the first-born of the cattle. 6 All Egypt will send up a great cry of anguish, a cry the like of which has never been heard before, nor ever will be again. But among all Israel not a dog's tongue shall be so much as scratched, no man or beast be hurt." Thus you shall know that the LORD does make a distinction between Egypt 8 and Israel. Then all these courtiers of yours will come down to me, prostrate themselves and cry, "Go away, you and all the people who follow at your heels." After that I will go away.' Then Moses left Pharaoh's presence hot with anger. 9 The LORD said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you; I will therefore show still more portents in the land of 10 Egypt.' All these portents had Moses and Aaron shown in the presence of Pharaoh, and yet the LORD made him obstinate, and he did not let the Israelites leave the country.

*The institution of the Passover*

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES AND AARON IN 12 Egypt: This month is for you the first of 2 months; you shall make it the first month of the year. Speak to the whole 3 community of Israel and say to them: On the tenth day of this month let each man take a lamb or a kid for his family, one for each household, but if a house- 4 hold is too small for one lamb or one kid, then the man and his nearest neighbour may take one between them. They shall share the cost, taking into account both the number of persons and the amount each of them eats. Your lamb or kid must be without 5 blemish, a yearling male. You may take equally a sheep or a goat. You must 6 have it in safe keeping until the fourteenth day of this month, and then all the assembled community of Israel shall slaughter the victim between dusk and dark. They must take some of the 7 blood and smear it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of every house in which they eat the lamb. On that 8 night they shall eat the flesh roast on the fire; they shall eat it with unleavened cakes and bitter herbs. You 9 are not to eat any of it raw or even boiled in water, but roasted, head, shins, and entrails. You shall not leave 10 any of it till morning; if anything is left over until morning, it must be destroyed by fire.

This is the way in which you must eat 11 it: you shall have your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand, and you must eat in urgent haste. It is the LORD'S Passover. On that night I shall pass through the 12 land of Egypt and kill every first-born

11.1-10: **The announcement of a final plague.** 8: Up to this point, the context suggests that Moses' speech is to the Hebrews. Here, however, the Pharaoh is addressed, despite 10.28. Apparently, we have a second account of the final confrontation between the two leaders. 10: Probably an editorial summary of the plague accounts, not a direct continuation of 11.1-9.

12.1-27: **Preparation for the Passover.** 2: *The first month of the year* is reckoned as at Passover time, the month of Nisan (March-April), in keeping with the late, postexilic calendar. Thus, vv. 1-20 belong to a late stage of the tradition; in the preexilic calendar, the new year began in autumn (23.16 n.; 34.22). 3-6: This annual sacrifice of a lamb or a goat at the coming of spring may have had its origins in a pre-Mosaic shepherds' festival, meant both to insure fertility and to preserve the newborn lambs during the nomadic pasturing. Indeed, it may have been this traditional festival which Moses demanded that the people be allowed to observe (5.1; 10.9). 11-13: The origin of the old festival is now connected with Israel's history: the people must be ready to move, not to new pasture, but to the realization of God's promise in the land of Canaan. The name *Passover*, whose original meaning is uncertain, is now connected with the impending deliverance from Egypt. 12: *Against all the gods of Egypt*: see 7.14-11.10 n.

of man and beast. Thus will I execute judgement, I the LORD, against all the gods of Egypt. And as for you, the blood will be a sign on the houses in which you are: when I see the blood I will pass over<sup>l</sup> you; the mortal blow shall not touch you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 You shall keep this day as a day of remembrance, and make it a pilgrim-feast, a festival of the LORD; you shall keep it generation after generation as a rule for all time. For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes. On the very first day you shall rid your houses of leaven; from the first day to the seventh anyone who eats leavened bread shall be outlawed from Israel. On the first day there shall be a sacred assembly and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly: on these days no work shall be done, except what must be done to provide food for everyone; and that will be allowed. You shall observe these commandments because this was the very day on which I brought you out of Egypt in your tribal hosts. You shall observe this day from generation to generation as a rule for all time.

18 You shall eat unleavened cakes in the first month from the evening which begins the fourteenth day until the evening which begins the twenty-first day. For seven days no leaven may be found in your houses, for anyone who eats anything fermented shall be outlawed from the community of Israel, be he foreigner or native. You must eat nothing fermented. Wherever you live you must eat your cakes unleavened.

21 Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go at once and get sheep for your families and slaughter the Passover. Then take a bunch of marjoram,<sup>m</sup> dip it in the blood in the basin<sup>n</sup> and smear some blood from the basin<sup>o</sup> on the lintel and the two door-posts. Nobody may go out through the door of his house till

morning. The LORD will go through 23 Egypt and strike it, but when he sees the blood on the lintel and the two door-posts, he will pass over that door and will not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you. You shall keep 24 this as a rule for you and your children for all time. When you enter the land 25 which the LORD will give you as he promised, you shall observe this rite. Then, when your children ask you, 26 "What is the meaning of this rite?" you shall say, "It is the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses." The people bowed down and prostrated themselves.

The Israelites went and did all that 28 the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; and by midnight the LORD had 29 struck down every first-born in Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh on his throne to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon, and the first-born of cattle. Before night was over Pharaoh 30 rose, he and all his courtiers and all the Egyptians, and a great cry of anguish went up, because not a house in Egypt was without its dead. Pharaoh sum- 31 moned Moses and Aaron while it was still night and said, 'Up with you! Be off, and leave my people, you and your Israelites. Go and worship the LORD, as you ask; take your sheep and cattle, 32 and go; and ask God's blessing on me also.' The Egyptians urged on the 33 people and hurried them out of the country, 'or else', they said, 'we shall all be dead.' The people picked up their 34 dough before it was leavened, wrapped their kneading-troughs in their cloaks, and slung them on their shoulders. Meanwhile the Israelites had done as 35 Moses had told them, asking the Egyptians for jewellery of silver and gold and for clothing. As the LORD had 36

<sup>l</sup> Or stand guard over.  
<sup>n</sup> Or on the threshold.

<sup>m</sup> Or hyssop.  
<sup>o</sup> Or from the threshold.

15: The festival of *unleavened cakes*, probably an ancient Canaanite agricultural rite to celebrate the barley harvest, is here joined to the pastoral Passover festival and is connected in origin with Israel's impending departure. The absence of leaven, originally prohibited because it was considered ritually impure, is now attributed to the need for haste. 22: *Marjoram*: an aromatic plant often used for ritual purposes (Lev.14.4; Num.19.6). 23: The *destroyer*, the death-demon of the old shepherds' festival, is reinterpreted as an agent of the LORD.

12.28-36: The tenth plague, continuing the account of 11.1-10.

made the Egyptians well-disposed towards them, they let them have what they asked; in this way they plundered the Egyptians.

*The exodus from Egypt*

37 THE ISRAELITES SET OUT FROM RAMESES on the way to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, not counting dependants. And with them too went a large company of every kind, and cattle in great numbers, both flocks and herds. The dough they had brought from Egypt they baked into unleavened cakes, because there was no leaven; for they had been driven out of Egypt and allowed no time even to get food ready for themselves.

40 The Israelites had been settled in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. At the end of four hundred and thirty years, on this very day, all the tribes of the LORD came out of Egypt.

42 This was a night of vigil as the LORD waited to bring them out of Egypt. It is the LORD's night; all Israelites keep their vigil generation after generation.

43 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: These are the rules for the Passover.

44 No foreigner may partake of it; any bought slave may eat it if you have circumcised him; no stranger or hired man may eat it. Each lamb must be eaten inside the one house, and you must not take any of the flesh outside the house. You must not break a single bone of it. The whole community of Israel shall keep this feast. If there are aliens living with you and they are to keep the Passover to the LORD, every male of them must be circumcised, and

then he can take part; he shall rank as native-born. No one who is uncircumcised may eat of it. The same law shall apply both to the native-born and to the alien who is living among you.

The Israelites did all that the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; and on this very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt mustered in their tribal hosts.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'Every first-born, the first birth of every womb among the Israelites, you must dedicate to me, both man and beast; it is mine.'

Then Moses said to the people, 'Remember this day, the day on which you have come out of Egypt, the land of slavery, because the LORD by the strength of his hand has brought you out. No leaven may be eaten this day, for today, in the month of Abib, is the day of your exodus; and when the LORD has brought you into the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites, the land which he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, then you must observe this rite in this same month. For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes, and on the seventh day there shall be a pilgrim-feast of the LORD. Only unleavened cakes shall be eaten during the seven days; nothing fermented and no leaven shall be seen throughout your territory. On that day you shall tell your son, "This commemorates what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt." You shall have the record of it as a sign upon your hand, and upon your forehead as a reminder, to make sure that the law of the LORD is always on your lips, because the LORD with a strong

12.37-13.22: Israel moves to the border of Egypt. 37: *Rameses*: one of the store-cities which the Hebrews had built (1.11). *Six hundred thousand*: for how the figure was derived, see Num. 1.17-46. 40: *Four hundred and thirty*: this length of stay differs from Gen.15.13 (four hundred years) and from Gen.15.16 (four generations; compare 6.16-20, which lists only four generations between Jacob and Moses.) 43-49: Supplementary regulations about the Passover, related to 12.1-27. The mention of *bought slave*, *hired man*, and *native-born* presupposes social conditions after the later settlement in the agricultural setting of Canaan. 13.1-16: Additional Passover regulations, not directly related to those in ch. 12. 2: The *first-born* of animals must be sacrificed to Yahweh in thanks and in recognition of his lordship; so too, the first yield of the harvest (Deut.26.1-2). For the exclusion of humans, see v. 13. 4: *Abib*: the name of the month during which Passover fell according to the preexilic calendar (contrast 12.2 n.). This way of dating suggests a relatively early age for the formulation of this unit of material. 8: *Me...I*: when the story of Yahweh's deliverance is related annually in the cult, it becomes a personal and contemporary experience. 9: *Sign*: an old practice of placing a mark on the hand or an amulet



10 hand brought you out of Egypt. This is a rule, and you shall keep it at the appointed time from year to year.

11 'When the LORD has brought you into the land of the Canaanites as he swore to you and to your forefathers, and given it to you, you shall surrender to the LORD the first birth of every womb; and of all first-born offspring of your cattle the males belong to the LORD. Every first-born male ass you may redeem with a kid or lamb, but if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. Every first-born among your sons you must redeem. When in time to come your son asks you what this means, you shall say to him, "By the strength of his hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh proved stubborn and refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the first-born in Egypt both man and beast. That is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first birth of every womb if it is a male and redeem every first-born of my sons. You shall have the record of it as a sign upon your hand, and upon your forehead as a phylactery, because by the strength of his hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

17 NOW WHEN PHARAOH LET THE PEOPLE go, God did not guide them by the road towards the Philistines, although that was the shortest; for he said, 'The people may change their minds when they see war before them, and turn back to Egypt.' So God made them go round by way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea; and the fifth genera-

tion of Israelites departed from Egypt.

Moses took the bones of Joseph 19 with him, because Joseph had exacted an oath from the Israelites: 'Some day', he said, 'God will show his care for you, and then, as you go, you must take my bones with you.'

They set out from Succoth and encamped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. And all the time the LORD went before them, by day a pillar of cloud to guide them on their journey, by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel night and day. The pillar of cloud never left its place in front of the people by day, nor the pillar of fire by night.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 14 'Speak to the Israelites: they are to turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth,<sup>p</sup> between Migdol and the sea to the east of Baal-zephon; your camp shall be opposite, by the sea. Pharaoh will then think that the Israelites are finding themselves in difficult country, and are hemmed in by the wilderness. I will make Pharaoh obstinate, and he will pursue them, so that I may win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.' The Israelites did as they were bidden.

When the king of Egypt was told that the Israelites had slipped away, he and his courtiers changed their minds completely, and said, 'What have we done? We have let our Israelite slaves go free!' So Pharaoh put horses to his chariot, and took his troops with him. He took

<sup>p</sup> Or where the desert tracks begin.

on the forehead as a sign of tribal membership is reinterpreted as a reminder of Yahweh's deliverance from Egypt. Compare Gen.4.15 n.; Deut.6.6-8. 13: Human sacrifice, particularly of the firstborn, was practiced in the Ancient Near East (Deut.12.31; 1 Kgs.16.34; 2 Kgs.16.3), but Israel was commanded to substitute an animal. See Gen.22.2 n. 14-15: The explanation of the ancient practice of substitution is here based on the events of the Passover in an attempt to make the prohibition more authoritative. 16: *Phylactery*: a small leather case containing a verse of Scripture, worn originally as a reminder of one's identity (v. 9 n.). 17: *Philistines*: Gen.9.27 n.; the main route to Canaan, here avoided, was along the seacoast, and would have been guarded by garrisons of Egyptian troops. 18: *Red Sea*: lit. "Sea of Reeds," and hence a shallow papyrus marsh on the border of Egypt. The Red Sea is the name of the Gulf of Elath, much further east. 19: See Gen.50.25. 21: It is uncertain whether the *cloud* and *fire* derive from ordinary practices in travel (such as the ancient custom of carrying a burning brazier at the head of a caravan) or are, instead, symbols of the divine presence (Gen.15.17 n.); the latter seems preferable, for the intent is to suggest the supernatural. The Canaanites personified the clouds on the fringes of a storm as minor deities (messengers) who announced the impending arrival of the storm-god.

14.1-31: **The deliverance at the sea.** At the moment when the LORD's promise of deliverance

six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt, with a commander in each. Then Pharaoh king of Egypt, made obstinate by the LORD, pursued the Israelites as they marched defiantly away. The Egyptians, all Pharaoh's chariots and horses, cavalry and infantry, pursued them and overtook them encamped beside the sea by Pi-hahiroth to the east of Baal-zephon. Pharaoh was almost upon them when the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians close behind. In their terror they clamoured to the LORD for help and said to Moses, 'Were there no graves in Egypt, that you should have brought us here to die in the wilderness? See what you have done to us by bringing us out of Egypt! Is not this just what we meant when we said in Egypt, "Leave us alone; let us be slaves to the Egyptians"? We would rather be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the wilderness.' 'Have no fear,' Moses answered; 'stand firm and see the deliverance that the LORD will bring you this day; for as sure as you see the Egyptians now, you will never see them again. The LORD will fight for you; so hold your peace.'

The LORD said to Moses, 'What is the meaning of this clamour? Tell the Israelites to strike camp. And you shall raise high your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea and cleave it in two, so that the Israelites can pass through the sea on dry ground. For my part I will make the Egyptians obstinate and they will come after you; thus will I win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and his army, chariots and cavalry all together. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I win glory for myself at the expense of their Pharaoh, his chariots and cavalry.'

The angel of God, who had kept in front of the Israelites, moved away to the rear. The pillar of cloud moved from the front and took its place be-

hind them and so came between the Egyptians and the Israelites. And the cloud brought on darkness and early nightfall, so that contact was lost throughout the night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea away all night with a strong east wind and turned the sea-bed into dry land. The waters were torn apart, and the Israelites went through the sea on the dry ground, while the waters made a wall for them to right and to left. The Egyptians went in pursuit of them far into the sea, all Pharaoh's horse, his chariots, and his cavalry. In the morning watch the LORD looked down on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw them into a panic. He clogged their chariot wheels and made them lumber along heavily, so that the Egyptians said, 'It is the LORD fighting for Israel against Egypt; let us flee.' Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, and let the water flow back over the Egyptians, their chariots and their cavalry.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the water returned to its accustomed place; but the Egyptians were in flight as it advanced, and the LORD swept them out into the sea. The water flowed back and covered all Pharaoh's army, the chariots and the cavalry, which had pressed the pursuit into the sea. Not one man was left alive. Meanwhile the Israelites had passed along the dry ground through the sea, with the water making a wall for them to right and to left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the power of Egypt, and the Israelites saw the Egyptians lying dead on the sea-shore. When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had put forth against Egypt, all the people feared the LORD, and they put their faith in him and in Moses his servant.

(3.7-8) is about to be realized, Pharaoh attempts to reassert his power. For a somewhat similar challenge to Israel's faith, see Gen.22.1-19 n. 12: Compare 5.20-21. 13-14: Israel is exhorted to believe that, even in her darkest hour, the promise will yet be realized. 19: *Angel of God* and *pillar of cloud* are used as synonyms. See 13.21 n. 21-29: The story may be based upon natural phenomena, and enhanced through ages of recital: the *east wind* (v. 21) drives back the waters of the shallow marsh (13.18 n.), but later generations ascribed this to direct divine intervention, as in v.30.

- 15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:
- I will sing to the LORD, for he has risen up in triumph; the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea.
- 2 The LORD is my refuge and my defence, he has shown himself my deliverer. He is my God, and I will glorify him; he is my father's God, and I will exalt him.
- 3 The LORD is a warrior: the LORD is his name.
- 4 The chariots of Pharaoh and his army he has cast into the sea; the flower of his officers are engulfed in the Red Sea.
- 5 The watery abyss has covered them, they sank into the depths like a stone.
- 6 Thy right hand, O LORD, is majestic in strength: thy right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.
- 7 In the fullness of thy triumph thou didst cast the rebels down: thou didst let loose thy fury; it consumed them like chaff.
- 8 At the blast of thy anger the sea piled up: the waters stood up like a bank: out at sea the great deep congealed.
- 9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake; I will divide the spoil, I will glut my appetite upon them; I will draw my sword, I will rid myself of them.'
- 10 Thou didst blow with thy blast; the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the swelling waves.
- 11 Who is like thee, O LORD, among the gods?<sup>q</sup> Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, worthy of awe and praise, who workest wonders?
- Thou didst stretch out thy right hand, earth engulfed them.
- In thy constant love thou hast led the people whom thou didst ransom: thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy dwelling-place. Nations heard and trembled; agony seized the dwellers in Philistia.
- 13 Then the chieftains of Edom were dismayed, trembling seized the leaders of Moab, all the inhabitants of Canaan were in turmoil; terror and dread fell upon them: through the might of thy arm they stayed stone-still, while thy people passed, O LORD, while the people whom thou madest thy own<sup>r</sup> passed by.
- 16 Thou broughtest them in and didst plant them in the mount that is thy possession, the dwelling-place, O LORD, of thy own making, the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy own hands prepared.
- 17 The LORD shall reign for ever and for ever.
- 18 For Pharaoh's horse, both chariots and cavalry, went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters over them, but Israel had passed through the sea on dry ground. And Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took up her tambourine, and all the women followed her, dancing to the sound of tambourines; and Miriam sang them this refrain:
- 19 Sing to the LORD, for he has risen up in triumph; the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea.

<sup>q</sup> Or in might.  
<sup>r</sup> madest thy own: or didst create.

15.1–21: Songs of victory, attributed to Moses (vv. 1–18) and Miriam (v. 21). These two extremely old hymns, possibly used in an ancient liturgy memorializing the deliverance, are depicted as originating immediately after the event. 11: *Among the gods*: see Gen.1.26 n. 13–18: The allusions seem to assume Israel's settlement in Canaan, and to mark the age when this part of the hymn was composed.

22 MOSES LED ISRAEL FROM THE RED SEA out into the wilderness of Shur. For three days they travelled through the wilderness without finding water. They came to Marah, but could not drink the Marah water because it was bitter; that is why the place was called Marah. 24 The people complained to Moses and asked, 'What are we to drink?' Moses cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log which he threw into the water, and then the water became sweet.

It was there that the LORD laid down a precept and rule of life; there he put them to the test. He said, 'If only you will obey the LORD your God, if you will do what is right in his eyes, if you will listen to his commands and keep all his statutes, then I will never bring upon you any of the sufferings which I brought on the Egyptians; for I the LORD am your healer.'

27 They came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm-trees, and there they encamped beside the water.

16 The whole community of the Israelites set out from Elim and came into the wilderness of Sin, which lies between Elim and Sinai. This was on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt.

2 The Israelites complained to Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said, 'If only we had died at the LORD's hand in Egypt, where we sat round the flesh-pots and had plenty of bread to eat! But you have brought us out into this wilderness to let this whole assembly starve to death.' The LORD said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people shall go out and gather a day's supply, so that I can put them to the test and

see whether they will follow my instructions or not. But on the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it shall be twice as much as they have gathered on other days.' Moses and Aaron then said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heeded your complaints against him; it is not against us that you bring your complaints; we are nothing.' 'You shall know this', Moses said, 'when the LORD, in answer to your complaints, gives you flesh to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread in plenty. What are we? It is against the LORD that you bring your complaints, and not against us.'

Moses told Aaron to say to the whole community of Israel, 'Come into the presence of the LORD, for he has heeded your complaints.' While Aaron was speaking to the community of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Say to them, "Between dusk and dark you will have flesh to eat and in the morning bread in plenty. You shall know that I the LORD am your God."'

That evening a flock of quails flew in and settled all over the camp, and in the morning a fall of dew lay all around it. When the dew was gone, there in the wilderness, fine flakes appeared, fine as hoar-frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, 'What is that?', because they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'That is the bread which the

<sup>s</sup> Heb. man-hu (cp. verse 31).

15.22-17.7: Complaints in the Wilderness. Common to Israel's history are moments of exhilaration followed by challenges and despair (compare 7.14-11.10 n.; 14.1-31 n.). 25: The idea that water may be made drinkable by casting pieces of wood into it is elsewhere attested in antiquity. 16.1: The precise chronology reflects the concern of later generations. Here the motive is to bind the events of the Exodus to a liturgical calendar. See Gen.7.24 n. 4: The test is to determine whether Israel is willing to continue into the Wilderness, with food available only on a daily basis. 5: The double portion for the Sabbath is to make labor on that day unnecessary. 6-8: Here, the blessings of bread (manna) and flesh (quail) are both given, whereas in another version (Num.11.4-34) the quail is provided only when the people grow tired of the manna. 10: Glory: radiance, a light, like fire (Gen.15.17 n.), serves as a symbol of the divine presence. 14-15: The bread (manna) may be the "honey-dew" secretion of the tamarisk tree which drops to the ground and solidifies during the cool of the night. It is still gathered

16 LORD has given you to eat. This is the command the LORD has given: "Each of you is to gather as much as he can eat: let every man take an omer a head  
17 for every person in his tent." The Israelites did this, and they gathered,  
18 some more, some less, but when they measured it by the omer, those who had gathered more had not too much, and those who had gathered less had not too little. Each had just as much as he could eat. Moses said, 'No one may  
19 keep any of it till morning.' Some, however, did not listen to Moses; they kept part of it till morning, and it became full of maggots and stank, and  
21 Moses was angry with them. Each morning every man gathered as much as he could eat, and when the sun grew  
22 hot, it melted away. On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers each. All the chiefs of the community came and told Moses. 'This', he answered, 'is what the LORD has said: "Tomorrow is a day of sacred rest, a sabbath holy to the LORD." So bake what you want to bake now, and boil what you want to boil; put aside what remains over and keep it safe till  
24 morning.' So they put it aside till morning as Moses had commanded, and it did not stink, nor did maggots appear  
25 in it. 'Eat it today,' said Moses, 'because today is a sabbath of the LORD.  
26 Today you will find none outside. For six days you may gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none.'  
27 Some of the people did go out to gather it on the seventh day, but they found none. The LORD said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to obey my commands and instructions? The LORD has given you the sabbath, and so he gives you two days' food every sixth day. Let each man stay where he is; no one may stir from his home on the  
30 seventh day.' And the people kept the sabbath on the seventh day.  
31 Israel called the food manna; it was

white, like coriander seed, and it tasted like a wafer made with honey.

'This', said Moses, 'is the command  
32 which the LORD has given: "Take a full omer of it to be kept for future generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness when I brought you out of Egypt."' So Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar  
33 and fill it with an omer of manna, and store it in the presence of the LORD to be kept for future generations.' Aaron  
34 did as the LORD had commanded Moses, and stored it before the Testimony for safe keeping. The Israelites  
35 ate the manna for forty years until they came to a land where they could settle; they ate it until they came to the border of Canaan. (An omer is one  
36 tenth of an ephah.)

The whole community of Israel set  
17 out from the wilderness of Sin and travelled by stages as the LORD told them. They encamped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink, and a dispute arose between  
2 them and Moses. When they said, 'Give us water to drink', Moses said, 'Why do you dispute with me? Why do you challenge the LORD?' There the people became so thirsty that they  
3 raised an outcry against Moses: 'Why have you brought us out of Egypt with our children and our herds to let us all die of thirst?' Moses cried to the  
4 LORD, 'What shall I do with these people? In a moment they will be stoning me.' The LORD answered, 'Go  
5 forward ahead of the people; take with you some of the elders of Israel and the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. You will find me waiting for  
6 you there, by a rock in Horeb. Strike the rock; water will pour out of it, and the people shall drink.' Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. He  
7 named the place Massah<sup>t</sup> and Meribah,<sup>u</sup> because the Israelites had disputed with him and challenged the

<sup>t</sup> That is Challenge.      <sup>u</sup> That is Dispute.

today by inhabitants of the area. 18: Omer: see p. 1035. 31: Manna: the original meaning of the term cannot be ascertained; the tradition here supplies a folk explanation (v. 15). Elsewhere (Ps. 78.25) it is called "the bread of angels." 34: A movable sanctuary, sometimes called the Testimony, seemingly housed a record of God's actions and requirements. See 25.16 n. 35: Forty: see Gen. 7.4 n. 17.6: Horeb: announced as the goal of the journey in 3.12. 7: Despite the previous evidence of God's guidance, Israel's trust vanished at the first difficulty.

LORD with their question, 'Is the LORD in our midst or not?'

8 The Amalekites came and attacked  
9 Israel at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, 'Pick your men, and march out tomorrow to fight for us against Amalek; and I will take my stand on the hill-top with the staff of God in my hand.' Joshua carried out his orders and fought against Amalek while Moses, Aaron and Hur climbed to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses raised his hands Israel had the advantage, and when he lowered his hands Amalek had the advantage. But when his arms grew heavy they took a stone and put it under him and, as he sat, Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. Thus Joshua defeated Amalek and put its people to the sword.

14 The LORD said to Moses, 'Record this in writing, and tell it to Joshua in these words: "I am resolved to blot out all memory of Amalek from under heaven."' Moses built an altar, and named it Jehovah-nissi and said, 'My oath upon it: the LORD is at war with Amalek generation after generation.'

18 JETHRO PRIEST OF MIDIAN, FATHER-IN-LAW of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and Israel his people, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. When Moses had dismissed his wife Zipporah, Jethro his father-in-law had received her and her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom, 'for', said Moses, 'I have become an alien<sup>v</sup> living in a foreign land'; the other's name was Eliezer,<sup>w</sup> 'for', he said, 'the God of my father was my help and saved me from Pharaoh's sword.'

5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, now

came to him with his sons and his wife, to the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. Moses was told, 'Here is Jethro, your father-in-law, coming to you with your wife and her two sons.' Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed low to him and kissed him, and they greeted one another. When they came into the tent Moses told him all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt for Israel's sake, and about all their hardships on the journey, and how the LORD had saved them. Jethro rejoiced at all the good the LORD had done for Israel in saving them from the power of Egypt. He said, 'Blessed be the LORD who has saved you from the power of Egypt and of Pharaoh. Now I know that the LORD is the greatest of all gods, because he has delivered the people from the power of the Egyptians who dealt so arrogantly with them.' Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a whole-offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and shared the meal with Jethro in the presence of God.

The next day Moses took his seat to settle disputes among the people, and they were standing round him from morning till evening. When Jethro saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'What are you doing for all these people? Why do you sit alone with all of them standing round you from morning till evening?' 'The people come to me', Moses answered, 'to seek God's guidance. Whenever there is a dispute among them, they come to me, and I decide between man and man. I declare the statutes and laws of God.' But his father-in-law said to Moses, 'This is not the best way to do it. You will only wear yourself out and wear

<sup>v</sup> Cp. 2. 22.    <sup>w</sup> That is God my help.

17.8-16: War with the Amalekites. A once-independent story, its function here is to explain and justify the continued animosity between Israel and a strong desert-dwelling tribe from the vicinity of Kadesh (Num.24.20; Deut.25.17-19; 1 Sam.15.2-3; 1 Chr.4.43). 9: Joshua's sudden appearance here suggests that this story once belonged in another context. 15: *Jehovah-nissi*: for this pronunciation of the divine name, see Introduction, p. xx. The place name means "Yahweh is my banner," a name given in celebration of a victory there.

18.1-27: Israel arrives at the sacred mountain. 1: *Jethro*: in 2.16-21, the name of the priest of Midian is Reuel. 2: Moses may have left his family in Midian on leaving for Egypt. 5: *Mountain of God*: Horeb (3.1), thus fulfilling the sign given to Moses (3.12). 13-26: The judicial system of Israel is traced back to Mosaic authority. To limit the power of civil courts ("officers over units": v. 25), the ultimate decision remains in the hands of religious leadership (Moses).

out all the people who are here. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it by yourself. Now listen to me: take my advice, and God be with you. It is for you to be the people's representative before God, and bring their disputes to him. You must instruct them in the statutes and laws, and teach them how they must behave and what they must do. But you must yourself search for capable, God-fearing men among all the people, honest and incorruptible men, and appoint them over the people as officers over units of a thousand, of a hundred, of fifty or of ten. They shall sit as a permanent court for the people; they must refer difficult cases to you but decide simple cases themselves. In this way your burden will be lightened, and they will share it with you. If you do this, God will give you strength, and you will be able to go on. And, moreover, this whole people will here and now regain peace and harmony.' Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all he had suggested. He chose capable men from all Israel and appointed them leaders of the people, officers over units of a thousand, of a hundred, of fifty or of ten. They sat as a permanent court, bringing the difficult cases to Moses but deciding simple cases themselves. Moses set his father-in-law on his way, and he went back to his own country.

### Israel at Mount Sinai

19 IN THE THIRD MONTH AFTER ISRAEL HAD left Egypt,<sup>x</sup> they came to the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and entered the wilderness of Sinai, where they encamped, pitching their tents opposite the mountain. Moses

went up the mountain of God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, 'Speak thus to the house of Jacob, and tell this to the sons of Israel: You have seen with your own eyes what I did to Egypt, and how I have carried you on eagles' wings and brought you here to me. If only you will now listen to me and keep my covenant, then out of all peoples you shall become my special possession; for the whole earth is mine. You shall be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the Israelites.'

Moses came and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these commands which the LORD had laid upon him. The people all answered together, 'Whatever the LORD has said we will do.' Moses brought this answer back to the LORD. The LORD said to Moses, 'I am now coming to you in a thick cloud, so that I may speak to you in the hearing of the people, and their faith in you may never fail.' Moses told the LORD what the people had said, and the LORD said to him, 'Go to the people and hallow them today and tomorrow and make them wash their clothes. They must be ready by the third day, because on the third day the LORD will descend upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You must put barriers round the mountain and say, "Take care not to go up the mountain or even to touch the edge of it." Any man who touches the mountain must be put to death. No hand shall touch him;<sup>y</sup> he shall be stoned or shot dead;<sup>z</sup> neither man nor beast may live. But when the ram's horn sounds, they may go up the

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds on this day.*

<sup>y</sup> *Or it.*

<sup>z</sup> *Or hurled to his death.*

19.1-25: Moses prepares the people to enter into covenant with Yahweh. 1: *Sinai*: see 3.1 n. 2: This version of the conclusion of Israel's wandering omits the meeting with Jethro (18.1-12) as the initial event at the sacred mountain. 3: The idea that gods dwell upon or reveal themselves upon high mountains is attested throughout the ancient world. Yahweh was believed to dwell in heaven and to come down to the mountain top (v. 20) to meet with Moses. 9: The association of a *cloud* with the divine presence may have originated in the observation of mists surrounding the tops of high mountains (see v. 3 n.) or may have been borrowed from Canaanite mythology (see 13.21 n.). Here, the cloud serves to obscure God from mortal eyes (see 33.20 for a reason why) and to avoid the impression that he exists in bodily form (Deut.4.11-12). 10: A change of clothing was a regular prescription for preparation for rituals (Gen.35.2). 12-13: The place at which the deity reveals himself is holy (Gen.28.16-17; Exod.3.5), and holiness was regarded as a mysterious energy transmittable by touch (Lev.6.25-27), which is sometimes fatal to man

14 mountain.' Moses came down from the mountain to the people. He hal-  
 15 lowed them and they washed their clothes. He said to the people, 'Be  
 16 ready by the third day; do not go near a woman.' On the third day, when  
 morning came, there were peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense  
 cloud on the mountain and a loud trumpet blast; the people in the camp  
 were all terrified.

17 Moses brought the people out from the camp to meet God, and they took  
 their stand at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was all smoking because  
 18 the LORD had come down upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke  
 of a kiln; all the people were terrified, and the sound of the trumpet grew ever  
 19 louder. Whenever Moses spoke, God answered him in a peal of thunder.<sup>a</sup>  
 20 The LORD came down upon the top of Mount Sinai and summoned Moses  
 to the mountain-top, and Moses went up. The LORD said to Moses, 'Go  
 21 down; warn the people solemnly that they must not force their way through  
 to the LORD to see him, or many of them will perish. Even the priests, who  
 22 have access to the LORD, must hallow themselves, for fear that the LORD may  
 23 break out against them.' Moses answered the LORD, 'The people cannot  
 come up Mount Sinai, because thou thyself didst solemnly warn us to set a  
 barrier to the mountain and so to keep it holy.' The LORD therefore said to  
 24 him, 'Go down; then come up and bring Aaron with you, but let neither  
 priests nor people force their way up to the LORD, for fear that he may break  
 25 out against them.' So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

God spoke, and these were his words: 20  
 I am the LORD your God who 2  
 brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other god<sup>b</sup> to set 3  
 against me.

You shall not make a carved image 4  
 for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the  
 earth below, or in the waters under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or 5  
 worship<sup>c</sup> them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous god. I punish the  
 children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generations of  
 those who hate me. But I keep faith 6  
 with thousands, with<sup>d</sup> those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrong use of the 7  
 name of the LORD your God: the LORD will not leave unpunished the man who  
 misuses his name.

Remember to keep the sabbath day 8  
 holy. You have six days to labour and 9  
 do all your work. But the seventh day 10  
 is a sabbath of the LORD your God; that day you shall not do any work,  
 you, your son or your daughter, your slave or your slave-girl, your cattle or  
 the alien within your gates; for in six 11  
 days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and on  
 the seventh day he rested. Therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and de-  
 clared it holy.

Honour your father and your moth- 12  
 er, that you may live long in the land which the LORD your GOD is giving you.

You shall not commit murder. 13  
 You shall not commit adultery. 14

a in . . . thunder: or by voice. b Or gods.  
 c Or or be led to worship.  
 d with . . . with: or for a thousand generations with . . .

(2 Sam.6.6-7). 15: The prohibition against sexual intercourse in the context of divine worship may be an attempt to distinguish the cult of the LORD from that of the gods of Canaan; see Lev.15.16-18 n. 16: The sounding of the *trumpet* was the means of summoning the people to an assembly (Ps.81.3).

20.1-21: The Ten Commandments are the basic requirements if Israel is to enter into covenant with the LORD and become his "holy nation" (19.6). In adopting them to regulate her internal affairs, she renounces all other loyalties, divine or human. Other versions in various stages of expansion are recorded (34.14-26; Deut.5.6-21). 2: As in recorded secular alliances of the time, a great king recited his gracious deeds on behalf of formerly oppressed peoples, inviting them to respond with gratitude and to formalize the relationship. 4: The prohibition is not against all plastic art, but only the use of such items in the cult of the LORD, since they tend to reduce the LORD of all the world (19.5) to a physical object (Isa.44.9-17). 5: Inherited guilt, a common assumption in the ancient world, was rejected by some biblical writers (Jer.31.29-30; Ezek. 18.19-20) though it continued to hold sway with the populace (Jn.9.1-2). 7: Lev.19.12 specifies one such *wrong use of the name*: in a false oath. 13: That *murder* does not include capital



15 You shall not steal.  
 16 You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour.  
 17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, his slave, his slave-girl, his ox, his ass, or anything that belongs to him.  
 18 When all the people saw how it thundered and the lightning flashed, when they heard the trumpet sound and saw the mountain smoking, they trembled and stood at a distance.  
 19 'Speak to us yourself,' they said to Moses, 'and we will listen; but if God speaks to us we shall die.' Moses answered, 'Do not be afraid. God has come only to test you, so that the fear of him may remain with you and keep you from sin.' So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was.

22 THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, SAY THIS TO the Israelites: You know now that I have spoken to you from heaven. You shall not make gods of silver to be worshipped as well as me, nor shall you make yourselves gods of gold. You shall make an altar of earth for me, and you shall sacrifice on it both your whole-offerings and your shared-offerings, your sheep and your cattle. Whenever I cause my name to be invoked, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, you must not build it of hewn stones, for if you use a chisel on it, you will profane it. You must not mount up to my altar by steps, in case your private parts be exposed on it.

These are the laws you shall set before them: 21

When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall be your slave for six years, but in the seventh year he shall go free and pay nothing.

If he comes to you alone, he shall go away alone; but if he is married, his wife shall go away with him.

If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and the man shall go away alone. But if the slave should say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go free', then his master shall bring him to God: he shall bring him to the door or the door-post, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl, and the man shall be his slave for life.

When a man sells his daughter into slavery, she shall not go free as a male slave may. If her master has not had intercourse with her and she does not please him, he shall let her be ransomed. He has treated her unfairly and therefore has no right to sell her to strangers. If he assigns her to his son, he shall allow her the rights of a daughter. If he takes another woman, he shall not deprive the first of meat, clothes, and conjugal rights. If he does not provide her with these three things, she shall go free without any payment.

Whoever strikes another man and kills him shall be put to death. But if he did not act with intent, but they met by act of God, the slayer may flee to a place which I will appoint for you. But if a man has the presumption to kill

punishment or killing in war is suggested by 21.12-17 and Deut.20.10-18. 18-21: This section, a logical continuation of 19.25, is the bridge between the Commandments and the loosely related material which follows.

20.22-22.23: **The Book of the Covenant:** See 24.7. Several earlier collections are recognizable by topical similarity and similar structure. Portions presuppose settled agrarian life, suggesting secular legislation operative in the land of Canaan, or even borrowed from the Canaanites. Israel, however, came to regard the legislation as an extension of the covenant requirements (20.2-17) and hence given at Sinai.

20.22-26: **Cultic regulations.** 24: This verse seems to sanction a variety of sanctuaries, in contrast to limitations encountered elsewhere, e.g. Deut.12.5. 25: The altars of the LORD must remain distinct from those of the gods of Canaan. 26: *Private parts:* see Gen.19.5 n.

21.1-22.17: **Social and economic regulations.** These rules are introduced by "when" or "if," and represent an origin different from those in 22.18-23.13. 2: *Hebrew:* see Gen.10.21 n. Contrast Deut.15.12, where the term has become synonymous with "Israelite." 6: This extremely old law may be a relic of belief in household gods (Gen.31.19) who dwell at the *door-post*. 7: The rights of the female slave are equated with those of the male in Deut.15.12, a passage from a later period. This passage is one of many which are protective of women. 13: See Num.35.9-12.

another by treachery, you shall take him even from my altar to be put to death.

15 Whoever strikes his father or mother shall be put to death.

16 Whoever kidnaps a man shall be put to death, whether he has sold him, or the man is found in his possession.

17 Whoever reviles his father or mother shall be put to death.

18 When men quarrel and one hits another with a stone or with a spade,<sup>e</sup> and the man is not killed but takes to his bed; if he recovers so as to walk about outside with a stick, then the one who struck him has no liability, except that he shall pay for loss of time and shall see that he is cured.

20 When a man strikes his slave or his slave-girl with a stick and the slave dies on the spot, he must be punished. But he shall not be punished if the slave survives for one day or two, because he is worth money to his master.

22 When, in the course of a brawl, a man knocks against a pregnant woman so that she has a miscarriage but suffers no further hurt, then the offender must pay whatever fine the woman's husband demands after assessment.

23 Wherever hurt is done, you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound.

26 When a man strikes his slave or slave-girl in the eye and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free in compensation for the eye. When he knocks out the tooth of a slave or a slave-girl, he shall let the slave go free in compensation for the tooth.

28 When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh may not be eaten; the owner of the ox shall be free from liability. If, however, the ox has for some time past been a vicious animal, and the owner has been duly warned but has not kept it under control, and the ox kills a man or a woman, then the ox shall be stoned, and the owner shall be put to death as well. If, however, the penalty is commuted for a

money payment, he shall pay in redemption of his life whatever is imposed upon him. If the ox gores a son or a daughter, the same rule shall apply. If the ox gores a slave or slave-girl, its owner shall pay thirty shekels of silver to their master, and the ox shall be stoned.

When a man removes the cover of a well<sup>f</sup> or digs a well<sup>f</sup> and leaves it uncovered, then if an ox or an ass falls into it, the owner of the well shall make good the loss. He shall repay the owner of the beast in silver, and the dead beast shall be his.

When one man's ox butts another's and kills it, they shall sell the live ox, share the price and also share the dead beast. But if it is known that the ox has for some time past been vicious and the owner has not kept it under control, he shall make good the loss, ox for ox, but the dead beast is his.

When a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, he shall repay five beasts for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. He shall pay in full; if he has no means, he shall be sold to pay for the theft. But if the animal is found alive in his possession, be it ox, ass, or sheep, he shall repay two.

If a burglar is caught in the act and is fatally injured, it is not murder; but if he breaks in after sunrise and is fatally injured, then it is murder.

When a man burns off a field or a vineyard and lets the fire spread so that it burns another man's field,<sup>h</sup> he shall make restitution from his own field according to the yield expected; and if the whole field is laid waste, he shall make restitution from the best part of his own field or vineyard.

When a fire starts and spreads to a heap of brushwood, so that sheaves, or standing corn, or a whole field is destroyed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

When one man gives another silver or chattels for safe keeping, and they are stolen from that man's house, the

<sup>e</sup> Or fist. <sup>f</sup> Or cistern.

<sup>g</sup> Verses 2-4 rearranged thus: 3b, 4, 2, 3a.

<sup>h</sup> Or When a man uses his field or vineyard for grazing, and lets his beast loose, and it feeds in another man's field.

17: *Reviles*: a curse was expected; see Gen.27.33-35 n.; Num.26.6. 23-25: The punishment

thief, if he is found, shall restore two-  
 8 fold. But if the thief is not found, the  
 owner of the house shall appear before  
 God, to make a declaration that he has  
 not touched his neighbour's property.  
 9 In every case of law-breaking involving  
 an ox, an ass, or a sheep, a cloak, or  
 any lost property which may be claimed,  
 each party shall bring his case before  
 God; he whom God declares to be in  
 the wrong shall restore twofold to his  
 neighbour.

10 When a man gives an ass, an ox, a  
 sheep or any beast into his neighbour's  
 keeping, and it dies or is injured or is  
 11 carried off, there being no witness, the  
 neighbour shall swear by the LORD  
 that he has not touched the man's  
 property. The owner shall accept this,  
 12 and no restitution shall be made. If it  
 has been stolen from him, he shall make  
 13 restitution to the owner. If it has been  
 mauled by a wild beast, he shall bring  
 it in as evidence; he shall not make  
 restitution for what has been mauled.

14 When a man borrows a beast from  
 his neighbour and it is injured or dies  
 while its owner is not with it, the bor-  
 15 rower shall make full restitution; but  
 if the owner is with it, the borrower  
 shall not make restitution. If it was  
 hired, only the hire shall be due.

16 When a man seduces a virgin who is  
 not yet betrothed, he shall pay the  
 17 bride-price for her to be his wife. If her  
 father refuses to give her to him, the  
 seducer shall pay in silver a sum equal  
 to the bride-price for virgins.

18 You shall not allow a witch to live.  
 19 Whoever has unnatural connection  
 with a beast shall be put to death.

20 Whoever sacrifices to any god but  
 the LORD shall be put to death under  
 solemn ban.

21 You shall not wrong an alien, or be  
 hard upon him; you were yourselves  
 22 aliens in Egypt. You shall not ill-treat  
 23 any widow or fatherless child. If you  
 do, be sure that I will listen if they  
 24 appeal to me; my anger will be roused  
 and I will kill you with the sword;

your own wives shall become widows  
 and your children fatherless.

If you advance money to any poor  
 25 man amongst my people, you shall not  
 act like a money-lender: you must not  
 exact interest in advance from him.

If you take your neighbour's cloak  
 26 in pawn, you shall return it to him by  
 sunset, because it is his only covering.  
 27 It is the cloak in which he wraps his  
 body; in what else can he sleep? If he  
 appeals to me, I will listen, for I am full  
 of compassion.

You shall not revile God, nor curse  
 28 a chief of your own people.

You shall not hold back the first of  
 29 your harvest, whether corn or wine.  
 You shall give me your first-born sons.  
 You shall do the same with your oxen  
 30 and your sheep. They shall stay with  
 the mother for seven days; on the  
 eighth day you shall give them to me.

You shall be holy to me: you shall  
 31 not eat the flesh of anything in the open  
 country killed by beasts, but you shall  
 throw it to the dogs.

You shall not spread a baseless  
 23 rumour. You shall not make common  
 cause with a wicked man by giving  
 malicious evidence.

You shall not be led into wrong-  
 2 doing by the majority, nor, when you  
 give evidence in a lawsuit, shall you side  
 with the majority to pervert justice; nor  
 3 shall you favour the poor man in his  
 suit.

When you come upon your enemy's  
 4 ox or ass straying, you shall take it back  
 to him. When you see the ass of some-  
 5 one who hates you lying helpless under  
 its load, however unwilling you may be  
 to help it, you must give him a hand  
 with it.

You shall not deprive the poor man  
 6 of justice in his suit. Avoid all lies, and  
 7 do not cause the death of the innocent  
 and the guiltless; for I the LORD will  
 never acquit the guilty. You shall not  
 8 accept a bribe, for bribery makes the  
 discerning man blind and the just man  
 give a crooked answer.

must not exceed the crime and must be equitably applied (Lev.24.19-22). 22.8: *Before God*: at the sanctuary, where the priests will decide the case (1 Kgs.8.31).

22.18-23.13: *Social and economic regulations*, introduced by "You shall not"; see 21.1-22.17 n. 20: *Ban*: compare Deut.13.12-16 and see Josh.6.17. 23: *I will listen*: see 3.7-10. 29-30: See 13.2 n. 31: Such food was forbidden because it was impossible to remove the blood from it

9 You shall not oppress the alien, for you know how it feels to be an alien; you were aliens yourselves in Egypt.  
 10 For six years you may sow your land and gather its produce; but in the seventh year you shall let it lie fallow and leave it alone. It shall provide food for the poor of your people, and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard and your olive-grove.  
 12 For six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you shall abstain from work, so that your ox and your ass may rest, and your home-born slave and the alien may refresh themselves.  
 13 Be attentive to every word of mine. You shall not invoke other gods: your lips shall not speak their names.  
 14 Three times a year you shall keep a pilgrim-feast to me. You shall celebrate the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days; you shall eat unleavened cakes as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt.  
 16 No one shall come into my presence empty-handed. You shall celebrate the pilgrim-feast of Harvest, with the first-fruits of your work in sowing the land, and the pilgrim-feast of Ingathering at the end<sup>i</sup> of the year, when you bring in the fruits of all your work on the land.  
 17 These three times a year shall all your males come into the presence of the Lord GOD.  
 18 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice at the same time as anything leavened.  
 19 The fat of my festal offering shall not remain overnight till morning.  
 19 You shall bring the choicest first-

fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

And now I send an angel before you to guard you on your way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Take heed of him and listen to his voice. Do not defy him; he will not pardon your rebelliousness, for my authority rests in him. If you will only listen to his voice and do all I tell you, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will harass those who harass you. My angel will go before you and bring you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will make an end of them. You are not to bow down to their gods, nor worship them, nor observe their rites, but you shall tear down all their images and smash their sacred pillars. Worship the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water. I will take away all sickness out of your midst. None shall miscarry or be barren in your land. I will grant you a full span of life.

I will send my terror before you and throw into confusion all the peoples whom you find in your path. I will make all your enemies turn their backs. I will spread panic before you to drive out in front of you the Hivites, the Canaanites and the Hittites. I will not drive them out all in one year, or the land would become waste and the wild beasts too many for you. I will drive them out little by little until your numbers have grown enough to take possession of the whole country. I will establish your frontiers from the Red Sea

<sup>i</sup> Or beginning.

(Lev.17.13–15; see Gen.4.10 n.). 23.9: This repeats 22.21; such repetitions suggest that materials have been compiled from diverse sources.

23.14–19: Cultic regulations. 15: Since there is no mention of Passover, this section may reflect a time before the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* and Passover were joined; see 12.15 n. 16: The *pilgrim-feast of Harvest*, also called the pilgrim-feast of Weeks (34.22), came fifty days after Passover (Lev.23.16; hence its Greek name, "Pentecost"); it celebrated the wheat harvest. The *Ingathering*, also called Booths and Tabernacles, celebrated the harvest of grapes and olives which, in the preexilic calendar, ended the year; on the postexilic calendar, see 12.2 n. 19: *Boil a kid in its mother's milk*: a Canaanite ritual, here forbidden to Israel.

23.20–33: Instructions for the entry into Canaan. While this section presupposes that the giving of the Law is now complete and Israel is ready to depart from the sacred mountain, much more legislation appears in the ensuing chapters. This suggests that several old traditions have been combined, but with little regard for precise sequence. 20: *Angel*: compare the previous

to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River. I will give the inhabitants of the country into your power, and you shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. They shall not stay in your land for fear they make you sin against me; for then you would worship their gods, and in this way you would be ensnared.

**24** THEN HE SAID TO MOSES, 'COME UP TO the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. While you are still at a distance, you are to bow down; and then Moses shall approach the LORD by himself, but not the others. The people may not go up with him at all.'

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, all his laws. The whole people answered with one voice and said, 'We will do all that the LORD has told us.' Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and put up twelve sacred pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He then sent the young men of Israel and they sacrificed bulls to the LORD as whole-offerings and shared-offerings. Moses took half the blood and put it in basins and the other half he flung against<sup>j</sup> the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it aloud for all the people to hear. They said, 'We will obey, and do all that the LORD has said.' Moses then took the blood and flung it over the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made

with you on the terms of this book.'

Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab <sup>9</sup> and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw<sup>k</sup> the God of Israel. Under his feet there was, as it were, a pavement of sapphire,<sup>l</sup> clear blue as the very heavens; but the LORD <sup>11</sup> did not stretch out his hand towards the leaders of Israel. They stayed there before God;<sup>m</sup> they ate and they drank. The LORD said to Moses, 'Come <sup>12</sup> up to me on the mountain, stay there and let me give you the tablets of stone, the law and the commandment, which I have written down that you may teach them.' Moses arose with Joshua <sup>13</sup> his assistant and went up the mountain of God; he said to the elders, 'Wait for us here until we come back to you. You have Aaron and Hur; if anyone has a dispute, let him go to them.' So Moses <sup>15</sup> went up the mountain and a cloud covered it. The glory of the LORD rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered the mountain for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. The glory of the LORD <sup>17</sup> looked to the Israelites like a devouring fire on the mountain-top. Moses entered the cloud and went up the mountain; there he stayed forty days and forty nights.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID: **25** Tell the Israelites to set aside a contribution for me; you shall accept whatever contribution each man shall freely offer. This is what you shall accept: **3**

<sup>j</sup> Or upon.      <sup>k</sup> Or they were afraid of . . .  
<sup>l</sup> Or lapis lazuli.      <sup>m</sup> Or They saw God; and . . .

symbol of divine leadership in the Wilderness (13.21 n.). **31:** *Red Sea:* here, the gulf of Elath (see 13.18 n.). *River:* the Euphrates; see Gen.15.18 n.

**24.1-11:** *Israel accepts the covenant obligations.* Two old traditions have been combined. In vv. 3-8 the ceremony takes place at the foot of the mountain, with all the people participating; in vv. 1-2,9-11, it takes place on the mountain in the presence only of the leaders. **1:** The abrupt mention of *Nadab and Abihu* emphasizes the fragmentary nature of this account and suggests that it once belonged to another context (compare 17.9 n.). **3:** *The words:* Ten Commandments (see 20.1-21 n.); the *laws* are the regulations of 20.22-23,33. **6-8:** The *altar* represents the deity. **10:** Back of this account lies the older notion that a high mountain could reach into the heavens (Gen.11.4 n.), into the domain of the deity. This idea, though present in passing clues, was superseded in the developing thought. **11:** *Stretch out his hand:* to slay. But contrast 33.20. *Ate and drank:* a meal formalized a covenant; see Gen.31.54.

**24.12-18:** *Moses prepares to receive the tablets of stone,* upon which the Ten Commandments are written. Chronologically, this segment of tradition should come before ch. 20. **18:** *Forty:* on the number, see Gen.7.4 n. This verse prepares for ch. 32, which once followed immediately.

**25.1-31.17:** *The sanctuary and its personnel.* This material, inserted during the last (priestly) stage of tradition collection and information, ascribes the cultic practices of the postexilic

- 4 gold, silver, copper; violet, purple, and  
scarlet yarn; fine linen and goats' hair;  
5 tanned rams' skins, porpoise<sup>n</sup>-hides, and  
6 and acacia-wood; oil for the lamp,  
balsam for the anointing oil and for  
7 the fragrant incense; cornelian and  
other stones ready for setting in the  
8 ephod and the breast-piece.<sup>o</sup> Make me  
a sanctuary, and I will dwell among  
9 them. Make it exactly according to the  
design I show you, the design for the  
Tabernacle and for all its furniture.  
This is how you must make it:
- 10 Make an Ark, a chest of acacia-  
wood, two and a half cubits long, one  
cubit and a half wide, and one cubit  
11 and a half high. Overlay it with pure  
gold both inside and out, and put a  
12 band of gold all round it. Cast four  
gold rings for it, and fasten them to its  
13 four feet, two rings on each side. Make  
poles of acacia-wood and plate them  
14 with gold, and insert the poles in the  
rings at the sides of the Ark to lift it.  
15 The poles shall remain in the rings of  
16 the Ark and never be removed. Put  
into the Ark the Tokens of the Coven-  
17 enant,<sup>p</sup> which I shall give you. Make a  
cover of pure gold, two and a half  
18 cubits long and one cubit and a half  
wide. Make two gold cherubim of  
beaten work at the ends of the cover,  
19 one at each end; make each cherub  
20 one piece with the cover. They shall be  
made with wings outspread and point-  
ing upwards, and shall screen the cover  
with their wings. They shall be face to  
face, looking inwards over the cover.  
21 Put the cover above the Ark, and put  
into the Ark the Tokens that I shall  
22 give you. It is there that I shall meet  
you, and from above the cover, between  
the two cherubim over the Ark of the  
Tokens, I shall deliver to you all my  
commands for the Israelites.
- 23 Make a table of acacia-wood, two

cubits long, one cubit wide, and one  
cubit and a half high. Overlay it with  
24 pure gold, and put a band of gold all  
round it. Make a rim round it a hand's  
25 breadth wide, and a gold band round  
the rim. Make four gold rings for the  
26 table, and put the rings at the four  
corners by the legs. The rings, which  
27 are to receive the poles for carrying the  
table, must be adjacent to the rim.  
Make the poles of acacia-wood and  
28 plate them with gold; they are to be  
used for carrying the table. Make its  
29 dishes and saucers, and its flagons and  
bowls from which drink-offerings may  
be poured: make them of pure gold.  
Put the Bread of the Presence<sup>q</sup> on the  
30 table, to be always before me.

Make a lamp-stand of pure gold.  
31 The lamp-stand, stem and branches,  
shall be of beaten work, its cups, both  
calyxes and petals, shall be of one piece  
with it. There are to be six branches  
32 springing from its sides; three branches  
of the lamp-stand shall spring from the  
one side and three branches from the  
other side. There shall be three cups  
33 shaped like almond blossoms, with  
calyx and petals, on the first branch,  
three cups shaped like almond blos-  
soms, with calyx and petals, on the  
next branch, and similarly for all six  
branches springing from the lamp-  
stand. On the main stem of the lamp-  
34 stand there are to be four cups shaped  
like almond blossoms, with calyx and  
petals, and there shall be calyxes of one  
35 piece with it under the six branches  
which spring from the lamp-stand, a  
single calyx under each pair of branch-  
es. The calyxes and the branches are  
36 to be of one piece with it, all a single  
piece of beaten work of pure gold.

*n* Strictly sea-cow. *o* Or pouch.  
*p* Tokens of the Covenant: or Testimony.  
*q* Or Shewbread.

period to the Sinai period. The wealth (and technology) required for such a structure as described would have been an intolerable strain during the Wilderness period.

**25.1-40: Furnishings for the Tabernacle.** **7: Ephod:** here a garment; see 28.6-12; 1 Sam.2.18. **8:** The abiding presence of the deity, who was formerly thought to dwell in heaven and to reveal himself especially upon sacred mountains (3.1; 19.3 n.), is symbolized through the erection of the portable sanctuary. **10:** The *Ark:* a portable wooden chest. *Cubit:* see p. 1035. **16:** The *Tokens of the Covenant* included a copy of the Ten Commandments (31.18; Deut.10.1-5) and relics of the LORD's acts of salvation (e.g. as in 16.32-34); see Tfn. p. **18: Cherubim:** see Gen.3.24 n. **22:** It is in the presence of the Tokens (v. 16 n.), as Israel reflects upon the LORD's requirements and his gracious acts (20.2 n.), that his commands will be communicated to her. **30: Bread:** see Lev. 24.5-9. **40:** Ancient Near Eastern temples and their

37 Make seven lamps for this and mount  
 38 them to shed light over the space in  
 39 front of it. Its tongs and firepans shall  
 40 be of pure gold. The lamp-stand and  
 all these fittings shall be made from  
 one talent of pure gold. See that you  
 work to the design which you were  
 shown on the mountain.

26 Make the Tabernacle of ten hangings  
 of finely woven linen, and violet,  
 purple, and scarlet yarn, with cheru-  
 bim worked on them, all made by a  
 2 seamster. The length of each hanging  
 shall be twenty-eight cubits and the  
 breadth four cubits; all are to be of the  
 3 same size. Five of the hangings shall  
 be joined together, and similarly the  
 4 other five. Make violet loops along the  
 edge of the last hanging in each set,  
 5 fifty for each set; they must be opposite  
 6 one another. Make fifty gold fasteners,  
 join the hangings one to another with  
 them, and the Tabernacle will be a  
 single whole.

7 Make hangings of goats' hair, eleven  
 in all, to form a tent over the Taber-  
 8 nacle; each hanging is to be thirty  
 cubits long and four wide; all eleven  
 9 are to be of the same size. Join five of  
 the hangings together, and similarly  
 the other six; then fold the sixth hang-  
 10 ing double at the front of the tent. Make  
 fifty loops on the edge of the last hang-  
 ing in the first set and make fifty loops  
 on the joining edge of the second set.  
 11 Make fifty bronze<sup>r</sup> fasteners, insert  
 them into the loops and join up the  
 12 tent to make it a single whole. The  
 additional length of the tent hanging<sup>s</sup>  
 is to fall over the back of the Taber-  
 13 nacle. On each side there will be an  
 additional cubit in the length of the  
 tent hangings; this shall fall over the  
 two sides of the Tabernacle to cover it.  
 14 Make for the tent a cover of tanned  
 rams' skins and an outer covering of  
 porpoise-hides.

15 Make for the Tabernacle planks of

acacia-wood as uprights, each plank 16  
 ten cubits long and a cubit and a half 17  
 wide, and two tenons for each plank  
 joined to each other. You shall do the 18  
 same for all the planks of the Taber-  
 nacle. Arrange the planks thus: twenty 19  
 planks for the south side, facing south-  
 wards, with forty silver sockets under 20  
 them, two sockets under each plank  
 for its two tenons; and for the second 21  
 or northern side of the Tabernacle,  
 twenty planks, with forty silver sockets, 22  
 two under each plank. Make six planks  
 for the far end of the Tabernacle on 23  
 the west. Make two planks for the  
 corners of the Tabernacle at the far 24  
 end; at the bottom they shall be alike,  
 and at the top, both alike, they shall fit 25  
 into a single ring. Do the same for both  
 of them; they shall be for the two  
 corners. There shall be eight planks 26  
 with their silver sockets, sixteen sockets  
 in all, two sockets under each plank  
 severally.

Make bars of acacia-wood: five for 26  
 the planks on the one side of the  
 Tabernacle, five for the planks on the 27  
 other side and five for the planks on  
 the far end of the Tabernacle on the 28  
 west. The middle bar is to run along  
 from end to end half-way up the planks.  
 Overlay the planks with gold, make 29  
 rings of gold on them to hold the bars,  
 and plate the bars with gold. Set up the 30  
 Tabernacle according to the design you  
 were shown on the mountain.

Make a Veil of finely woven linen 31  
 and violet, purple, and scarlet yarn,  
 with cherubim worked on it, all made 32  
 by a seamster. Fasten it with hooks of  
 gold to four posts of acacia-wood overlaid 33  
 with gold, standing in four silver  
 sockets. Hang the Veil below the  
 fasteners and bring the Ark of the  
 Tokens inside the Veil. Thus the Veil

<sup>r</sup> Or copper and so throughout the description of the Tabernacle.

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds half the hanging which remains over.

furnishings were believed to be based upon celestial models rather than human design (compare the developed idea in Rev.21.2).

26.1-37: **The design of the Tabernacle.** Two conceptions of the portable sanctuary are here combined: the Tent of the Presence (33.7-10; Num.11.16-17), which is seemingly simple and unadorned, and the ornate Tabernacle. In v. 7 the two are so combined that the former covers the latter. Although the Tabernacle and its adornments are presented as forerunners of the Temple in Jerusalem, it is more likely that the temples of Solomon (1 Kgs. ch. 6) and Zerubbabel (Hag. ch. 1) provided the priestly author with his view of the structure and adornments of the Tabernacle. See 25.1-31.17 n. 33: *Holy Place*: the outer shrine, containing incense altar

will make a clear separation for you  
 between the Holy Place and the Holy  
 34 of Holies. Place the cover over the Ark  
 of the Tokens in the Holy of Holies.  
 35 Put the table outside the Veil and the  
 lamp-stand at the south side of the  
 Tabernacle, opposite the table which  
 36 you shall put at the north side. For the  
 entrance of the tent make a screen of  
 finely woven linen, embroidered with  
 37 violet, purple, and scarlet. Make five  
 posts of acacia-wood for the screen and  
 overlay them with gold; make golden  
 hooks for them and cast five bronze  
 sockets for them.  
 27 Make the altar of acacia-wood; it  
 shall be square, five cubits long by five  
 cubits broad and three cubits high.  
 2 Let its horns at the four corners be of  
 one piece with it, and overlay it with  
 3 bronze. Make for it pots to take away  
 the fat and the ashes, with shovels,  
 4 tossing bowls, forks, and firepans, all  
 of bronze. Make a grating for it of  
 bronze network, and fit four bronze  
 rings on the network at its four corners.  
 5 Put it below the ledge of the altar, so  
 that the network comes half-way up the  
 6 altar. Make poles of acacia-wood for  
 the altar and overlay them with bronze.  
 7 They shall be inserted in the rings at  
 8 both sides of the altar to carry it. Leave  
 the altar a hollow shell. As you were  
 shown on the mountain, so shall it be  
 made.  
 9 Make the court of the Tabernacle.  
 For the one side, the south side facing  
 southwards, the court shall have hang-  
 10 ings of finely woven linen a hundred  
 cubits long, with twenty posts and  
 twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks  
 and bands on the posts shall be of  
 11 silver. Similarly all along the north side  
 there shall be hangings a hundred cubits  
 long, with twenty posts and twenty  
 sockets of bronze; the hooks and bands  
 12 on the posts shall be of silver. For the  
 breadth of the court, on the west side,  
 there shall be hangings fifty cubits long,

with ten posts and ten sockets. On the 13  
 east side, towards the sunrise, which 14  
 was fifty cubits, hangings shall extend 15  
 fifteen cubits from one corner, with 16  
 three posts and three sockets, and 17  
 hangings shall extend fifteen cubits 18  
 from the other corner, with three posts 19  
 and three sockets. At the gateway of 20  
 the court, there shall be a screen twenty 21  
 cubits long of finely woven linen em-  
 broidered with violet, purple, and 22  
 scarlet, with four posts and four sock-  
 ets. The posts all round the court shall 23  
 have bands of silver, with hooks of 24  
 silver, and sockets of bronze. The 25  
 length of the court shall be a hundred 26  
 cubits, and the breadth fifty, and the 27  
 height five cubits, with finely woven 28  
 linen and bronze sockets throughout. 29  
 All the equipment needed for serving 30  
 the Tabernacle, all its pegs and those 31  
 of the court, shall be of bronze.

You yourself are to command the 20  
 Israelites to bring you pure oil of 21  
 pounded olives ready for the regular 22  
 mounting of the lamp. In the Tent of 23  
 the Presence<sup>1</sup> outside the Veil that hides 24  
 the Tokens, Aaron and his sons shall 25  
 keep the lamp in trim from dusk to 26  
 dawn before the LORD. This is a rule 27  
 binding on their descendants among the 28  
 Israelites for all time.

You yourself are to summon to your 28  
 presence your brother Aaron and his 29  
 sons out of all the Israelites to serve as 30  
 my priests: Aaron and his sons Nadab 31  
 and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. For 32  
 your brother Aaron make sacred vest- 33  
 ments, to give him dignity and gran- 34  
 deur. Tell all the craftsmen whom I 35  
 have endowed with skill to make the 36  
 vestments for the consecration of 37  
 Aaron as my priest. These are the vest- 38  
 ments they shall make: a breast-piece, 39  
 an ephod, a mantle, a chequered tunic, 40  
 a turban, and a sash. They shall make 41  
 sacred vestments for Aaron your 42  
 brother and his sons to wear when they 43

<sup>1</sup> Or Tent of Meeting.

(30.1-6), lamp-stand, and table. *Holy of Holies*: the inner shrine containing the Ark. See 1 Kgs. 6.14-17.

27.1-21: **The court of the Tabernacle.** 1: The *altar*, for animals, was the main object in the court. 2: *Horns*: elevations at each corner, creating a shallow depression atop the altar onto which the sacrifice was placed. The horns were regarded as especially sacred (29.12; 1 Kgs.1.50). 20: The *lamp* was located inside the Tabernacle (25.31-40).

28.1-43: **Instructions for making the priestly garments.** 9-12: *Sons of Israel*: the tribal names.



- 5 serve as my priests, using gold; violet, purple, and scarlet yarn; and fine linen.
- 6 The ephod shall be made of gold, and with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and with finely woven linen worked by a seamster. It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined back and front.
- 8 The waist-band on it shall be of the same workmanship and material as the fabric of the ephod, and shall be of gold, with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely woven linen. You shall take two cornelians and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel: six of their names on the one stone, and the six other names on the second, all in order of seniority. With the skill of a craftsman, a seal-cutter, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall set them in gold rosettes, and fasten them on the shoulders of the ephod, as reminders of the sons of Israel. Aaron shall bear their names on his two shoulders as a reminder before the LORD.
- 13,14 Make gold rosettes and two chains of pure gold worked into the form of ropes, and fix them on the rosettes.
- 15 Make the breast-piece of judgement; it shall be made, like the ephod, by a seamster in gold, with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely woven linen. It shall be a square folded, a span long and a span wide. Set in it four rows of precious stones: the first row, sardin, chrysolite and green felspar; the second row, purple garnet, lapis lazuli and jade; the third row, turquoise, agate and jasper; the fourth row, topaz, cornelian and green jasper, all set in gold rosettes. The stones shall correspond to the twelve sons of Israel name by name; each stone shall bear the name of one of the twelve tribes engraved as on a seal.
- 22 Make for the breast-piece chains of pure gold worked into a rope. Make two gold rings, and fix them on the two upper corners of the breast-piece.
- 24 Fasten the two gold ropes to the two rings at those corners of the breast-piece, and the other ends of the ropes
- to the two rosettes, thus binding the breast-piece to the shoulder-pieces on the front of the ephod. Make two gold rings and put them at the two lower corners of the breast-piece on the inner side next to the ephod. Make two gold rings and fix them on the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod, low down in front, along its seam above the waist-band of the ephod. Then the breast-piece shall be bound by its rings to the rings of the ephod with violet braid, just above the waist-band of the ephod, so that the breast-piece will not be detached from the ephod. Thus, when Aaron enters the Holy Place, he shall carry over his heart in the breast-piece of judgement the names of the sons of Israel, as a constant reminder before the LORD.
- Finally, put the Urim and the Thummim into the breast-piece of judgement, and they will be over Aaron's heart when he enters the presence of the LORD. So shall Aaron bear these symbols of judgement upon the sons of Israel over his heart constantly before the LORD.
- Make the mantle of the ephod a single piece of violet stuff. There shall be a hole for the head in the middle of it. All round the hole there shall be a hem of woven work, with an oversewn edge, so that it cannot be torn. All round its skirts make pomegranates of violet, purple, and scarlet stuff, with golden bells between them, a golden bell and a pomegranate alternately the whole way round the skirts of the mantle. Aaron shall wear it when he ministers, and the sound of it shall be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out; and so he shall not die.
- Make a rosette of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal, 'Holy to the LORD'.<sup>u</sup> Fasten it on a violet braid and set it on the very front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron's forehead; he has to bear the blame for shortcomings in

<sup>u</sup> as ... LORD: or 'JEHOVAH' as on a seal in sacred characters.

15: The breast-piece of judgement contained the Urim and Thummim (v. 30), the two sacred lots by which the priests could determine the divine will (compare 1 Sam.14.38-42). 33-35: Bells: their purpose is uncertain, but possibly derived from an ancient practice of ringing bells to frighten away demons.

the rites with which the Israelites offer their sacred gifts, and the rosette shall be always on his forehead so that they may be acceptable to the LORD.

39 Make the chequered tunic and the turban of fine linen, but the sash of embroidered work. For Aaron's sons make tunics and sashes; and make tall head-dresses to give them dignity and grandeur. With these invest your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint them, install them and consecrate them; so shall they serve me as priests.  
42 Make for them linen drawers reaching to the thighs to cover their private parts; and Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they enter the Tent of the Presence or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place. Thus they will not incur guilt and die. This is a rule binding on him and his descendants for all time.

29 In consecrating them to be my priests this is the rite to be observed. Take a young bull and two rams without blemish. Take unleavened loaves, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, all made of wheaten flour; put them in a single basket and bring them in it. Bring also the bull and the two rams.  
4 Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence, and wash them with water. Take the vestments and invest Aaron with the tunic, the mantle of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breast-piece, and fasten the ephod to him with its waist-band.  
6 Set the turban on his head, and the symbol of holy dedication on the turban. Take the anointing oil, pour it on his head and anoint him. Then bring his sons forward, invest them with tunics, gird them with the sashes and tie their tall head-dresses on them. They shall hold the priesthood by a rule binding for all time.

Next you shall install Aaron and his sons. Bring the bull to the front of the Tent of the Presence, and they shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter the bull before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. Take some of its blood, and put it with your finger on the horns of the altar. Pour all the rest of it at the base of the altar. Then take the fat covering the entrails, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat upon them, and burn it on the altar; but the flesh of the bull, and its skin and offal, you shall destroy by fire outside the camp. It is a sin-offering.

Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Then slaughter it, take its blood and fling it against the sides of the altar. Cut the ram up; wash its entrails and its shins, lay them with the pieces and the head, and burn the whole ram on the altar: it is a whole-offering to the LORD; it is a soothing odour, a food-offering to the LORD.

Take the second ram, and let Aaron and his sons lay their hands on its head. Then slaughter it, take some of its blood, and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, and on their right thumbs and big toes. Fling the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar. Take some of the blood which is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments, and on his sons and their vestments. So shall he and his vestments, and his sons and their vestments become holy. Take the fat from the ram, the fat-tail, the fat covering the entrails, the long lobe of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat upon them, and the right leg: for it is a ram of installation. Take also one round loaf of bread, one cake cooked with oil, and one wafer from the

29.1-46: Instructions for the installation of the priests. The passage ascribes the origin of the Aaronite priesthood to the Mosaic period (see 25.1-31.17 n.). However, in early Israelite history, eligibility for serving as a priest was not confined to a tribe, or to a clan within a tribe (see Judg. ch. 17). As history unfolded, the Levites came to be recognized as the priestly tribe (Deut.33.8-11). Later (namely in the postexilic period) a subgroup, supposedly descended from Aaron, a Levite, became the only priests. 4: *The Tent of the Presence*: see 26.1-37 n. 10: By touching the sacrificial victim, the worshiper identified with it. 12: *Blood*, the life-force (Gen.9.4), was sacred to God. The blood was to be used to add to the sense of communion with the deity which the sacrifice brought about. 18: *Soothing odour*: an idiom meaning "acceptable sacrifice" (Gen.8.21). In earlier polytheistic times, the gods were believed

24 basket of unleavened bread that is before the LORD. Set all these on the hands of Aaron and of his sons and present them as a special gift before the LORD. Then take them out of their hands, and burn them on the altar with the whole-offering for a soothing odour to the LORD: it is a food-offering to the LORD. Take the breast of Aaron's ram of installation, present it as a special gift before the LORD, and it shall be your requisite.

27 Hallow the breast of the special gift and the leg of the contribution, that which is presented and that which is set aside from the ram of installation, that which is for Aaron and that which is for his sons; and they shall belong to Aaron and his sons, by a rule binding for all time, as a gift from the Israelites, for it is a contribution, set aside from their shared-offerings, their contribution to the LORD.

29 Aaron's sacred vestments shall be kept for the anointing and installation of his sons after him. The priest appointed in his stead from among his sons, the one who enters<sup>v</sup> the Tent of the Presence to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them for seven days.

31 Take the ram of installation, and boil its flesh in a sacred place; Aaron and his sons shall eat the ram's flesh and the bread left in the basket, at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence.

33 They shall eat the things with which expiation was made at their installation and their consecration. No unqualified person may eat them, for they are holy. If any of the flesh of the installation, or any of the bread, is left over till morning, you shall destroy it by fire; it shall not be eaten, for it is holy.

35 Do this with Aaron and his sons as I have commanded you, spending seven days over their installation.

36 Offer a bull daily, a sin-offering as expiation for sin; offer the sin-offering on the altar when you make expiation for it, and consecrate it by anointing.

For seven days you shall make expiation for the altar, and consecrate it, and it shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall be forfeit as sacred.

This is what you shall offer on the altar: two yearling rams regularly every day. You shall offer the one ram at dawn, and the second between dusk and dark, a tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of pure oil of pounded olives, and a drink-offering of a quarter of a hin of wine for the first ram. You shall offer the second ram between dusk and dark, and with it the same grain-offering and drink-offering as at dawn, for a soothing odour: it is a food-offering to the LORD, a regular whole-offering in every generation; you shall make the offering at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence before the LORD, where I meet you and speak to you. I shall meet the Israelites there, and the place will be hallowed by my glory. I shall hallow the Tent of the Presence and the altar; and Aaron and his sons I shall consecrate to serve me as priests. I shall dwell in the midst of the Israelites, I shall become their God, and by my dwelling among them they will know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD their God.

30 Make an altar on which to burn incense; make it of acacia-wood. It shall be a square, a cubit long by a cubit broad and two cubits high; the horns of one piece with it. Overlay it with pure gold, the top, the sides all round, and the horns; and put round it a band of gold. Make pairs of gold rings for it; put them under the band at the two corners on both sides to receive the poles by which it is to be carried. Make the poles of acacia-wood and overlay them with gold. Put it before the Veil in front of the Ark of the Tokens where I will meet you. On it Aaron shall burn

<sup>v</sup> Or when he enters.

attracted by the smell. 26: *Perquisite*: a gift equivalent to wages, or beyond the stipulated wage. The officiating priest was to receive an agreed portion of the sacrifice; see Lev.7.31-36; Deut. 18.3. An abuse is related in 1 Sam.2.12-17. 27-28: In subsequent times portions of some sacrifices were to be preserved perpetually for Aaron's descendants. 36-42: The daily sacrificial ritual of the postexilic Temple is here ascribed to the period of Aaron's consecration.

30.1-10: **The construction of the incense altar.** The *altar for incense* was part of the furnishings

fragrant incense; every morning when he tends the lamps he shall burn the incense, and when he mounts the lamps between dusk and dark, he shall burn the incense; so there shall be a regular burning of incense before the LORD for all time. You shall not offer on it any unauthorized incense, nor any whole-offering or grain-offering; and you shall not pour a drink-offering over it. Aaron shall make expiation with blood on its horns once a year; with blood from the sin-offering of the yearly Expiation<sup>w</sup> he shall do this for all time. It is most holy to the LORD.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: When you number the Israelites for the purpose of registration, each man shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD, to avert plague among them during the registration. As each man crosses over to those already counted he shall give half a shekel by the sacred standard (twenty gerahs to the shekel) as a contribution to the LORD. Everyone from twenty years old and upwards who has crossed over to those already counted shall give a contribution to the LORD. The rich man shall give no more than the half-shekel, and the poor man shall give no less, when you give the contribution to the LORD to make expiation for your lives. The money received from the Israelites for expiation you shall apply to the service of the Tent of the Presence. The expiation for your lives shall be a reminder of the Israelites to the LORD.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: Make a bronze basin for ablution with its stand of bronze; put it between the Tent of the Presence and the altar, and fill it with water with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet. When they enter the Tent of the Presence they shall wash with water,

lest they die. So also when they approach the altar to minister, to burn a food-offering to the LORD, they shall wash their hands and feet, lest they die. It shall be a rule for all time binding on him and his descendants in every generation.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: You yourself shall take spices as follows: five hundred shekels of sticks of myrrh, half that amount (two hundred and fifty shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, two hundred and fifty shekels of aromatic cane, five hundred shekels of cassia by the sacred standard, and a hin of olive oil. From these prepare sacred anointing oil, a perfume compounded by the perfumer's art. This shall be the sacred anointing oil. Anoint with it the Tent of the Presence and the Ark of the Tokens, the table and all its vessels, the lamp-stand and its fittings, the altar of incense, the altar of whole-offering and all its vessels, the basin and its stand. You shall consecrate them, and they shall be most holy; whatever touches them shall be forfeit as sacred. Anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them to be my priests. Speak to the Israelites and say: This shall be the holy anointing oil for my service in every generation. It shall not be used for anointing the human body, and you must not prepare any oil like it after the same prescription. It is holy, and you shall treat it as holy. The man who compounds perfume like it, or who puts any of it on any unqualified person, shall be cut off from his father's kin.

The LORD said to Moses, Take fragrant spices: gum resin,<sup>x</sup> aromatic shell, galbanum; add pure frankincense to the spices in equal proportions. Make it into incense, perfume

<sup>w</sup> Or Atonement.    <sup>x</sup> Or mastic.

of the outer shrine (v. 6; 26.33 n.). This section logically belongs with 25.1–40. 10: The *yearly Expiation*: the Day of Atonement; see Lev. ch. 16.

30.11–16: **The financial support of the cult.** The census for military and financial purposes, introduced possibly under the monarchy, was considered offensive to God (2 Sam. 24.10). The tax paid by the worshiper was a *ransom* (v. 12) to protect him from the offense to the deity. 13: *Shekel*: see p. 1035.

30.17–21: **The basin for ritual washing.** The *basin* stood in the Tabernacle court. This section logically belongs with 27.1–21. Compare the Sea in Solomon's temple, 1 Kgs. 7.23–26.

30.22–38: **Formulas for the sacred oil and incense.** 23: *Myrrh*: a fragrant resin. 24: *Cassia*: an aromatic bark. *Hin*: see p. 1035, 34: *Aromatic shell*: derived from a mollusk found in the Red Sea. *Galbanum* . . . *frankincense*: resinous (vegetable) gums.

made by the perfumer's craft, salted  
 36 and pure, a holy thing. Pound some of  
 it into fine powder, and put it in front  
 of the Tokens in the Tent of the  
 Presence, where I shall meet you; you  
 37 shall treat it as most holy. The incense  
 prepared according to this prescription  
 you shall not make for your own use.  
 You shall treat it as holy to the LORD.  
 38 The man who makes any like it for his  
 own pleasure shall be cut off from his  
 father's kin.

**31 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,**

2 Mark this: I have specially chosen  
 Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the  
 3 tribe of Judah. I have filled him with  
 divine spirit, making him skilful and  
 4 ingenious, expert in every craft, and a  
 master of design, whether in gold,  
 5 silver, copper, or cutting stones to be  
 set, or carving wood, for workmanship  
 6 of every kind. Further, I have appointed  
 Aholiab<sup>y</sup> son of Ahisamach of the  
 tribe of Dan to help him, and I have  
 endowed every skilled craftsman with  
 the skill which he has. They shall make  
 everything that I have commanded  
 7 you: the Tent of the Presence, the Ark  
 for the Tokens, the cover over it, and all  
 8 the furnishings of the tent; the table  
 and its vessels, the pure lamp-stand  
 and all its fittings, the altar of incense,  
 9 the altar of whole-offering and all its  
 10 vessels, the basin and its stand; the  
 stitched vestments, that is the sacred  
 vestments for Aaron the priest and the  
 vestments for his sons when they  
 11 minister as priests, the anointing oil  
 and the fragrant incense for the Holy  
 Place. They shall carry out all I have  
 commanded you.

12 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 13 Speak to the Israelites, you yourself,  
 and say to them: Above all you shall  
 observe my sabbaths, for the sabbath  
 is a sign between me and you in every

generation that you may know that I  
 am the LORD who hallows you. You 14  
 shall keep the sabbath, because it is a  
 holy day for you. If anyone profanes it  
 he must be put to death. Anyone who  
 does work on it shall be cut off from  
 his father's kin. Work may be done on 15  
 six days, but on the seventh day there  
 is a sabbath of sacred rest, holy to the  
 LORD. Whoever does work on the sab-  
 bath day must be put to death. The 16  
 Israelites shall keep the sabbath, they  
 shall keep it in every generation as a  
 covenant for ever. It is a sign for ever 17  
 between me and the Israelites, for in  
 six days the LORD made the heavens  
 and the earth, but on the seventh day  
 he ceased work and refreshed himself.

When he had finished speaking with 18  
 Moses on Mount Sinai, the LORD gave  
 him the two tablets of the Tokens, tab-  
 lets of stone written with the finger of  
 God.

WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW THAT MOSES WAS 32  
 so long in coming down from the  
 mountain, they confronted Aaron and  
 said to him, 'Come, make us gods to go  
 ahead of us. As for this fellow Moses,  
 who brought us up from Egypt, we do  
 not know what has become of him.'  
 Aaron answered them, 'Strip the gold 2  
 rings from the ears of your wives and  
 daughters, and bring them to me.' So 3  
 all the people stripped themselves of  
 their gold earrings and brought them  
 to Aaron. He took them out of their 4  
 hands, cast the metal in a mould, and  
 made it into the image of a bull-calf.  
 'These', he said, 'are your gods, O 5  
 Israel, that brought you up from  
 Egypt.' Then Aaron was afraid and 5  
 built an altar in front of it and issued  
 this proclamation, 'Tomorrow there is  
 to be a pilgrim-feast to the LORD.' Next 6  
 day the people rose early, offered whole-  
<sup>y</sup> Or Aholiab.

**31.1-11: The appointment of craftsmen.**

**31.12-17: The Sabbath, the sign of the covenant.** This strong emphasis on the Sabbath observance may reflect the exilic period when the great pilgrim festivals (23.14-17) could not be kept; if so, its intent was to give the community a deeper sense of corporate identity.

**31.18-32.35: The breach of the covenant.** The ancient narrative strand, last met in 24.18, is resumed here. Aaron is seriously involved in the idolatrous incident of the golden calf; the effect of the intervening priestly material (25.1-31.17) centering on him softens the account of the sin. **32.1:** *So long:* forty days (24.18). Despite earlier enthusiasm for the covenant (24.7), Israel's faith in the LORD wavers at the delay. *Gods:* the Heb. noun is plural in form, but has a singular meaning (as in Gen.1.1) throughout the chapter. 4: The *bull-calf* was to serve as a

offerings, and brought shared-offerings. After this they sat down to eat and drink and then gave themselves up to revelry. But the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down at once, for your people, the people you brought up from Egypt, have done a disgraceful thing; so quickly have they turned aside from the way I commanded them. They have made themselves an image of a bull-calf, they have prostrated themselves before it, sacrificed to it and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from Egypt."' So the LORD said to Moses, 'I have considered this people, and I see that they are a stubborn people. Now, let me alone to vent my anger upon them, so that I may put an end to them and make a great nation spring from you.' But Moses set himself to placate the LORD his God: 'O LORD', he said, 'why shouldst thou vent thy anger upon thy people, whom thou didst bring out of Egypt with great power and a strong hand? Why let the Egyptians say, "So he meant evil when he took them out, to kill them in the mountains and wipe them off the face of the earth"? Turn from thy anger, and think better of the evil thou dost intend against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thy own self: "I will make your posterity countless as the stars in the sky, and all this land, of which I have spoken, I will give to them, and they shall possess it for ever."' So the LORD relented, and spared his people the evil with which he had threatened them. Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Tokens in his hands, inscribed on both sides; on the front and on the back they were inscribed. The tablets were the handiwork of God, and the writing was God's writing, engraved on the tablets. Joshua, hearing the uproar the people were making, said to Moses, 'Listen! There is fighting in the camp.' Moses replied,

'This is not the clamour of warriors, nor the clamour of a defeated people; it is the sound of singing that I hear.'

As he approached the camp, Moses saw the bull-calf and the dancing, and he was angry; he flung the tablets down, and they were shattered to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf they had made and burnt it; he ground it to powder, sprinkled it on water, and made the Israelites drink it. He demanded of Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you should have brought such great guilt upon them?' Aaron replied, 'Do not be angry, sir. The people were deeply troubled; that you well know. And they said to me, "Make us gods to go ahead of us, because, as for this fellow Moses, who brought us up from Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So I said to them, "Those of you who have any gold, strip it off." They gave it me, I threw it in the fire, and out came this bull-calf.' Moses saw that the people were out of control and that Aaron had laid them open to the secret malice of their enemies. He took his place at the gate of the camp and said, 'Who is on the LORD's side? Come here to me'; and the Levites all rallied to him. He said to them, 'These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: "Arm yourselves, each of you, with his sword. Go through the camp from gate to gate and back again. Each of you kill his brother, his friend, his neighbour."' The Levites obeyed, and about three thousand of the people died that day. Moses then said, 'Today you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD completely, because you have turned each against his own son and his own brother and so have this day brought a blessing upon yourselves.'

The next day Moses said to the people, 'You have committed a great sin. I shall now go up to the LORD; perhaps I may be able to secure pardon

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visible symbol of the presence of the deity. See 1 Kgs.12.28 n. 9-14: God continues to accept Israel, not because of her merits, but as another manifestation of his mysterious grace. 19: Moses' action symbolizes the state of the covenant at that moment. 21-24: This may be a priestly attempt to bring out the role of the people and thus minimize Aaron's guilt. 26-29: The Levites here earn recognition as the LORD's priests by demonstrating a loyalty higher than

31 for your sin.' So Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'O hear me! This people has committed a great sin: they have made themselves gods of gold. If thou wilt forgive them, forgive. But if not, blot out my name, I pray, from thy book which thou hast written.' The LORD answered Moses, 'It is the man who has sinned against me that I will blot out from my book. But go now, lead the people to the place which I have told you of. My angel shall go ahead of you, but a day will come when I shall punish them for their sin.' And the LORD smote the people for worshipping the bull-calf which Aaron had made.

33 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES: 'COME, GO up from here, you and the people you have brought up from Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give to their posterity. I will send an angel ahead of you, and will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites. I will bring you to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not journey in your company, for fear that I annihilate you on the way; for you are a stubborn people.' When the people heard this harsh sentence they went about like mourners, and no man put on his ornaments. The LORD said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites, "You are a stubborn people: at any moment, if I journey in your company, I may annihilate you. Put away your ornaments now, and I will determine what to do to you."' And so the Israelites stripped off their ornaments, and wore them no more from Mount Horeb onwards.

7 Moses used to take a<sup>2</sup> tent and pitch it at a distance outside the camp. He called it the Tent of the Presence, and everyone who sought the LORD would

go out to the Tent of the Presence outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each at the entrance to his tent, and follow Moses with their eyes until he entered the tent. When Moses entered it, the pillar of cloud came down, and stayed at the entrance to the tent while the LORD spoke with Moses. As soon as the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they would all prostrate themselves, every man at the entrance to his tent. The LORD would speak with Moses face to face, as one man speaks to another. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, never moved from inside the tent.

Moses said to the LORD, 'Thou bidst me lead this people up, but thou hast not told me whom thou wilt send with me. Thou hast said to me, "I know you by name, and, further, you have found favour with me." If I have indeed won thy favour, then teach me to know thy way, so that I can know thee and continue in favour with thee, for this nation is thy own people.' The LORD answered, 'I will go with you in person and set your mind at rest.' Moses said to him, 'Indeed if thou dost not go in person, do not send us up from here; for how can it ever be known that I and thy people have found favour with thee, except by thy going with us? So shall we be distinct, I and thy people, from all the peoples on earth.' The LORD said to Moses, 'I will do this thing that you have asked, because you have found favour with me, and I know you by name.'

And Moses prayed, 'Show me thy glory.' The LORD answered, 'I will make all my goodness<sup>a</sup> pass before you, and I will pronounce in your hearing the Name JEHOVAH.<sup>b</sup> I will be

<sup>z</sup> Or the.      <sup>a</sup> Or character.      <sup>b</sup> See note on 3. 15.

that to family and people. 33: *My book*: see Mal.3.16. The allusion is to a belief of a record of man's merits or trespasses, kept in heaven; late Judaism embroidered this theme.

33.1-23: *Israel prepares to leave the sacred mountain*. Another tradition has already been related; see 23.20-33 n. The inclusion of various ancient traditions about Sinai (24.1-32.35) creates a sense of some delay. 7-11: This seems an old tradition, originally independent, about the *Tent of the Presence* (29.4; see 26.1-37 n.). Why the material was placed in this particular context is not clear. 19: *JEHOVAH*: see 3.12 n.; 3.15 Tfn. *g*. It is only because the LORD is *gracious* and compassionate that he will continue with Israel despite her disobedience in the episode of the calf (ch. 32).

gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' But he added, 'My face you cannot see, for no mortal man may see me and live.' The LORD said, 'Here is a place beside me. Take your stand on the rock and when my glory passes by, I will put you in a crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.'

34 The LORD said to Moses, 'Cut two stone tablets like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words which were on the first tablets, which you broke in pieces. Be ready by morning. Then in the morning go up Mount Sinai; stand and wait for me there on the top. No man shall go up with you, no man shall even be seen anywhere on the mountain, nor shall flocks or herds graze within sight of that mountain.' So Moses cut two stone tablets like the first, and he rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets in his hands. And the LORD came down in the cloud and took his place beside him and pronounced the Name JEHOVAH. Then the LORD passed in front of him and called aloud, 'JEHOVAH, the LORD, a god compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, ever constant and true, maintaining constancy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin, and not sweeping the guilty clean away; but one who punishes sons and grandsons to the third and fourth generation for the iniquity of their fathers!' Moses made haste, bowed to the ground and prostrated himself. He said, 'If I have indeed won thy favour, O Lord, then may the Lord go in our company. However stubborn a people they are, forgive our iniquity and our sin and take us as thy own possession.'

The LORD said, Here and now I make a covenant. In full view of all your people I will do such miracles as have never been performed in all the world or in any nation. All the surrounding peoples shall see the work of the LORD, for fearful is that which I will do for you.<sup>c</sup> Observe all I command you this day; and I for my part will drive out before you the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. Be careful not to make a covenant with the natives of the land against which you are going, or they will prove a snare in your midst. No: you shall demolish their altars, smash their sacred pillars and cut down their sacred poles. You shall not prostrate yourselves to any other god. For the LORD's name is the Jealous God, and a jealous god he is. Be careful not to make a covenant with the natives of the land, or, when they go wantonly after their gods and sacrifice to them, you may be invited, any one of you, to partake of their sacrifices, and marry your sons to their daughters, and when their daughters go wantonly after their gods, they may lead your sons astray too.

You shall not make yourselves gods of cast metal.

You shall observe the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread: for seven days, as I have commanded you, you shall eat unleavened cakes at the appointed time, in the month of Abib, because in the month of Abib you went out from Egypt.

Every first birth of the womb belongs to me, and the males of all your herds, both cattle and sheep. You may buy back the first birth of an ass by giving a sheep instead, but if you do not buy it, you must break its neck. You shall buy back all the first-born of your sons,

c for fearful . . . for you; or (for he is to be feared) which I will do for you.

34.1-35: The renewal of the covenant. The episodes of the shattering of the tablets (32.19) and of Moses' request for a theophany or "divine self-manifestation" (33.18-23) provide the narrator with an opportunity to relate still other ancient Sinaitic traditions, including a (somewhat different) list of Ten Commandments (vv. 14-26; see 20.1-21 n.), under the theme of a covenant renewal. Israel's departure is again apparently delayed. 6-7: This seems to be an extremely ancient cultic confession, and it is repeated many times (Num.14.18; Neh.9.17; Ps.103.8; Joel 2.13; Jonah 4.2). 13: *Sacred pillars and poles* were a central feature of Canaanite shrines, symbolizing the presence of the fertility gods Baal and Asherah. 14-26: The covenant



and no one shall come into my presence empty-handed.

21 For six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall cease work: even at ploughing time and harvest you shall cease work.

22 You shall observe the pilgrim-feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the pilgrim-feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your males shall come into the presence of the Lord, the LORD the God of Israel; for after I have driven out the nations before you and extended your frontiers, there will be no danger from covetous neighbours when you go up these three times to enter the presence of the LORD your God.

25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice at the same time as anything leavened, nor shall any portion of the victim of the pilgrim-feast of Passover remain overnight till morning.

26 You shall bring the choicest firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

27 The LORD said to Moses, 'Write these words down, because the covenant I make with you and with Israel is in these words.' So Moses stayed there with the LORD forty days and forty nights, neither eating nor drinking, and wrote down the words of the covenant, the Ten Words,<sup>d</sup> on the tablets. At length Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two stone tablets of the Tokens in his hands, and when he descended, he did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been speaking with the LORD. When Aaron and the Israelites saw how the skin of Moses' face shone, they were afraid to approach him. He called out to them, and Aaron and all the chiefs in the congregation turned to-

wards him. Moses spoke to them, and afterwards all the Israelites drew near. He gave them all the commands with which the LORD had charged him on Mount Sinai, and finished what he had to say.

Then Moses put a veil over his face, and whenever he went in before the LORD to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. Then he would go out and tell the Israelites all the commands he had received. Whenever the skin of Moses' face shone in the sight of the Israelites, he would put the veil back over his face until he went in again to speak with the LORD.

MOSES CALLED THE WHOLE COMMUNITY of Israelites together and thus addressed them: These are the LORD's commands to you: On six days you may work, but the seventh you are to keep as a sabbath of sacred rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever works on that day shall be put to death. You are not even to light your fire at home on the sabbath day.

These words Moses spoke to all the community of Israelites: This is the command the LORD has given: Each of you set aside a contribution to the LORD. Let all who wish, bring a contribution to the LORD: gold, silver, copper; violet, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goats' hair; tanned rams' skins, porpoise-hides, and acacia-wood; oil for the lamp, perfume for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; cornelians and other stones ready for setting in the ephod and the breast-piece. Let every craftsman among you come and make everything the LORD has commanded. The Tabernacle, its tent and covering, fasteners,

<sup>d</sup> Or Ten Commandments.

regulations, paralleled in 20.3-6, 8-11; 22.29-30; 23.14-19. 29: God's "glory," which Moses has requested to see (33.18,22), is oftentimes described as a visible radiance (16.10). Because of the unique revelation accorded Moses, his face is now said to "shine." Vg. mistranslated "Moses' face had horns" (hence Michelangelo's horned Moses); the mistranslation arises from the fact that Heb. *qeren* means both "ray of light" and "horn" and may be related to the way ancient priests were sometimes depicted with a horned headpiece which symbolized their semidivine status.

35.1-40.38: The erection of the Tabernacle. The priestly narrative now continues from 31.17, showing how the instructions which began in 25.1 were carried out.

35.4-36.7: The obtaining of finances and craftsmen. 4-29: This is an expansion of 25.1-9.

12 planks, bars, posts, and sockets, the  
 13 Ark and its poles, the cover and the  
 14 Veil of the screen, the table, its poles,  
 15 and all its vessels, and the Bread of the  
 16 Presence, the lamp-stand for the light,  
 17 its fittings, lamps and the lamp oil; the  
 18 altar of incense and its poles, the  
 19 anointing oil, the fragrant incense, and  
 20 the screen for the entrance of the  
 21 Tabernacle, the altar of whole-offering,  
 22 its bronze grating, poles, and all ap-  
 23 purtenances, the basin and its stand;  
 24 the hangings of the court, its posts and  
 25 sockets, and the screen for the gateway  
 26 of the court; the pegs of the Taber-  
 27 nacle and court and their cords, the  
 28 stitched vestments for ministering in  
 29 the Holy Place, that is the sacred vest-  
 30 ments for Aaron the priest and the  
 31 vestments for his sons when they  
 32 minister as priests.

33 The whole community of the Israel-  
 34 ites went out from Moses' presence,  
 35 and everyone who was so minded  
 36 brought of his own free will a contribu-  
 37 tion to the LORD for the making of the  
 38 Tent of the Presence and all its service,  
 39 and for the sacred vestments. Men and  
 40 women alike came and freely brought  
 41 clasps, earrings, finger-rings, and pen-  
 42 dants, gold ornaments of every kind,  
 43 every one of them presenting a special  
 44 gift of gold to the LORD. And every  
 45 man brought what he possessed of vio-  
 46 let, purple, and scarlet yarn, fine linen  
 47 and goats' hair, tanned rams' skins and  
 48 porpoise-hides. Every man, setting  
 49 aside a contribution of silver or copper,  
 50 brought it as a contribution to the  
 51 LORD, and all who had acacia-wood  
 52 suitable for any part of the work  
 53 brought it. Every woman with the skill  
 54 spun and brought the violet, purple,  
 55 and scarlet yarn, and fine linen. All the  
 56 women whose skill moved them spun  
 57 the goats' hair. The chiefs brought cor-  
 58 nelians and other stones ready for set-  
 59 ting in the ephod and the breast-piece,  
 60 the perfume and oil for the light, for the  
 61 anointing oil, and for the fragrant in-  
 62 cense. Every Israelite man and woman  
 63 who was minded to bring offerings to the  
 64 LORD for all the work which he had com-  
 65 manded through Moses did so freely.

Moses said to the Israelites, 'Mark 30  
 this: the LORD has specially chosen  
 31 Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the  
 32 tribe of Judah. He has filled him with  
 33 divine spirit, making him skilful and  
 34 ingenious, expert in every craft, and a  
 35 master of design, whether in gold,  
 36 silver, and copper, or cutting precious  
 37 stones for setting, or carving wood, in  
 38 every kind of design. He has inspired  
 39 both him and Aholiab son of Ahisa-  
 40 mach of the tribe of Dan to instruct  
 41 workers and designers of every kind,  
 42 engravers, seamsters, embroiderers in  
 43 violet, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine  
 44 linen, and weavers, fully endowing  
 45 them with skill to execute all kinds of  
 46 work. Bezalel and Aholiab shall work  
 47 exactly as the LORD has commanded,  
 48 and so also shall every craftsman whom  
 49 the LORD has made skilful and in-  
 50 genious in these matters, to know how  
 51 to execute every kind of work for the  
 52 service of the sanctuary.'

Moses summoned Bezalel, Aholiab, 2  
 and every craftsman to whom the LORD  
 had given skill and who was willing, to  
 come forward and set to work. They 3  
 received from Moses every contribution  
 which the Israelites had brought for the  
 work of the service of the sanctuary,  
 but the people still brought freewill  
 offerings morning after morning, so 4  
 that the craftsmen at work on the  
 sanctuary left what they were doing,  
 every one of them, and came to Moses 5  
 and said, 'The people are bringing  
 much more than we need for doing the  
 work which the LORD has commanded.'  
 So Moses sent word round the camp 6  
 that no man or woman should prepare  
 anything more as a contribution for  
 the sanctuary. So the people stopped  
 bringing gifts; what was there already 7  
 was more than enough for all the work  
 they had to do.

Then all the craftsmen among the 8  
 workers made the Tabernacle of ten  
 hangings of finely woven linen, and  
 violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, with  
 cherubim worked on them, all made 9  
 by a seamster. The length of each hang-  
 ing was twenty-eight cubits and the  
 breadth four cubits, all of the same

35.30-36.7: See 31.1-11. 36.8-39.43: Execution of the Tabernacle designs. 8-38: See 26.1-37.

10 size. They joined five of the hangings together, and similarly the other five.  
 11 They made violet loops on the outer edge of the one set of hangings and they did the same for the outer edge of  
 12 the other set of hangings. They made fifty loops for each hanging; they made also fifty loops for the end hanging in the second set, the loops being opposite each other. They made fifty gold fasteners, with which they joined the hangings one to another, and the Tabernacle became a single whole.  
 14 They made hangings of goats' hair, eleven in all, to form a tent over the  
 15 Tabernacle; each hanging was thirty cubits long and four cubits wide, all eleven of the same size. They joined five of the hangings together, and  
 17 similarly the other six. They made fifty loops on the edge of the outer hanging in the first set and fifty loops on the  
 18 joining edge of the second set, and fifty bronze fasteners to join up the tent and make it a single whole. They made for the tent a cover of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of porpoise-hides.

20 They made for the Tabernacle planks  
 21 of acacia-wood as uprights, each plank ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide, and two tenons for each plank joined to each other. They did the same for all the planks of the Tabernacle.  
 23 They arranged the planks thus: twenty planks for the south side, facing southwards, with forty silver sockets under them, two sockets under each plank for its two tenons; and for the second or northern side of the Tabernacle twenty planks with forty silver sockets, two under each plank. They made six planks for the far end of the Tabernacle on the west. They made two planks for the corners of the Tabernacle at the far end; at the bottom they were alike, and at the top, both alike, they fitted into a single ring. They did the same for both of them at the two  
 30 corners. There were eight planks with their silver sockets, sixteen sockets in all, two sockets under each plank.  
 31 They made bars of acacia-wood: five for the planks on the one side of

the Tabernacle, five bars for the planks 32 on the second side of the Tabernacle, and five bars for the planks on the far end of the Tabernacle on the west. They made the middle bar to run along 33 from end to end half-way up the frames. They overlaid the frames with 34 gold, made rings of gold on them to hold the bars and plated the bars with gold.

They made the Veil of finely woven 35 linen and violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked on it, all made by a seamster. And they made 36 for it four posts of acacia-wood overlaid with gold, with gold hooks, and cast four silver sockets for them. For 37 the entrance of the tent a screen of finely woven linen was made, embroidered with violet, purple, and scarlet, and five posts of acacia-wood 38 with their hooks. They overlaid the tops of the posts and the bands round them with gold; the five sockets for them were of bronze.

Bezalel then made the Ark, a chest 37 of acacia-wood, two and a half cubits long, one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit and a half high. He overlaid 2 it with pure gold, both inside and out, and put a band of gold all round it. He 3 cast four gold rings to be on its four feet, two rings on each side of it. He 4 made poles of acacia-wood and plated them with gold, and inserted the poles 5 in the rings at the sides of the Ark to lift it. He made a cover of pure gold, 6 two and a half cubits long and one cubit and a half wide. He made two 7 gold cherubim of beaten work at the ends of the cover, one at each end; he 8 made each cherub of one piece with the cover. They had wings outspread and 9 pointing upwards, screening the cover with their wings; they stood face to face, looking inwards over the cover.

He made the table of acacia-wood, 10 two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one cubit and a half high. He overlaid 11 it with pure gold and put a band of gold all round it. He made a rim round 12 it a hand's breadth wide, and a gold band round the rim. He cast four gold 13 rings for it, and put the rings at the

37.1-9: See 25.10-22. 10-16: See 25.23-30; here, too, execution follows the instructions

14 four corners by the four legs. The rings, which were to receive the poles for carrying the table, were close to the rim. These carrying-poles he made of acacia-wood and plated them with gold. He made the vessels for the table, its dishes and saucers, and its flagons and bowls from which drink-offerings were to be poured; he made them of pure gold.

17 He made the lamp-stand of pure gold. The lamp-stand, stem, and branches, were of beaten work, its cups, both calyxes and petals, were of one piece with it. There were six branches springing from its sides; three branches of the lamp-stand sprang from one side and three branches from the other side. There were three cups shaped like almond blossoms, with calyx and petals, on the first branch, three cups shaped like almond blossoms, with calyx and petals, on the next branch, and similarly for all six branches springing from the lamp-stand. On the main stem of the lamp-stand there were four cups shaped like almond blossoms, with calyx and petals, and there were calyxes of one piece with it under the six branches which sprang from the lamp-stand, a single calyx under each pair of branches. The calyxes and the branches were of one piece with it, all a single piece of beaten work of pure gold. He made its seven lamps, its tongs and firepans of pure gold. The lamp-stand and all these fittings were made from one talent of pure gold.

25 He made the altar of incense of acacia-wood, square, a cubit long by a cubit broad and two cubits high, the horns of one piece with it. He overlaid it with pure gold, the top, the sides all round, and the horns, and he put round it a band of gold. He made pairs of gold rings for it; he put them under the band at the two corners on both sides to receive the poles by which it was to be carried. He made the poles of acacia-wood and overlaid them with gold.

29 He prepared the sacred anointing oil and the fragrant incense, pure,

compounded by the perfumer's art.

38 He made the altar of whole-offering of acacia-wood, square, five cubits long by five cubits broad and three cubits high. Its horns at the four corners were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. He made all the vessels for the altar, its pots, shovels, tossing bowls, forks, and firepans, all of bronze. He made for the altar a grating of bronze network under the ledge, coming half-way up. He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating to receive the poles, and he made the poles of acacia-wood and overlaid them with bronze. He inserted the poles in the rings at the sides of the altar to carry it. He left the altar a hollow shell.

8 The basin and its stand of bronze he made out of the bronze mirrors of the women who were on duty at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence.

9 He made the court. For the south side facing southwards the hangings of the court were of finely woven linen a hundred cubits long, with twenty posts and twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks and bands on the posts were of silver. Along the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits, with twenty posts and twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks and bands on the posts were of silver. On the west side there were hangings fifty cubits long, with ten posts and ten sockets; the hooks and bands on the posts were of silver. On the east side, towards the sunrise, fifty cubits, there were hangings on either side of the gateway of the court; they extended fifteen cubits to one corner, with their three posts and their three sockets, and fifteen cubits to the second corner, with their three posts and their three sockets. The hangings of the court all round were of finely woven linen. The sockets for the posts were of bronze, the hooks and bands on the posts of silver, the tops of them overlaid with silver, and all the posts of the court were bound with silver. The screen at the gateway of the court was of finely woven linen, embroidered

previously given. 17-24: See 25.31-40. 25-28: See 30.1-10. 29: See 30.22-38. 38:1-7: See 27.1-8. 8: See 30.17-21. 9-20: See 27.9-19; there is no deviation here from the instructions given there.

with violet, purple, and scarlet, twenty cubits long and five cubits high to correspond to the hangings of the court,  
 19 with four posts and four sockets of bronze, their hooks of silver, and the tops of them and their bands overlaid  
 20 with silver. All the pegs for the Tabernacle and those for the court were of bronze.  
 21 These were the appointments of the Tabernacle, that is the Tabernacle of the Tokens which was assigned by Moses to the charge of the Levites under Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.  
 22 Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah made everything the  
 23 LORD had commanded Moses. He was assisted by Aholiab son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, an engraver, a seamster, and an embroiderer in fine linen with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn.  
 24 The gold of the special gift used for the work of the sanctuary amounted in all to twenty-nine talents seven hundred and thirty shekels, by the sacred  
 25 standard. The silver contributed by the community when registered was one hundred talents one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, by the sacred standard.  
 26 This amounted to a beka a head, that is half a shekel by the sacred standard, for every man from twenty years old and upwards, who had been registered, a total of six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty  
 27 men. The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets for the sanctuary and for the Veil, a hundred sockets to a hundred talents, a talent to a socket.  
 28 With the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the posts, overlaid the tops of the  
 29 posts and put bands round them. The bronze of the special gift came to seventy talents two thousand four  
 30 hundred shekels; with this he made sockets for the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, the bronze altar and its bronze grating, all the vessels for the  
 31 altar, the sockets all round the court, the sockets for the posts at the gate-

way of the court, all the pegs for the Tabernacle, and the pegs all round the court.

They used violet, purple, and scarlet 39 yarn in making the stitched vestments for ministering in the sanctuary and in making the sacred vestments for Aaron, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They made the ephod of gold, with 2 violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely woven linen. The gold was beaten 3 into thin plates, cut and twisted into braid to be worked in by a seamster with the violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen. They made shoulder- 4 pieces for it, joined back and front. The waist-band on it was of the same 5 workmanship and material as the fabric of the ephod; it was gold, with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely woven linen, as the LORD commanded Moses.

They prepared the cornelians, fixed 6 in gold rosettes, engraved by the art of a seal-cutter with the names of the sons of Israel, and fastened them on the 7 shoulders of the ephod as reminders of the sons of Israel, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They made the breast-piece; it was 8 worked like the ephod by a seamster, in gold, with violet, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely woven linen. They 9 made the breast-piece square, folded, a span long and a span wide. They set 10 in it four rows of precious stones: the first row, sardin, chrysolite and green felspar; the second row, purple garnet, 11 lapis lazuli and jade; the third row, 12 turquoise, agate and jasper; the fourth 13 row, topaz, cornelian and green jasper, all set in gold rosettes. The stones cor- 14 responded to the twelve sons of Israel, name by name, each bearing the name of one of the twelve tribes engraved as on a seal. They made for the breast- 15 piece twisted cords of pure gold worked into a rope. They made two gold ros- 16 ettes and two gold rings, and they fixed the two rings on the two corners of the breast-piece. They fastened the two 17 gold ropes to the two rings at those corners of the breast-piece, and the 18

A single court is presumed; some temples often had two courts. 21: *Tokens*: see 25.16 (Tfn. p) and 16.34 n. The *appointments* probably included a copy of the Ten Commandments kept in the Ark. 26: The figure is the same as that in the census recorded in Num. 1.46. 39.1-31; See 28.1-43.

other ends of the two ropes to the two  
 rosettes, thus binding them to the  
 shoulder-pieces on the front of the  
 19 ephod. They made two gold rings and  
 put them at the two corners of the  
 breast-piece on the inner side next to  
 20 the ephod. They made two gold rings  
 and fixed them on the two shoulder-  
 pieces of the ephod, low down and in  
 front, close to its seam above the waist-  
 21 band on the ephod. They bound the  
 breast-piece by its rings to the rings of  
 the ephod with a violet braid, just  
 above the waist-band on the ephod, so  
 that the breast-piece would not become  
 detached from the ephod; so the LORD  
 22 had commanded Moses. They made the  
 mantle of the ephod a single piece of  
 woven violet stuff, with a hole in the  
 23 middle of it which had a hem round it,  
 with an oversewn edge so that it could  
 24 not be torn. All round its skirts they  
 made pomegranates of violet, purple,  
 and scarlet stuff, and finely woven  
 25 linen. They made bells of pure gold  
 and put them all round the skirts of the  
 26 mantle between the pomegranates, a  
 bell and a pomegranate alternately the  
 whole way round the skirts of the  
 mantle, to be worn when ministering,  
 as the LORD commanded Moses.

27 They made the tunics of fine linen,  
 woven work, for Aaron and his sons,  
 28 the turban of fine linen, the tall head-  
 dresses and their bands all of fine linen,  
 29 the drawers of finely woven linen, and  
 the sash of finely woven linen, em-  
 broidered in violet, purple, and scarlet,  
 as the LORD had commanded Moses.

30 They made a rosette of pure gold as  
 the symbol of their holy dedication and  
 inscribed on it as the engraving on a  
 31 seal, 'Holy to the LORD',<sup>e</sup> and they  
 fastened on it a violet braid to fix it on  
 the turban at the top, as the LORD had  
 commanded Moses.

32 Thus all the work of the Tabernacle  
 of the Tent of the Presence was  
 completed, and the Israelites did every-  
 thing exactly as the LORD had com-  
 33 manded Moses. They brought the  
 Tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all  
 its furnishings, its fasteners, planks,

bars, posts and sockets, the covering 34  
 of tanned rams' skins and the outer  
 covering of porpoise-hides, the Veil of 35  
 the screen, the Ark of the Tokens and 36  
 its poles, the cover, the table and its  
 vessels, and the Bread of the Presence,  
 the pure lamp-stand with its lamps in a 37  
 row and all its fittings, and the lamp  
 oil, the gold altar, the anointing oil, 38  
 the fragrant incense, and the screen at the  
 entrance of the tent, the bronze altar, 39  
 the bronze grating attached to it, its  
 poles and all its furnishings, the basin  
 and its stand, the hangings of the court, 40  
 its posts and sockets, the screen for the  
 gateway of the court, its cords and pegs,  
 and all the equipment for the service of  
 the Tabernacle for the Tent of the Pres-  
 41 ence, the stitched vestments for minis-  
 tering in the sanctuary, that is the  
 sacred vestments for Aaron the priest  
 and the vestments for his sons when  
 they minister as priests. As the LORD 42  
 had commanded Moses, so the Israel-  
 ites carried out the whole work. Moses 43  
 inspected all the work, and saw that  
 they had carried it out according to the  
 command of the LORD; and he blessed  
 them.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID: 40  
 On the first day of the first month you 2  
 shall set up the Tabernacle, the Tent  
 of the Presence. You shall put the Ark 3  
 of the Tokens in it and screen the Ark 4  
 with the Veil. You shall bring in the  
 table and lay it; then you shall bring  
 in the lamp-stand and mount its lamps.  
 You shall then set the gold altar of 5  
 incense in front of the Ark of the  
 Tokens and put the screen of the en-  
 trance of the Tabernacle in place. You 6  
 shall put the altar of whole-offering in  
 front of the entrance of the Tabernacle,  
 the Tent of the Presence. You shall put 7  
 the basin between the Tent of the  
 Presence and the altar and put water  
 in it. You shall set up the court all 8  
 round and put in place the screen of the  
 gateway of the court. You shall take 9  
 the anointing oil and anoint the Taber-

<sup>e</sup> on it . . . LORD: or 'JEHOVAH' on it in sacred characters  
 as engraved on a seal.

32-43: A summary of the completed work. 43: *Inspected*: to be sure of precise workmanship.  
 40.1-38: The erection of the Tabernacle. 1: For the purpose of the chronological references,

nacle and everything in it; thus you shall consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it shall be holy. You shall anoint the altar of whole-offering and all its vessels; thus shall you consecrate it, and it shall be most holy. You shall anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate it. You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence and wash them with the water. Then you shall clothe Aaron with the sacred vestments, anoint him and consecrate him; so shall he be my priest. You shall then bring forward his sons, clothe them in tunics, anoint them as you anointed their father, and they shall be my priests. Their anointing shall inaugurate a hereditary priesthood for all time.

Exactly as the LORD had commanded him, so Moses did. In the first month of the second year, on the first day of that month, the Tabernacle was set up.

Moses set up the Tabernacle. He put the sockets in place, inserted the planks, fixed the crossbars and set up the posts. He spread the tent over the Tabernacle and fixed the covering of the tent above it, as the LORD had commanded him. He took the Tokens and put them in the Ark, inserted the poles in the Ark, and put the cover over the top of the Ark. He brought the Ark into the Tabernacle, set up the Veil of the screen and so screened the Ark of the Tokens, as the LORD had commanded him. He put the table in the Tent of the Presence on the north side of the Tabernacle outside the Veil and arranged bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded him. He set the lamp-stand in the Tent of the

Presence opposite the table at the south side of the Tabernacle and mounted the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded him. He set up the gold altar in the Tent of the Presence in front of the Veil and burnt fragrant incense on it, as the LORD had commanded him. He set up the screen at the entrance of the Tabernacle, fixed the altar of whole-offering at the entrance of the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Presence, and offered on it whole-offerings and grain-offerings, as the LORD had commanded him. He set up the basin between the Tent of the Presence and the altar and put water there for washing, and Moses and Aaron and his sons used to wash their hands and feet when they entered the Tent of the Presence or approached the altar, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He set up the court all round the Tabernacle and the altar, and put a screen at the gateway of the court.

Thus Moses completed the work, and the cloud covered the Tent of the Presence, and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter the Tent of the Presence, because the cloud had settled on it and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. At every stage of their journey, when the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites broke camp; but if the cloud did not lift from the Tabernacle, they did not break camp until the day it lifted. For the cloud of the LORD hovered over the Tabernacle by day, and there was fire in the cloud by night, and the Israelites could see it at every stage of their journey.

see 16.1. n. 34: *Cloud*: see 14.19; 19.9 n. *Glory*: see 34.29 n. 35: See also 1 Kgs.8.10–11. 38: See 13.21–22.

# LEVITICUS

This segment of Israel's tradition is part of a larger priestly account of the origins of the sanctuary, its personnel and rituals, which begins in Exodus chs. 25-31, 35-40 and continues into Numbers chs. 1-10 (see Introduction to the Pentateuch). Despite the probability that the account assumed its present form early in the postexilic age, it contains many units and even collections of material handed down from a much earlier time.

The title, Leviticus, supplied in the Greek and Latin translations, arose from the emphasis upon the duties of the tribe of Levi as priests. The concerns of the book, however, are much wider than the title suggests, and may be classified as follows: (1) guidelines for laymen bringing offerings of animals or grain (chs. 1-7); (2) the installation of the Aaronite priests (chs. 8-10); (3) legislation concerning uncleanness (chs. 11-15); (4) the annual Day of Atonement (ch. 16); (5) the exhortation to be a holy people (chs. 17-26, the section being called the "Holiness Code"); (6) regulations for the fulfillment of religious vows (ch. 27).

During the postexilic age, an impoverished, harassed Israel lived under the domination of the Persian Empire. Her identity as a monarchical political state no longer secure or adequate, she sought to recover her ancient identity as a worshipping community ruled by the LORD. Accordingly, Leviticus stresses the antiquity of the Aaronite priestly leadership and of the attendant rituals. In a time of uncertainty about Israel's election and of a tendency to assimilate to the culture of her neighbors, Leviticus placed great stress on the uniqueness of Israel's socio-economic legislation and encouraged the observance of even the smallest details of the cultic regulations. In contrast to the unrestrained social and economic abuses of the late monarchic and exilic periods, it reasserted the ancient prohibition against absolute human domination of persons and physical property. Thus, in spite of the failures of the past and the hardships of the present, Israel could once again recover her identity as a "holy people" in whose midst the LORD dwelled.

## *Laws concerning offerings and sacrifices*

1 **T**HE LORD SUMMONED MOSES AND  
2 spoke to him from the Tent of the  
Presence, and said, Say this to the  
Israelites: When any man among you  
presents an animal as an offering to the  
LORD, the offering may be presented  
either from the herd or from the flock.  
3 If his offering is a whole-offering  
from the cattle, he shall present a male  
without blemish; he shall present it at  
the entrance to the Tent of the Presence  
before the LORD so as to secure ac-  
4 ceptance for himself. He shall lay his  
hand on the head of the victim and it  
will be accepted on his behalf<sup>a</sup> to make  
5 expiation for him. He shall slaughter  
the bull before the LORD, and the  
Aaronite priests shall present the blood  
and fling it against the altar all round  
6 at the entrance of the Tent of the Pre-  
sence. He shall then flay the victim and

cut it up. The sons of Aaron the priest  
7 shall kindle a fire on the altar and  
arrange wood on the fire. The Aaronite  
8 priests shall arrange the pieces, includ-  
ing the head and the suet, on the wood  
on the altar-fire, the entrails and shins  
9 shall be washed in water, and the priest  
shall burn it all on the altar as a whole-  
offering, a food-offering of soothing  
odour to the LORD.

If the man's whole-offering is from  
10 the flock, either from the rams or from  
the goats, he shall present a male with-  
out blemish. He shall slaughter it before  
11 the LORD at the north side of the altar,  
and the Aaronite priests shall fling the  
blood against the altar all round. He  
12 shall cut it up, and the priest shall  
arrange the pieces, together with the  
head and the suet, on the wood on the  
altar-fire, the entrails and shins shall be  
13 washed in water, and the priest shall  
present and burn it all on the altar: it  
a Or by him (the LORD).

1.1-17: The whole offering of an animal by fire (also called a "holocaust" or "burnt offering").  
1: *Moses*: the transmitter of these sacrificial regulations assigned their origin to the LORD at Sinai. *Tent of the Presence*: see Exod.26.1-37 n. 2: *When*: these are not requirements for specific occasions, but voluntary offerings by individuals. 4: Originally an offering of praise and gratitude, this ancient sacrifice was increasingly used as a rite of *expiation*, by means of which atonement with God was effected. 5: *Aaronite priests*: see Exod.29.1-46 n. *Against the altar*: see Exod.29.12 n. 9: The *shins* are washed to remove dirt and dung (compare Exod.29.14),



is a whole-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

14 If a man's offering to the LORD is a whole-offering of birds, he shall present turtle-doves or young pigeons as his offering. The priest shall present it at the altar, and shall wrench off the head and burn it on the altar; and the blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar. He shall take away the crop and its contents in one piece, and throw it to the east side of the altar where the ashes are. He shall tear it by its wings without severing them completely, and shall burn it on the altar, on top of the wood of the altar-fire: it is a whole-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

2 When any person presents a grain-offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of flour. He shall pour oil on it and add frankincense to it. He shall bring it to the Aaronite priests, one of whom shall scoop up a handful of the flour and oil with all the frankincense. The priest shall burn this as a token on the altar, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD. The remainder of the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: it is most sacred, it is taken from the food-offerings of the LORD.

4 When you present as a grain-offering something baked in an oven, it shall consist of unleavened cakes of flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers smeared with oil. If your offering is a grain-offering cooked on a griddle, it shall be an unleavened cake of flour mixed with oil. Crumble it in pieces and pour oil on it. This is a grain-offering.

7 If your offering is a grain-offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of flour with oil. Bring an offering made up in this way to the LORD and present

it to the priest, who shall bring it to the altar; then he shall set aside part of the grain-offering as a token and burn it on the altar, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD. The remainder of the grain-offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: it is most sacred, it is taken from the food-offerings of the LORD.

No grain-offering which you present to the LORD shall be made of anything that ferments; you shall not burn any leaven or any honey as a food-offering to the LORD. As for your offering of firstfruits, you shall present them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered up at the altar as a soothing odour. Every offering of yours which is a grain-offering shall be salted; you shall not fail to put the salt of your covenant with God on your grain-offering. Salt shall accompany all offerings.

If you present to the LORD a grain-offering of first-ripe grain, you must present fresh corn roasted, crushed meal from fully ripened corn. You shall add oil to it and put frankincense upon it. This is a grain-offering. The priest shall burn as its token some of the crushed meal, some of the oil, and all the frankincense as a food-offering to the LORD.

If a man's offering is a shared-offering from the cattle, male or female, he shall present it without blemish before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the victim and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. The Aaronite priests shall fling the blood against the altar all round. One of them shall present part of the shared-offering as a food-offering to the LORD: he shall remove the fat covering the entrails and all the fat

impediments to sacrifices. *Soothing odour*: see Exod.29.18 n. 14-17: The poor, unable to afford cattle or sheep, are given this equally acceptable option.

2.1-16: **Grain offerings by fire** as a gift to God. Three types are mentioned: flour (vv.1-3), cakes (vv. 4-10), or roasted meal (vv. 14-16). 2: *Oil*: of the olive. *Frankincense*: see Exod. 30.34 n. 3: *Most sacred*: hence to be eaten by the priests only, in the sanctuary area (compare 6.25-26). 11: *Honey*, like *leaven*, caused fermentation, which was regarded as ritually impure. 12: *Firstfruits*: see Deut.26.1-11. 13: *Salt* symbolized sharing. Possibly, too, its purifying (2 Kgs.2.21) and preserving properties made it desirable for the meal which sealed a covenant (Num.18.19). 14: *Corn*: barley or wheat.

3.1-17: **The shared-offering** for deity, priests and worshipers. Only the preparation of the victim is dealt with here (see also 7.11-36). 1: *Male or female*: for the whole-offering only a male was permitted. 3: *Since part* is offered to the LORD, the ritual departs from that of the whole-offering because the priests and worshipers share in the "meal." *Fat*, considered a source of great vitality and delicacy, was, like blood (17.10-16), to be reserved for the deity

4 upon the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat on them beside the haunches, and the long lobe of the liver with the kidneys. The Aaronites shall burn it on the altar on top of the whole-offering which is upon the wood on the fire, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

6 If a man's offering as a shared-offering to the LORD is from the flock, male or female, he shall present it without blemish. If he is presenting a ram as his offering, he shall present it before the LORD, lay his hand on the head of the victim and slaughter it in front of the Tent of the Presence. The Aaronites shall then fling its blood against the altar all round. He shall present part of the shared-offering as a food-offering to the LORD; he shall remove its fat, the entire fat-tail cut off close by the spine, the fat covering the entrails and all the fat upon the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat on them beside the haunches, and the long lobe of the liver with the kidneys. The priest shall burn it at the altar, as food offered to the LORD.

12 If the man's offering is a goat, he shall present it before the LORD, lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of the Presence. The Aaronites shall then fling its blood against the altar all round. He shall present part of the victim as a food-offering to the LORD; he shall remove the fat covering the entrails and all the fat upon the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat on them beside the haunches and the long lobe of the liver with the kidneys. The priest shall burn this at the altar, as a food-offering of soothing odour. All fat belongs to the LORD.  
17 This is a rule for all time from genera-

tion to generation wherever you live: you shall not eat any fat or any blood.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID, 4 Say this to the Israelites: These are the 2 rules for any man who inadvertently transgresses any of the commandments of the LORD and does anything prohibited by them:

If the anointed priest sins so as to 3 bring guilt on the people, for the sin he has committed he shall present to the LORD a young bull without blemish as a sin-offering. He shall bring the bull to 4 the entrance of the Tent of the Presence before the LORD, lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the LORD. The anointed priest shall then 5 take some of its blood and bring it to the Tent of the Presence. He shall dip 6 his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood in front of the sacred Veil seven times before the LORD. The 7 priest shall then put some of the blood before the LORD in the Tent of the Presence on the horns of the altar where fragrant incense is burnt, and he shall pour the rest of the bull's blood at the base of the altar of whole-offering at the entrance of the Tent of the Presence. He shall set aside all the fat from 8 the bull of the sin-offering; he shall set aside the fat covering the entrails and all the fat upon the entrails, the two 9 kidneys with the fat on them beside the haunches, and the long lobe of the liver with the kidneys. It shall be set aside 10 as the fat from the ox at the shared-offering is set aside. The priest shall burn the pieces of fat on the altar of whole-offering. But the skin of the bull 11 and all its flesh, including head and shins, its entrails and offal, the whole 12 of it, he shall take away outside the

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alone (vv. 16–17). 5: The whole-offering, made afresh each day (6.9), would already be on the altar when the shared-offering was being prepared.

4.1–5.13: **The sin-offering for inadvertent transgression.** For deliberate sin, see Num.15.30. 3: *To bring guilt*: compare Gen.18.23–33 n. Since *the priest* represents the entire community before God and vice versa, any sin on his part contaminates the people and excludes his offering an atoning sacrifice in their behalf. *A young bull*: the most expensive sacrificial animal. 5–6: Unlike the previously mentioned rituals, part of this more serious sacrifice is offered in *the Tent*. Sins of the *whole community* were regarded as equally as grave as those of priests (vv. 13–21), whereas those of individuals were less serious (vv. 22–35). 6: *Veil*: see Exod.26.31–33. 7: *Horns*: see Exod.27.2 n. *Altar . . . incense*: see Exod.30.1–10. *Blood*: the locus of the life-force and forbidden for human consumption, blood was especially effective in expiation (17.10–12; Heb.9.22). 11–12: Although part of other sacrifices was reserved for the priests (2.10; 7.14; Exod.29.27–28 n.), they could not eat of one offered in their own behalf (compare 6.29–30).

camp to a place ritually clean, where the ash-heap is, and destroy it on a wood-fire on top of the ash-heap.

- 13 If the whole community of Israel sins inadvertently and the matter is not known to the assembly, if they do what is forbidden in any commandment of the LORD and so incur guilt, then, when the sin they have committed is notified to them, the assembly shall present a young bull as a sin-offering and shall bring it in front of the Tent of the Presence. The elders of the community shall lay their hands on the victim's head before the LORD, and it shall be slaughtered before the LORD. The anointed priest shall then bring some of the blood to the Tent of the Presence, dip his finger in it and sprinkle it in front of the Veil seven times before the LORD. He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar before the LORD in the Tent of the Presence and pour all the rest at the base of the altar of whole-offering at the entrance of the Tent of the Presence. He shall then set aside all the fat from the bull and burn it on the altar. He shall deal with this bull as he deals with the bull of the sin-offering, and in this way the priest shall make expiation for their guilt and they shall be forgiven. He shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as the other bull was burnt. This is a sin-offering for the assembly.
- 22 When a man of standing sins by doing inadvertently what is forbidden in any commandment of the LORD his God, thereby incurring guilt, and the sin he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a he-goat without blemish. He shall lay his hand on the goat's head and shall slaughter it before the LORD in the place where the whole-offering is slaughtered. It is a sin-offering. The priest shall then take some of the blood of the victim with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of whole-offering. He shall pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar of whole-offering. He shall burn all the

fat at the altar in the same way as the fat of the shared-offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation for that man's sin, and it shall be forgiven him.

If any person among the common people sins inadvertently and does what is forbidden in any commandment of the LORD, thereby incurring guilt, and the sin he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering for the sin which he has committed a she-goat without blemish. He shall lay his hand on the head of the victim and slaughter it in the place where the whole-offering is slaughtered. The priest shall then take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of whole-offering. All the rest of the blood he shall pour at the base of the altar. He shall remove all its fat as the fat of the shared-offering is removed, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as a soothing odour to the LORD. So the priest shall make expiation for that person's guilt, and it shall be forgiven him.

If the man brings a sheep as his offering for sin, it shall be a ewe without blemish. He shall lay his hand on the head of the victim and slaughter it as a sin-offering in the place where the whole-offering is slaughtered. The priest shall then take some of the blood of the victim with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of whole-offering. All the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar. He shall remove all the fat, as the fat of the sheep is removed from the shared-offering. The priest shall burn the pieces of fat at the altar on top of the food-offerings to the LORD, and shall make expiation for the sin that the man has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

IF A PERSON HEARS A SOLEMN ADJURATION to give evidence as a witness to something he has seen or heard and does not declare what he knows, he commits a sin and must accept responsibility.

13-21: Community-wide sin also requires that the inner altar be purified with sacrificial blood. 22-35: For those less serious individual offenses there is permission to use cheaper sacrificial animals (vv. 23,28,32), to conduct the rite at the outer altar only (v. 25), and to omit the burning of the nonfat portions which are to go to the priest (6.26). 5.1-4: An appendix

2 If a person touches anything unclean, such as the dead body of an unclean animal, whether wild or domestic, or of  
 3 an unclean reptile, or if he touches anything unclean in a man, whatever that uncleaness may be, and it is concealed by him although he is aware of it, he  
 4 shall incur guilt. Or if a person rashly utters an oath to do something evil or good, in any matter in which such a man may swear a rash oath, and it is concealed by him although he is aware of it, he shall in either case incur guilt.  
 5 Whenever a man incurs guilt in any of these cases and confesses how he has  
 6 sinned therein, he shall bring to the LORD, as his penalty for the sin that he has committed, a female of the flock, either a ewe or a she-goat, as a sin-offering, and the priest shall make expiation for him on account of his sin which he has committed, and he shall be pardoned.  
 7 But if he cannot afford as much as a young animal, he shall bring to the LORD for the sin he has committed two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, one for a sin-offering and the other for a  
 8 whole-offering. He shall bring them to the priest, and present first the one intended for the sin-offering. He shall wrench its head back without severing  
 9 it. He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the victim against the side of the altar, and what is left of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar:  
 10 it is a sin-offering. He shall deal with the second bird as a whole-offering according to custom, and the priest shall make expiation for the sin the man has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.  
 11 If the man cannot afford two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, for his sin he shall bring as his offering a tenth of an ephah of flour, as a sin-offering. He shall add no oil to it nor put frankincense on it, because it is a sin-offer-

ing. He shall bring it to the priest, who shall scoop up a handful from it as a token and burn it on the altar on the food-offerings to the LORD: it is a sin-offering. The priest shall make expiation for the sin the man has committed in any one of these cases, and it shall be forgiven him. The remainder belongs to the priest, as with the grain-offering.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: When any person commits an offence by inadvertently defaulting in dues sacred to the LORD, he shall bring as his guilt-offering to the LORD a ram without blemish from the flock, the value to be determined by you in silver shekels according to the sacred standard, for a guilt-offering; he shall make good his default in sacred dues, adding one fifth. He shall give it to the priest, who shall make expiation for his sin with the ram of the guilt-offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

If and when any person sins unwittingly and does what is forbidden by any commandment of the LORD, thereby incurring guilt, he must accept responsibility. He shall bring to the priest as a guilt-offering a ram without blemish from the flock, valued by you, and the priest shall make expiation for the error into which he has unwittingly fallen, and it shall be forgiven him. It is a guilt-offering; he has been guilty of an offence against the LORD.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: When any person sins and commits a grievous fault against the LORD, whether he lies to a fellow-countryman about a deposit or contract, or a theft, or wrongs him by extortion, or finds lost property and then lies about it, and swears a false oath in regard to any sin of this sort that he commits—if he does this, thereby incurring guilt, he shall restore what he has stolen or gained by extortion, or the deposit left with him or the lost property which he

illustrating situations for which a sin-offering is required. 2-3: For details concerning *uncleaness*, see chs. 11-15. 7-13: Less expensive but equally acceptable sin-offerings are listed (see 1.14-17 n.). 11: *Ephah*: see p. 1035.

5.14-6.7: **The guilt-offering**, a special designation for the sin-offering when it must be accompanied by reparation to an offended party. 15: *Sacred standard*: see p. 1035. 6.1-7: Whereas the previous section has been concerned with offenses strictly against the deity, here the focus is offenses against one's fellowman. Only when the latter has been satisfied may one then bring a guilt-offering to the deity.

5 found, or anything at all concerning which he swore a false oath. He shall make full restitution, adding one fifth to it, and give it back to the aggrieved party on the day when he offers his  
6 guilt-offering. He shall bring to the LORD as his guilt-offering a ram without blemish from the flock, valued by  
7 you, as a guilt-offering. The priest shall make expiation for his guilt before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any act which has brought guilt upon him.

8 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,

9 Give this command to Aaron and his sons: This is the law of the whole-offering. The whole-offering shall remain on the altar-hearth all night till morning, and the altar-fire shall be kept  
10 burning there. Then the priest, having donned his linen robe and put on linen drawers to cover himself, shall remove the ashes to which the fire reduces the whole-offering on the altar and put  
11 them beside the altar. He shall then change into other garments and take the ashes outside the camp to a ritually  
12 clean place. The fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall never go out. Every morning the priest shall have fresh wood burning thereon, arrange the whole-offering on it, and on top burn the fat from the shared-  
13 offerings. Fire shall always be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out.

14 This is the law of the grain-offering. The Aaronites shall present it before  
15 the LORD in front of the altar. The priest shall set aside a handful of the flour from it, with the oil of the grain-offering, and all the frankincense on it. He shall burn this token of it on the altar as a soothing odour to the LORD.  
16 The remainder Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten in the form of unleavened cakes and in a holy place.

They shall eat it in the court of the Tent of the Presence. It shall not be baked  
17 with leaven. I have allotted this to them as their share of my food-offerings. Like the sin-offering and the guilt-offering, it is most sacred. Any male  
18 descendant of Aaron may eat it, as a due from the food-offerings to the LORD, for generation after generation for all time. Whatever touches them is to be forfeit as sacred.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: 19 This is the offering which Aaron and  
20 his sons shall present to the LORD:<sup>b</sup> one tenth of an ephah of flour, the usual grain-offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. It shall be  
21 cooked with oil on a griddle; you shall bring it well-mixed, and so present it crumbled in small pieces as a grain-offering, a soothing odour to the LORD. The anointed priest in the line of  
22 Aaron shall offer it. This is a rule binding for all time. It shall be burnt in sacrifice to the LORD as a complete offering. Every grain-offering of a  
23 priest shall be a complete offering; it shall not be eaten.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 24 Speak to Aaron and his sons in these  
25 words: This is the law of the sin-offering. The sin-offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD in the place where the whole-offering is slaughtered; it is most sacred. The priest who officiates  
26 shall eat of the flesh; it shall be eaten in a sacred place, in the court of the Tent of the Presence. Whatever  
27 touches its flesh is to be forfeit as sacred. If any of the blood is splashed on a garment, that shall be washed in a sacred place. An earthenware vessel  
28 in which the sin-offering is boiled shall be smashed. If it has been boiled in a

*b Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds on the day when he is anointed.*

**6.8-7.38:** The role of the Aaronite priests in the sacrifices previously mentioned (1.1-6.7). To this point, the directions are primarily for the layman who has brought the animal (see 1.2 n.); here the directions are for the priests. **9:** A whole-offering for the entire people is to be offered twice daily and to consist of a ram (Exod.29.38-39; Num.28.3-4). In the preexilic period it was required but once daily (2 Kgs.16.15). **12-13:** The undying fire on the altar symbolizes Israel's unceasing obedience to the will of the LORD. **14:** Grain-offering: the layman's voluntary sacrifice (2.1-16). **16:** Since the priests share in a portion of this offering made to God, it must be eaten in the court, not in a profane area (compare v. 11; 4.12; 2.3 n.). **19-23:** This special grain-offering by the priests must, unlike the previous one, be burned entirely. See 4.11-12 n. **27-28:** Holiness, regarded almost like a fluid substance, and transmitted by contact (see Exod. 19.12-13 n.), must be washed from a garment, scoured from a copper vessel, and released from

29 copper vessel, that shall be scoured and  
rinsed with water. Any male of priestly  
family may eat of this offering; it is  
30 most sacred. If, however, part of the  
blood is brought to the Tent of the  
Presence to make expiation in the holy  
place, the sin-offering shall not be  
eaten; it shall be destroyed by fire.

7 This is the law of the guilt-offering:  
2 it is most sacred. The guilt-offering  
shall be slaughtered in the place where  
the whole-offering is slaughtered, and  
its blood shall be flung against the altar  
3 all round. The priest shall set aside and  
present all the fat from it: the fat-tail  
4 and the fat covering the entrails, the  
two kidneys with the fat on them beside  
the haunches, and the long lobe of the  
5 liver with the kidneys. The priest shall  
burn these pieces on the altar as a food-  
offering to the LORD; it is a guilt-  
6 offering. Any male of priestly family  
may eat it. It shall be eaten in a sacred  
7 place; it is most sacred. There is one  
law for both sin-offering and guilt-  
offering: they shall belong to the priest  
who performs the rite of expiation.  
8 The skin of any man's whole-offering  
shall belong to the priest who presents  
9 it. Every grain-offering baked in an  
oven and everything that is cooked in  
a pan or on a griddle shall belong to  
10 the priest who presents it. Every grain-  
offering, whether mixed with oil or dry,  
shall be shared equally among all the  
Aaronites.

11 This is the law of the shared-offering  
12 presented to the LORD. If a man pre-  
sents it as a thank-offering, then, in  
addition to the thank-offering, he shall  
present unleavened cakes mixed with  
oil, wafers of unleavened flour smeared  
with oil, and well-mixed flour and flat  
13 cakes mixed with oil. He shall present  
flat cakes of leavened bread in addition  
14 to his shared thank-offering. One part

of every offering he shall present as a  
contribution for the priest who flings the  
blood of the shared-offering against the  
altar. The flesh shall be eaten on  
15 the day of its presentation; none of it  
shall be put aside till morning.

16 If a man's sacrifice is a votive offer-  
ing or a freewill offering, it may be  
eaten on the day it is presented or on  
the next day. Any flesh left over on the  
17 third day shall be destroyed by fire. If  
18 any flesh of his shared-offering is eaten  
on the third day, the man who has pre-  
sented it shall not be accepted. It will  
not be counted to his credit, it shall be  
reckoned as tainted and the person  
who eats any of it shall accept respon-  
19 sibility. No flesh which comes into  
contact with anything unclean shall be  
eaten; it shall be destroyed by fire.

The flesh may be eaten by anyone  
who is clean, but the person who, while  
20 unclean, eats flesh from a shared-  
offering presented to the LORD shall  
be cut off from his father's kin. When  
21 any person is contaminated by contact  
with anything unclean, be it man,  
beast, or reptile, and then eats any of  
the flesh from the shared-offerings pre-  
sented to the LORD, that person shall  
be cut off from his father's kin.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
22 Speak to the Israelites in these words:  
23 You shall not eat the fat of any ox,  
sheep, or goat. The fat of an animal  
24 that has died a natural death or has  
been mauled by wild beasts may be put  
to any other use, but you shall not eat  
it. Every man who eats fat from a beast  
25 of which he has presented any part as a  
food-offering to the LORD shall be cut  
off from his father's kin.

You shall eat none of the blood,  
26 whether of bird or of beast, wherever  
you may live. Every person who eats  
27

a porous vessel by smashing it. 30: The distinction here is between the sin-offering for priest or community (4.3–21) and that for individuals (4.22–35). See 4.5–6 n.; 4.22–35 n. 7.1–10: The ritual for the *guilt-offering*, omitted in 5.14–6.7 because of its similarity to the preceding sin-offering, is here outlined. Since it is prescribed for individuals only, the blood is not applied to the incense-altar and hence the meat is available for consumption by the priests (6.30 n.). 11–19: Various occasions for a *shared-offering* (3.1–17) are mentioned, with minor accompanying procedures. 16: *A votive offering*: one vowed to the deity if he would grant a special request; see ch. 27. *A freewill offering*: presented without special reason or occasion. 20: *Eaten by anyone*: that is, except for the portions reserved for the priests (vv. 31–36). *Clean . . . unclean*: for the relevant rules, see chs. 11–15. 21: It is unclear here whether *cut off* means execution by the community or death by divine causation; compare 20.1–8. 24: *Fat*: see 3.3 n. *Mauled*:

any of the blood shall be cut off from his father's kin.

28 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 29 Speak to the Israelites in these words: Whoever comes to present a shared-offering shall set aside part of it as an offering to the LORD. With his own hands he shall bring the food-offerings to the LORD. He shall also bring the fat together with the breast which is to be presented as a special gift before the LORD; the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall belong to Aaron and his descendants. You shall give the right hind-leg of your shared-offerings as a contribution for the priest: it shall be the perquisite of the Aaronite who presents the blood and the fat of the shared-offering. I have taken from the Israelites the breast of the special gift and the leg of the contribution made out of the shared offerings, and have given them as a due from the Israelites to Aaron the priest and his descendants for all time.  
 35 This is the portion prescribed for Aaron and his descendants out of the LORD's food-offerings, appointed on the day when they were presented as priests to the LORD; and on the day when they were anointed, the LORD commanded that these prescribed portions should be given to them by the Israelites. This is a rule binding on their descendants for all time.  
 37 This, then, is the law of the whole-offering, the grain-offering, the sin-offering, the guilt-offering, the installation-offerings, and the shared-offerings, with which the LORD charged Moses on Mount Sinai on the day when he commanded the Israelites to present their offerings to the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai.

*The hallowing and installation of the priests*

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID, 8  
 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, 2  
 the vestments, the anointing oil, the ox for a sin-offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened cakes, and assemble all the community at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence.' Moses did as the LORD had commanded him, and the community assembled at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. He told the community that this was what the LORD had commanded. He presented Aaron and his sons and washed them in water. He invested Aaron with the tunic, girded him with the sash, robed him with the mantle, put the ephod on him, tied it with its waist-band and fastened the ephod to him with the band. He put the breast-piece<sup>c</sup> on him and set the Urim and Thummim in it. He then put the turban upon his head and set the gold rosette as a symbol of holy dedication on the front of the turban, as the LORD had commanded him. Moses then took the anointing oil, anointed the Tabernacle and all that was within it and consecrated them. He sprinkled some of the oil seven times on the altar, anointing the altar, all its vessels, the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and so consecrated him. Moses then brought the sons of Aaron forward, invested them with tunics, girded them with sashes and tied their tall head-dresses on them, as the LORD had commanded him.

He then brought up the ox for the sin-offering; Aaron and his sons laid

<sup>c</sup> Or pouch.

see Exod.22.31 n. 28-36: This is a supplement to vv. 11-21, specifying or expanding the priestly share of the sacrificial meat. 35-38: The obligation to support the priesthood in the specified ways is integrated into the very foundation of the cult at Sinai (see 1.1 n.; compare Exod. 29.36-42 n.).

8.1-36: The installation of the Aaronite priesthood, following the instructions of Exod.29.1-46 (see also Exod.40.12-15). The instructions for the sanctuary and its personnel are given in Exod.25.1-31.17 and the carrying out in Exod.35.1-40.38. The delay in the installation of the priesthood (despite the wording of Exod.40.16) is logical: the cultic activity can only begin when the Tabernacle is completed. Accordingly, the instructions for sacrifice (Lev. chs. 1-7) interrupt the flow of the narrative. 1: *Aaron*: for the development of the priesthood, see Exod. 29.1-46 n. 2: The *vestments* are described in Exod. ch. 28. *Anointing oil*: see Exod.30.22-33 for the formula. *Ox...rams...unleavened cakes*: Exod.29.1-2. 6: *Washed them in water*: see Exod.29.4; compare Exod.30.17-21 for the more general ritual. 7: *Ephod*: see Exod.28.6-12. 8: *Urim and Thummim*: see Exod.28.15 n. 10-11: The instructions for anointing the furniture

15 their hands on its head, and he slaughtered it. Moses took some of the blood and put it with his finger on the horns round the altar. Thus he purified the altar, and when he had poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar, he consecrated it by making  
16 expiation for it. He took all the fat upon the entrails, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with their  
17 fat, and burnt them on the altar, but the ox, its skin, its flesh, and its offal, he destroyed by fire outside the camp, as the LORD had commanded him.

18 Moses then brought forward the ram of the whole-offering; Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the ram's  
19 head, and he slaughtered it. Moses flung its blood against the altar all round. He cut the ram up and burnt  
20 the head, the pieces, and the suet. He washed the entrails and the shins in water and burnt the whole on the altar. This was a whole-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

22 Moses then brought forward the second ram, the ram for the installation of priests. Aaron and his sons laid  
23 their hands upon its head, and he slaughtered it. Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on his right thumb, and on the big toe of his right foot. He then brought forward the sons of Aaron, put  
24 some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on their right thumbs, and on the big toes of their right feet. He flung the rest of the blood against the  
25 altar all round; he took the fat, the fat-tail, the fat covering the entrails, the long lobe of the liver, the two kidneys  
26 with their fat, and the right leg. Then from the basket of unleavened cakes before the LORD he took one unleavened cake, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, and laid them on

the fatty parts and the right leg. He put  
27 the whole on the hands of Aaron and of his sons, and he presented it as a special gift before the LORD. He took  
28 it from their hands and burnt it on the altar on top of the whole-offering. This was an installation-offering, it was a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

Moses then took the breast and  
29 presented it as a special gift before the LORD; it was his portion of the ram of installation, as the LORD had commanded him. He took some of the  
30 anointing oil and some of the blood on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his vestments, and on his sons and their vestments with him. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments, and with him his sons and their vestments.

Moses said to Aaron and his sons,  
31 'Boil the flesh of the ram at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, and eat it there, together with the bread in the installation-basket, in accordance with the command: "Aaron and his  
32 sons shall eat it." The remainder of the flesh and bread you shall destroy by  
33 fire. You shall not leave the entrance to the Tent of the Presence for seven days, until the day which completes the period of your installation, for it lasts  
34 seven days. What was done this day followed the LORD's command to make  
35 expiation for you. You shall stay at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence day and night for seven days, keeping vigil to the LORD, so that you do not die, for so I was commanded.'

Aaron and his sons did everything  
36 that the LORD had commanded through Moses.

On the eighth day Moses summoned  
9 Aaron and his sons and the Israelite elders. He said to Aaron, 'Take for  
2 yourself a bull-calf for a sin-offering and a ram for a whole-offering, both

and vessels of the Tabernacle are contained in Exod.30.26-29; 40.9-11. 15: *Purified the altar*: for the instructions, see Exod.29.36-37; for the reason, see Lev.4.5-6 n.; 4.13-21 n. 22: *The ram of the installation* is a shared-offering (3.1-17; 7.11-36), and hence consumed by God (v. 28), by Moses as the officiating priest (v. 29), and by the Aaronites as the community (v. 31). 23: *Ear . . . thumb . . . toe*: the significance of this act is unsure (compare 14.14,17,25,28), but the parts chosen may be extremities representative of the whole man. 24: *The blood*, put on the priests' bodies and the *altar* (representing the deity: see Exod.29.12 n.), expresses the special relationship between the priesthood and the LORD. 30: *Sprinkled . . . his vestments*: see Exod. 29.21.

9.1-24: *The priests assume their sacrificial duties*, which have been described in 6.8-7.38. 1: *The eighth day*: at the conclusion of the installation (8.33-35). 5-6: *The function of the*



without blemish, and present them  
 3 before the LORD. Then bid the Israel-  
 ites take a he-goat for a sin-offering, a  
 calf and a lamb, both yearlings without  
 4 blemish, for a whole-offering, and a  
 bull and a ram for shared-offerings to  
 be sacrificed before the LORD, together  
 with a grain-offering mixed with oil.  
 This day the LORD will appear to you.'

5 They brought what Moses had com-  
 manded to the front of the Tent of the  
 Presence, and all the community ap-  
 proached and stood before the LORD.  
 6 Moses said, 'This is what the LORD has  
 commanded you to do, so that the glory  
 7 of the LORD may appear to you. Come  
 near to the altar,' he said to Aaron;  
 'prepare your sin-offering and your  
 whole-offering and make expiation for  
 yourself and for your household. Then  
 prepare the offering of the people and  
 make expiation for them, as the LORD  
 has commanded.'

8 So Aaron came near to the altar and  
 slaughtered the calf, which was his sin-  
 9 offering. The sons of Aaron presented  
 the blood to him, and he dipped his  
 finger in the blood and put it on the  
 horns of the altar. The rest of the blood  
 he poured out at the base of the altar.  
 10 Part of the sin-offering, the fat, the  
 kidneys, and the long lobe of the liver,  
 he burnt on the altar as the LORD had  
 11 commanded Moses, but the flesh and  
 the skin he destroyed by fire outside the  
 12 camp. Then he slaughtered the whole-  
 offering; his sons handed him the blood,  
 and he flung it against the altar all  
 13 round. They handed him the pieces of  
 the whole-offering and the head, and  
 14 he burnt them on the altar. He washed  
 the entrails and the shins and burnt  
 them on the altar, on top of the whole-  
 offering.

15 He then brought forward the offering

of the people. He took the he-goat, the  
 people's sin-offering, slaughtered it and  
 performed the rite of the sin-offering  
 as he had previously done for himself.  
 He presented the whole-offering and 16  
 prepared it in the manner prescribed.  
 He brought forward the grain-offering, 17  
 took a handful of it and burnt it on the  
 altar, in addition to the morning  
 whole-offering. He slaughtered the bull 18  
 and the ram, the shared-offerings of the  
 people. His sons handed him the blood,  
 and he flung it against the altar all  
 round. But the fatty parts of the bull, 19  
 the fat-tail of the ram, the fat covering  
 the entrails, and the two kidneys  
 with the fat upon them, and the long  
 lobe of the liver, all this fat they first 20  
 put on the breasts of the animals and  
 then burnt it on the altar. Aaron 21  
 presented the breasts and the right leg  
 as a special gift before the LORD, as  
 Moses had commanded.

Then Aaron lifted up his hands to- 22  
 wards the people and pronounced the  
 blessing over them. He came down  
 from performing the rites of the sin-  
 offering, the whole-offering, and the  
 shared-offerings. Moses and Aaron 23  
 entered the Tent of the Presence, and  
 when they came out, they blessed the  
 people, and the glory of the LORD  
 appeared to all the people. Fire came 24  
 out from before the LORD and con-  
 sumed the whole-offering and the fatty  
 parts on the altar. All the people saw,  
 and they shouted and fell on their  
 faces.

NOW NADAB AND ABIHU, SONS OF 10  
 Aaron, took their firepans, put fire in  
 them, threw incense on the fire and  
 presented before the LORD illicit fire  
 which he had not commanded. Fire 2  
 came out from before the LORD and

sacrificial ritual is to bring about an awareness of the divine presence. 8-11: Aaron begins with a sin-offering for priests (4.3-12), following that already offered by Moses (8.14-17), so that he will be sinless when he ministers before the congregation (compare 4.3 n.). 15: The sacrificial animal differs from that of 4.13-21, and this suggests that the practice changed from time to time. 22: *The blessing*: Num.6.22-27. *Came down*: from the altar. 23: *Glory*: Exod.16.10 n.

10.1-20: *Ritual deviation and its consequences*. It is in part through precise ritual that post-exilic Israel maintained her identity and distinctiveness, and a specific episode is here cited in order to encourage strict obedience (vv. 1-7). This then presented a suitable occasion for the transmitters of the traditions to append related warnings (vv. 8-20). 1: *Nadab and Abihu* were the oldest of Aaron's sons who once played an important role in Israel's traditions (see Exod. 6.23 and 24.1-10). What exactly is meant by *illicit fire* is unclear, although the plain lesson of the incident is to warn against unauthorized ritual acts. 2: The story may perhaps be based on a struggle for power between different priestly groups (compare Num. ch. 16; see Exod.

destroyed them; and so they died in  
 3 the presence of the LORD. Then Moses  
 said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD  
 meant when he said: Among those who  
 approach me, I must be treated as holy;  
 in the presence of all the people I must  
 be given honour.' Aaron was dumb-  
 4 founded. Moses sent for Mishael and  
 Elzaphan, the sons of Aaron's uncle  
 Uzziel, and said to them, 'Come and  
 carry your cousins outside the camp  
 5 away from the holy place.' They came  
 and carried them away in their tunics  
 outside the camp, as Moses had told  
 6 them. Moses then said to Aaron and  
 to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, 'You  
 shall not leave your hair dishevelled or  
 tear your clothes in mourning, lest you  
 die and the LORD be angry with the  
 whole community. Your kinsmen, all  
 the house of Israel, shall weep for the  
 destruction by fire which the LORD has  
 7 kindled. You shall not leave the en-  
 trance to the Tent of the Presence lest  
 you die, because the LORD's anointing  
 oil is on you.' They did as Moses had  
 said.

8 **THE LORD SPOKE TO AARON AND SAID:**  
 9 You and your sons with you shall not  
 drink wine or strong drink when you  
 are to enter the Tent of the Presence,  
 lest you die. This is a rule binding on  
 10 your descendants for all time, to make  
 a distinction between sacred and pro-  
 11 fane, between clean and unclean, and  
 to teach the Israelites all the decrees  
 which the LORD has spoken to them  
 through Moses.

12 Moses said to Aaron and his sur-  
 viving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, 'Take

what is left over of the grain-offering  
 out of the food-offerings of the LORD,  
 and eat it without leaven beside the  
 altar; it is most sacred. You shall eat it  
 13 in a sacred place; it is your due and that  
 of your sons out of the LORD's food-  
 offerings, for so I was commanded.  
 You shall eat the breast of the special  
 14 gift and the leg of the contribution in  
 a clean place, you and your sons and  
 daughters; for they have been given  
 to you and your children as your due  
 out of the shared-offerings of the  
 Israelites. The leg of the contribution  
 15 and the breast of the special gift shall  
 be brought, along with the food-offer-  
 ings of fat, to be presented as a special  
 gift before the LORD, and it shall be-  
 long to you and your children together,  
 a due for all time; for so the LORD has  
 commanded.'

Moses made searching inquiry about  
 16 the goat of the sin-offering and found  
 that it had been burnt. He was angry  
 with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sur-  
 viving sons, and said, 'Why did you not  
 17 eat the sin-offering in the sacred place?  
 It is most sacred. It was given to you  
 to take away the guilt of the com-  
 munity by making expiation for them  
 before the LORD. If the blood is not  
 18 brought within the sacred precincts,  
 you shall eat the sin-offering there as I  
 was commanded.' But Aaron replied  
 19 to Moses, 'See, they have today pre-  
 sented their sin-offering and their  
 whole-offering before the LORD, and  
 this is what has befallen me; if I eat a  
 sin-offering today, will it be right in the  
 eyes of the LORD?' When Moses heard  
 20 this, he deemed it right.

29.1-46 n.), which resulted in a defeat for the descendants of these two men, so that the priest-  
 hood descended through the next oldest son, Eleazar (Num.20.25-28). 3: *Those who approach  
 me*: the priests. 4: *Outside the camp*: where the sacrificial remains were burned and the altar  
 ashes deposited (4.12). 6: *Hair . . . clothes*: these funeral actions were forbidden to the chief  
 priest; see 21.10-11. 7: To prevent contamination, the priest must remain within the temple-  
 complex (21.12; for the consequences, see 4.3 n.). 9: The warning against alcoholic beverage  
 may rest upon two bases: to ensure the ability to observe the fine details of the ritual (compare  
 Isa.28.7-8), and to avoid the cultic practices of Israel's neighbors. It also probably reflects  
 the persistence of the antialcohol ethic of eastern nomads, an ethic that disappeared among  
 laymen as Israel emerged as an agricultural society. 12-13: See 6.16-18. 14-15: See 7.28-34.  
 16-20: On the sacrificial animal (v. 16), see 9.15 n. According to 4.13-21, the blood should  
 have been sprinkled inside the sanctuary and applied to the incense-altar there. This Aaron  
 apparently failed to do (9.15; compare 9.8-9), applying the blood rather to the sacrificial altar  
 in the court. Thus the meat should have been eaten by the priests (6.25-30). A discrepancy in  
 such precise and central material (10.1-20 n.) called for explanation, and those who collected  
 the priestly materials saw in the Nadab and Abihu episode the opportunity to provide Aaron  
 with an excuse which would not create a precedent for future deviations. Since Aaron shared

*Laws of purification and atonement*

11 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND AARON  
 2 and said, Speak to the Israelites in  
 these words: Of all animals on land  
 these are the creatures you may eat:  
 3 you may eat any animal which has a  
 parted foot or a cloven hoof and also  
 4 chews the cud; those which have only  
 a cloven hoof or only chew the cud you  
 may not eat. These are: the camel,  
 because it chews the cud but has not a  
 cloven hoof; you shall regard it as  
 5 unclean; the rock-badger,<sup>d</sup> because it  
 chews the cud but has not a parted  
 foot; you shall regard it as unclean;  
 6 the hare, because it chews the cud but  
 has not a parted foot; you shall regard  
 7 it as unclean; the pig, because it has a  
 parted foot and a cloven hoof but does  
 not chew the cud; you shall regard it  
 8 as unclean. You shall not eat their flesh  
 or even touch their dead bodies; you  
 shall regard them as unclean.  
 9 Of creatures that live in water these  
 you may eat: all those that have fins  
 and scales, whether in salt water or  
 10 fresh; but all that have neither fins nor  
 scales, whether in salt or fresh water,  
 including both small creatures in shoals  
 and larger creatures, you shall regard  
 11 as vermin. They shall be vermin to you;  
 you shall not eat their flesh, and their  
 dead bodies you shall treat as those of  
 12 vermin. Every creature in the water  
 that has neither fins nor scales shall be  
 vermin to you.  
 13 These are the birds you shall regard  
 as vermin, and for this reason they shall  
 not be eaten: the griffon-vulture,<sup>e</sup> the  
 black vulture, and the bearded vul-  
 14 ture;<sup>f</sup> the kite and every kind of falcon;  
 every kind of crow,<sup>g</sup> the desert-owl, the  
 15,16 short-eared owl, the long-eared owl,

and every kind of hawk; the tawny 17  
 owl, the fisher-owl, and the screech-  
 owl; the little owl, the horned owl, the 18  
 osprey, the stork,<sup>h</sup> every kind of  
 cormorant, the hoopoe, and the bat. 19

All teeming winged creatures that go 20  
 on four legs shall be vermin to you,  
 except those which have legs jointed 21  
 above their feet for leaping on the  
 ground. Of these you may eat every 22  
 kind of great locust, every kind of long-  
 headed locust, every kind of green  
 locust, and every kind of desert locust.  
 Every other teeming winged creature 23  
 that has four legs you shall regard as  
 vermin; you would make yourselves 24  
 unclean with them: whoever<sup>i</sup> touches  
 their dead bodies shall be unclean till  
 evening. Whoever picks up their dead 25  
 bodies shall wash his clothes but remain  
 unclean till evening.

You shall regard as unclean every 26  
 animal which has a parted foot but has  
 not a cloven hoof and does not chew  
 the cud: whoever<sup>i</sup> touches them shall  
 be unclean. You shall regard as un- 27  
 clean all four-footed wild animals that  
 go on flat paws; whoever<sup>i</sup> touches their  
 dead bodies shall be unclean till even-  
 ing. Whoever takes up their dead 28  
 bodies shall wash his clothes but re-  
 main unclean till evening. You shall  
 regard them as unclean.

You shall regard these as unclean 29  
 among creatures that teem on the  
 ground: the mole-rat,<sup>j</sup> the jerboa, and  
 every kind of thorn-tailed lizard; the 30  
 gecko, the sand-gecko, the wall-gecko,  
 the great lizard, and the chameleon.  
 You shall regard these as unclean 31  
 among teeming creatures; whoever<sup>i</sup>  
 touches them when they are dead shall

*d* Or rock-rabbit. *e* Or eagle. *f* Or ossifrage.  
*g* Or raven. *h* Or heron. *i* Or whatever. *j* Or weasel.

in his sons' guilt (compare 4.3 n.), it would be inappropriate for him to consume a sin-offering (compare 4.11-12 n.). However, the occasion for the excuse creates a chronological difficulty: the erroneous sin-offering occurred before the sins of Aaron's sons!

11.1-47: **Clean and unclean animals.** The priestly theologians believed that God had intended for man to be vegetarian (Gen.1.29), but had approved the eating of meat from the time of Noah onward (Gen.9.3-4). But now Israel's distinctiveness as a "holy nation" (vv. 43-45; Exod.19.6) is enforced and a focus for identity provided, by severely restricting the creatures which she might consume. This would be especially important during the exilic (Dan. ch. 1) and postexilic periods (compare Exod.31.12-17 n.), although it is here suggested that the origins of the prohibition lie in the Mosaic Age (see Exod.25.1-31.17 n.). A similar but shorter account is found in Deut.14.3-21. 3: The original basis for this distinction is obscure: it may perhaps be related to the sacredness of the animals to the deities of Israel's neighbors (see Exod.23.19 n.). 5-6: The *rock-badger* and the *hare* do not really chew the cud, but only appear to do so. 24-25: Uncleaness, like holiness (6.27-28 n.), can be transferred from one object

32 be unclean till evening. Anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, any article of wood or garment or skin or sacking, any article in regular use; it shall be plunged into water but shall remain unclean till evening, when it shall be  
 33 clean. If any of these falls into an earthenware vessel, its contents shall be unclean and it shall be smashed.  
 34 Any food on which water from such a vessel is poured shall be unclean, and any drink in such a vessel shall be unclean. Anything on which the dead  
 35 body of such a creature falls shall be unclean; an oven or a stove shall be broken, for they are unclean and you  
 36 shall treat them as such; but a spring or a cistern where water collects shall remain clean, though whatever<sup>k</sup> touches the dead body shall be unclean. When any of their dead bodies  
 37 falls on seed intended for sowing, it remains clean; but if the seed has been soaked in water and any dead body  
 38 falls on it, you shall treat it as unclean.  
 39 When any animal allowed as food dies, all that touch the carcass shall be unclean till evening. Whoever eats any  
 40 of the carcass shall wash his clothes but remain unclean till evening; whoever takes up the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean till evening.  
 41 All creatures that teem on the ground are vermin; they shall not be eaten.  
 42 All creatures that teem on the ground, crawl on their bellies, go on all fours or have many legs, you shall not eat, because they are vermin which contaminate. You shall not contaminate  
 43 yourselves through any teeming creature. You shall not defile yourselves with them and make yourselves unclean by them. For I am the LORD your  
 44 God; you shall make yourselves holy

and keep yourselves holy, because I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any teeming creature that creeps on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up from Egypt to become your God. You shall keep yourselves holy, because I am holy.

This, then, is the law concerning beast and bird, every living creature that swims in the water and every living creature that teems on the land. It is to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and living creatures that may not be eaten.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, **12** Speak to the Israelites in these words: **2** When a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the period of her impurity through menstruation. On the eighth day, the child shall have the flesh of his foreskin circumcised. The woman shall wait for thirty-three days because her blood requires purification; she shall touch nothing that is holy, and shall not enter the sanctuary till her days of purification are completed. If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean for fourteen days as for her menstruation and shall wait for sixty-six days because her blood requires purification. When her days of purification are completed for a son or a daughter, she shall bring a yearling ram for a whole-offering and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. He shall present it before the LORD and make expiation for her, and she shall be clean from the issue of her blood. This is the law for the woman who bears a child, whether male or female. If she cannot afford a

<sup>k</sup> Or whoever.

to another. **33**: *Smashed*: compare 6.28. **36**: Basic sources of water (*spring* or *cistern*) were, like *seed* (v. 37), exempt because of their value to the community. **38**: The reason for the exclusion of *soaked* seed is not made clear, but it may have been that "uncleanness" could then permeate it more thoroughly.

**12.1-8**: *Uncleanness from childbirth*. The mysterious power at work in childbirth was regarded with awe throughout the ancient world. The "uncleanness" was ritual rather than literal or hygienic. **2**: *Menstruation*: see 15.19-24. **4**: On the frequent use of the number forty (thirty-three plus the seven of v. 2), see Gen.7.4 n. *Purification*: the loss of blood marked an imperfection, a blemish, and hence cultic unacceptability (compare the sacrifices "without blemish": 1.3,10; and the limitations of priests with bodily blemishes: 21.16-23). **5**: The longer delay after the birth of a daughter may reflect the view that girls were considered less desirable than sons. **6**: On the need for a sin-offering, compare 4.1-5.13 n.

ram, she shall bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, one for a whole-offering and the other for a sin-offering. The priest shall make expiation for her and she shall be clean.

13 The LORD spoke to Moses and

2 Aaron and said: When any man has a discoloration on the skin of his body, a pustule or inflammation, and it may develop into the sores of a malignant skin-disease, he shall be brought to the priest, either to Aaron or to one of his

3 sons. The priest shall examine the sore on the skin; if the hairs on the sore have turned white and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it shall be considered the sore of a malignant skin-disease, and the priest, after examination, shall pronounce him ritually unclean.

4 But if the inflammation on his skin is white and seems no deeper than the skin, and the hairs have not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. If, when he examines him on the seventh day, the sore remains as it was and has not spread in the skin, he shall keep him in

6 isolation for another seven days. When the priest examines him again on the seventh day, if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him ritually clean. It is only a scab; the man shall wash his

7 clothes and so be clean. But if the scab spreads on the skin after he has been to the priest to be pronounced ritually clean, the man shall show himself a

8 second time to the priest. The priest shall examine him again, and if it continues to spread, he shall pronounce him ritually unclean; it is a malignant skin-disease.

9 When anyone has the sores of a malignant skin-disease, he shall be

10 brought to the priest, and the priest shall examine him. If there is a white mark on the skin, turning the hairs white, and an ulceration appears in the

11 mark, it is a chronic skin-disease on the body, and the priest shall pronounce him ritually unclean; there is no need for isolation because he is unclean

12 already. If the skin-disease breaks out

and covers the affected person from head to foot as far as the priest can see, the priest shall examine him, and if he

13 finds the condition spread all over the body, he shall pronounce him ritually clean. It has all gone white; he is clean. But from the moment when raw flesh

14 appears, the man shall be considered unclean. When the priest sees it, he

15 shall pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is to be considered unclean; it is a malignant skin-disease. On the other

16 hand, when the raw flesh heals and turns white, the man shall go to the priest, who shall examine him, and if

17 the sores have gone white, he shall pronounce him clean. He is ritually clean.

When a fester appears on the skin

18 and heals up, but is followed by a

19 white mark or reddish-white inflammation on the site of the fester, the man shall show himself to the priest. The priest shall examine him; if it

20 seems to be beneath the skin and the hairs have turned white, the priest shall pronounce him ritually unclean. It is a malignant skin-disease which has

broken out on the site of the fester. But if the priest on examination finds

21 that it has no white hairs, is not beneath the skin and has faded, he shall isolate him for seven days. If the affec-

22 tion has spread at all in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; for it is a malignant skin-disease. But

23 if the inflammation is no worse and has not spread, it is only the scar of the fester, and the priest shall pronounce him ritually clean.

Again, in the case of a burn on the

24 skin, if the raw spot left by the burn becomes a reddish-white or white inflammation, the priest shall examine it.

25 If the hairs on the inflammation have turned white and it is deeper than the skin, it is a malignant skin-disease which has broken out at the site of the burn. The priest shall pronounce the man ritually unclean; it is a malignant

skin-disease. But if the priest on exam-

26 ination finds that there is no white hair on the inflammation and it is not

13.1-46; 14.1-32: **Uncleanness from skin disease.** Illness, when it produced marked imperfection, rendered the person cultically "unclean" (see 12.4 n.). 4-5: The *isolation* was to prevent the inadvertent transfer of cultic impurity (see 11.24-25 n.) by one's touching of the impure.

- beneath the skin and has faded, he shall keep him in isolation for seven days.
- 27 When the priest examines him on the seventh day, if the inflammation has spread at all in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a malignant skin-disease. But if the inflammation is no worse, has not spread and has faded, it is only a mark from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him ritually clean because it is the scar of the burn.
- 28
- 29 When a man, or woman, has a sore on the head or chin, the priest shall examine it; and if it seems deeper than the skin and the hair is yellow and sparse, the priest shall pronounce him ritually unclean; it is a scurf, a malignant skin-disease of the head or chin.
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- 31 But when the priest sees the sore, if it appears to be no deeper than the skin and yet there is no yellow hair on the place, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. He shall examine the sore on the seventh day; if the scurf has not spread and there are no yellow hairs on it and it seems no deeper than the skin, the man shall get himself shaved except for the scurfy part, and the priest shall keep him in isolation for another seven days. The priest shall examine it again on the seventh day, and if the scurf has not spread on the skin and appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. The man shall wash his clothes and so be ritually clean. But if the scurf spreads at all in the skin after the man has been pronounced clean, the priest shall examine him again. If it has spread in the skin, the priest need not even look for yellow hair; the man is unclean. If, however, the scurf remains as it was but black hair has begun to grow on it, it has healed. The man is ritually clean and the priest shall pronounce him so.
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- 38 When a man, or woman, has inflamed patches on the skin and they are white, the priest shall examine them. If they are white and fading, it is dull-white leprosy that has broken out on the skin. The man is ritually clean.
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- 40 When a man's hair falls out from his head, he is bald behind but not ritually unclean. If the hair falls out from the front of the scalp, he is bald on the forehead but clean. But if on the bald patch behind or on the forehead there is a reddish-white sore, it is a malignant skin-disease breaking out on those parts. The priest shall examine him, and if the discoloured sore on the bald patch behind or on the forehead is reddish-white, similar in appearance to a malignant skin-disease on the body, the man is suffering from such a disease; he is ritually unclean and the priest must not fail to pronounce him so. The symptoms are in this case on his head.
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- 45 One who suffers from a malignant skin-disease shall wear his clothes torn, leave his hair dishevelled, conceal his upper lip, and cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' So long as the sore persists, he shall be considered ritually unclean. The man is unclean: he shall live apart and must stay outside the settlement.
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- 47 When there is a stain of mould, whether in a garment of wool or linen, or in the warp or weft of linen or wool, or in a skin or anything made of skin; if the stain is greenish or reddish in the garment or skin, or in the warp or weft, or in anything made of skin, it is a stain of mould which must be shown to the priest. The priest shall examine it and put the stained material aside for seven days. On the seventh day he shall examine it again. If the stain has spread in the garment, warp, weft, or skin, whatever the use of the skin, the stain is a rotting mould: it is ritually unclean. He shall burn the garment or the warp or weft, whether wool or linen, or anything of skin which is stained; because it is a rotting mould, it must be destroyed by fire. But if the priest sees that the stain has not spread in the garment, warp or weft, or anything made of skin, he shall give orders for the stained material to be washed, and then he shall put it aside for another seven days. After it has been washed the priest shall examine the stain; if it has not changed its appearance, although it has not spread, it is unclean and you shall destroy it by fire, whether the rot is on the right side or the wrong. If the priest examines it and finds the stain faded after being washed, he shall tear it out of the garment, skin, warp,
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57 or weft. If, however, the stain re-  
appears in the garment, warp or weft,  
or in anything of skin, it is breaking  
out afresh and you shall destroy by fire  
58 whatever is stained. If you wash the  
garment, warp, weft, or anything of  
skin and the stain disappears, it shall  
be washed a second time and then it  
shall be ritually clean.  
59 This is the law concerning stain of  
mould in a garment of wool or linen,  
in warp or weft, or in anything made  
of skin; by it they shall be pronounced  
clean or unclean.

**14 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID:**

2 This is the law concerning a man  
suffering from a malignant skin-disease.  
On the day when he is to be cleansed  
3 he shall be brought to the priest. The  
priest shall go outside the camp and  
examine him. If the man is healed of  
4 his disease, then the priest shall order  
two clean small birds to be brought  
alive for the man who is to be cleansed,  
together with cedar-wood, scarlet  
5 thread, and marjoram.<sup>1</sup> He shall order  
one of the birds to be killed over an  
earthenware bowl containing fresh  
6 water. He shall then take the living  
bird and the cedar-wood, scarlet thread,  
and marjoram and dip them and the  
living bird in the blood of the bird that  
has been killed over the fresh water.  
7 He shall sprinkle the blood seven times  
on the man who is to be cleansed from  
his skin-disease and so cleanse him; the  
living bird he shall release to fly away  
8 over the open country. The man to be  
cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave  
off all his hair, bathe in water and so  
be ritually clean. He may then enter the  
camp but must stay outside his tent for  
9 seven days. On the seventh day he shall  
shave off all the hair on his head, his  
beard, and his eyebrows, and then  
shave the rest of his hair, wash his  
clothes and bathe in water; then he  
shall be ritually clean.

On the eighth day he shall bring two 10  
yearling rams and one yearling ewe, all  
three without blemish, a grain-offering  
of three tenths of an ephah of flour  
mixed with oil, and one log of oil. The 11  
officiating priest shall place the man  
to be cleansed and his offerings before  
the LORD at the entrance to the Tent  
of the Presence. He shall then take one 12  
of the rams and offer it with the log of  
oil as a guilt-offering, presenting them  
as a special gift before the LORD. The 13  
ram shall be slaughtered where the sin-  
offerings and the whole-offerings are  
slaughtered, within the sacred precincts,  
because the guilt-offering, like the sin-  
offering, belongs to the priest. It is most 14  
sacred. The priest shall then take some  
of the blood of the guilt-offering and  
put it on the lobe of the right ear of the  
man to be cleansed and on his right  
thumb and the big toe of his right foot.  
He shall next take the log of oil and 15  
pour some of it on the palm of his own  
left hand, dip his right forefinger into  
the oil on his left palm and sprinkle 16  
some of it with his finger seven times  
before the LORD. He shall then put 17  
some of the oil remaining on his palm  
on the lobe of the right ear of the man  
to be cleansed, on his right thumb and  
on the big toe of his right foot, on top  
of the blood of the guilt-offering. 18  
The remainder of the oil on the priest's  
palm shall be put upon the head of the  
man to be cleansed, and thus the priest  
shall make expiation for him before the 19  
LORD. The priest shall then perform  
the sin-offering and make expiation  
for the uncleanness of the man who is  
to be cleansed. After this he shall  
slaughter the whole-offering and offer 20  
it and the grain-offering on the altar.  
Thus the priest shall make expiation  
for him, and then he shall be clean.

If the man is poor and cannot afford 21  
these offerings, he shall bring one  
young ram as a guilt-offering to be a

<sup>1</sup> Or hyssop.

**14.2:** *Cleansed:* The ritual is not for healing (since that is here assumed), but for the removal of impurity (vv. 3–20) for reentry into the community. **4:** The color *scarlet* was regarded as effective in the exorcism of demons. *Marjoram:* see Exod.12.22 n. **5–7:** On the effectiveness of *blood* as a cleansing agent, see 4.7 n. The flight of the *living bird* symbolizes the man's freedom from impurity, his uncleanness perhaps having been transferred to it (compare 16.20–22). **8:** *Wash . . . shave . . . bathe:* thus cleansing all places to which the impurity might cling. **10:** *Ephah; log:* see p. 1035. **12:** *Guilt-offering:* see 5.14–6.7. **13:** *To the priest:* 6.29; 10.16–18. **14–17:** See 8.23 n. **19:** The *sin-offering:* the ewe (4.32–35). **20:** The *whole-offering:* the second

special gift making expiation for him, and a grain-offering of a tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with oil, and a log of oil, also two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, whichever he can afford, one for a sin-offering and the other for a whole-offering. He shall bring them to the priest for his cleansing on the eighth day, at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence before the LORD. The priest shall take the ram for the guilt-offering and the log of oil, and shall present them as a special gift before the LORD. The ram for the guilt-offering shall then be slaughtered, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt-offering, and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the man to be cleansed and on his right thumb and on the big toe of his right foot. He shall pour some of the oil on the palm of his own left hand and sprinkle some of it with his right forefinger seven times before the LORD. He shall then put some of the oil remaining on his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the man to be cleansed, and on his right thumb and on the big toe of his right foot exactly where the blood of the guilt-offering was put. The remainder of the oil on the priest's palm shall be put upon the head of the man to be cleansed to make expiation for him before the LORD. Of the birds which the man has been able to afford, turtle-doves or young pigeons, whichever it may be, the priest shall deal with one as a sin-offering and with the other as a whole-offering and shall make the grain-offering with them. Thus the priest shall make expiation before the LORD for the man who is to be cleansed. This is the law for the man with a malignant skin-disease who cannot afford the regular offering for his cleansing.

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and said: When you have entered the land of Canaan which I give you to occupy, if I inflict a fungous infection upon a house in the land you have occupied, its owner shall come and report to the priest that there ap-

pears to him to be a patch of infection in his house. The priest shall order the house to be cleared before he goes in to examine the infection, or everything in it will become unclean. After this the priest shall go in to inspect the house. If on inspection he finds the patch on the walls consists of greenish or reddish depressions, apparently going deeper than the surface, he shall go out of the house and, standing at the entrance, shall put it in quarantine for seven days. On the seventh day he shall come back and inspect the house, and if the patch has spread in the walls, he shall order the infected stones to be pulled out and thrown away outside the city in an unclean place. He shall then have the house scraped inside throughout, and all the daub<sup>m</sup> they have scraped off shall be tipped outside the city in an unclean place. They shall take fresh stones to replace the others and replaster the house with fresh daub.

If the infection reappears in the house and spreads after the stones have been pulled out and the house scraped and redaubed, the priest shall come and inspect it. If the infection has spread in the house, it is a corrosive growth; the house is unclean. The house shall be demolished, stones, timber, and daub, and it shall all be taken away outside the city to an unclean place. Anyone who has entered the house during the time it has been in quarantine shall be unclean till evening. Anyone who has slept or eaten a meal in the house shall wash his clothes. But if, when the priest goes into the house and inspects it, he finds that the infection has not spread after the redaubing, then he shall pronounce the house ritually clean, because the infection has been cured.

In order to rid the house of impurity, he shall take two small birds, cedar-wood, scarlet thread, and marjoram. He shall kill one of the birds over an earthenware bowl containing fresh

*m Or mud.*

ram (1.10-13). 21-32: Regulations allowing less valuable animals are given in 1.14-17 (whole-offering) and 5.7-13 (sin-offering).

13.47-59; 14.33-53: Uncleaness in fabric or buildings. Mould (13.47) or fungous infection (14.34), like fermentation (2.11 n.), are corruptions not to be introduced into the cultic sphere.



51 water. He shall then take the cedar-wood, marjoram, and scarlet thread, together with the living bird, dip them in the blood of the bird that has been killed and in the fresh water, and  
52 sprinkle the house seven times. Thus he shall purify the house, using the blood of the bird, the fresh water, the living bird, the cedar-wood, the marjoram, and the scarlet thread. He shall  
53 set the living bird free outside the city to fly away over the open country, and make expiation for the house; and then it shall be clean.

54 This is the law for all malignant skin-diseases, and for scurf, for mould in  
55 clothes and fungus in houses, for a discoloration of the skin, scab, and inflammation, to declare when these are  
56 pronounced unclean and when clean. This is the law for skin-disease, mould, and fungus.

#### 15 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND AARON

2 and said, Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When any man has a discharge from his body, the discharge is  
3 ritually unclean. This is the law concerning the uncleanness due to his discharge whether it continues or has  
4 been stopped; in either case he is unclean.

4 Every bed on which the man with a discharge lies down shall be ritually unclean, and everything on which he  
5 sits shall be unclean. Any man who touches the bed shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till  
6 evening. Whoever sits on anything on which the man with a discharge has sat shall wash his clothes, bathe in  
7 water and remain unclean till evening. Whoever touches the body of the man  
8 with a discharge shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till  
9 evening. If the man spits on one who is ritually clean, the latter shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain  
10 unclean till evening. Everything on

which the man sits when riding shall  
10 be unclean. Whoever touches anything that has been under him shall be unclean till evening, and whoever handles  
11 such things shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till evening. Anyone whom the man with  
12 a discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain  
13 unclean till evening. Any earthenware bowl touched by the man shall be smashed, and every wooden bowl shall  
14 be rinsed with water.

When the man is cleansed from his  
13 discharge, he shall reckon seven days to his cleansing, wash his clothes, bathe his body in fresh water and be ritually  
14 clean. On the eighth day he shall obtain two turtle-doves or two young pigeons and, coming before the LORD  
15 at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, shall give them to the priest. The priest shall deal with one as a sin-offering and the other as a whole-offering, and shall make for him before  
16 the LORD the expiation required by the discharge.

When a man has emitted semen, he  
16 shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean till evening. Every piece  
17 of clothing or skin on which there is any semen shall be washed and remain unclean till evening. This applies also  
18 to the woman with whom a man has had intercourse; they shall both bathe themselves in water and remain unclean till evening.

When a woman has a discharge of  
19 blood, her impurity shall last for seven days; anyone who touches her shall be unclean till evening. Everything on  
20 which she lies or sits during her impurity shall be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till  
21 evening. Whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till  
22 evening.

15.1-33: **Uncleanness from genital discharge.** 2: *Body*: possibly a polite term for the sex organ (see Ezek.23.20 where the same Heb. word is translated "member"). The condition referred to is likely gonorrhoea. 16-18: The intent is to effect a complete separation between sexual activity and cult worship; the unclean person could not approach the sanctuary. This separation is in sharp contrast to some forms of religious expression among ancient peoples, for whom fertility rites were not uncommon. Compare Gen.19.5 n.; 20.26; Exod.28.42-43. 19-24: Regulations concerning menstruation.

23 evening. If he is on the bed or seat where she is sitting, by touching it he shall become unclean till evening. If a man goes so far as to have intercourse with her and any of her discharge gets on to him, then he shall be unclean for seven days, and every bed on which he lies down shall be unclean.

25 When a woman has a prolonged discharge of blood not at the time of her menstruation, or when her discharge continues beyond the period of menstruation, her impurity shall last all the time of her discharge; she shall be unclean as during the period of her menstruation. Any bed on which she lies during the time of her discharge shall be like that which she used during menstruation, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean as in her menstrual uncleanness. Every person who touches them shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes, bathe in water and remain unclean till evening. If she is cleansed from her discharge, she shall reckon seven days and after that she shall be ritually clean. On the eighth day she shall obtain two turtle-doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. The priest shall deal with one as a sin-offering and with the other as a whole-offering, and make for her before the LORD the expiation required by her unclean discharge.

31 In this way you shall warn the Israelites against uncleanness, in order that they may not bring uncleanness upon the Tabernacle where I dwell among them, and so die.

32 This is the law for the man who has a discharge, or who has an emission of semen and is thereby unclean, and for the woman who is suffering her men-

struation—for everyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who has intercourse with a woman who is unclean.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AFTER THE 16 death of Aaron's two sons, who died when they offered illicit fire before the LORD. He said to him: Tell your 2 brother Aaron that he must not enter the sanctuary within the Veil, in front of the cover over the Ark, except at the appointed time, on pain of death; for I appear in the cloud above the cover. When Aaron enters the sanctuary, this 3 is what he shall do. He shall bring a young bull for a sin-offering and a ram for a whole-offering. He shall wear a 4 sacred linen tunic and linen drawers to cover himself, and he shall put a linen sash round his waist and wind a linen turban round his head; all these are sacred vestments, and he shall bathe in water before putting them on. He shall 5 take from the community of the Israelites two he-goats for a sin-offering and a ram for a whole-offering. He shall 6 present the bull as a sin-offering and make expiation for himself and his household. Then he shall take the two 7 he-goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. He shall cast lots over the two 8 goats, one to be for the LORD and the other for the Precipice.<sup>n</sup> He shall pre- 9 sent the goat on which the lot for the LORD has fallen and deal with it as a sin-offering; but the goat on which the 10 lot for the Precipice has fallen shall be made to stand alive before the LORD, for expiation to be made over it before it is driven away into the wilderness to the Precipice.

<sup>n</sup> Or for Azazel.

**16.1-34:** The annual purification ritual purges the sanctuary and forgives the community of the accumulated transgressions which voluntary sin-offerings (4.1-5.13) have not covered. The origin of this regular ritual (v. 29) of the postexilic period is ascribed to the Mosaic age (compare Exod.20.22-23.33 n.; 25.1-31.17 n.; Lev.1.1 n.). The combination of the sins of Nadab and Abihu (10.1-7) plus the presence of their corpses in the sanctuary (v. 1; compare ch. 21) created the need for a special ritual of purification. This section logically follows ch. 10, and the insertion of the laws on uncleanness (chs. 11-15) has served to heighten the need for a regular ritual such as that here described. **2:** Only on this occasion does the sacrifice take the priest *within the veil*; previously mentioned sin-offerings took place either at the sacrificial altar in the Tabernacle court (Exod.27.1 n.) or at the incense-altar in the outer part of the structure (Exod.26.33 n.). See 4.6,17,25,30. *Ark*: see Exod.25.10 n. *Appointed time*: see vv. 29-30. *Death*: see Exod.33.20. *Cloud*: see Exod.19.9 n. **5:** *He-goats*: see 9.15 n. **8:** *Precipice*: see Tin. n. Azazel was possibly the name of a demon who, in earlier times, was thought to be exorcised from the community. **9:** *Lot*: see Exod.28.15 n. **11:** *For himself*: see 9.8-11 n. **14:** *Eastwards*:

11 Aaron shall present his bull as a sin-offering, making expiation for himself and his household, and then slaughter  
 12 the bull as a sin-offering. He shall take a firepan full of glowing embers from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of powdered fragrant incense,  
 13 and bring them within the Veil. He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the cloud of incense will hide the cover over the Tokens so that  
 14 he shall not die. He shall take some of the bull's blood and sprinkle it with his finger both on the surface of the cover, eastwards, and seven times in front of the cover.  
 15 He shall then slaughter the people's goat as a sin-offering, bring its blood within the Veil and do with its blood as he did with the bull's blood, sprinkling  
 16 it on the cover and in front of it. He shall make for the sanctuary the expiation required by the ritual uncleanness of the Israelites and their acts of rebellion, that is by all their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of the Presence, which dwells among them in the midst of all their uncleanness. No other man shall be within the Tent of the Presence from the time when he enters the sanctuary to make expiation until he comes out, and he shall make expiation for himself, his household, and the whole assembly of Israel.  
 18 He shall then come out to the altar which is before the LORD and make expiation for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it all over the horns of  
 19 the altar; he shall sprinkle some of the blood on the altar with his finger seven times. So he shall purify it from all the uncleanness of the Israelites and hallow it.  
 20 When Aaron has finished making expiation for the sanctuary, for the Tent of the Presence, and for the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.

21 He shall lay both his hands on its head and confess over it all the iniquities of the Israelites and all their acts of rebellion, that is all their sins; he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness in charge of a man who is waiting ready. The  
 22 goat shall carry all their iniquities upon itself into some barren waste and the man shall let it go, there in the wilderness.

Aaron shall then enter the Tent of  
 23 the Presence, take off the linen clothes which he had put on when he entered the sanctuary, and leave them there. He shall bathe in water in a consecrated place and put on his vestments; then he shall go out and perform his own whole-offering and that of the people, thus making expiation for himself and for the people. He shall burn  
 25 the fat of the sin-offering upon the altar. The man who drove the goat  
 26 away to the Precipice shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and not till then may he enter the camp. The two  
 27 sin-offerings, the bull and the goat, the blood of which was brought within the Veil to make expiation in the sanctuary, shall be taken outside the camp and destroyed by fire—skin, flesh, and offal. The man who burns them shall  
 28 wash his clothes and bathe in water, and not till then may he enter the camp.

This shall become a rule binding on  
 29 you for all time. On the tenth day of the seventh month you shall mortify yourselves; you shall do no work, whether native Israelite or alien settler, because on this day expiation shall be  
 30 made on your behalf to cleanse you, and so make you clean before the LORD from all your sins. This is a sabbath  
 31 of sacred rest for you, and you shall mortify yourselves; it is a rule binding for all time. Expiation shall be  
 32 made by the priest duly anointed and installed to serve in succession to his

the direction of the desert (Wilderness: v. 21), where demons were thought to dwell. 16: For the sanctuary: see 4.13–21 n. 20–22: The idea of transferring sin to animals is found in many societies. Here, the action may only symbolize the community's freedom from sin. Compare 14.5–7 n. 27: Destroyed by fire: in keeping with the requirements of 4.12, 21. 29: The tenth day is near the autumnal equinox, which marked the new year in the older preexilic solar calendar (Ezek. 40.1; see Exod. 12.2 n.). In 23.27 and 25.9 it is called "the Day of Atonement." Throughout the ancient world, the days of the equinox were marked by rites of mortification (v. 29), purgation (v. 30), and renewal.

33 father; he shall put on the sacred linen clothes and shall make expiation for the holy sanctuary, the Tent of the Presence, and the altar, on behalf of the priests and the whole assembly of  
34 the people. This shall become a rule binding on you for all time, to make for the Israelites once a year the expiation required by all their sins.

And Moses carried out the LORD's commands.

*The law of holiness*

17 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,  
2 Speak to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites in these words: This is  
3 what the LORD has commanded. Any Israelite who slaughters an ox, a sheep,  
4 or a goat, either inside or outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence to present it as an offering to the LORD before the Tabernacle of the LORD shall be held guilty of bloodshed: that man has shed blood and shall be cut off  
5 from his people. The purpose is that the Israelites should bring to the LORD the animals which they slaughter in the open country; they shall bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence and sacrifice them as shared-offerings to the LORD. The  
6 priest shall fling the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, and burn the fat as a soothing odour to the LORD. They shall no longer sacrifice their slaughtered beasts to the demons<sup>o</sup> whom they

wantonly follow. This shall be a rule binding on them and their descendants for all time.

You shall say to them: Any Israelite  
8 or alien settled in Israel who offers a whole-offering or a sacrifice and does  
9 not bring it to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence to sacrifice it to the LORD shall be cut off from his father's kin.

If any Israelite or alien settled in  
10 Israel eats any blood, I will set my face against the eater, and cut him off from his people, because the life of a creature  
11 is the blood, and I appoint it to make expiation on the altar for yourselves: it is the blood, that is the life, that makes expiation. Therefore I have  
12 told the Israelites that neither you, nor any alien settled among you, shall eat blood.

Any Israelite or alien settled in  
13 Israel who hunts beasts or birds that may lawfully be eaten shall drain out the blood and cover it with earth, because the life of every living creature is  
14 the blood, and I have forbidden the Israelites to eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood: every man who eats it shall be cut off.

Every person, native or alien, who  
15 eats that which has died a natural death or has been mauled by wild beasts shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and remain ritually unclean till evening; then he shall be clean. If he  
16 does not wash his clothes and bathe his body, he must accept responsibility.

<sup>o</sup> Or satyrs.

17.1–26.46: **The Law of Holiness**, by means of which Israel is to be holy because God is holy (19.2; 20.7–8). This collection of regulations and exhortations, once independent, serves here to stress the obligations of the community, rather than those of the priests. The section gets its name, Holiness Code, from the repeated refrain, "You shall be holy."

17.1–16: **Regulations concerning the slaughter of animals.** 3: *Slaughters*: the animals are here intended for food. 4: Contrast the regulations in Deut.12.15,20–21, written earlier, which exempted food animals from this requirement. The Holiness Code envisages proximity to Jerusalem, while Deut. supposes possible residence in places far distant from it. *Cut off*: see 7.21 n. 5: *Bring to the LORD*: i.e. to the Temple in Jerusalem. This mandate reflects a time directly before or shortly after the Babylonian Exile (see Introduction), when there was a Judean community, but small and confined to the immediate environs of Jerusalem. 7: According to 2 Kgs.23.8, a cult of *demons* was widespread in Judah before the Babylonian Exile. The need to exterminate it seemed sufficient justification for the requirement in vv. 3–6. 8: *Aliens* were increasingly common in Judah during the Babylonian Exile and shortly thereafter. 10: *Blood*: see also Deut.12.23–25. 11: *Expiation*: see 4.7 n., and for the rites involved, 4.1–6.7; ch. 16. 13: *Beasts or birds*: nonsacrificial animals. *Lawfully be eaten*: see ch. 11. Every meal involving meat thus became an opportunity for Israel to remember her special identity, a task which became increasingly difficult during the exilic and postexilic periods (see Introduction to Lev. and 11.1–47 n.).

18 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,  
 2 Speak to the Israelites in these words:  
 3 I am the LORD your God. You shall not  
 do as they do in Egypt where you once  
 dwelt, nor shall you do as they do in the  
 land of Canaan to which I am bringing  
 you; you shall not conform to their in-  
 4 stitutions. You must keep my laws and  
 conform to my institutions without  
 5 fail: I am the LORD your God. You  
 shall observe my institutions and my  
 laws: the man who keeps them shall  
 have life through them. I am the LORD.  
 6 No man shall approach a blood-  
 relation for intercourse. I am the  
 7 LORD. You shall not bring shame on  
 your father by intercourse with your  
 mother: she is your mother; you shall  
 8 not bring shame upon her. You shall  
 not have intercourse with your father's  
 wife: that is to bring shame upon your  
 9 father. You shall not have intercourse  
 with your sister, your father's daugh-  
 ter, or your mother's daughter, whether  
 brought up in the family or in  
 another home; you shall not bring  
 10 shame upon them. You shall not have  
 intercourse with your son's daughter  
 or your daughter's daughter: that is to  
 11 bring shame upon yourself. You shall  
 not have intercourse with a daughter  
 of your father's wife, begotten by your  
 father: she is your sister, and you shall  
 12 not bring shame upon her. You shall  
 not have intercourse with your father's  
 sister: she is a blood-relation of your  
 13 father. You shall not have intercourse  
 with your mother's sister: she is a  
 14 blood-relation of your mother. You  
 shall not bring shame upon your  
 father's brother by approaching his  
 15 wife: she is your aunt. You shall not  
 have intercourse with your daughter-  
 in-law: she is your son's wife; you  
 16 shall not bring shame upon her. You  
 shall not have intercourse with your  
 brother's wife: that is to bring shame

upon him. You shall not have inter- 17  
 course with both a woman and her  
 daughter, nor shall you take her son's  
 daughter or her daughter's daughter to  
 have intercourse with them: they are  
 her blood-relations, and such conduct  
 is lewdness. You shall not take a 18  
 woman who is your wife's sister to  
 make her a rival-wife, and to have  
 intercourse with her during her sister's  
 lifetime.

You shall not approach a woman to 19  
 have intercourse with her during her  
 period of menstruation. You shall not 20  
 have sexual intercourse with the wife  
 of your fellow-countryman and so  
 make yourself unclean with her. You 21  
 shall not surrender any of your children  
 to Molech and thus profane the name  
 of your God: I am the LORD. You shall 22  
 not lie with a man as with a woman:  
 that is an abomination. You shall not 23  
 have sexual intercourse with any beast  
 to make yourself unclean with it, nor  
 shall a woman submit herself to inter-  
 course with a beast: that is a violation 24  
 of nature. You shall not make your-  
 selves unclean in any of these ways;  
 for in these ways the heathen, whom I  
 am driving out before you, made them- 25  
 selves unclean. This is how the land  
 became unclean, and I punished it for  
 its iniquity so that it spewed out its  
 inhabitants. You, unlike them, shall 26  
 keep my laws and my rules: none of  
 you, whether natives or aliens settled  
 among you, shall do any of these  
 abominable things. The people who 27  
 were there before you did these abom-  
 inable things and the land became un-  
 clean. So the land will not spew you out 28  
 for making it unclean as it spewed them  
 out; for anyone who does any of these 29  
 abominable things shall be cut off from  
 his people. Observe my charge, there- 30  
 fore, and follow none of the abominable  
 institutions customary before your

18.1-30: Prohibited sexual relations. 2: *I am the LORD your God*: the introductory words of the covenant ceremony (Exod.20.2), calling to mind the LORD's gracious deeds for Israel, and Israel's need of obedience. 3: On Canaanite sexual practices, see Gen.19.5 n. 11: Marriage to a half-sister was previously allowable (Gen.20.12 n.). 12: Marriage to an aunt was apparently acceptable at an earlier time. Indeed, Moses and Aaron were the product of such a union (Exod.6.20). 16: *Brother's wife*: while he is alive. After his death, however, such a marriage could become an obligation (Deut.25.5-10 n.). 18: Marriage to women who were sisters was allowable at an earlier time (Gen.29.1-30). 21: The Ammonite god was offered child sacrifices by fire (Jer.32.35). 25-29: That Israel has already settled in Canaan seems clearly presupposed. Compare Exod.20.22-23.33 n.

time; do not make yourselves unclean with them. I am the LORD your God.

19 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID, 2 Speak to all the community of the Israelites in these words: You shall be holy, because I, the LORD your God, 3 am holy. You shall revere, every man of you, his mother and his father. You shall keep my sabbaths. I am the LORD 4 your God. Do not resort to idols; you shall not make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

5 When you sacrifice a shared-offering to the LORD, you shall slaughter it so as 6 to win acceptance for yourselves. It must be eaten on the day of your sacrifice or the next day. Whatever is left over till the third day shall be destroyed 7 by fire; it is tainted, and if any of it is eaten on the third day, it will not be 8 acceptable. He who eats it must accept responsibility, because he has profaned the holy-gift to the LORD: that person shall be cut off from his father's kin.

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap right into the edges of your field; neither shall you 10 glean the loose ears of your crop; you shall not completely strip your vineyard nor glean the fallen grapes. You shall leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

11 You shall not steal; you shall not cheat or deceive a fellow-countryman.

12 You shall not swear by my name with intent to deceive and thus profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

13 You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him. You shall not keep back a hired man's wages till next morning.

14 You shall not treat the deaf with contempt, nor put an obstruction in the way of the blind. You shall fear your God. I am the LORD.

You shall not pervert justice, either 15 by favouring the poor or by subservience to the great. You shall judge your fellow-countryman with strict justice. You shall not go about spreading 16 slander among your father's kin, nor take sides against your neighbour on a capital charge. I am the LORD. You 17 shall not nurse hatred against your brother. You shall reprove your fellow-countryman frankly and so you will have no share in his guilt.<sup>p</sup> You shall 18 not seek revenge, or cherish anger towards your kinsfolk; you shall love your neighbour as a man like yourself. I am the LORD.

You shall keep my rules. You shall 19 not allow two different kinds of beast to mate together. You shall not plant your field with two kinds of seed. You shall not put on a garment woven with two kinds of yarn.

When a man has intercourse with a 20 slave-girl who has been assigned to another man and neither ransomed nor given her freedom, inquiry shall be made. They shall not be put to death, because she has not been freed. The 21 man shall bring his guilt-offering, a ram, to the LORD to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence, and with it the 22 priest shall make expiation for him before the LORD for his sin, and he shall be forgiven the sin he has committed.

When you enter the land, and plant 23 any kind of tree for food, you shall treat it as bearing forbidden fruit. For three years it shall be forbidden and may not be eaten. In the fourth year all 24 its fruit shall be a holy-gift to the LORD, and this releases it for use. In the fifth 25 year you may eat its fruit, and thus the yield it gives you shall be increased. I am the LORD your God.

<sup>p</sup> Or and for that you will incur no blame.

19.1-37: Diverse social and cultic regulations, possibly constructed around a version of part of the Ten Commandments (vv. 3-4, 11-12; see Exod. 20.1-21 n.). The importance of these guidelines is emphasized by the repeated remark, "I am the LORD" (18.2 n.). 2: There is stressed here the theme for man's obedience: his imitation of God's holiness. 6: See 7.16-18. 18: See Mk. 12.28-31. This love is to be extended to the alien as well (vv. 33-34). See Lk. 10.29-37. 19: Fabric made of the *two kinds of yarn* was reserved for the sanctuary (Exod. 26.1) and the garments of the Aaronite priest (Exod. 28.5-6). 20: *Assigned*: chosen for marriage. 21: Since a *guilt-offering* would be accompanied by compensation for damages (see 6.1-7), the law is concerned not only with the sin of illicit intercourse but also with the damages to the owner who could not sell her as a virgin. 23-25: The purpose behind this legislation is obscure; perhaps the Canaanites regarded the *tree* as a new creation of the fertility gods. Here, it is enjoined simply as the demand of the LORD, although the language of MT in v. 23 (lit. "you will leave its foreskin, namely its fruit, uncircumcised") draws on the analogy of the male child who can

26 You shall not eat meat with the blood in it. You shall not practise  
 27 divination or soothsaying. You shall not round off your hair from side to side, and you shall not shave the edge  
 28 of your beards. You shall not gash yourselves in mourning for the dead; you shall not tattoo yourselves. I am the LORD.

29 Do not prostitute your daughter and so make her a whore; thus the land shall not play the prostitute and be full  
 30 of lewdness. You shall keep my sabbaths, and revere my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

31 Do not resort to ghosts and spirits, nor make yourselves unclean by seeking them out. I am the LORD your God.

32 You shall rise in the presence of grey hairs, give honour to the aged, and fear God. I am the LORD.

33 When an alien settles with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. He shall be treated as a native born  
 34 among you, and you shall love him as a man like yourself, because you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

35 You shall not pervert justice in measurement of length, weight, or quantity.

36 You shall have true scales, true weights, true measures dry and liquid. I am the LORD your God who brought you out  
 37 of Egypt. You shall observe all my rules and laws and carry them out. I am the LORD.

20 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 2 Say to the Israelites: Any Israelite or alien settled in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall be put to death: the common people shall stone  
 3 him. I, for my part, set my face against that man and cut him off from his people, because he has given a child of his to Molech, thus making my sanc-

tuary unclean and profaning my holy name. If the common people connive  
 4 at it when a man has given a child of his to Molech and do not put him to death, I will set my face against man  
 5 and family, and both him and all who follow him in his wanton following after Molech,<sup>q</sup> I will cut off from their people.

I will set my face against the man  
 6 who wantonly resorts to ghosts and spirits, and I will cut that person off from his people. Hallow yourselves and  
 7 be holy, because I the LORD your God am holy. You shall keep my rules and  
 8 obey them: I am the LORD who hallows you.

When any man reviles his father and  
 9 his mother, he shall be put to death. He has reviled his father and his mother; his blood shall be on his own head. If a man commits adultery with  
 10 his neighbour's wife, both adulterer and adulteress shall be put to death. The man who has intercourse with his  
 11 father's wife has brought shame on his father. They shall both be put to death; their blood shall be on their own heads. If a man has intercourse with his  
 12 daughter-in-law, they shall both be put to death. Their deed is a violation of nature; their blood shall be on their own heads. If a man has intercourse  
 13 with a man as with a woman, they both commit an abomination. They shall be put to death; their blood shall be on their own heads. If a man takes both  
 14 a woman and her mother, that is lewdness. Both he and they shall be burnt; thus there shall be no lewdness in your midst. A man who has sexual  
 15 intercourse with any beast shall be put to death, and you shall kill the beast. If a woman approaches any animal to  
 16

<sup>q</sup> Or in his lusting after human sacrifice.

only be dedicated after circumcision. 26: *Divination or soothsaying*: methods of determining the divine will, practiced in the cults of Israel's neighbors. 27-28: These actions are possibly forbidden because of their role in the cult of Canaanite gods. 29: Sacred, rather than ordinary, prostitution is meant. See Gen.38.21 n. 31: The dead were supposed to have knowledge of the future. See 1 Sam. ch. 28.

20.1-27: *Transgressions punishable by death*. The subject matter is essentially that of ch. 18, but now with penalties attached. Perhaps the two chapters were once independent, self-contained units. 2: *Molech*: see 18.21 n. 3: *Cut him off*: see 7.21 n. *Sanctuary unclean*: compare 4.13-21 n. 10-16: The community is to apply the death penalty for these sexual offenses, as opposed to those in vv. 17-21 where retribution is seemingly left to the deity. Since these relationships (in vv. 17-21) had been practiced in an earlier age (18.11-12 nn., 18.18 n.), their prohibition was likely regarded as unenforceable.

have intercourse with it, you shall kill both woman and beast. They shall be put to death; their blood shall be on their own heads. If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and they see one another naked, it is a scandalous disgrace. They shall be cut off in the presence of their people. The man has had intercourse with his sister and he shall accept responsibility. If a man lies with a woman during her monthly period and brings shame upon her, he has exposed her discharge and she has uncovered the source of her discharge; they shall both be cut off from their people. You shall not have intercourse with your mother's sister or your father's sister: it is the exposure of a blood-relation. They shall accept responsibility. A man who has intercourse with his uncle's wife has brought shame upon his uncle. They shall accept responsibility for their sin and shall be proscribed and put to death. If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has brought shame upon his brother; they shall be proscribed. You shall keep all my rules and my laws and carry them out, that the land into which I am bringing you to live may not spew you out. You shall not conform to the institutions of the nations whom I am driving out before you: they did all these things and I abhorred them, and I told you that you should occupy their land, and I would give you possession of it, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God: I have made a clear separation between you and the nations, and you shall make a clear separation between clean beasts and unclean beasts and between unclean and clean birds. You shall not make yourselves vile through beast or bird or anything that creeps on the ground, for I have made a clear separation between them and you, declaring them unclean. You shall be holy to me, because I the LORD am holy. I have made a clear separation between you and the heathen, that you may belong to me.

Any man or woman among you who calls up ghosts or spirits shall be put to death. The people shall stone them; their blood shall be on their own heads.

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, SAY TO THE priests, the sons of Aaron: A priest shall not render himself unclean for the death of any of his kin except for a near blood-relation, that is for mother, father, son, daughter, brother, or full sister who is unmarried and a virgin; nor shall he make himself unclean for any married woman<sup>r</sup> among his father's kin, and so profane himself.

Priests shall not make bald patches on their heads as a sign of mourning, nor cut the edges of their beards, nor gash their bodies. They shall be holy to their God, and they shall not profane the name of their God, because they present the food-offerings of the LORD, the food of their God, and they shall be holy. A priest shall not marry a prostitute or a girl who has lost her virginity, nor shall he marry a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God. You shall keep him holy because he presents the food of your God; you shall regard him as holy because I the LORD, I who hallow them, am holy. When a priest's daughter profanes herself by becoming a prostitute, she profanes her father. She shall be burnt to death.

The high priest, the one among his fellows who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and has been consecrated to wear the vestments, shall neither leave his hair dishevelled nor tear his clothes. He shall not enter the place where any man's dead body lies; not even for his father or his mother shall he render himself unclean. He shall not go out of the sanctuary for fear that he dishonour the sanctuary of his God, because the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him. I am the LORD. He shall marry a woman who is still a virgin. He shall not marry a widow, a divorced woman, a woman who has lost her virginity, or

21.1-24: The preservation of priestly sanctity. On the importance of this, see 4.3 n. 1: *Render himself unclean*: by participating in the funeral rites (see Num.19.11-19). 5: See 19.27-28 n. 10-12: See 10.6 n.; 10.7 n. 16-23: Compare 12.4 n.; 13.1-46 n.



15 a prostitute, but only a virgin from his father's kin; he shall not dishonour his descendants among his father's kin, for I am the LORD who hallows him.

16 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 17 Speak to Aaron in these words: No man among your descendants for all time who has any physical defect shall come and present the food of his God.

18 No man with a defect shall come, whether a blind man, a lame man, a man stunted or overgrown, a man deformed in foot or hand, or with misshapen brows or a film over his eye or a discharge from it, a man who has a scab or eruption or has had a testicle

21 ruptured. No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect in his body shall approach to present the food-offerings of the LORD; because he has a defect he shall not approach to present the food of his God. He may eat

22 the bread of God both from the holy-gifts and from the holiest of holy-gifts, but he shall not come up to the Veil nor approach the altar, because he has a defect in his body. Thus he shall not profane my sanctuaries, because I am the LORD who hallows them.

24 Thus did Moses speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

22 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 2 Tell Aaron and his sons that they must be careful in the handling of the holy-gifts of the Israelites which they hallow to me, lest they profane my holy name.

3 I am the LORD. Say to them: Any man of your descent for all time who while unclean approaches the holy-gifts which the Israelites hallow to the LORD shall be cut off from my presence. I

4 am the LORD. No man descended from Aaron who suffers from a malignant skin-disease, or has a discharge, shall eat of the holy-gifts until he is cleansed.

A man who touches anything which makes him unclean or who has an emission of semen, a man who touches any vermin which makes him unclean or any human being who makes him

6 unclean: any person who touches such a thing shall be unclean till sunset and

unless he washes his body shall not eat of the holy-gifts. When the sun 7 goes down, he shall be clean, and after that he may eat from the holy-gifts, because they are his food. He shall not 8 eat an animal that has died a natural death or has been mauled by wild beasts, thereby making himself unclean. I am the LORD. The priests shall 9 observe my charge, lest they make themselves guilty and die for profaning my name. I am the LORD who hallows them. No unqualified person may eat 10 any holy-gift; nor may a stranger lodging with a priest or a hired man eat a holy-gift. A slave bought by a priest with 11 his own money may do so, and slaves born in his household may also share his food. When a priest's daughter marries 12 an unqualified person, she shall not eat any of the contributions of holy-gifts; but if she is widowed or divorced 13 and is childless and comes back to her father's house as in her childhood, she shall share her father's food. No unqualified person may eat any of it.

When a man inadvertently eats a 14 holy-gift, he shall make good the holy-gift to the priest, adding a fifth to its value. The priests shall not profane the 15 holy-gifts of the Israelites which they set aside for the LORD; they shall not 16 let men eat their holy-gifts and so incur guilt and its penalty, because I am the LORD who hallows them.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 17 Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites in these words: When any man of the house of Israel or any alien in Israel presents, whether in fulfilment of a vow or for a freewill offering, such an offering as is presented to the LORD for a whole-offering so as to win acceptance for yourselves, it shall be a male without defect, of cattle, sheep, or goats. You shall not present anything which is defective, because it will not be acceptable on your behalf. 20 When a man presents a shared-offering to the LORD, whether cattle or sheep, to fulfil a special<sup>s</sup> vow or as a freewill

<sup>s</sup> fulfil a special: or discharge a . . .

22.1-33: Preservation of the sanctity of sacrificial gifts. These rules concern those who may consume the parts of the sacrifice reserved for priests (2.3; 5.13; 6.16-18,29-30; 7.6-10).

3: *Unclean*: as defined by the regulations in chs. 11-15. 10: *Unqualified person*: a nonpriest.

16: The priest is forbidden to give or sell the sacrificial food to the unsuspecting layman and

offering, if it is to be acceptable it must be perfect; there shall be no defect in it. You shall present to the LORD nothing blind, disabled, mutilated, with running sore, scab, or eruption, nor set any such creature on the altar as a food-offering to the LORD. If a bull or a sheep is overgrown or stunted, you may make of it a freewill offering, but it will not be acceptable in fulfilment of a vow. If its testicles have been crushed or bruised, torn or cut, you shall not present it to the LORD; this is forbidden in your land.

You shall not procure any such creature from a foreigner and present it as food for your God. Their deformity is inherent in them, a permanent defect, and they will not be acceptable on your behalf.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: When a calf, a lamb, or a kid is born, it must not be taken from its mother for seven days. From the eighth day onwards it will be acceptable when offered as a food-offering to the LORD. You shall not slaughter a cow or sheep at the same time as its young. When you make a thank-offering to the LORD, you shall sacrifice it so as to win acceptance for yourselves; it shall be eaten that same day, and none be left till morning. I am the LORD.

You shall observe my commandments and perform them. I am the LORD. You shall not profane my holy name; I will be hallowed among the Israelites. I am the LORD who hallows you, who brought you out of Egypt to become your God. I am the LORD.

**23 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,**  
 2 Speak to the Israelites in these words: These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, and you shall proclaim them as sacred assemblies; these are my appointed seasons. On six days work may be done, but every seventh day is a sabbath of sacred rest, a day of sacred

assembly, on which you shall do no work. Wherever you live, it is the LORD's sabbath.

These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, the sacred assemblies which you shall proclaim in their appointed order. In the first month on the fourteenth day between dusk and dark is the LORD's Passover. On the fifteenth day of this month begins the LORD's pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes. On the first day there shall be a sacred assembly; you shall not do your daily work. For seven days you shall present your food-offerings to the LORD. On the seventh day also there shall be a sacred assembly; you shall not do your daily work.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, Speak to the Israelites in these words: When you enter the land which I give you, and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He shall present the sheaf as a special gift before the LORD on the day after the sabbath, so as to gain acceptance for yourselves. On the day you present the sheaf, you shall prepare a perfect yearling ram for a whole-offering to the LORD, with the proper grain-offering, two tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil, as a food-offering to the LORD, of soothing odour, and also with the proper drink-offering, a quarter of a hin of wine. You shall eat neither bread, nor grain, parched or fully ripened, during that day, the day on which you bring your God his offering; this is a rule binding on your descendants for all time wherever you live.

From the day after the sabbath, the day on which you bring your sheaf as a special gift, you shall count seven full weeks. The day after the seventh sabbath will make fifty days, and then you shall present to the LORD a grain-

*t Or from.*

then collect a fine from him (v. 15). 26-27: Compare 19.23-25 n. 28: Such may have been a Canaanite cult practice. 29-30: See 7.11-15. 31-33: See 18.2 n.

23.1-44: The calendar of the sacred days. 2: The entire community is addressed, since it is the obligation of every individual to observe the sacred occasions. 4: *Assemblies*: festivals requiring pilgrimage to the sanctuary. See Deut.16.16. 5: *Passover*: see Exod.12.1-27 and the notes. 6: *Unleavened bread*: Exod.12.15 n. 9: This second introduction suggests that a once independent regulation about Passover has been joined to the context. 10: The *first sheaf* was of barley, which ripened in April. 16: *Fifty days* (Gk. "Pentecost"): see Exod.23.16 n. This

17 offering from the new crop. You shall bring from your homes two loaves as a special gift; they shall contain two tenths of an ephah of flour and shall be baked with leaven. They are the  
 18 LORD's firstfruits. In addition to the bread you shall present seven perfect yearling sheep, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be a whole-offering to the LORD with the proper grain-offering and the proper drink-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD. You shall also  
 19 prepare one he-goat for a sin-offering and two yearling sheep for a shared-offering, and the priest shall present them in addition to the bread of the first-fruits as a special gift before the LORD. They shall be a holy-gift to  
 20 the LORD for the priest. On that same day you shall proclaim a sacred assembly for yourselves; you shall not do your daily work. This is a rule binding on your descendants for all time wherever you live.  
 21 When you reap the harvest in your land, you shall not reap right into the edges of your field, neither shall you glean the fallen ears. You shall leave them for the poor and for the alien. I am the LORD your God.  
 22 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 23 Speak to the Israelites in these words: In the seventh month you shall keep the first day as a sacred rest, a day of remembrance and acclamation, a day of sacred assembly. You shall not do your daily work; you shall present a food-offering to the LORD.  
 24 The LORD spoke to Moses and said: 25 Further, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. There shall be a sacred assembly; you shall mortify yourselves and present a food-offering to the LORD. On that same day you shall do no work because it is a day of expiation, to make expiation for you before the LORD your God. Therefore every person who does not mortify himself on that day shall be cut off  
 26 from his father's kin. I will extirpate any person who does any work on that

day. You shall do no work; it is a rule 31 binding on your descendants for all time wherever you live. It is for you a 32 sabbath of sacred rest, and you shall mortify yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day to the following evening you shall keep your sabbath-rest.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 33 Speak to the Israelites in these words: 34 On the fifteenth day of this seventh month the LORD's pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles<sup>u</sup> begins, and it lasts for seven days. On the first day there shall 35 be a sacred assembly; you shall not do your daily work. For seven days you 36 shall present a food-offering to the LORD; and on the eighth day there shall be a sacred assembly, and you shall present a food-offering to the LORD. It is the closing ceremony; you shall not do your daily work.

These are the appointed seasons of 37 the LORD which you shall proclaim as sacred assemblies for presenting food-offerings to the LORD, whole-offerings and grain-offerings, shared-offerings and drink-offerings, each on its day, besides the LORD's sabbaths and all 38 your gifts, your vows, and your freewill offerings to the LORD.

Further, from the fifteenth day of the 39 seventh month, when the harvest has been gathered, you shall keep the LORD's pilgrim-feast for seven days. The first day is a sacred rest and so is the eighth day. On the first day you 40 shall take the fruit of citrus-trees, palm fronds, and leafy branches, and willows<sup>v</sup> from the riverside, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep this as a 41 pilgrim-feast in the LORD's honour for seven days every year. It is a rule binding for all time on your descendants; in the seventh month you shall hold 42 this pilgrim-feast. You shall live in arbours for seven days, all who are native Israelites, so that your 43 descendants may be reminded how I made the Israelites live in arbours when

<sup>u</sup> Or Booths or Arbours.

<sup>v</sup> Or poplars.

observance was of the wheat harvest in May or June. 22: See 19.9-10. 23: See v. 9 n. 24-25: The new year day. It varies in biblical calendars, at times in the fall, and at times in the spring (see Exod.12.2 n.). 26-32: The ritual is outlined in ch. 16. 34: *Tabernacles*: see Exod.23.16 n. 43: An old Canaanite agricultural festival is here connected with the LORD's gracious deliverance

I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

44 Thus Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed seasons of the LORD.

**24 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID:**

2 Command the Israelites to take pure oil of pounded olives ready for the regular mounting of the lamp outside the Veil of the Tokens in the Tent of the Presence. Aaron shall keep the lamp in trim regularly from dusk to dawn before the LORD: this is a rule binding on your descendants for all time. The lamps on the lamp-stand, ritually clean, shall be regularly kept in trim by him before the LORD.

5 You shall take flour and bake it into twelve loaves, two tenths of an ephah to each. You shall arrange them in two rows, six to a row on the table, ritually clean, before the LORD. You shall sprinkle pure frankincense on the rows, and this shall be a token of the bread, offered to the LORD as a food-offering. Sabbath after sabbath he shall arrange it regularly before the LORD as a gift from the Israelites. This is a covenant for ever; it is the privilege of Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat the bread in a holy place, because it is the holiest of holy-gifts. It is his due out of the food-offerings of the LORD for all time.

10-11 Now there was in the Israelite camp a man whose mother was an Israelite and his father an Egyptian; his mother's name was Shelomith daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan; and he went out and became involved in a brawl with an Israelite of pure descent.

He uttered the Holy Name in blasphemy, so they brought him to Moses; and they kept him in custody until the LORD's will should be clearly made known to them.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 13 Take the man who blasphemed out of the camp. Everyone who heard him shall put a hand<sup>w</sup> on his head, and then all the community shall stone him to death. You shall say to the Israelites: 15 When any man whatever blasphemes his God, he shall accept responsibility for his sin. Whoever utters the Name 16 of the LORD shall be put to death: all the community shall stone him; alien or native, if he utters the Name, he shall be put to death.

When one man strikes another and 17 kills him, he shall be put to death. Whoever strikes a beast and kills it 18 shall make restitution, life for life. When one man injures and disfigures 19 his fellow-countryman, it shall be done to him as he has done; fracture for 20 fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury and disfigurement that he has inflicted upon another shall in turn be inflicted upon him.

Whoever strikes a beast and kills it 21 shall make restitution, but whoever strikes a man and kills him shall be put to death. You shall have one penalty for alien and native alike. For I am the LORD your God.

Thus did Moses speak to the Israelites, and they took the man who blasphemed out of the camp and stoned him to death. The Israelites did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>w</sup> Or their hands.

of Israel: the harvester's temporary shelter imitates the dwellings in the Wilderness (compare Exod.12.11-13 n., 15 n.). Thus, that great event was to be "relived" annually (compare Exod.13.8 n.).

**24.1-9: Regulations concerning the sanctuary.** This belongs topically with the instructions to the priests found in chs. 21-22; the concern with the calendar (ch. 23) resumes in ch. 25. Ch. 24 is possibly a priestly addition to the Holiness Code (see 17.1-26.46 n.). 3: *From dusk to dawn:* a change from earlier practice in which the lamp did not burn to dawn (1 Sam.3.4). 5: *Twelve:* one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. 7: *Token:* and hence to be burned at the weekly renewal of the bread (compare 2.1-3). Topically, vv. 5-9 belong with the instructions for the priests in 6.14-23.

**24.10-16: An instance of contempt for God (blasphemy).** The intent is not only to provide legislation through a precedent-setting case, but also to recall how the alien was protected under law, and his near equality to the native (16.29; 17.8-16; 19.33-34). 11: *Blasphemy* was cursing God, or showing contempt for him by word or action (see Num.15.30-31; compare Isa.36.18-20; 37.6). Blasphemy is extended in v. 16 to the mere pronunciation of the divine name, Yahweh. 13-15: Compare Deut.17.2-7.

**24.17-22: The law of retaliation,** topically related to vv. 10-16 by the theme of capital punishment and equality under the law. 19-20: See Exod.21.23-25 n.

25 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES ON MOUNT  
 2 Sinai and said, Speak to the Israelites  
 in these words: When you enter the  
 land which I give you, the land shall  
 3 keep sabbaths to the LORD. For six  
 years you may sow your fields and for  
 six years prune your vineyards and  
 4 gather the harvest, but in the seventh  
 year the land shall keep a sabbath of  
 sacred rest, a sabbath to the LORD. You  
 shall not sow your field nor prune your  
 5 vineyard. You shall not harvest the  
 crop that grows from fallen grain, nor  
 gather in the grapes from the unpruned  
 vines. It shall be a year of sacred rest for  
 6 the land. Yet what the land itself pro-  
 duces in the sabbath year shall be food  
 for you, for your male and female  
 slaves, for your hired man, and for the  
 7 stranger lodging under your roof, for  
 your cattle and for the wild animals in  
 your country. Everything it produces  
 may be used for food.  
 8 You shall count seven sabbaths of  
 years, that is seven times seven years,  
 9 forty-nine years, and in the seventh  
 month on the tenth day of the month,  
 on the Day of Atonement, you shall  
 send the ram's horn round. You shall  
 send it through all your land to sound  
 10 a blast, and so you shall hallow the  
 fiftieth year and proclaim liberation  
 in the land for all its inhabitants. You  
 shall make this your year of jubilee.  
 Every man of you shall return to his  
 patrimony, every man to his family.  
 11 The fiftieth year shall be your jubilee.  
 You shall not sow, and you shall not  
 harvest the self-sown crop, nor shall  
 you gather in the grapes from the un-  
 12 pruned vines, because it is a jubilee,

to be kept holy by you. You shall eat  
 the produce direct from the land.

In this year of jubilee you shall return,  
 every one of you, to his patrimony.  
 When you sell or buy land amongst  
 yourselves, neither party shall drive  
 a hard bargain. You shall pay your  
 fellow-countryman according to the  
 number of years since the jubilee,  
 and he shall sell to you according to  
 the number of annual crops. The more  
 years there are to run, the higher the  
 price, the fewer the years, the lower,  
 because he is selling you a series of  
 crops. You must not victimize one  
 another, but you shall fear your God,  
 because I am the LORD your God.  
 Observe my statutes, keep my judgements  
 and carry them out; and you shall  
 live in the land in security. The land  
 shall yield its harvest; you shall eat  
 your fill and live there secure. If  
 you ask what you are to eat during the  
 seventh year, seeing that you will  
 neither sow nor gather the harvest, I  
 will ordain my blessing for you in the  
 sixth year and the land shall produce  
 a crop to carry over three years. When  
 you sow in the eighth year, you will  
 still be eating from the earlier crop;  
 you shall eat the old until the new crop  
 is gathered in the ninth year.

No land shall be sold outright, because  
 the land is mine, and you are coming  
 into it as aliens and settlers. Throughout  
 the whole land of your patrimony,  
 you shall allow land which has been  
 sold to be redeemed.

When one of you is reduced to poverty  
 and sells part of his patrimony, his  
 next-of-kin who has the duty of

25.1-55: The sabbatical and Jubilee years. The former celebration (vv. 2-7) symbolizes the LORD's ultimate ownership of the land; the latter (vv. 8-34) attempts to prevent the growth of economic classes. 1: That this legislation is allocated to *Sinai*, rather than to the Tent of the Presence (1.1 and subsequent chapter headings), suggests not only its original independence of the present context but also its importance in the opinion of those who transmitted it. The legislation assumes the settlement of Israel in Canaan and subsequent economic abuses. 4: The application of the *sacred rest* notion to the *sabbath of the land* introduces a dimension absent from the form of the regulation given in Exod.23.10-11. 6: Permission for the owner to benefit from the land also differs from Exod.23.10-11 and may be a concession to economic necessity or to the impossibility of strict enforcement. 8-12: A brief summary of the Jubilee regulation. 9: *Day of Atonement*: see 16.29 n. *Ram's horn*: in Heb. *yobhel*, whence the English word "jubilee." The horn was blown to announce the celebration (compare Exod.19.16 n.). 10: "Sale" or "lease" of land was not in perpetuity; rather, land was to return to the original owner at the Jubilee. This is expanded in vv. 23-28. 15-16: In addition to area and fertility, the value of land to be leased depended on the duration of the contract, the maximum being until the next Jubilee. 23: The LORD had given the land to Israel through no merit of her own (Deut. 9.1-6) and hence it is not hers to use for unrestrained personal gain. Man is only an *alien*,

26 redemption shall come and redeem what his kinsman has sold. When a man has no such next-of-kin and himself becomes able to afford its redemption, he shall take into account 27 the years since the sale and pay the purchaser the balance up to the jubilee. Then he may return to his patrimony. But if the man cannot afford to buy back the property, it shall remain in the hands of the purchaser till the year of jubilee. It shall then revert to the original owner, and he shall return to his patrimony.

29 When a man sells a dwelling-house in a walled town, he shall retain the right of redemption till the end of the year of the sale; for a time he shall have the right of redemption. If it is not redeemed before a full year is out, the house in the walled town shall vest in perpetuity in the buyer and his descendants; it shall not revert at the jubilee. Houses in unwalled hamlets shall be treated as property in the open country: the right of redemption shall hold good, and in any case the house shall revert at the jubilee. Levites shall have the perpetual right to redeem houses of their own patrimony in 33 towns belonging to them. If one of the Levites does not redeem his house in such a town, then it shall still revert to him at the jubilee, because the houses in Levite towns are their patrimony in 34 Israel. The common land surrounding their towns shall not be sold, because it is their property in perpetuity.

35 When your brother-Israelite is reduced to poverty and cannot support himself in the community, you shall assist him as you would an alien or a stranger, and he shall live with you. 36 You shall not charge him interest on a loan, either by deducting it in advance from the capital sum, or by adding it on repayment. You shall fear your God, and your brother shall live with

you; you shall not deduct interest when 37 advancing him money nor add interest to the payment due for food supplied on credit. I am the LORD your God 38 who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to become your God.

When your brother is reduced to 39 poverty and sells himself to you, you shall not use him to work for you as a slave. His status shall be that of a hired 40 man or a stranger lodging with you; he shall work for you until the year of jubilee. He shall then leave your ser- 41 vice, with his children, and go back to his family and to his ancestral property: because they are my slaves 42 whom I brought out of Egypt, they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. You 43 shall not drive him with ruthless severity, but you shall fear your God. Such slaves as you have, male or 44 female, shall come from the nations round about you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy the chil- 45 dren of those who have settled and lodge with you and such of their family as are born in the land. These may be- 46 come your property, and you may leave them to your sons after you; you may use them as slaves permanently. But your fellow-Israelites you shall not drive with ruthless severity.

When an alien or a stranger living 47 with you becomes rich, and your brother becomes poor and sells himself to the alien or stranger or to a member of some alien family, he shall have the 48 right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his brothers may re- 49 deem him, or his uncle, his cousin, or any blood-relation of his family, or, if he can afford it, he may redeem him- 50 self. He and his purchaser together shall reckon from the year when he sold himself to the year of jubilee, and the price shall be adjusted to the number of years. His period of service with his

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dependent upon the LORD's land. 29-31: City property is exempted from the law of redemption. 32-34: The Levites, having no tribal territory of their own (Num.18.20-24; 35.1-8; Deut. 10.8-9; see Gen.34.1-31 n.), must be protected from dispossession more rigidly than the general population. 38: Just as the LORD aided the landless, alien Hebrews in Egypt, so must they respond to the needs of those around them. See 18.2 n.; Deut.5.12-15. 42-43: Members of the community are, like land (v. 23 n.), the possession of the LORD. 44-46: There are striking differences between the legislation here and that of Exod.21.1-11 (see especially Exod.21.2 n.). 47-48: On the status of aliens under Israelite law, see 24.10-16 n.

owner shall be reckoned at the rate of a  
 51 hired man. If there are still many years  
 to run to the year of jubilee, he must  
 repay for his redemption a proportionate  
 amount of the sum for which  
 52 he sold himself; if there are few, he shall  
 53 reckon and repay accordingly. He shall  
 have the status of a labourer hired from  
 year to year, and you shall not let him  
 be driven with ruthless severity by his  
 54 owner. If the man is not redeemed in  
 the intervening years, he and his children  
 shall be released in the year of  
 55 jubilee; for it is to me that the Israelites  
 are slaves, my slaves whom I brought  
 out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

**26** YOU SHALL NOT MAKE IDOLS FOR YOUR-  
 selves; you shall not erect a carved  
 image or a sacred pillar; you shall not  
 put a figured stone on your land to  
 prostrate yourselves upon, because I  
 2 am the LORD your God. You shall  
 keep my sabbaths and revere my sanctuary.  
 I am the LORD.

3 If you conform to my statutes, if you  
 observe my commandments and carry  
 4 them out, I will give you rain at the  
 proper time; the land shall yield its  
 produce and the trees of the countryside  
 5 their fruit. Threshing shall last till  
 vintage and vintage till sowing; you  
 shall eat your fill and live secure in  
 6 your land. I will give peace in the land,  
 and you shall lie down to sleep with no  
 one to terrify you. I will rid your land  
 of dangerous beasts and it shall not be  
 7 ravaged by war. You shall put your enemies  
 to flight and they shall fall in  
 8 battle before you. Five of you shall  
 pursue a hundred and a hundred of you  
 ten thousand; so shall your enemies fall  
 9 in battle before you. I will look upon  
 you with favour, I will make you fruitful  
 and increase your numbers: I will  
 give my covenant with you its full  
 10 effect. Your old harvest shall last you  
 in store until you have to clear out the

old to make room for the new. I will  
 11 establish my Tabernacle among you  
 and will not spurn you. I will walk to  
 12 and fro among you; I will become your  
 God and you shall become my people.  
 I am the LORD your God who brought  
 13 you out of Egypt and let you be their  
 slaves no longer; I broke the bars of  
 your yoke and enabled you to walk  
 upright.

But if you do not listen to me, if you  
 14 fail to keep all these commandments  
 of mine, if you reject my statutes, if  
 15 you spurn my judgements, and do not  
 obey all my commandments, but break  
 my covenant, then be sure that this is  
 16 what I will do: I will bring upon you  
 sudden terror, wasting disease, recurrent  
 fever, and plagues that dim the sight  
 and cause the appetite to fail.  
 You shall sow your seed to no purpose,  
 for your enemies shall eat the crop. I  
 17 will set my face against you, and you  
 shall be routed by your enemies. Those  
 that hate you shall hound you on until  
 you run when there is no pursuit.

If after all this you do not listen to  
 18 me, I will go on to punish you seven  
 times over for your sins. I will break  
 19 down your stubborn pride. I will make  
 the sky above you like iron and the  
 earth beneath you like bronze. Your  
 20 strength shall be spent in vain; your  
 land shall not yield its produce nor the  
 trees of the land their fruit.

If you still defy me and refuse to  
 21 listen, I will multiply your calamities  
 seven times, as your sins deserve. I will  
 22 send wild beasts among you; they shall  
 tear your children from you, destroy  
 your cattle and bring your numbers  
 low; and your roads shall be deserted.  
 If after all this you have not learnt  
 23 discipline but still defy me, I in turn  
 24 will defy you and scourge you seven  
 times over for your sins. I will bring  
 25 war in vengeance upon you, vengeance  
 irrevocable under covenant; you shall

26.1-46: The consequence of obedience or disobedience. This conclusion of the Holiness Code (see 17.1-26.46 n.) is patterned after Ancient Near Eastern contracts which conclude with a list of curses against those who disregard their stipulations. 1-2: This appears to be either an isolated fragment or the conclusion of ch. 25. 9: *Covenant*: see Exod.20.1-21 n.; Gen. chs. 15 and 17. 11-13: A summary of the fundamental goal of the foregoing legislation. See 9.5-6 n. 18: The LORD uses only that amount of discipline necessary to accomplish his task. On progressive intensification, see Amos 4.6-12. 21-39: See 26.1-46 n. While the language, in keeping with this form of document, seems extreme, it may, in part, be based upon the obser-

be herded into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be given over to the enemy. I will cut short your daily bread until ten women can bake your bread in a single oven; they shall dole it out by weight, and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied.

If in spite of this you do not listen to me and still defy me, I will defy you in anger, and I myself will punish you seven times over for your sins. Instead of meat you shall eat your sons and your daughters. I will destroy your hill-shrines and demolish your incense-altars. I will pile your rotting carcasses on the rotting logs<sup>x</sup> that were your idols, and I will spurn you. I will make your cities desolate and destroy your sanctuaries; the soothing odour of your offerings I will not accept. I will destroy your land, and the enemies who occupy it shall be appalled. I will scatter you among the heathen, and I will pursue you with the naked sword; your land shall be desolate and your cities heaps of rubble. Then, all the time that it lies desolate, while you are in exile in the land of your enemies, your land shall enjoy its sabbaths to the full. All the time of its desolation it shall have the sabbath rest which it did not have when you lived there. And I will make those of you who are left in the land of your enemies so ridden with fear that, when a leaf flutters behind them in the wind, they shall run as if it were the sword behind them; they shall fall with no one in pursuit. Though no one pursues them they shall stumble over one another, as if the sword were behind them, and there shall be no stand made against the enemy. You shall meet your end among the heathen, and your enemies' land shall swallow you up. Those who are left shall pine away in an enemy land under their own iniquities; and with their fathers' iniquities upon them too, they shall pine away as they did.

40 But though they confess their in-

iquity, their own and their fathers', their treachery, and even their defiance of me, I will defy them in my turn and carry them off into their enemies' land. Yet if then their stubborn spirit is broken and they accept their punishment in full, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac, yes, and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. The land shall be rid of its people and enjoy in full its sabbaths while it lies desolate, and they shall pay in full the penalty because they rejected my judgements and spurned my statutes. Yet even then, in their enemies' land, I shall not have rejected nor spurned them, bringing them to an end and so breaking my covenant with them, because I am the LORD their God. I will remember on their behalf the covenant with the men of former times whom I brought out of Egypt in full sight of all the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.

These are the statutes, the judgements, and the laws which the LORD established between himself and the Israelites on Mount Sinai through Moses.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID, 27 Speak to the Israelites in these words: 2 When a man makes a special<sup>y</sup> vow to the LORD which requires your valuation of living persons, a male between 3 twenty and sixty years old shall be valued at fifty silver shekels, that is shekels by the sacred standard. If it is a 4 female, she shall be valued at thirty shekels. If the person is between five 5 years old and twenty, the valuation shall be twenty shekels for a male and ten for a female. If the person is be- 6 tween a month and five years old, the valuation shall be five shekels for a male and three for a female. If the person is 7 over sixty and a male, the valuation shall be fifteen shekels, but if a female,

<sup>x</sup> rotting logs: or effigies.  
<sup>y</sup> makes a special: or discharges a . . .

valuation of the results of warfare among Israel's neighbors. 30: *Rotting logs*: a sarcastic allusion to idols. 46: *Sinai*: see 25.1 n.

27.1-34: *The fulfilment of religious vows*. In return for success (Judg.11.29-31) or recovery from misfortune (Ps.66.13-15), a person would make a *special vow* of a sacrifice or donation to the sanctuary. 2: *Valuation*: persons dedicated to perform minor cultic services (compare



- 8 ten shekels. If the man is too poor to pay the amount of your valuation, the person shall be set before the priest, and the priest shall value him according to the sum which the man who makes the vow can afford: the priest shall make the valuation.
- 9 If the vow concerns a beast such as may be offered as an offering to the LORD, then every gift shall be holy to the LORD. He shall not change it for another, or substitute good for bad or bad for good. But if a substitution is in fact made of one beast for another, then both the original beast and its substitute shall be holy to the LORD.
- 10 If the vow concerns any unclean beast such as may not be offered as an offering to the LORD, then the animal shall be brought before the priest, and he shall value it whether good or bad. The priest's valuation shall be decisive; in case of redemption the payment shall be increased by one fifth.
- 11 When a man dedicates his house as holy to the LORD, the priest shall value it whether good or bad, and the priest's valuation shall be decisive. If the donor redeems his house, he shall pay the amount of the valuation increased by one fifth, and the house shall be his.
- 12 If a man dedicates to the LORD part of his ancestral land, you shall value it according to the amount of seed-corn it can carry, at the rate of fifty shekels of silver for a homer of barley seed. If he dedicates his land from the year of jubilee, it shall stand at your valuation; but if he dedicates it after the year of jubilee, the priest shall estimate the price in silver according to the number of years remaining till the next year of jubilee, and this shall be deducted from your valuation. If the man who dedicates his field should redeem it, he shall pay the amount of your valuation in silver, increased by one fifth, and it shall be his. If he does not redeem it but sells the land to another man, it shall no longer be redeemable; when the land reverts at the year of jubilee, it shall be like land that has been devoted, holy to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest as his patrimony.
- 13 If a man dedicates to the LORD land which he has bought, land which is not part of his ancestral land, the priest shall estimate the amount of the value for the period until the year of jubilee, and the man shall give the amount fixed as at that day; it is holy to the LORD. At the year of jubilee the land shall revert to the man from whom he bought it, whose patrimony it is. Every valuation you make shall be made by the sacred standard (twenty gerahs to the shekel).
- 14 Notwithstanding, no man may dedicate to the LORD the first-born of a beast which in any case has to be offered as a first-born, whether an ox or a sheep. It is the LORD's. If it is any unclean beast, he may redeem it at your valuation and shall add one fifth; but if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at your valuation. Notwithstanding, nothing which a man devotes to the LORD irredeemably from his own property, whether man or beast or ancestral land, may be sold or redeemed. Everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD. No human being thus devoted may be redeemed, but he shall be put to death.
- 15 Every tithe on land, whether from grain or from the fruit of a tree, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. If a man wishes to redeem any of his tithe, he shall pay its value in-

1 Sam.1.11,21-28) could be released through a payment of money. 11: The *unclean beast*, since it cannot be sacrificed, may be redeemed by the person who vowed it, but only at the expense of a penalty. 16: The value of the land depends upon its productivity (the annual yield of barley). *Homer*: see p. 1035. 17-19: Priests, like laymen (25.8-34), cannot gain permanent possession of another man's land and thus impoverish him, even though the man has vowed it to the LORD. He may redeem it, at a penalty, or receive it back at the Jubilee. This is in contrast to other Ancient Near Eastern religions which allowed the temples to accumulate vast estates. 20-21: If the man seeks to disregard his vow to the LORD by selling his property to another, he forfeits the right of the Jubilee. 25: *Gerahs*: see p. 1035. 26: *First-born*: one cannot vow to the LORD that which already belongs to him (Exod.13.11-13). 27: *Unclean beast*: compare Exod.13.13 for the case of a male ass. Here, however, the beast may be kept by the sanctuary for sale. "Clean" first-born could not be redeemed (Num.18.17). 30: The *tithe*, used to support the priesthood (Num.18.21,24; compare Lev.25.32-34 n.) and the poor (Deut.26.12), cannot be a vowed donation, for it is already an obligation. 31: *Redeem any of his tithe*: the opportunity is here

- 32 creased by one fifth. Every tenth creature that passes under the counting rod shall be holy to the LORD; this applies to all tithes of cattle and sheep. There shall be no inquiry whether it is good or bad, and no substitution. If any substitution is made, then both the tithe-animal and its substitute shall be forfeit as holy; it shall not be redeemed.
- 33 These are the commandments which the LORD gave Moses for the Israelites on Mount Sinai. 34

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provided to pay in money rather than in kind. 32-33: *Cattle and sheep*: these tithes are regarded as "devoted" to the LORD, and whatever was devoted (see v. 28) could not be "redeemed," that is, cash could not be substituted. (What was "devoted" was deemed as thereafter unsuitable for normal human use.) Moreover, the actual tenth animal was to be given; probably the intent was to prevent the gift of a sickly or emaciated animal rather than a healthy one. 32: *Counting rod*: compare Jer.33.13 for the method of counting the flock.

# NUMBERS

This segment of Israel's early story is known in the Hebrew Bible as "In the Wilderness" (a phrase occurring in the initial verse), a title more characteristic of the whole book than is "Numbers." The latter, found in the Greek and Latin translations, is derived from the various censuses and the general arithmetical precision which characterize the work.

The book may be topically divided as follows: (1) preparation for departure from the sacred mountain, Sinai (1.1-10.10); (2) the journey to the oasis at Kadesh where, according to the priestly chronology, most of the "forty years" (33.38) in the Wilderness were spent (10.11-12.16; compare 13.26); (3) the stay at Kadesh (13.1-20.21); (4) an abortive attempt to enter Canaan from the south (14.39-45; 21.1-3); (5) the detour around Edom through Transjordan to the eastern border of Canaan (20.22-36.13). With the departure from Sinai, the place of divine revelation shifts from the mountain to the movable Tent of the Presence.

The theme is repeated that the community was willing to shun its destiny through exchanging the perils of the Wilderness journey for a return to the supposed safety of Egypt. Yet Israel was preserved by the grace of God in order that the ancient promise to the patriarchs (see Introduction to the Pentateuch) would be realized.

## *Israel in the wilderness of Sinai*

1 **O**N THE FIRST DAY OF THE SECOND month in the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses at the Tent of the Presence in the wilderness of Sinai in  
2 these words: "Number the whole community of Israel by families in the father's line, recording the name of every  
3 male person aged twenty years and upwards fit for military service. You and Aaron are to make a detailed list of  
4 them by their tribal hosts, and you shall have to assist you one head of family  
5 from each tribe. These are their names:

- 6 of Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur;
- 7 of Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai;
- 8 of Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab;
- 9 of Issachar, Nethaneel son of Zuar;
- 10 of Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon;
- 11 of Joseph: of Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud;
- 12 of Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur;
- 13 of Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni;
- 14 of Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai;
- 15 of Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran;
- 16 of Gad, Eliasaph son of Reuel;
- 17 of Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.'

These were the conveners of the whole community, chiefs of their fathers' tribes and heads of Israelite clans. So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been indicated by name. They summoned the whole community on the first day of the second month, and they registered their descent by families in the father's line, recording every male person aged twenty years and upwards, as the LORD had told Moses to do. Thus it was that he drew up the detailed lists in the wilderness of Sinai:

The tribal list of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by families in the father's line, with the name of every male person aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Reuben being forty-six thousand five hundred.

The tribal list of Simeon, by families in the father's line, with the name of every male person aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Simeon being fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

The tribal list of Gad, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of

**1.1-54:** A census of the tribes. In anticipation of departure from Sinai (10.11) and of armed opposition by the Canaanites (chs. 13-14), a survey of military potential is conducted. **1:** *Second month:* one month since the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod.40.2); on the priestly chronology, see Gen.7.24 n. **5-15:** Although Israel as a league of twelve tribes took shape only after the conquest of Canaan (Exod.6.3 n.), here each tribe is represented as part of a united Israel in the Wilderness. On the omission of Levi, see vv. 47-49 n. **6:** *Simeon:* see Gen.34.1-31 n. **10:** *Joseph* is subdivided (Gen.48.5 n.) in order to keep the total number of tribes at twelve (compare Gen.22.20-24 n.). **20-46:** A preserved ancient census, possibly taken well after the conquest of Canaan (Exod.30.11-16 n.), is here presented as conducted at Sinai, for the

the tribe of Gad being forty-five thousand and six hundred and fifty.

26 The tribal list of Judah, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Judah being seventy-four thousand six hundred.

28 The tribal list of Issachar, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Issachar being fifty-four thousand four hundred.

30 The tribal list of Zebulun, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Zebulun being fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

32 The tribal lists of Joseph: that of Ephraim, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Ephraim being forty thousand five hundred; that of Manasseh, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Manasseh being thirty-two thousand two hundred.

36 The tribal list of Benjamin, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Benjamin being thirty-five thousand four hundred.

38 The tribal list of Dan, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Dan being sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

40 The tribal list of Asher, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Asher being forty-one thousand five hundred.

The tribal list of Naphtali, by families in the father's line, with the names of all men aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, the number in the list of the tribe of Naphtali being fifty-three thousand four hundred.

These were the numbers recorded in the detailed lists by Moses and Aaron and the twelve chiefs of Israel, each representing one tribe and being the head of a family. The total number of Israelites aged twenty years and upwards fit for service, recorded in the lists of fathers' families, was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. A list of the Levites by their fathers' families was not made.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'You shall not record the total number of the Levites or make a detailed list of them among the Israelites. You shall put the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle of the Tokens, with its equipment and everything in it. They shall carry the Tabernacle and all its equipment; they alone shall be its attendants and shall pitch their tents round it. The Levites shall take the Tabernacle down when it is due to move and shall put it up when it halts; any unqualified person who comes near it shall be put to death. All other Israelites shall pitch their tents, each tribal host in its proper camp and under its own standard. But the Levites shall encamp round the Tabernacle of the Tokens, so that divine wrath may not follow the whole community of Israel; the Tabernacle of the Tokens shall be in their keeping.'

The Israelites did exactly as the LORD had told Moses to do.

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and said, 'The Israelites shall encamp each under his own standard by the emblems of his father's family; they shall pitch their tents round the Tent of the Presence, facing it.

'In front of it, on the east, the division of Judah shall be stationed under

Wilderness could scarcely have supported this aggregate (v. 46) of persons for a sustained period (33.38). 47-49: Contrast 3.14-39, where a census for nonmilitary purposes is taken. On the lack of a list . . . , see Gen.49.5-7 n. 50-53: On the duties of the Levites, see ch. 3.

2.1-34: The arrangement of the tribes for encampment or march. The model for this conception may possibly have been encampments around the sanctuary at one of the pilgrimage festivals (Deut.16.16). 3: The preferential position assigned to Judah may reflect its eminence in later

the standard of its camp by tribal hosts. The chief of Judah shall be  
 4 Nahshon son of Amminadab. His host, with its members as detailed, numbers  
 5 seventy-four thousand six hundred men. Next to Judah the tribe of Issachar  
 6 shall be stationed. Its chief shall be Nethaneel son of Zuar; his host, with  
 7 its members as detailed, numbers fifty-four thousand four hundred. Then the  
 8 tribe of Zebulun: its chief shall be Eliab son of Helon: his host, with its  
 9 members as detailed, numbers fifty-seven thousand four hundred. The  
 number listed in the camp of Judah, by hosts, is one hundred and eighty-six  
 thousand four hundred. They shall be the first to march.

10 'To the south the division of Reuben shall be stationed under the standard  
 of its camp by tribal hosts. The chief of Reuben shall be Elizur son of She-  
 11 deur; his host, with its members as detailed, numbers forty-six thousand  
 12 five hundred. Next to him the tribe of Simeon shall be stationed. Its chief  
 shall be Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; his host, with its members as detailed,  
 13 numbers fifty-nine thousand three hundred. Then the tribe of Gad: its  
 14 chief shall be Eliasaph son of Reuel; his host, with its members as detailed,  
 15 numbers forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. The number listed in the  
 16 camp of Reuben, by hosts, is one hundred and fifty-one thousand four  
 hundred and fifty. They shall be the second to march.

17 'When the Tent of the Presence moves, the camp of the Levites shall  
 keep its station in the centre of the other camps; they shall all move in the  
 order of their encamping, each man in his proper place under his standard.

18 'To the west the division of Ephraim shall be stationed under the standard  
 of its camp by tribal hosts. The chief of

Ephraim shall be Elishama son of Ammihud; his host, with its members  
 19 as detailed, numbers forty thousand five hundred. Next to him the tribe of  
 20 Manasseh shall be stationed. Its chief shall be Gamaliel son of Pedahzur; his  
 21 host, with its members as detailed, numbers thirty-two thousand two hundred.  
 Then the tribe of Benjamin: its chief shall be Abidan son of Gideoni;  
 22 his host, with its members as detailed, numbers thirty-five thousand four  
 23 hundred. The number listed in the camp of Ephraim, by hosts, is one  
 24 hundred and eight thousand one hundred. They shall be the third to march.

'To the north the division of Dan  
 25 shall be stationed under the standard of its camp by tribal hosts. The chief  
 of Dan shall be Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai; his host, with its members  
 26 as detailed, numbers sixty-two thousand seven hundred. Next to him the tribe of  
 27 Asher shall be stationed. Its chief shall be Pagiel son of Ocran; his host, with  
 28 its members as detailed, numbers forty-one thousand five hundred. Then the  
 29 tribe of Naphtali: its chief shall be Ahira son of Enan; his host, with its members  
 30 as detailed, numbers fifty-three thousand and four hundred. The number listed  
 31 in the camp of Dan is a hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They  
 shall march, under their standards, last.'

These were the Israelites listed by  
 32 their fathers' families. The total number in the camp, recorded by tribal  
 hosts, was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

The Levites were not included in the  
 33 detailed lists with their fellow-Israelites, for so the LORD had commanded  
 Moses. The Israelites did exactly as the  
 34 LORD had commanded Moses, pitching and breaking camp standard by stan-  
 dard, each man according to his family in his father's line.

times (compare Gen.38.1-30 n.), especially its survival after other tribes had been overrun and exiled by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. *Nahshon*: his name is found in the list in 1.5-15. 4: The numbers throughout this chapter conform with those in 1.20-47. 17: The central position of the *Tent* reflected its importance as well as insured its protection. In an old version of the tradition (Exod.33.7-11), it was located outside the encampment. 18: On the position of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* (v. 20), contrast the preferential place of Judah (v. 3 n.). *Ephraim* was the seat of the "apostate" cult of the golden calves (1 Kgs.12.25-33) and *Manasseh* contained the capital city (Samaria) from which the "evil" kings of the northern tribes reigned (2 Kgs. 17.5-17). In the postexilic period, the Samaritans were regarded as racially impure by the priestly leadership of Judah (see 2 Kgs.17.24).

3 THESE WERE THE DESCENDANTS OF Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.  
 2 The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab the eldest, Abihu, Eleazar and  
 3 Ithamar. These were the names of Aaron's sons, the anointed priests who had been installed in the priestly office.  
 4 Nadab and Abihu fell dead before the LORD because they had presented illicit fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai. They left no sons; Eleazar and Ithamar continued to perform the priestly office in their father's presence.  
 5 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 6 'Bring forward the tribe of Levi and appoint them to serve Aaron the priest and to minister to him. They shall be in attendance on him and on the whole community before the Tent of the Presence, undertaking the service of the  
 8 Tabernacle. They shall be in charge of all the equipment in the Tent of the Presence, and be in attendance on the Israelites, undertaking the service of  
 9 the Tabernacle. You shall assign the Levites to Aaron and his sons as especially dedicated to him out of all  
 10 the Israelites. To Aaron and his line you shall commit the priestly office and they shall perform its duties; any unqualified person who intrudes upon it shall be put to death.'  
 11 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 12 'I take the Levites for myself out of all the Israelites as a substitute for the eldest male child of every woman; the  
 13 Levites shall be mine. For every eldest child, if a boy, became mine when I destroyed all the eldest sons in Egypt. So I have consecrated to myself all the

first-born in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be mine. I am the LORD.'

The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai and said, 'Make a detailed list of all the Levites by their families in the father's line, every male from the age of one month and upwards.'

Moses made a detailed list of them in accordance with the command given him by the LORD. Now these were the names of the sons of Levi:

- Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
- Descendants of Gershon, by families: Libni and Shimei.
- Descendants of Kohath, by families: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.
- Descendants of Merari, by families: Mahli and Mushi.

These were the families of Levi, by fathers' families:

Gershon: the family of Libni and the family of Shimei. These were the families of Gershon, and the number of males in their list as detailed, from the age of one month and upwards, was seven thousand five hundred. The families of Gershon were stationed on the west, behind the Tabernacle. Their chief was Eliasaph son of Lael, and in the service of the Tent of the Presence they were in charge of the Tabernacle and its coverings, of the screen at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, the hangings of the court, the screen at the entrance to the court all round the Tabernacle and the altar, and of all else needed for its maintenance.

Kohath: the family of Amram, the

3.1-51: The appointment and enumeration of the Levites. 4: See Lev.10.1-7 and the notes. 6: *To serve Aaron*: The differentiation between Aaron's family and the rest of the Levites arose historically in the postexilic period; here the priestly (Aaronite) writers ascribe it as commanded at Sinai. See Exod.29.1-46 n. 10: *Be put to death*: the warning about the unqualified persons who may be put to death is directed to Levitical groups who might become dissatisfied with the custodial duties here assigned to them, especially so since other ancient traditions know nothing of exclusive eminence for the family of Aaron (Deut.33.8-11). For a controversy over this eminence, see ch. 16. 11-13: This positive view of the Levites, seemingly old, is here placed in a context of subordination to the Aaronites. See also vv. 40-51 and the repetition in 8.15-19. 12: Regulations concerning the *eldest male* are found in Exod.13.2,11-15 but there it is suggested that an animal *substitute* is in order (Exod.13.13 n.). 13: *When I destroyed*: see Exod.13.14-15 n. 15: Those below the age of *one month* are possibly excluded because of a high infant mortality rate. On the reason for the census, see vv. 40-48. 17-20: See also Exod. 6.16-19. This division of Levi is functional, providing for a group for each of the four sides of the Tabernacle (vv. 23,29,35,38). The Aaronites (v. 38) make a fifth group. See also 26.58. 23: The reason for the unfavorable position given the descendants of *Gershon* is obscure (compare 2.18 n.). See Judg.18.30-31, the idolatrous service instituted by the sons of Jonathan

family of Izhar, the family of Hebron, the family of Uzziel. These were the families of Kohath, and the number of males, from the age of one month and upwards, was eight thousand six hundred. They were the guardians of the holy things. The families of Kohath were stationed on the south, at the side of the Tabernacle. Their chief was Elizaphan son of Uzziel; they were in charge of the Ark, the table, the lampstands and the altars, together with the sacred vessels used in their service, and the screen with everything needed for its maintenance. The chief over all the chiefs of the Levites was Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, who was appointed overseer of those in charge of the sanctuary.

Merari: the family of Mahli, the family of Mushi. These were the families of Merari, and the number of males in their list as detailed from the age of one month and upwards was six thousand two hundred. Their chief was Zuriel son of Abihail; they were stationed on the north, at the side of the Tabernacle. The Merarites were in charge of the planks, bars, posts, and sockets of the Tabernacle, together with its vessels and all the equipment needed for its maintenance, the posts, sockets, pegs, and cords of the surrounding court.

In front of the Tabernacle on the east, Moses was stationed, with Aaron and his sons, in front of the Tent of the Presence eastwards. They were in charge of the sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites; any unqualified person who came near would be put to death.

The number of Levites recorded by Moses on the detailed list by families at the command of the LORD was twenty-two thousand males aged one month and upwards.

The LORD said to Moses, 'Make a detailed list of all the male first-born in

Israel aged one month and upwards, and count the number of persons. You shall reserve the Levites for me—I am the LORD—in substitution for the eldest sons of the Israelites, and in the same way the Levites' cattle in substitution for the first-born cattle of the Israelites.' As the LORD had told him to do, Moses made a list of all the eldest sons of the Israelites, and the total number of first-born males recorded by name in the register, aged one month and upwards, was twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'Take the Levites as a substitute for all the eldest sons in Israel and the cattle of the Levites as a substitute for their cattle. The Levites shall be mine. I am the LORD. The eldest sons in Israel will outnumber the Levites by two hundred and seventy-three. This remainder must be ransomed, and you shall accept five shekels for each of them, taking the sacred shekel and reckoning twenty gerahs to the shekel; you shall give the money with which they are ransomed to Aaron and his sons.'

Moses took the money paid as ransom for those who remained over when the substitution of Levites was complete. The amount received was one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels of silver by the sacred standard. In accordance with what the LORD had said, he gave the money to Aaron and his sons, doing what the LORD had told him to do.

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and said, 'Among the Levites, make a count of the descendants of Kohath between the ages of thirty and fifty, by families in the father's line, comprising everyone who comes to take duty in the service of the Tent of the Presence.

'This is the service to be rendered

(son of Gershom), a group possibly to be identified with Gershonites. 29: The descendants of Kohath are given charge of the holy things because they are the nearest relatives of the Aaronites (Exod. 6.18, 20). 32: Eleazar: see Lev. 10.2 n. 39: For a possible origin of this census figure, compare 1.20-46 n. The numbers given in vv. 22, 28, 34 actually total 22,300. In v. 46, the excess of firstborn sons in Israel over Levites is derived from this figure. 40-48: See vv. 11-13 n., 12 n. 41: The substitution of the Levites' cattle is elsewhere unattested, and was not always practiced (18.17). 49-51: Financial support of the cult rests on Mosaic authority. 50: Shekels: see p. 1035.

4.1-49: An alternative account of the assignment of Levitical duties, particularly in relation to preparation of the Tent for travel. 2: On the priority of Kohath, see 3.29 n. 3: The minimum

by the Kohathites in the Tent of the Presence; it is most sacred. When the camp is due to move, Aaron and his sons shall come and take down the Veil of the screen and cover the Ark of the Tokens with it; over this they shall put a covering of porpoise-hide<sup>a</sup> and over that again a violet cloth all of one piece; they shall then put its poles in place. Over the Table of the Presence they shall spread a violet cloth and lay on it the dishes, saucers, and flagons, and the bowls for drink-offerings; the Bread regularly presented shall also lie upon it; then they shall spread over them a scarlet cloth and over that a covering of porpoise-hide, and put the poles in place. They shall take a violet cloth and cover the lamp-stand, its lamps, tongs, firepans, and all the containers for the oil used in its service; they shall put it with all its equipment in a sheet of porpoise-hide slung from a pole. Over the gold altar they shall spread a violet cloth, cover it with a porpoise-hide covering, and put its poles in place. They shall take all the articles used for the service of the sanctuary, put them on a violet cloth, cover them with a porpoise-hide covering, and sling them from a pole. They shall clear the altar of the fat and ashes, spread a purple cloth over it, and then lay on it all the equipment used in its service, the firepans, forks, shovels, tossing-bowls, and all the equipment of the altar, spread a covering of porpoise-hide over it and put the poles in place. Once Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the sacred equipment, when the camp is due to move, the Kohathites shall come to carry it; they must not touch it on pain of death. All these things are the load to be carried by the Kohathites, the things connected with the Tent of the Presence. Eleazar son of Aaron the priest shall have charge of the lamp-oil,

the fragrant incense, the regular grain-offering, and the anointing oil, with the general oversight of the whole Tabernacle and its contents, the sanctuary and its equipment.'

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and said, 'You must not let the families of Kohath be extirpated, and lost to the tribe of Levi. If they are to live and not die when they approach the most holy things, this is what you must do: Aaron and his sons shall come and set each man to his appointed task and to his load, and the Kohathites themselves shall not enter to cast even a passing glance on the sanctuary, on pain of death.'

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'Number the Gershonites by families in the father's line. Make a detailed list of all those between the ages of thirty and fifty who come on duty to perform service in the Tent of the Presence.

'This is the service to be rendered by the Gershonite families, comprising their general duty and their loads. They shall carry the hangings of the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Presence, its covering, that is the covering of porpoise-hide which is over it, the screen at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, the hangings of the court, the screen at the entrance to the court surrounding the Tabernacle and the altar, their cords and all the equipment for their service; and they shall perform all the tasks connected with them. These are the acts of service they shall render. All the service of the Gershonites, their loads and their other duties, shall be directed by Aaron and his sons; you shall assign them the loads for which they shall be responsible. This is the service assigned to the Gershonite families in connection with the Tent of

<sup>a</sup> Strictly hide of sea-cow.

age for service varied from time to time (8.24). 5: *Veil*: see Exod.26.31-35. *Ark*: see Exod. 25.10 n. *Tokens*: see Exod.25.16 n. 7: *Bread*: Exod.25.30; Lev.24.5-9. 9: *Lamp-stand*: see Exod.25.31-40. 11: *Gold altar*: for incense (see Exod.30.1-10). 13: *The altar*: for whole offerings (Lev.1.1-17), located in the court (Exod.27.1-8). 15: It is only after the Aaronites have packed the furniture of the sanctuary and insulated it from touch and view with bags of skin that their nearest relatives (3.29 n.) are allowed to approach it. 17-20: The repeated warnings against the Kohathites' approaching the sacred objects (v. 15; compare 3.10,38) possibly reflect an obscure power struggle within the priesthood (compare Lev.10.2 n. and Exod.32.26-29 n.); this section anticipates the challenge in ch. 16. 25: *Hangings*: see Exod.26.1-6. *Tent*: see Exod.



the Presence; Ithamar son of Aaron shall be in charge of them.

29 'You shall make a detailed list of the Merarites by families in the father's  
30 line, all those between the ages of thirty and fifty, who come on duty to perform service in the Tent of the Presence.

31 'These are the loads for which they shall be responsible in virtue of their service in the Tent of the Presence: the planks of the Tabernacle with its bars,  
32 posts, and sockets, the posts of the surrounding court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, and all that is needed for the maintenance of them; you shall assign to each man by name the load for which he is responsible. These are the duties of the Merarite families in virtue of their service in the Tent of the Presence. Ithamar son of Aaron the priest shall be in charge of them.'

34 Moses and Aaron and the chiefs of the community made a detailed list of the Kohathites by families in the  
35 father's line, taking all between the ages of thirty and fifty who came on duty to perform service in the Tent of the  
36 Presence. The number recorded by families in the detailed lists was two thousand seven hundred and fifty.  
37 This was the total number in the detailed lists of the Kohathite families who did duty in the Tent of the Presence; they were recorded by Moses and Aaron as the LORD had told them to do through Moses.

38-39 The Gershonites between the ages of thirty and fifty, who came on duty for service in the Tent of the Presence, were recorded in detailed lists by families in the father's line. Their number, by families in the father's line, was two  
40 thousand six hundred and thirty. This was the total recorded in the lists of the Gershonite families who came on duty in the Tent of the Presence, and were recorded by Moses and Aaron as the LORD had told them to do.

42-43 The families of Merari, between the

ages of thirty and fifty, who came on duty to perform service in the Tent of the Presence, were recorded in detailed lists by families in the father's line. Their number by families was three  
44 thousand two hundred. These were recorded in the Merarite families by  
45 Moses and Aaron as the LORD had told them to do through Moses.

Thus Moses and Aaron and the chiefs  
46 of Israel made a detailed list of all the Levites by families in the father's line, between the ages of thirty and fifty  
47 years; these were all who came to perform their various duties and carry their loads in the service of the Tent of the Presence. Their number was eight  
48 thousand five hundred and eighty. They  
49 were recorded one by one by Moses at the command of the LORD, according to their general duty and the loads they carried.<sup>b</sup> For so the LORD had told Moses to do.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID: 5  
Command the Israelites to expel from 2  
the camp everyone who suffers from a malignant skin-disease or a discharge, and everyone ritually unclean from contact with a corpse. You shall put 3  
them outside the camp, both male and female, so that they will not defile your camps in which I dwell among you. The Israelites did this: they put them 4  
outside the camp. As the LORD had said when he spoke to Moses, so the Israelites did.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 5  
Say to the Israelites: When anyone, 6  
man or woman, wrongs another and thereby breaks faith with the LORD, that person has incurred guilt which demands reparation. He shall confess 7  
the sin he has committed, make restitution in full with the addition of one fifth, and give it to the man to whom compensation is due. If there is no next- 8  
of-kin to whom compensation can be

<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and his registered ones.*

26.1-37 n. 31: *Planks*: see Exod.26.15-30. 48: For a possible origin of this figure, compare 1.20-46 n.

5.1-6.27: An appendix of unrelated regulations, most of which clarify prior legislation. The Sinai narrative is nearing its completion: the writers here assemble all remaining material understood to have had its origin there. 2: *Skin-disease*: see Lev.13.1-46. *Discharge*: see Lev.15.1-33. *Contact with a corpse*: 19.11-22; compare Lev.21.1-12. 3: *Put them outside*: although earlier legislation commanded the unclean to "stay outside" (Lev.13.46), it made no provision for their failure to do so. *Defile*: see Lev.11.24-25 n. 5-8: Lev.6.1-7 does not cover

paid, the compensation payable in that case shall be the LORD's, for the use of the priest, in addition to the ram of expiation with which the priest makes expiation for him.

9 Every contribution made by way of holy-gift which the Israelites bring to the priest shall be the priest's. The priest shall have the holy-gifts which a man gives; whatever is given to him shall be his.

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 12 Speak to the Israelites in these words: When a married woman goes astray, is 13 unfaithful to her husband, and has sexual intercourse with another man, and this happens without the husband's knowledge, and the crime is undetected, because, though she has been defiled, there is no direct evidence against her and she was not caught in 14 the act, but when in such a case a fit of jealousy comes over the husband which causes him to suspect his wife, she being in fact defiled; or when, on the other hand, a fit of jealousy comes over a husband which causes him to suspect his wife, when she is not in fact defiled; 15 then in either case, the husband shall bring his wife to the priest together with the prescribed offering for her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal. He shall not pour oil on it nor put frankincense on it, because it is a grain-offering for jealousy, a grain-offering of protestation conveying an imputation of guilt. The priest shall bring her forward and set 17 her before the LORD. He shall take clean<sup>c</sup> water in an earthenware vessel, and shall take dust from the floor of the Tabernacle and add it to the water. 18 He shall set the woman before the LORD, uncover her head, and place the grain-offering of protestation in her hands; it is a grain-offering for jealousy. The priest shall hold in his own hand the water of contention which brings 19 out the truth. He shall then put the woman on oath and say to her, 'If no

man has had intercourse with you, if you have not gone astray and let yourself become defiled while owing obedience to your husband, then may your innocence be established by the water of contention which brings out the truth. But if, while owing him obedience, 20 you have gone astray and let yourself become defiled, if any man other than your husband has had intercourse with you' (the priest shall here put the 21 woman on oath with an adjuration, and shall continue), 'may the LORD make an example of you among your people in adjurations and in swearing of oaths by bringing upon you miscarriage and untimely birth; and this water that brings out the truth shall enter your body, bringing upon you miscarriage and untimely birth.' The woman shall respond, 'Amen, Amen.' 22 The priest shall write these curses on a scroll and wash them off into the water of contention; he shall make the woman 24 drink the water that brings out the truth, and the water shall enter her body. The priest shall take the grain-offering for jealousy from the woman's hand, present it as a special gift before 25 the LORD, and offer it at the altar. He shall take a handful from the grain-offering by way of token, and burn it at the altar; after this he shall make the woman 27 drink the water. If she has let herself become defiled and has been unfaithful to her husband, then when the priest makes her drink the water that brings out the truth and the water has entered her body, she will suffer a miscarriage or untimely birth, and her name will become an example in adjuration among her kin. But if the woman has 28 not let herself become defiled and is pure, then her innocence is established and she will bear her child.

Such is the law for cases of jealousy, 29 where a woman, owing obedience to her husband, goes astray and lets herself

<sup>c</sup> Or holy.

the case of the man who is not present to receive damages for injury to his property. Even if he has no next-of-kin, the guilty person cannot escape his obligation: payment must be made to the sanctuary. 11-31; Lev.20.10 presupposes the presence of witnesses with evidence to prove adultery and justify the death penalty. Here, in the absence of such evidence, a divine indication of guilt or innocence was sought through "trial by ordeal" (vv. 16-28). Such "ordeals" were widely practiced in the ancient world. 15: See Lev.5.11. 17: *Dust from the . . . Tabernacle*: a holy ingredient, meant to enhance respect for the oath to be taken (vv. 19-22). 18: *Uncover her head*:

- 30 become defiled, or where a fit of jealousy comes over a man which causes him to suspect his wife. He shall set her before the LORD, and the priest shall deal with her as this law prescribes.
- 31 No guilt will attach to the husband, but the woman shall bear the penalty of her guilt.
- 6 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
2 Speak to the Israelites in these words: When anyone, man or woman, makes a special<sup>d</sup> vow dedicating himself to the LORD as a Nazirite,<sup>e</sup> he shall abstain from wine and strong drink. These he shall not drink, nor anything made from the juice of grapes; nor shall he eat grapes, fresh or dried. During the whole term of his vow he shall eat nothing that comes from the vine, nothing whatever, shoot or berry. During the whole term of his vow no razor shall touch his head; he shall let his hair grow long and plait it until he has completed the term of his dedication: he shall keep himself holy to the LORD.
- 6 During the whole term of his vow he shall not go near a corpse, not even when his father or mother, brother or sister, dies; he shall not make himself ritually unclean for them, because the Nazirite vow to his God is on his head.
- 8 He shall keep himself holy to the LORD during the whole term of his Nazirite vow.
- 9 If someone suddenly falls dead by his side touching him and thereby making his hair, which has been dedicated, ritually unclean, he shall shave his head seven days later, on the day appointed for his ritual cleansing. On the eighth day he shall bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence.
- 11 The priest shall offer one as a sin-offering and the other as a whole-offering and shall make expiation for him for the sin he has incurred through contact with the dead body; and he shall consecrate his head afresh on that day. The man shall re-dedicate himself to the LORD for the term of his vow and bring a yearling ram as a guilt-

offering. The previous period shall not be reckoned, because the hair which he dedicated became unclean.

The law for the Nazirite, when the term of his dedication is completed, shall be this. He shall be brought to the entrance to the Tent of the Presence and shall present his offering to the LORD: one yearling ram without blemish as a whole-offering, one yearling ewe without blemish as a sin-offering, one ram without blemish as a shared-offering, and a basket of cakes made of flour mixed with oil, and of wafers smeared with oil, both unleavened, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings. The priest shall present all these before the LORD and offer the man's sin-offering and whole-offering; the ram he shall offer as a shared-offering to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened cakes and the proper grain-offering and drink-offering. The Nazirite shall shave his head at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, take the hair which had been dedicated and put it on the fire where the shared-offering is burning. The priest shall take the shoulder of the ram, after boiling it, and take also one unleavened cake from the basket and one unleavened wafer, and put them on the palms of the Nazirite's hands, his hair which had been dedicated having been shaved. The priest shall then present them as a special gift before the LORD; these, together with the breast of the special gift and the leg of the contribution, are holy and belong to the priest. When this has been done, the Nazirite is again free to drink wine.

Such is the law for the Nazirite who has made his vow. Such is the offering he must make to the LORD for his dedication, apart from anything else that he can afford. He must carry out his vow in full according to the law governing his dedication.

<sup>d</sup> makes a special: or performs a . . .  
<sup>e</sup> That is separated one or dedicated one.

a custom otherwise connected with mourning (Lev.10.6). 6.3: Wine may have been avoided because it could induce drunkenness, unbecoming in a holy man; see also Lev.2.11 n.; 10.9 n. 5: See, for example, Judg.13.5 and 16.15-19. 6-7: Compare Lev.21.1-12. 9: The elapse of seven days is normal (19.11). 10: The sacrificial animals correspond to those required in some

22 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 23 Speak to Aaron and his sons in these words: These are the words with which you shall bless the Israelites:

24 The LORD bless you and watch over you;  
 25 the LORD make his face shine upon<sup>f</sup> you and be gracious to you;  
 26 the LORD look kindly on you and give you peace.

27 They shall pronounce my name over the Israelites, and I will bless them.

7 ON THE DAY THAT MOSES COMPLETED THE setting up of the Tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it; he also anointed and consecrated its equipment, and the altar and its vessels. The chief men of Israel, heads of families—that is the chiefs of the tribes, who had assisted in preparing the detailed lists—came forward and brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons and twelve oxen, one wagon from every two chiefs and from each one an ox.<sup>g</sup> These they brought forward before the Tabernacle; and the LORD spoke to Moses and said, 'Accept these from them: they shall be used for the service of the Tent of the Presence. Assign them to the Levites as their several duties require.'

6 So Moses accepted the wagons and oxen and assigned them to the Levites.  
 7 He gave two wagons and four oxen to the Gershonites as required for their  
 8 service; four wagons and eight oxen to the Merarites as required for their service, in charge of Ithamar the son of  
 9 Aaron the priest. He gave none to the Kohathites because the service laid upon them was that of the holy things: these they had to carry themselves on their shoulders.

10 When the altar was anointed, the

chiefs brought their gift for its dedication and presented their offering before it. The LORD said to Moses, 'Let the  
 11 chiefs present their offering for the dedication of the altar one by one, on consecutive days.'

The chief who presented his offering  
 12 on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. His offering was one silver dish weighing a  
 13 hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten gold shekels,  
 14 full of incense; one young bull, one full-grown ram, and one yearling ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-  
 15 offering; and two bulls, five full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five yearling rams, as a shared-offering. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

On the second day Nethaneel son of  
 18 Zuar, chief of Issachar, brought his offering. He brought one silver dish  
 19 weighing a hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten gold  
 20 shekels, full of incense; one young bull, one full-grown ram, and one yearling  
 21 ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five  
 22 full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five yearling rams, as a shared-offering. This was the offering of Nethaneel son of Zuar.

On the third day the chief of the  
 24 Zebulunites, Eliab son of Helon, came. His offering was one silver dish weighing a hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering;

<sup>f</sup> Or to. <sup>g</sup> Or a bull.

other cases of recovery from uncleanness (Lev.12.8 and 14.22). 22-26: This blessing was likely part of the regular Temple service (see Lev.9.22). 25: *Make his face shine* is alternatively expressed in v. 26 as *look kindly on*. See Pss.31.16 and 80.3.

7.1-89: Offerings of the tribal leaders at the consecration of the Tabernacle. Topically, this once independent unit belongs with Exod. ch. 40 which describes the completion of the sanctuary. The narrative in Lev. chs. 8-9, where the sacrificial ritual was initiated, does not reflect it; in the priestly chronology (see 1.1 n.), a month has now passed. The placement here is logical: this unit presupposes rules for laymen bringing sacrifices (Lev. chs. 1-7) and the presence of Aaronites (Lev. chs. 8-9) and Levites (Num. ch. 3) to receive the offerings. 2: *Detailed lists*: the census of ch. 1. 9: *Holy things*: see 4.1-15. 11: *Consecutive days*: the length and detail

26 one saucer weighing ten gold shekels,  
 27 full of incense; one young bull, one  
 full-grown ram, and one yearling ram,  
 28 as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a  
 29 sin-offering; and two bulls, five full-  
 grown rams, five he-goats, and five  
 yearling rams, as a shared offering.  
 This was the offering of Eliab son of  
 Helon.

30 On the fourth day the chief of the  
 Reubenites, Elizur son of Shedeur,  
 31 came. His offering was one silver dish  
 weighing a hundred and thirty shekels  
 by the sacred standard and one silver  
 tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both  
 32 full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-  
 offering; one saucer weighing ten gold  
 33 shekels, full of incense; one young bull,  
 one full-grown ram, and one yearling  
 34 ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat  
 35 as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five  
 full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five  
 yearling rams, as a shared-offering.  
 This was the offering of Elizur son of  
 Shedeur.

36 On the fifth day the chief of the  
 Simeonites, Shelumiel son of Zuri-  
 37 shaddai, came. His offering was one  
 silver dish weighing a hundred and  
 thirty shekels by the sacred standard  
 and one silver tossing-bowl weighing  
 seventy, both full of flour mixed with  
 38 oil as a grain-offering; one saucer  
 weighing ten gold shekels, full of in-  
 39 cense; one young bull, one full-grown  
 ram, and one yearling ram, as a whole-  
 40 offering; one he-goat as a sin-offering;  
 41 and two bulls, five full-grown rams,  
 five he-goats, and five yearling rams,  
 as a shared-offering. This was the  
 offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishad-  
 dai.

42 On the sixth day the chief of the  
 Gadites, Eliasaph son of Reuel, came.  
 43 His offering was one silver dish weigh-  
 ing a hundred and thirty shekels by the  
 sacred standard and one silver tossing-  
 bowl weighing seventy, both full of  
 flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering;  
 44 one saucer weighing ten gold shekels,  
 full of incense; one young bull, one full-  
 45 grown ram, and one yearling ram, as a  
 whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-  
 46 offering; and two bulls, five full-grown

rams, five he-goats, and five yearling  
 rams, as a shared-offering. This was the  
 offering of Eliasaph son of Reuel.

On the seventh day the chief of the 48  
 Ephraimites, Elishama son of Ammi-  
 hud, came. His offering was one silver 49  
 dish weighing a hundred and thirty  
 shekels by the sacred standard and one  
 silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy,  
 both full of flour mixed with oil as a  
 grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten 50  
 gold shekels, full of incense; one young 51  
 bull, one full-grown ram, and one  
 yearling ram, as a whole-offering; one 52  
 he-goat as a sin-offering; and two bulls, 53  
 five full-grown rams, five he-goats, and  
 five yearling rams, as a shared-offering.  
 This was the offering of Elishama son  
 of Ammihud.

On the eighth day the chief of the 54  
 Manassites, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur,  
 came. His offering was one silver dish 55  
 weighing a hundred and thirty shekels  
 by the sacred standard and one silver  
 tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both  
 full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-  
 offering; one saucer weighing ten gold 56  
 shekels, full of incense; one young bull, 57  
 one full-grown ram, and one yearling  
 ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat 58  
 as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five 59  
 full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five  
 yearling rams, as a shared-offering.  
 This was the offering of Gamaliel son  
 of Pedahzur.

On the ninth day the chief of the 60  
 Benjamites, Abidan son of Gideoni,  
 came. His offering was one silver dish 61  
 weighing a hundred and thirty shekels  
 by the sacred standard and one silver  
 tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both  
 full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-  
 offering; one saucer weighing ten gold 62  
 shekels, full of incense; one young bull, 63  
 one full-grown ram, and one yearling  
 ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat 64  
 as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five 65  
 full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five  
 yearling rams, as a shared-offering.  
 This was the offering of Abidan son of  
 Gideoni.

On the tenth day the chief of the 66  
 Danites, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai,  
 came. His offering was one silver dish 67

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of the narrative which follows (12-83) suggest the importance of financial support for the cult,

weighing a hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten gold shekels, full of incense; one young bull, one full-grown ram, and one yearling ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five yearling rams, as a shared-offering. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

On the eleventh day the chief of the Asherites, Pagiel son of Ocran, came. His offering was one silver dish weighing a hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten gold shekels, full of incense; one young bull, one full-grown ram, and one yearling ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five yearling rams, as a shared-offering. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ocran.

On the twelfth day the chief of the Naphtalites, Ahira son of Enan, came. His offering was one silver dish weighing a hundred and thirty shekels by the sacred standard and one silver tossing-bowl weighing seventy, both full of flour mixed with oil as a grain-offering; one saucer weighing ten gold shekels, full of incense; one young bull, one full-grown ram, and one yearling ram, as a whole-offering; one he-goat as a sin-offering; and two bulls, five full-grown rams, five he-goats, and five yearling rams, as a shared-offering. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

This was the gift from the chiefs of Israel for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed: twelve silver dishes, twelve silver tossing-bowls, and twelve golden saucers; each silver dish

weighed a hundred and thirty shekels, each silver tossing-bowl seventy shekels. The total weight of the silver vessels was two thousand four hundred shekels by the sacred standard. There were twelve golden saucers full of incense, ten shekels each by the sacred standard: the total weight of the gold of the saucers was a hundred and twenty shekels. The number of beasts for the whole-offering was twelve bulls, twelve full-grown rams, and twelve yearling rams, with the prescribed grain-offerings, and twelve he-goats for the sin-offering. The number of beasts for the shared-offering was twenty-four bulls, sixty full-grown rams, sixty he-goats, and sixty yearling rams. This was the gift for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed. And when Moses entered the Tent of the Presence to speak with God, he heard the Voice speaking from above the cover over the Ark of the Tokens from between the two cherubim: the Voice spoke to him.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, "Speak to Aaron in these words: "When you mount the seven lamps, see that they shed their light forwards in front of the lamp-stand." Aaron did this: he mounted the lamps, so as to shed light forwards in front of the lamp-stand, as the LORD had instructed Moses. The lamp-stand was made of beaten-work in gold, as well as the stem and the petals. Moses made it to match the pattern which the LORD had shown him.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: Take the Levites apart from the rest of the Israelites and cleanse them ritually. This is what you shall do to cleanse them. Sprinkle lustral water over them; they shall then shave their whole bodies, wash their clothes, and so be cleansed. Next, they shall take a young bull as a whole-offering<sup>h</sup> with its prescribed grain-offering, flour mixed with

<sup>h</sup> as a whole-offering: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

and encourage imitation of the generosity of the tribal leaders. 89: This appears to be a fragment with no relation to its present context. See Exod.25.22.

8.1-9.14: Another collection of miscellaneous materials (see 5.1-6.27 n. for the reason). 1-4: Belonging topically with Exod.25.31-40 and 37.17-24, this section specifies the orientation of the lamps. 5-26: The consecration of the Levites. The material of ch. 3 is enlarged as the story moves from appointment to installation. The procedure is similar to that for the Aaronites in

oil; and you shall take a second young  
 9 bull as a sin-offering. Bring the Levites  
 before the Tent of the Presence and  
 call the whole community of Israelites  
 10 together. Bring the Levites before the  
 LORD, and let the Israelites lay their  
 11 hands on their heads. Aaron shall  
 present the Levites before the LORD as  
 a special gift from the Israelites, and  
 they shall be dedicated to the service  
 12 of the LORD. The Levites shall lay their  
 hands on the heads of the bulls; one  
 bull shall be offered as a sin-offering  
 and the other as a whole-offering to the  
 LORD, to make expiation for the  
 13 Levites. Then you shall set the Levites  
 before Aaron and his sons, presenting  
 14 them to the LORD as a special gift. You  
 shall thus separate the Levites from  
 the rest of the Israelites, and they shall  
 be mine.

15 After this, the Levites shall enter the  
 Tent of the Presence to serve in it,  
 ritually cleansed and presented as a  
 16 special gift; for they are given and  
 dedicated to me, out of all the Israel-  
 ites. I have accepted them as mine in  
 place of all that comes first from the  
 womb, every first child among the  
 17 Israelites; for every first-born male  
 creature, man or beast, among the  
 Israelites is mine. On the day when I  
 struck down every first-born creature  
 in Egypt, I hallowed all the first-born  
 18 of the Israelites to myself, and I have  
 19 accepted the Levites in their place. I  
 have given the Levites to Aaron and his  
 sons, dedicated among the Israelites to  
 perform the service of the Israelites in  
 the Tent of the Presence and to make  
 expiation for them, and then no calam-  
 ity will befall them when they come  
 close to the sanctuary.

20 Moses and Aaron and the whole  
 community of Israelites carried out all  
 the commands the LORD had given to  
 Moses for the dedication of the Levites.  
 21 The Levites purified themselves of sin  
 and washed their clothes, and Aaron

presented them as a special gift before  
 the LORD and made expiation for them,  
 to cleanse them. Then at last they went  
 22 in to perform their service in the Tent  
 of the Presence, before Aaron and his  
 sons. Thus the commands the LORD  
 had given to Moses concerning the  
 Levites were all carried out.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: 23  
 Touching the Levites: they shall begin 24  
 their active work in the service of the  
 Tent of the Presence at the age of  
 twenty-five. At the age of fifty a Levite 25  
 shall retire from regular service and  
 shall serve no longer. He may continue 26  
 to assist his colleagues in attendance in  
 the Tent of the Presence but shall per-  
 form no regular service. This is how  
 you shall arrange the attendance of the  
 Levites.

In the first month of the second year 9  
 after they came out of Egypt, the LORD  
 spoke to Moses in the wilderness of  
 Sinai and said, 'Let the Israelites pre- 2  
 pare the Passover at the time appointed  
 for it. This shall be between dusk and 3  
 dark on the fourteenth day of this  
 month, and you shall keep it at this  
 appointed time, observing every rule  
 and custom proper to it.' So Moses 4  
 told the Israelites to prepare the Pass-  
 over, and they prepared it on the four- 5  
 teenth day of the first month, between  
 dusk and dark, in the wilderness of  
 Sinai. The Israelites did exactly as the  
 LORD had instructed Moses.

It happened that some men were 6  
 ritually unclean through contact with  
 a corpse and so could not keep the  
 Passover on the right day. They came  
 before Moses and Aaron that same day  
 and said, 'We are unclean through 7  
 contact with a corpse. Must we there-  
 fore be debarred from presenting the  
 LORD's offering at its appointed time  
 with the rest of the Israelites?' Moses 8  
 answered, 'Wait, and let me hear what  
 commands the LORD has for you.'

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 9

Lev. ch. 8. 7: *Shave... wash*: see Lev.14.8 n. 10: *Lay their hands*: thus the Levites become an offering brought by the people, a variation upon the theme that they are a substitute for the firstborn (vv. 16-18; 3.11-13). 13: *Before Aaron*: see 3.6 n. 24: *Touching*: concerning. *Twenty-five*: see 4.3 n. 9.1-14: Provision for a delayed Passover celebration. 1: *First month*: chronologically, this material, like ch. 7, belongs before 1.1 which is dated to the second month. 2-3: See Exod.12.1-10. 6: For seven days after *contact with a corpse*, a person could not approach the Tabernacle (19.11-22). 6-8: The tension between the laws of uncleanness and the command for each person to observe the Passover (Exod.12.3) is resolved by a precedent

10 Tell the Israelites: If any one of you or of your descendants is ritually unclean through contact with a corpse, or if he is away on a long journey, he shall keep a Passover to the LORD none the less. But in that case he shall prepare the victim in the second month, between dusk and dark on the fourteenth day. It shall be eaten with unleavened cakes and bitter herbs; nothing shall be left over till morning, and no bone of it shall be broken. The Passover shall be kept exactly as the law prescribes. The man who, being ritually clean and not absent on a journey, neglects to keep the Passover, shall be cut off from his father's kin, because he has not presented the LORD's offering at its appointed time. That man shall accept responsibility for his sin.

14 When an alien is settled among you, he also shall keep the Passover to the LORD, observing every rule and custom proper to it. The same law is binding on you all, alien and native alike.

*The journey from Sinai to Edom*

15 ON THE DAY WHEN THEY SET UP THE Tabernacle, that is the Tent of the Tokens, cloud covered it, and in the evening a brightness like fire appeared over it till morning. So it continued: the cloud covered it by day and a brightness like fire by night. Whenever the cloud lifted from the tent, the Israelites struck camp, and at the place where the cloud settled, there they pitched their camp. At the command of the LORD they struck camp, and at the command of the LORD they encamped again, and continued in camp as long as the cloud rested over the Tabernacle. When the cloud stayed long over the Tabernacle, the Israelites remained in attendance on the LORD and did not move on; and it was the same when the cloud continued over the Tabernacle only a few days: at the

command of the LORD they remained in camp, and at the command of the LORD they struck camp. There were also times when the cloud continued only from evening till morning, and in the morning, when the cloud lifted, they moved on. Whether by day or by night, they moved as soon as the cloud lifted. Whether it was for a day or two, for a month or a year, whenever the cloud stayed long over the Tabernacle, the Israelites remained where they were and did not move on; they did so only when the cloud lifted. At the command of the LORD they encamped, and at his command they struck camp. At the LORD's command, given through Moses, they remained in attendance on the LORD.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said: 10 Make two trumpets of beaten silver and use them for summoning the community and for breaking camp. When both are sounded, the whole community shall muster before you at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. If a single trumpet is sounded, the chiefs who are heads of the Israelite clans shall muster. When you give the signal for a shout, those encamped on the east side are to move off. When the signal is given for a second shout those encamped to the south are to move off. A signal to shout is the signal to move off. When you convene the assembly, you shall sound a trumpet but not raise a shout. This sounding of the trumpets is the duty of the Aaronite priests and shall be a rule binding for all time on your descendants.

When you go into battle against an invader and you are hard pressed by him, you shall raise a cheer when the trumpets sound, and this will serve as a reminder of you before the LORD your God and you will be delivered from your enemies. On your festal days and at your appointed seasons and on the first day of every month, you shall sound the trumpets over your whole-

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placed in the time of Moses. 10: *Away*: a possibility not covered by previous legislation. For similar extensions or liberalizations, indicative of the flexibility with which later generations viewed their laws, see 5.3 n., 5-8 n., 11-31 n. 13: *Cut off*: see Lev.7.21 n. 14: See Exod.12.43-49.

9.15-10.36: *Preparation and departure from Sinai*. The narrative has reached this point twice previously (see Exod.23.20-33 n. and 33.1-23 n., plus Exod.34.1-35 n.); it resumes from Exod.40.38. 16: *Cloud... fire*: see Exod.13.21 n. 10.13-27: The order of the march follows the



offerings and your shared-offerings, and the trumpets shall be a reminder on your behalf before the LORD your God. I am the LORD your God.

11 In the second year, on the twentieth day of the second month, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the  
12 Tokens, and the Israelites moved by stages from the wilderness of Sinai, until the cloud came to rest in the wilderness of Paran. The first time that  
13 they broke camp at the command of the LORD given through Moses, the standard of the division of Judah moved off first with its tribal hosts: the host of Judah under Nahshon son of Aminadab, the host of Issachar under  
14 Nethaneel son of Zuar, and the host of Zebulun under Eliab son of Helon.  
15 Then the Tabernacle was taken down, and its bearers, the sons of Gershon and Merari, moved off.

16 Secondly, the standard of the division of Reuben moved off with its tribal hosts: the host of Reuben under Elizur son of Shedeur, the host of Simeon under Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, and the host of Gad under Eliasaph son of Reuel. The Kohathites, the bearers of the holy things, moved off next, and on their arrival found the Tabernacle set up.

17 Thirdly, the standard of the division of Ephraim moved off with its tribal hosts: the host of Ephraim under Elishama son of Ammihud, the host of Manasseh under Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, and the host of Benjamin under Abidan son of Gideoni.

18 Lastly, the standard of the division of Dan, the rearguard of all the divisions, moved off with its tribal hosts: the host of Dan under Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the host of Asher under Pagiel son of Ocran, and the host of Naphtali under Ahira son of Enan.

19 This was the order of march for the Israelites, mustered in their hosts, and in this order they broke camp.

20 And Moses said to Hobab son of

Reuel the Midianite, his brother-in-law, 'We are setting out for the place which the LORD promised to give us. Come with us, and we will deal generously with you, for the LORD has given an assurance of good fortune for Israel.' But he replied, 'No, I will not; I would rather go to my own country and my own people.' Moses said, 'Do not desert us, I beg you; for you know where we ought to camp in the wilderness, and you will be our guide. If you will go with us, then all the good fortune with which the LORD favours us we will share with you.'

21 Then they moved off from the mountain of the LORD and journeyed for three days, and the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD kept a day's journey ahead of them to find them a place to rest. The cloud of the LORD hung over them by day when they moved camp. Whenever the Ark began to move, Moses said,

'Up, Lord, and may thy enemies be scattered  
and those that hate thee flee before thee.'

When it halted, he said,

'Rest, LORD of the countless thousands of Israel.'

22 There came a time when the people complained to the LORD of their hardships. When he heard, he became angry and fire from the LORD broke out among them, and was raging at one end of the camp, when the people appealed to Moses. He interceded with the LORD, and the fire died down. Then they named that place Taberah,<sup>i</sup> because the fire of the LORD had burned among them there.

23 Now there was a mixed company of strangers who had joined the Israelites. These people began to be greedy for

<sup>i</sup> That is Burning.

prescription of 2.3-31 and the responsibilities follow that of 4.1-33. 29: The tradition here, different from later priestly versions, continues from Exod.34.35. Reuel: see Exod.18.1 n.

11.1-34: Rebellion in the Wilderness. Despite Israel's certainty of God's presence and graciousness in granting the covenant (Exod. chs. 20-24) and in renewing it (Exod. ch. 34), doubts and complaints nevertheless arose at the first new difficulty. 1: On fire as a means or symbol of divine punishment, see Lev.10.1-2. 4: Strangers: see Exod.12.38; greedy: see Ps.78.18.

better things, and the Israelites themselves wept once again and cried, 'Will no one give us meat? Think of it! In Egypt we had fish for the asking, cucumbers and water-melons, leeks and onions and garlic. Now our throats are parched; there is nothing wherever we look except this manna.' (The manna looked like coriander seed, the colour of gum resin. The people went about collecting it, ground it up in hand-mills or pounded it in mortars, then boiled it in the pot and made it into cakes. It tasted like butter-cakes. When dew fell on the camp at night, the manna fell with it.) Moses heard the people wailing, all of them in their families at the opening of their tents. Then the LORD became very angry, and Moses was troubled. He said to the LORD, 'Why hast thou brought trouble on thy servant? How have I displeased the LORD that I am burdened with the care of this whole people? Am I their mother? Have I brought them into the world, and am I called upon to carry them in my bosom, like a nurse with her babies, to the land promised by thee on oath to their fathers? Where am I to find meat to give them all? They pester me with their wailing and their "Give us meat to eat." This whole people is a burden too heavy for me; I cannot carry it alone. If that is thy purpose for me, then kill me outright. But if I have won thy favour let me suffer this trouble at thy hands<sup>j</sup> no longer.'

The LORD answered Moses, 'Assemble seventy elders from Israel, men known to you as elders and officers in the community; bring them to me at the Tent of the Presence, and there let them take their stand with you. I will come down and speak with you there. I will take back part of that same spirit which has been conferred on you and confer it on them, and they will share with you the burden of taking care for the

people; then you will not have to bear it alone. And to the people you shall say this: "Hallow yourselves in readiness for tomorrow; you shall have meat to eat. You wailed in the LORD's hearing; you said, 'Will no one give us meat? In Egypt we lived well.' The LORD will give you meat and you shall eat it. Not for one day only, nor for two days, nor five, nor ten, nor twenty, but for a whole month you shall eat it until it comes out at your nostrils and makes you sick; because you have rejected the LORD who dwells in your midst, wailing in his presence and saying, 'Why did we ever come out of Egypt?'"'

Moses replied, 'Here am I with six hundred thousand men on the march around me, and thou dost promise them meat to eat for a whole month. How can the sheep and oxen be slaughtered that would be enough for them? If all the fish in the sea could be caught, would they be enough?' The LORD said to Moses, 'Is there a limit to the power of the LORD? You will see this very day whether or not my words come true.'

Moses came out and told the people what the LORD had said. He assembled seventy men from the elders of the people and stationed them round the Tent. Then the LORD descended in the cloud and spoke to him. He took back part of that same spirit which he had conferred on Moses and conferred it on the seventy elders; as the spirit alighted on them, they fell into a prophetic ecstasy, for the first and only time.

Now two men named Eldad and Medad, who had been enrolled with the seventy, were left behind in the camp. But, though they had not gone out to the Tent, the spirit alighted on

<sup>j</sup> this trouble . . . hands: *prob. original rdg., altered in Heb. to my trouble.*

6: *Manna*: see Exod.16.14–15,31 nn. In another version, placed after the escape from Egypt (Exod. ch. 16), manna and meat (quails) are the LORD's response to a single demand for food. In its present setting, however, the story depicts Israel as increasingly unappreciative: the quails are granted only when the manna is declared insufficient. See Exod.16.6–8 n. 14–17, 24b–30: The intensification of the rebellion provides the opportunity for introduction of a new theme: the sharing of Moses' responsibility as leader. The elders, who must have exercised tribal leadership since antiquity, are here said to derive their power from and to remain under the authority of the community's religious leadership. Compare Exod.18.13–26 n. 16: *Seventy*: as in Exod.24.1; see Gen.46.27 n. 18–24a, 31–34: Continuation of the food tradition. 26: *Out to the*

27 them none the less, and they fell into an ecstasy there in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses that Eldad and Medad were in an ecstasy in the camp, whereupon Joshua son of Nun, who had served with Moses since he was a boy, broke in, 'My lord Moses, stop them!' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous on my account? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would confer his spirit on them all!' And Moses rejoined the camp with the elders of Israel.

31 Then a wind from the LORD sprang up; it drove quails in from the west, and they were flying all round the camp for the distance of a day's journey, 32 three feet above the ground. The people were busy gathering quails all that day, all night, and all next day, and even the man who got least gathered ten homers. They spread them out to dry all about 33 the camp. But the meat was scarcely between their teeth, and they had not so much as bitten it, when the LORD's anger broke out against the people and he struck them with a deadly plague.

34 That place was called Kibroth-hattaavah<sup>k</sup> because there they buried the people who had been greedy for meat.

35 From Kibroth-hattaavah the Israelites went on to Hazeroth, and while 12 they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron began to speak against Moses. They blamed him for his Cushite wife (for he had married a Cushite woman), 2 and they said, 'Is Moses the only one with<sup>l</sup> whom the LORD has spoken? Has he not spoken with<sup>l</sup> us as well?' 3 Moses was in fact a man of great humility, the most humble man on 4 earth. But the LORD heard them and suddenly he said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Go out all three of you to the Tent of the Presence.' So the three went 5 out, and the LORD descended in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance

to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. The two of them went forward, and he said, 6

'Listen to my words.  
If he<sup>m</sup> were your prophet and  
nothing more,  
I would make myself known to him  
in a vision,  
I would speak with him in a dream.  
But my servant Moses is not such a 7  
prophet;  
he alone is faithful<sup>n</sup> of all my  
household.  
With him I speak face to face, 8  
openly and not in riddles.  
He shall see the very form of the  
LORD.  
How do you dare speak against my  
servant Moses?'

Thus the anger of the LORD was 9 roused against them, and he left them; and as the cloud moved from the tent, 10 there was Miriam, her skin diseased and white as snow. Aaron turned towards her and saw her skin diseased. Then he said to Moses, 'Pray, my lord, 11 do not make us pay the penalty of sin, foolish and wicked though we have been. Let her not be like something 12 still-born, whose flesh is half eaten away when it comes from the womb.' So Moses cried, 'Not this, O LORD! 13 Heal her, I pray.' The LORD replied, 14 'Suppose her father had spat in her face, would she not have to remain in disgrace for seven days? Let her be kept for seven days in confinement outside the camp and then be brought back.' So Miriam was kept outside for seven days, 15 and the people did not strike camp until she was brought back. After this they set out from Hazeroth and pitched 16 camp in the wilderness of Paran.

<sup>k</sup> That is the Graves of Greed. <sup>l</sup> Or by.  
<sup>m</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. the LORD. <sup>n</sup> Or to be trusted.

*Tent:* see 2.17 n. for various traditions as to its location. 27–30: *Prophets*, deriving their inspiration directly from God, were a challenge to all established forms of religious authority. Here, the later prophetic movement is traced back to Moses and receives sanction from his blessing. 31: *Quails:* see Exod.16.6–8 n. 32: *Homer:* see p. 1035.

11.35–12.16: *A challenge to Moses' authority.* 12.1: *Cushite:* possibly another designation for Midianite (Hab.3.7), and hence Zipporah (Exod.2.16–22). Compare 25.6–18; 31.1–18. For other possibilities, see Gen.10.6 n. 2: *With us:* Miriam is called a "prophetess" and recognized as a leader in Exod.15.20. 8: *Face to face:* Exod.33.11. *Form:* Exod.33.18–23. 14: *Spit* is mentioned as causing uncleanness in Lev.15.8. *Seven days:* the prescribed period following recovery from skin disease (Lev.14.8–9). 16: The itinerary does not accord with 10.12.

13 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,  
 2 'Send men out to explore the land of  
 Canaan which I am giving to the  
 Israelites; from each of their fathers'  
 tribes send one man, and let him be a  
 3 man of high rank.' So Moses sent them  
 from the wilderness of Paran at the  
 command of the LORD, all of them  
 leading men among the Israelites.  
 4 These were their names:  
 from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua  
 son of Zaccur;  
 5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat  
 son of Hori;  
 6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of  
 Jephunneh;  
 7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of  
 Joseph;  
 8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea  
 son of Nun;  
 9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son  
 of Raphu;  
 10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel  
 son of Sodi;  
 11 from the tribe of Joseph (that is from  
 the tribe of Manasseh), Gaddi son  
 of Susi;  
 12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of  
 Gemalli;  
 13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son  
 of Michael;  
 14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi  
 son of Vophsi;  
 15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of  
 Machi.  
 16 These are the names of the men whom  
 Moses sent to explore the land. But  
 Moses called the son of Nun Joshua,  
 not Hoshea.  
 17 When Moses sent them to explore the  
 land of Canaan, he said to them, 'Make  
 your way up by the Negeb, and go on  
 18 into the hill-country. See what the land  
 is like, and whether the people who live  
 there are strong or weak, few or many.  
 19 See whether it is easy or difficult coun-

try in which they live, and whether the  
 cities in which they live are weakly de-  
 fended or well fortified; is the land 20  
 fertile or barren, and does it grow trees  
 or not? Go boldly in and take some of  
 its fruit.' It was the season when the  
 first grapes were ripe.

They went up and explored the 21  
 country from the wilderness of Zin as  
 far as Rehob by Lebo-hamath. They 22  
 went up by the Negeb and came to  
 Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and  
 Talmai, the descendants of Anak,<sup>o</sup>  
 were living. (Hebron was built seven 23  
 years before Zoan in Egypt.) They came  
 to the gorge of Eshcol,<sup>p</sup> and there they  
 cut a branch with a single bunch of  
 grapes, and they carried it on a pole  
 two at a time; they also picked pome-  
 granates and figs. It was from the 24  
 bunch of grapes which the Israelites  
 cut there that that place was named the  
 gorge of Eshcol. After forty days they 25  
 returned from exploring the country,  
 and came back to Moses and Aaron 26  
 and the whole community of Israelites  
 at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran.  
 They made their report to them and to  
 the whole community, and showed 27  
 them the fruit of the country. And this  
 was the story they told Moses: 'We  
 made our way into the land to which  
 you sent us. It is flowing with milk and  
 honey, and here is the fruit it grows;  
 but its inhabitants are sturdy, and the 28  
 cities are very strongly fortified; indeed,  
 we saw there the descendants of Anak.  
 We also saw the Amalekites who live 29  
 in the Negeb, Hittites, Jebusites, and  
 Amorites who live in the hill-country,  
 and the Canaanites who live by the sea  
 and along the Jordan.'

Then Caleb called for silence before 30  
 Moses and said, 'Let us go up at once  
 and occupy the country; we are well  
 able to conquer it.' But the men who 31

<sup>o</sup> descendants of Anak: or tall men.  
<sup>p</sup> Eshcol: that is Bunch of Grapes.

13.1-33: Spying out the land of Canaan. With this account, the theme of the conquest of the promised land begins to rise, to reach its climax in the Book of Josh. Various memories have here been combined, with duplications and variations. 16: *Joshua, not Hoshea*: the two names, however, come from the same Heb. verb. Hoshea means "save"; Joshua, "the LORD saves." "Jesus" is a much later form of Joshua. 21: *Lebo-hamath*: this tradition, at variance with a shallow exploration in v. 22, may be based on the northern boundaries of the Solomonic kingdom (1 Kgs.8.65). Compare Gen.15.18 n. 25: *Forty days*: see Gen. 7.4 n. 26: *Kadesh*: the setting for the events until 20.22, forty years later (14.32-33). 33: *Nephilim*: see Gen.6.1-4 n.

had gone with him said, 'No, we cannot  
 32 attack these people; they are stronger  
 than we are.' Thus their report to the  
 Israelites about the land which they had  
 explored was discouraging: 'The coun-  
 try we explored', they said, 'will swal-  
 low up any who go to live in it. All the  
 people we saw there are men of gigantic  
 33 size. When we set eyes on the Nephili-  
 m<sup>q</sup> (the sons of Anak<sup>r</sup> belong to the  
 Nephilim) we felt no bigger than grass-  
 hoppers; and that is how we looked to  
 them.'

14 Then the whole Israelite community  
 cried out in dismay; all night long they  
 2 wept. One and all they made com-  
 plaints against Moses and Aaron: 'If  
 only we had died in Egypt or in the  
 wilderness!' they said. 'Far happier if  
 3 we had! Why should the LORD bring us  
 to this land, to die in battle and leave  
 our wives and our dependants to be-  
 come the spoils of war? To go back to  
 4 Egypt would be better than this.' And  
 they began to talk of choosing some-  
 one to lead them back.

5 Then Moses and Aaron flung them-  
 selves on the ground before the  
 assembled community of the Israelites,  
 6 and two of those who had explored the  
 land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son  
 of Jephunneh, rent their clothes and  
 addressed the whole community: 'The  
 country we penetrated and explored',  
 8 they said, 'is very good land indeed. If  
 the LORD is pleased with us, he will  
 bring us into this land which flows with  
 9 milk and honey, and give it to us. But  
 you must not rebel against the LORD.  
 You need not fear the people of the  
 land; for there we shall find food. They  
 have lost the protection that they had:  
 the LORD is with us. You have nothing  
 10 to fear from them.' But by way of  
 answer the assembled Israelites threat-  
 ened to stone them, when suddenly the  
 glory of the LORD appeared to them all  
 in the Tent of the Presence.

11 Then the LORD said to Moses, 'How  
 much longer will this people treat me  
 with contempt? How much longer will

they refuse to trust me in spite of all  
 the signs I have shown among them? I  
 12 will strike them with pestilence. I will  
 deny them their heritage, and you and  
 your descendants I will make into a  
 nation greater and more numerous  
 than they.' But Moses answered the  
 13 LORD, 'What if the Egyptians hear of  
 it? It was thou who didst bring this  
 people out of Egypt by thy strength.  
 What if they tell the inhabitants of this  
 14 land? They too have heard of thee,  
 LORD, that thou art with this people,  
 and art seen face to face, that thy cloud  
 stays over them, and thou goest before  
 them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a  
 pillar of fire by night. If then thou dost  
 15 put them all to death at one blow, the  
 nations who have heard these tales of  
 thee will say, "The LORD could not  
 16 bring this people into the land which  
 he promised them by oath; and so he  
 destroyed them in the wilderness."

'Now let the LORD's might be shown  
 17 in its greatness, true to thy proclama-  
 tion of thyself—"The LORD, long-  
 18 suffering, ever constant, who forgives  
 iniquity and rebellion, and punishes  
 sons to the third and fourth generation  
 for the iniquity of their fathers, though  
 he does not sweep them clean away."  
 Thou hast borne with this people from  
 19 Egypt all the way here; forgive their  
 iniquity, I beseech thee, as befits thy  
 great and constant love.'

The LORD said, 'Your prayer is  
 20 answered; I pardon them. But as I live,  
 21 in very truth the glory of the LORD shall  
 fill the earth. Not one of all those who  
 22-23 have seen my glory and the signs which  
 I wrought in Egypt and in the wilder-  
 ness shall see the country which I prom-  
 ised on oath to their fathers. Ten  
 times they have challenged me and not  
 obeyed my voice. None of those who  
 have flouted me shall see this land. But  
 24-25 my servant Caleb showed a different  
 spirit: he followed me with his whole  
 heart. Because of this, I will bring him

<sup>q</sup> Or giants.  
<sup>r</sup> sons of Anak: or tall men.

14.1-45: Israel's response to the report of the spies. The theme of "rebellion" (11.1-34; Exod.15.22-17.7) here reaches a climax with a theological explanation for "forty" years of wandering in the Wilderness. The combination of variant traditions evident in ch. 13 continues in ch. 14. 18: See Exod.34.6-7 n. The LORD's sovereignty is evident in graciousness as well as in power. 25: *Vale*: the coastal plain. *Turn back*: from direct entry from the south, and detour to

into the land in which he has already set foot, the territory of the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwell in the Vale, and put his descendants in possession of it. Tomorrow you must turn back and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea.<sup>s</sup>

26 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron  
27 and said, 'How long must I tolerate<sup>t</sup>  
the complaints of this wicked community? I have heard the Israelites  
28 making complaints against me. Tell them that this is the very word of the LORD: As I live, I will bring home to you the words I have heard you utter.  
29 Here in this wilderness your bones shall lie, every man of you on the register from twenty years old and upwards, because you have made these complaints against me. Not one of you shall enter the land which I swore with uplifted hand should be your home, except only Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your dependants, those dependants who, you said, would become the spoils of war, I will bring them in to the land you have rejected,  
32 and they shall enjoy it. But as for the rest of you, your bones shall lie in this wilderness; your sons shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years, paying the penalty of your wanton disloyalty till the last man of you dies there. Forty days you spent exploring the country, and forty years you shall spend—a year for each day—paying the penalty of your iniquities. You shall know what it means to have me against  
35 you.<sup>u</sup> I, the LORD, have spoken. This I swear to do to all this wicked community who have combined against me. There shall be an end of them here in this wilderness; here they shall die.'  
36 But the men whom Moses had sent to explore the land, and who came back and by their report set all the community complaining against him, died of the plague before the LORD; they died of the plague because they had

made a bad report. Of those who went 38 to explore the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh alone remained alive.

When Moses reported the LORD's 39 words to all the Israelites, the people were plunged in grief. They set out early 40 next morning and made for the heights of the hill-country, saying, 'Look, we are on our way up to the place the LORD spoke of. We admit that we have been wrong.' But Moses replied, 'Must 41 you persist in disobeying the LORD's command? No good will come of this. Go no further; you will not have the 42 LORD with you, and your enemies will defeat you. For in front of you are the 43 Amalekites and Canaanites, and you will die by the sword, because you have ceased to follow the LORD, and he will no longer be with you.' But they went 44 recklessly on their way towards the heights of the hill-country, though neither the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD nor Moses moved with them out of the camp; and the Amalekites and 45 Canaanites from those hills came down and fell upon them, and crushed them at Hormah.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID, 15  
Speak to the Israelites in these words: 2  
When you enter the land where you are to live, the land I am giving you, you 3  
will make food-offerings to the LORD; they may be whole-offerings or any sacrifice made in fulfilment of a special<sup>v</sup> vow or by way of freewill offering or at one of the appointed seasons. When you thus make an offering of soothing odour from herd or flock to the LORD, the man who offers, in presenting it, 4  
shall add a grain-offering of a tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil. You shall also add to the 5  
whole-offering or shared-offering a

<sup>s</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

<sup>t</sup> must I tolerate: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. for.*

<sup>u</sup> Or to thwart me.

<sup>v</sup> in fulfilment of a special: or to discharge a . . .

the east by way of Elath (*the Red Sea*: Exod.13.18 n.). See 21.4. Part of the group disregarded this directive (vv. 39–45). 26–38: This is an alternative version of vv. 11–25.

15.1–41: A collection of miscellaneous cultic regulations. It possibly was placed here, rather than with the Sinai legislation, because it was to be operative after the conquest of Canaan (v. 2), and that theme makes its appearance only in chs. 13–14. Possibly, though, it was placed here because the episode of vv. 32–36 occurred in the Wilderness. 1–16: Grain and wine, products common in Canaan as opposed to the Wilderness, must then accompany the previously specified animal sacrifice (Lev. chs. 1–7). 4: *Ephah*; *hin*: see p. 1035. 5: *Lamb*: see 28.3, 7, 14.

quarter of a hin of wine as a drink-offering with each lamb sacrificed.

6 If the animal is a ram, the grain-offering shall be two tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with a third of a hin of oil, and the wine for the drink-offering shall be a third of a hin; in this way you will make an offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

8 When you offer to the LORD a young bull, whether as a whole-offering or as a sacrifice to fulfil a special<sup>w</sup> vow, or as a shared-offering, you shall add a grain-offering of three tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with half a hin of oil, and for the drink-offering, half a hin of wine: the whole will thus be a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD. This is what must be done in each case, for every bull or ram, lamb

12 or kid, whatever the number of each

13 that you offer. Every native Israelite shall observe these rules in each case when he offers a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

14 When an alien residing with you or permanently settled among you offers a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD, he shall do as you do. There is one and the same rule for you and for the resident alien, a rule binding for all time on your descendants; you and the alien are alike before the LORD.

16 There shall be one law and one custom for you and for the alien residing with you.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,

18 Speak to the Israelites in these words: After you have entered the land into

19 which I am bringing you, whenever you eat the bread of the country, you shall set aside a contribution for the LORD.

20 You shall set aside a cake made of your first kneading of dough, as you set aside the contribution from the threshing-floor. You must give a contribution to the LORD from your first kneading of dough; this rule is binding on your descendants.

22 When through inadvertence you omit to carry out any of these commands which the LORD gave to Moses

—any command whatever that the LORD gave you through Moses on that first day and thereafter and made binding on your descendants—if it be done inadvertently, unnoticed by the community, then the whole community shall offer one young bull as a whole-offering, a soothing odour to the LORD, with its proper grain-offering and drink-offering according to custom; and they shall add one he-goat as a sin-offering. The priest shall make expiation for the whole community of Israelites, and they shall be forgiven. The omission was inadvertent; and they have brought their offering, a food-offering to the LORD; they have made their sin-offering before the LORD for their inadvertence; the whole community of Israelites and the aliens residing among you shall be forgiven. The inadvertence was shared by the whole people.

If any individual sins inadvertently, he shall present a yearling she-goat as a sin-offering, and the priest shall make expiation before the LORD for the said individual, and he shall be forgiven. For anyone who sins inadvertently, there shall be one law for all, whether native Israelite or resident alien. But the person who sins presumptuously, native or alien, insults the LORD. He shall be cut off from his people, because he has brought the word of the LORD into contempt and violated his command. That person shall be wholly cut off; the guilt shall be on his head alone.

During the time that the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day. Those who had caught him in the act brought him to Moses and Aaron and all the community, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clearly known what was to be done with him. The LORD said to Moses, 'The man must be put to death; he must be stoned by all the community outside the camp.' So they took him outside the camp and all stoned him

<sup>w</sup> fulfil a special: or discharge a . . .

14: *Alien*: see Lev.24.10–16 n. 17–21: This seems to be an extension of Lev.23.9–14 and Deut. 26.1–4, which required an offering of cakes in addition to the first sheaf. 22–31: The expanded requirements of vv. 1–16 are here applied to the sin-offering (Lev.4.1–5.13). 22–29: Expiation in the case of sin by *inadvertence*. 32–36: The law about "presumptuous" sin (vv. 30–31) is

to death, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

37 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 38 Speak to the Israelites in these words: You must make tassels like flowers on the corners of your garments, you and your children's children. Into this tassel  
 39 you shall work a violet thread, and whenever you see this in the tassel, you shall remember all the LORD's commands and obey them, and not go your own wanton ways, led astray by your  
 40 own eyes and hearts. This token is to ensure that you remember all my commands and obey them, and keep yourselves holy, consecrated to your God.  
 41 I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt to become your God. I am the LORD your God.

16 NOW KORAH SON OF IZHAR, SON OF Kohath, son of Levi, with the Reubenites Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab  
 2 and On son of Peleth, challenged the authority of Moses. With them in their revolt were two hundred and fifty Israelites, all men of rank in the community, conveners of assembly and men  
 3 of good standing. They confronted Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You take too much upon yourselves. Every member of the community is holy and the LORD is among them all. Why do you set yourselves up above  
 4 the assembly of the LORD?' When Moses heard this, he prostrated himself,  
 5 and he said to Korah and all his company, 'Tomorrow morning the LORD shall declare who is his, who is holy and may present offerings to him. The man whom the LORD chooses shall  
 6 present them. This is what you must do, you, Korah, and all your company:  
 7 you must take censers and put fire in them, and then place incense on them before the LORD tomorrow. The man whom the LORD then chooses is the man who is holy. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi.'

Moses said to Korah, 'Now listen, 8 you sons of Levi. Is it not enough for 9 you that the God of Israel has set you apart from the community of Israel, bringing you near him to maintain the service of the Tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the community as their ministers? He has brought you 10 near him and your brother Levites with you; now you seek the priesthood as well. That is why you and all your company have combined together against the LORD. What is Aaron that you should 11 make these complaints against him?'

Moses sent to fetch Dathan and 12 Abiram sons of Eliab, but they answered, 'We are not coming. Is it a 13 small thing that you have brought us away from a land flowing with milk and honey to let us die in the wilderness? Must you also set yourself up as 14 prince over us? What is more, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us fields and vineyards to inherit. Do you think you can hoodwink men like us? We are not coming.' This answer made 15 Moses very angry, and he said to the LORD, 'Take no notice of their murmuring. I have not taken from them so much as a single ass; I have done no wrong to any of them.'

Moses said to Korah, 'Present yourselves before the LORD tomorrow, you and all your company, you and they and Aaron. Each man of you is to take 17 his censer and put incense on it. Then you shall present them before the LORD with their two hundred and fifty censers, and you and Aaron shall also bring your censers.' So each man took 18 his censer and put fire in it and placed incense on it; Moses and Aaron took their stand at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, and Korah gathered 19 his whole company together and faced them at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared

concretely illustrated. 37-40: An ancient custom of dress (*tassels*) is here reinterpreted as a reminder of religious identity. Compare Gen.17.9-14 n. 41: See Lev.18.2 n.

16.1-17.13 The Wilderness revolt. Two different accounts are seen blended together. One is between factions of Levites (3.6 n.; compare Lev.10.2 n.); this account is anticipated in previous warnings (3.10 n.), especially those directed against the descendants of Kohath (4.17-20 n.). The other account is non-Levite. Possibly the older, non-Levite revolt by Dathan and Abiram (compare Deut.11.6; Ps.106.16-18) is here expanded by the priestly writers so as to include the Levite Korah as a rebel (vv. 1a,2b-11,16-24,27a,32b,35-50). 15: Compare



20 to the whole community. And the LORD  
spoke to Moses and Aaron and said,  
21 'Stand apart from this company, so  
that I may make an end of them in a  
22 single instant.' But they prostrated  
themselves and said, 'O God, God of  
the spirits of all mankind, if one man  
sins, wilt thou be angry with the whole  
23 community?' But the LORD said to  
24 Moses, 'Tell them to stand back from  
the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and  
Abiram.'

25 So Moses rose and went to Dathan  
and Abiram, and the elders of Israel  
26 followed him. He said to the whole  
community, 'Stand well away from the  
tents of these wicked men; touch nothing  
of theirs, or you will be swept  
27 away because of all their sins.' So they  
moved away from the places occupied  
by Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Now  
Dathan and Abiram, holding themselves  
erect, had come out to the entrance  
of their tents with their wives,  
28 their sons, and their dependants. Then  
Moses said, 'This shall prove to you  
that it is the LORD who sent me to do  
all these things, and it was not my own  
29 heart that prompted me. If these men  
die a natural death and share the common  
fate of man, then the LORD has  
30 not sent me; but if the LORD makes a  
great chasm, and the ground opens its  
mouth and swallows them and all that  
is theirs, and they go down alive to  
Sheol, then you will know that these  
men have held the LORD in contempt.'

31 Hardly had Moses spoken when the  
ground beneath them split; the earth  
opened its mouth and swallowed them  
and their homes—all the followers of  
32 Korah and all their property. They  
went down alive into Sheol with all that  
they had; the earth closed over them,  
and they vanished from the assembly.  
34 At their cries all the Israelites round  
them fled, shouting, 'Look to yourselves!  
the earth will swallow us up.'  
35 Meanwhile fire had come out from the  
LORD and burnt up the two hundred  
and fifty men who were presenting the  
incense.

36 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and

said, 'Bid Eleazar son of Aaron the 37  
priest set aside the censers from the  
burnt remains, and scatter the fire from  
them far and wide, because they are  
holy. And the censers of these men 38  
who sinned at the cost of their lives you  
shall make into beaten plates to cover  
the altar; they are holy, because they  
have been presented before the LORD.  
Let them be a sign to the Israelites.' So 39  
Eleazar the priest took the bronze<sup>x</sup>  
censers which the victims of the fire  
had presented, and they were beaten  
into plates to make a covering for the  
altar, as a reminder to the Israelites 40  
that no person unqualified, not  
descended from Aaron, should come  
forward to burn incense before the LORD,  
or his fate would be that of Korah and  
his company. All this was done as the  
LORD commanded Eleazar through Moses.

Next day all the community of the 41  
Israelites raised complaints against  
Moses and Aaron and taxed them with  
causing the death of some of the  
LORD's people. As they gathered 42  
against Moses and Aaron, they turned  
towards the Tent of the Presence and  
saw that the cloud covered it, and the  
glory of the LORD appeared. Moses and 43  
Aaron came to the front of the Tent of  
the Presence, and the LORD spoke to  
Moses and Aaron and said, 'Stand well 44  
clear of this community, so that in a  
single instant I may make an end of  
them.' Then they prostrated themselves,  
and Moses said to Aaron, 'Take 46  
your censer, put fire from the altar in  
it, set incense on it, and go with it  
quickly to the assembled community  
to make expiation for them. Wrath has  
gone forth already from the presence  
of the LORD. The plague has begun.'  
So Aaron took his censer, as Moses 47  
had said, ran into the midst of the  
assembly and found that the plague had  
begun among the people. He put incense  
on the censer and made expiation  
for the people, standing between the 48  
dead and the living, and the plague  
stopped. Fourteen thousand seven 49  
hundred died of it, in addition to those

<sup>x</sup> Or copper.

1 Sam.12.3. 30: *Sheol*: the underworld, domain of the dead. 37: *Set aside*: compare Lev.10.4 n. 39-40: But see Exod.27.2 and 38.2, according to which the *altar plates* were attached earlier at Sinai. (See Exod.25.1-31.17 n.) 41-50: The larger community is warned never to assist the

who had died for the offence of Korah.  
 50 When Aaron came back to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence, the plague had stopped.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 2 'Speak to the Israelites and tell them to give you a staff for each tribe, one from every tribal chief, twelve in all, and  
 3 write each man's name on his staff. On Levi's staff write the name of Aaron, for there shall be one staff for each  
 4 head of a tribe. You shall put them all in the Tent of the Presence before the  
 5 Tokens, where I meet you, and the staff of the man I choose shall sprout. I will rid myself of the complaints of these Israelites, who keep on complaining against you.'

6 Moses thereupon spoke to the Israelites, and each of their chiefs handed him a staff, each of them one for his tribe, twelve in all, and Aaron's staff  
 7 among them. Moses put them before  
 8 the LORD in the Tent of the Tokens, and next day when he entered the tent, he found that Aaron's staff, the staff for the tribe of Levi, had sprouted. Indeed, it had sprouted, blossomed, and produced  
 9 ripe almonds. Moses then brought out the staffs from before the LORD and showed them to all the Israelites; they saw for themselves, and  
 10 each man took his own staff. The LORD said to Moses, 'Put back Aaron's staff in front of the Tokens to be kept as a warning to all rebels, so that you may rid me once and for all of their complaints, and then they shall not die.'  
 11 Moses did this; as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

12 The Israelites said to Moses, 'This is the end of us! We perish, one and all!  
 13 Every single person who goes near the Tabernacle of the LORD dies. Is this to be our final end?'

18 THE LORD SAID TO AARON: YOU AND your sons, together with the members

of your father's tribe, shall be fully answerable for the sanctuary. You and your sons alone shall be answerable for your priestly office; but you shall admit your kinsmen of Levi, your father's tribe, to be attached to you and assist you while you and your sons are before the Tent of the Tokens. They shall be in attendance on you and fulfil all the duties of the Tent, but shall not go near the holy vessels and the altar, or they will die and you with them. They shall be attached to you and be responsible for the maintenance of the Tent of the Presence in every detail; no unqualified person shall come near you. You yourselves shall be responsible for the sanctuary and the altar, so that wrath may no more fall on the Israelites. I have myself taken the Levites your kinsmen out of all the Israelites as a gift for you, given to the LORD for the maintenance of the Tent of the Presence. But only you and your sons may fulfil the duties of your priestly office that concern the altar or lie within the Veil. This duty is yours; I bestow on you this gift of priestly service. The unqualified person who intrudes on it shall be put to death.

The LORD said to Aaron: I, the LORD, commit to your control the contributions made to me, that is all the holy-gifts of the Israelites. I give them to you and to your sons for your allotted portion due to you in perpetuity. Out of the most holy gifts kept back from the altar-fire this part shall belong to you: every offering, whether grain-offering, sin-offering, or guilt-offering, rendered to me as a most holy gift, belongs to you and to your sons. You shall eat it as befits most holy gifts; every male may eat it. You shall regard it as holy.

This also is yours: the contribution from all such of their gifts as are presented as special gifts by the Israelites. I give them to you and to your sons and

Levites in their aspiration for the priesthood, and informed that only Aaron's expiatory activity can prevent catastrophe. 17.1-11: In a final attempt to secure recognition for the Aaronite priesthood, God chooses Aaron's *staff* from among those of the tribes. Levites other than the descendants of Aaron are here ignored. The motif of a flowering rod as a sign of divine election is found in many parts of the world. 12-13: These verses fit more logically after 16.34. They now form a conclusion to the entire passage, 16.1-17.11.

18.1-32: The duties and rights of the priests and Levites. The catastrophes of chs. 16-17, caused by neglect and violation of guidelines for the Levites, provided an appropriate setting for the repetition and expansion of material previously related. 1-7: See 3.5-10. 8-10: For the kinds

daughters with you as a due in perpetuity. Every person in your household who is ritually clean may eat them.

12 I give you all the choicest of the oil, the choicest of the new wine and the corn, the firstfruits which are given to  
13 the LORD. The first-ripe fruits of all produce in the land which are brought to the LORD shall be yours. Everyone in your household who is clean may eat them.

14 Everything in Israel which has been devoted to God shall be yours.

15 All the first-born of man or beast which are brought to the LORD shall be yours. Notwithstanding, you must accept payment in redemption of any first-born of man and of unclean  
16 beasts: at the end of one month you shall redeem it at the fixed price of five shekels of silver by the sacred standard  
17 (twenty gerahs to the shekel). You must not, however, allow the redemption of the first-born of a cow, sheep, or goat; they are holy. You shall fling their blood against the altar and burn their fat in sacrifice as a food-offering  
18 of soothing odour to the LORD; their flesh shall be yours, as are the breast of the special gift and the right leg.

19 All the contributions from holy-gifts, which the Israelites set aside for the LORD, I give to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a due in perpetuity. This is a perpetual covenant of salt before the LORD with you and your descendants also.

20 The LORD said to Aaron: You shall have no patrimony in the land of Israel, no holding among them; I am your holding in Israel, I am your patrimony.

21 To the Levites I give every tithe in Israel to be their patrimony, in return for the service they render in maintaining the Tent of the Presence. In order  
22 that the Israelites may not henceforth approach the Tent and thus incur the

penalty of death, the Levites alone shall  
23 perform the service of the Tent, and they shall accept the full responsibility for it. This rule is binding on your descendants for all time. They shall have no patrimony among the Israelites, because I give them as their patri-  
24 mony the tithe which the Israelites set aside as a contribution to the LORD. Therefore I say to them: You shall have no patrimony among the Israelites.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 25  
26 Speak to the Levites in these words: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe which I give you from them as your patrimony, you shall set aside from it the contribution to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. Your contribution  
27 shall count for you as if it were corn from the threshing-floor and juice from the vat. In this way you too shall set  
28 aside the contribution due to the LORD out of all tithes which you receive from the Israelites and shall give the LORD's contribution to Aaron the priest. Out  
29 of all the gifts you receive you shall set aside the contribution due to the LORD; and the gift which you hallow<sup>y</sup> must be taken from the choicest of them.

You shall say to the Levites: When 30  
31 you have set aside the choicest part of your portion, the remainder shall count for you as the produce of the threshing-floor and the winepress, and you may eat it anywhere, you and your households. It is your payment for service in the Tent of the Presence. When you  
32 have set aside its choicest part, you will incur no penalty in respect of it, and you will not be profaning the holy-gifts of the Israelites; so you will not die.

THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND AARON 19  
and said: This is a law and a statute 2  
which the LORD has ordained. Tell the

<sup>y</sup> you hallow: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

of offerings, see Lev. chs. 1-7. 12-13: On the offering of *firstfruits*, see 15.17-21 n. 15: See Exod.13.11-13 for the redemption of the firstborn. 16: Compare 3.44-48. 17: Compare Lev. 27.9-10,26-27. 18: See Lev.7.28-36. 19: *Covenant of salt*: see Lev.2.13 n. 21: *Tithe*: see Lev. 27.30-33. In older legislation (Deut.26.12-13), the Levites were not the sole recipients. 24: See Lev.25.32-34 n.

19.1-22: *Purification after contact with a corpse*. This ritual is related here, rather than with the other regulations regarding uncleanness (Lev. chs. 11-15), possibly because of the large number of fatalities reported in chs. 16-17. 2: *Red*: compare Lev.14.4 n. 3: *East*: see Lev.

Israelites to bring you a red cow without blemish or defect, which has never borne the yoke. You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered<sup>z</sup> to the east of it. Eleazar the priest shall take some of the blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times towards the front of the Tent of the Presence. The cow shall be burnt in his sight, skin, flesh, and blood, together with the offal. The priest shall then take cedar-wood, marjoram, and scarlet thread, and throw them into the heart of the fire in which the cow is burning. He shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after which he may enter the camp, but he remains ritually unclean till sunset. The man who burnt the cow shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, but he also remains unclean till sunset. Then a man who is clean shall collect the ashes of the cow and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. They shall be reserved for use by the Israelite community in the water of ritual purification; for the cow is a sin-offering. The man who collected the ashes of the cow shall wash his clothes, but he remains unclean till sunset. This rule shall be binding for all time on the Israelites and on the alien who is living with them.

Whoever touches a corpse shall be ritually unclean for seven days. He shall get himself purified with the water of ritual purification on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he shall be clean. If he is not purified both on the third day and on the seventh, he shall not be clean. Everyone who touches a corpse, that is the body of a man who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the Tabernacle of the LORD. That person shall be cut off from Israel. The water of purification has not been flung over him; he remains unclean, and his impurity is still upon him.

When a man dies in a tent, this is the law: everyone who goes into the tent and everyone who was inside the tent shall be ritually unclean for seven days, and every open vessel which has covering tied over it shall also be unclean. In the open, anyone who touches a man killed with a weapon or one who has died naturally, or who touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean for seven days. For such uncleanness, they shall take some of the ash from the burnt mass of the sin-offering and add fresh water to it in a vessel. Then a man who is clean shall take marjoram, dip it in the water, and sprinkle the tent with all the vessels in it and all the people who were there, or the man who has touched a human bone, a corpse (whether the man was killed or died naturally), or a grave. The man who is clean shall sprinkle the unclean man on the third day and on the seventh; on the seventh day he shall purify him; then the man shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and at sunset he shall be clean. If a man who is unclean does not get himself purified, that person shall be cut off from the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of purification has not been flung over him; he is unclean. This rule shall be binding on you for all time. The man who sprinkles the water of purification shall also wash his clothes, and whoever touches the water shall be unclean till sunset. Whatever the unclean man touches shall be unclean, and any person who touches that shall be unclean till sunset.

IN THE FIRST MONTH THE WHOLE community of Israel reached the wilderness of Zin and stayed some time at Kadesh; there Miriam died and was buried.

<sup>z</sup> Or he shall take it outside the camp and slaughter it . . .

16.14 n. 5: The burning of the *skin, blood, and offal* is here unique; contrast Lev.1.3-9. 6: *Cedar-wood, marjoram, and scarlet thread* are also used in the ritual of purification after recovery from skin-disease (Lev.14.1-9). 7: *Wash . . . bathe*: see Lev.14.8 n. 13: *Cut off*: see Lev.7.21 n. 15: The uncleanness of an *open vessel* may have originated from the fear that the demon which caused the death or disease might have taken refuge in the vessel.

20.1-13: **The demand for water at Meribah.** Exod.17.1-7 places this event, in slightly different form, before the arrival at Sinai. 1: This account was once independent of the present context,

2 There was no water for the community; so they gathered against Moses and Aaron. The people disputed with Moses and said, 'If only we had perished when our brothers perished in the presence of the LORD! Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness for us and our beasts to die here? Why did you fetch us up from Egypt to bring us to this vile place, where nothing will grow, neither corn nor figs, vines nor pomegranates? There is not even any water to drink.'

6 Moses and Aaron came forward in front of the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of the Presence. There they fell prostrate, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

7 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 8 'Take a<sup>a</sup> staff, and then with Aaron your brother assemble all the community, and, in front of them all, speak to the rock and it will yield its water. Thus you will produce water for the community out of the rock, for them 9 and their beasts to drink.' Moses left the presence of the LORD with the staff, as he had commanded him. Then he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and he said to them, 'Listen to me, you rebels. Must we get water out of this rock for you?' Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out in abundance and they all drank, men and beasts. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'You did not trust me so far as to uphold my holiness in the sight of the Israelites; therefore you shall not lead this assembly into the land which I promised to give them.' Such were the waters of Meribah,<sup>b</sup> where the people disputed with the LORD and through which his holiness was upheld.

### The approach to the promised land

FROM KADESH MOSES SENT ENVOYS TO 14 the king of Edom: 'This is a message from your brother Israel. You know all the hardships we have encountered, how our fathers went down to Egypt, 15 and we lived there for many years. The Egyptians ill-treated us and our fathers before us, and we cried to the LORD 16 for help. He listened to us and sent an angel, and he brought us out of Egypt; and now we are here at Kadesh, a town on your frontier. Grant us passage 17 through your country. We will not trespass on field or vineyard, or drink from your wells. We will keep to the king's highway; we will not turn off to right or left until we have crossed your territory.' But the Edomites answered, 18 'You shall not cross our land. If you do, we will march out and attack you in force.' The Israelites said, 'But we will 19 keep to the main road. If we and our flocks drink your water, we will pay you for it; we will simply cross your land on foot.' But the Edomites said, 20 'No, you shall not', and took the field against them with a large army in full strength. Thus the Edomites refused to 21 allow Israel to cross their frontier, and Israel went a different way to avoid a conflict.

The whole community of Israel set 22 out from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. At Mount Hor, near the frontier 23 of Edom, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Aaron shall be gathered to his 24 father's kin. He shall not enter the land which I promised to give the Israelites, because over the waters of Meribah you rebelled against my command. Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and go 25 up Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his robes 26

*a* Or the. *b* That is Dispute.

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for in 13.26, the people have already arrived at Kadesh. The precise year is here missing, but the context requires that it be toward the end of the "forty" years of wandering (see 13.26 n.). 12: The reason given for the LORD's anger is not clear. It may have been because Moses, by acting himself, high-handedly, thereby impedes a miracle dependent on divine grace. See also Deut.32.48-52. The episode reflects the knowledge of later generations that Joshua, not Moses, led Israel into Canaan, for Moses had died before the conquest. See Deut.1.37. The account is placed here because of Aaron's death in vv. 22-29.

20.14-29: Preparation and departure from Kadesh. 14: A detour through Edom was necessary because an attempt at direct entry had failed (14.39-45). *Brother*: see Gen.25.24-30. 17: The *king's highway* was the main route from Elath (14.25 n.) northward to Syria. 24: *Gathered to his father's kin* is a common biblical idiom for death, reflecting the ancient practice of a burial in a family tomb (Gen.49.29-33).

and invest Eleazar his son with them, for Aaron shall be taken from you: he shall die there.' Moses did as the LORD had commanded him: they went up Mount Hor in sight of the whole community, and Moses stripped Aaron of his robes and invested his son Eleazar with them. There Aaron died on the mountain-top, and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. So the whole community saw that Aaron had died, and all Israel mourned him for thirty days.

21 When the Canaanite king of Arad who lived in the Negeb heard that the Israelites were coming by way of Atharim, he attacked them and took some of them prisoners. Israel thereupon made a vow to the LORD and said, 'If thou wilt deliver this people into my power, I will destroy their cities.' The LORD listened to Israel and delivered the Canaanites into their power. Israel destroyed them and their cities and called the place Hormah.<sup>c</sup>

4 Then they left Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea to march round the flank of Edom. But on the way they grew impatient and spoke against God and Moses. 'Why have you brought us up from Egypt', they said, 'to die in the desert where there is neither food nor water? We are heartily sick of this miserable fare.' Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit the Israelites so that many of them died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and you. Plead with the LORD to rid us of the snakes.' Moses therefore pleaded with the LORD for the people; and the LORD told Moses to make a serpent<sup>d</sup> of bronze and erect it as a standard, so that anyone who had been bitten could look at it and recover. So Moses made a bronze serpent and erected it as a standard, so that when a snake had bitten a man,

he could look at the bronze serpent and recover.

The Israelites went on and encamped at Oboth. They moved on from Oboth and encamped at Iye-abarim in the wilderness on the eastern frontier of Moab. From there they moved and encamped by the gorge of the Zared. They moved on from the Zared and encamped by the farther side of the Arnon in the wilderness which extends into Amorite territory, for the Arnon was the Moabite frontier; it lies between Moab and the Amorites. That is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD speaks of Vaheb<sup>e</sup> in Suphah and the gorges:

Arnon and the watershed of the gorges that falls away towards the dwellings at Ar and slopes towards the frontier of Moab.

From there they moved on to Beer:<sup>f</sup> this is the water-hole where the LORD said to Moses, 'Gather the people together and I will give them water.' It was then that Israel sang this song:

Well up, spring water! Greet it with song, the spring unearthed by the princes, laid open by the leaders of the people with sceptre and with mace, a gift from the wilderness.

And they proceeded from Beer<sup>g</sup> to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; then from Bamoth to the valley in the Moabite country below the summit of Pisgah overlooking the desert.

Then Israel sent envoys to the Amorite king Sihon and said, 'Grant

<sup>c</sup> That is Destruction. <sup>d</sup> Or snake.  
<sup>e</sup> Name meaning Watershed.  
<sup>f</sup> Name meaning Water-hole.  
<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. from a gift.

21.1-35: From the border of Edom to the plains of Moab. 1-3: This seems to be an originally independent unit, interrupting the continuity between 20.29 and 21.4. It tells how Israel later avenged the defeat at Hormah (14.39-45), and suggests that it happened just before the detour around Edom. Judg.1.16-17, however, places the event at a later time. 4-9: An idol in the Temple at Jerusalem (2 Kgs.18.4) was later traced back to this episode. Unlike previous protests because of lack of food or water (chs. 11,20; Exod.15.22-17.1), this protest brings no relief. 13: *Amorites*: an alternative name for the Canaanites. 14-15: *The Book of the Wars of the LORD* has not been preserved beyond this quotation. 17-18: Since the custom of music and dance at the clearing of a well is widely attested in the Near East, this likely was a traditional chant

us passage through your country. We will not trespass on field or vineyard, nor will we drink from your wells. We will travel by the king's highway till we have crossed your territory.'  
 23 But Sihon would not grant Israel passage through his territory; he mustered all his people and came out against Israel in the wilderness. He advanced  
 24 as far as Jahaz and attacked Israel, but Israel put them to the sword, giving no quarter, and occupied their land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, the territory of the Ammonites, where the country  
 25 became difficult. So Israel took all these Amorite cities and settled in them, that is in Heshbon and all its dependent  
 26 villages. Heshbon was the capital of the Amorite king Sihon, who had fought against the former king of Moab and taken from him all his territory as far  
 27 as the Arnon. Therefore the bards say:

Come to Heshbon, come!

Let us see the city of Sihon rebuilt  
and restored!

28 For fire blazed out from Heshbon,  
and flames from Sihon's city.  
It devoured Ar of Moab,  
and swept the high ground at Arnon  
head.

29 Woe to you, Moab;  
it is the end of you, you people of  
Kemosh.

He has made his sons fugitives  
and his daughters the prisoners of  
Sihon the Amorite king.

30 From Heshbon to Dibon their very  
embers are burnt out  
and they are extinct,  
while the fire spreads onward to  
Medeba.

31 Thus Israel occupied the territory of  
the Amorites.

32 Moses then sent men to explore

Jazer; the Israelites captured it together with its dependent villages and drove out the Amorites living there. Then  
 33 they turned and advanced along the road to Bashan. Og king of Bashan, with all his people, took the field against them at Edrei. The LORD said to  
 34 Moses, 'Do not be afraid of him. I have delivered him into your hands, with all his people and his land. Deal with him as you dealt with Sihon the Amorite king who lived in Heshbon.'  
 35 So they put him to the sword with his sons and all his people, until there was no survivor left, and they occupied his land.

### Israel in the plains of Moab

THE ISRAELITES WENT FORWARD AND 22  
 encamped in the lowlands of Moab on the farther side of the Jordan from Jericho.

Balak son of Zippor saw what Israel 2  
 had done to the Amorites, and Moab 3  
 was in terror of the people because there were so many of them. The Moabites were sick with fear at the sight of them; and they said to the elders 4  
 of Midian, 'This horde will soon lick up everything round us as a bull crops the spring grass.' Balak son of Zippor was at that time king of Moab. He 5  
 sent a deputation to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor by the Euphrates in the land of the Amavites, with this message, 'Look, an entire nation has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the country and are settling at my very door. Come at once 6  
 and lay a curse on them, because they are too many for me; then I may be able to defeat them and drive them from the country. I know that those whom you bless are blessed, and those whom you curse are cursed.'

The elders of Moab and Midian took 7

for such an occasion. 27-30: An Amorite victory ballad is cited, in order to enhance the subsequent victory of Israel. *Kemosh* (v. 29) was the chief god of the Moabites (1 Kgs.11.33). 33-35: See Deut.3.1-7.

22.1-40: Balaam is summoned to curse Israel. 6: *Lay a curse*: see Exod.21.17 n. The use of professional cursers, regarded as having special rapport with the deity, is well attested from antiquity. 7-20: This is one version of the next phase of the story, the other being vv. 21-35. According to the first, Balaam consults the LORD and is forbidden (vv. 7-14), then allowed (vv. 15-20), to accept Balak's invitation. According to the second, he does not consult the LORD and learns of his opposition only after an angel has threatened his life. He is then allowed to proceed. 7: *Augury* is the so-called science of determining the divine will through omens.

the fees for augury with them, and they came to Balaam and told him what Balak had said. 'Spend this night here,' he said, 'and I will give you whatever answer the LORD gives to me.' So the Moabite chiefs stayed with Balaam. God came to Balaam and asked him, 'Who are these men with you?' Balaam replied, 'Balak son of Zippor king of Moab has sent them to me and he says, "Look, a people newly come out of Egypt is covering the face of the country. Come at once and denounce them for me; then I may be able to fight them and drive them away."' God said to Balaam, 'You are not to go with them or curse the people, because they are to be blessed.'<sup>h</sup> So Balaam rose in the morning and said to Balak's chiefs, 'Go back to your own country; the LORD has refused to let me go with you.' Then the Moabite chiefs took their leave and went back to Balak, and told him that Balaam had refused to come with them; whereupon Balak sent a second and larger embassy of higher rank than the first. They came to Balaam and told him, 'This is the message from Balak son of Zippor: "Let nothing stand in the way of your coming. I will confer great honour upon you; I will do whatever you ask me. But you must come and denounce this people for me."' Balaam gave this answer to Balak's messengers: 'Even if Balak were to give me all the silver and gold in his house, I could not disobey the command of the LORD my God in anything, small or great. But stay here for this night, as the others did, that I may learn what more the LORD has to say to me.' During the night God came to Balaam and said to him, 'If these men have come to summon you, then rise and go with them, but do only what I tell you.' So in the morning Balaam rose, saddled his ass and went with the Moabite chiefs.

22 But God was angry because Balaam was going, and as he came riding on his ass, accompanied by his two servants, the angel of the LORD took his stand in the road to bar his way. When

the ass saw the angel standing in the road with his sword drawn, she turned off the road into the fields, and Balaam beat the ass to bring her back on to the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood where the road ran through a hollow, with fenced vineyards on either side. The ass saw the angel and, crushing herself against the wall, crushed Balaam's foot against it, and he beat her again. The angel of the LORD moved on further and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn either to right or left. When the ass saw the angel, she lay down under Balaam. At that Balaam lost his temper and beat the ass with his stick. The LORD then made the ass speak, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done? This is the third time you have beaten me.' Balaam answered the ass, 'You have been making a fool of me. If I had had a sword here, I should have killed you on the spot.' But the ass answered, 'Am I not still the ass which you have ridden all your life? Have I ever taken such a liberty with you before?' He said, 'No.' Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes: he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn, and he bowed down and fell flat on his face before him. The angel said to him, 'What do you mean by beating your ass three times like this? I came out to bar your way but you made straight for me, and three times your ass saw me and turned aside. If she had not turned aside, I should by now have killed you and spared her.' Balaam replied to the angel of the LORD, 'I have done wrong. I did not know that you stood in the road confronting me. But now, if my journey displeases you, I am ready to go back.' The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, 'Go on with these men; but say only what I tell you.' So Balaam went on with Balak's chiefs.

When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he came out to meet him as far as Ar of Moab by the Arnon on his frontier. Balak said to Balaam, 'Did I not send time and again to summon

<sup>h</sup> Or are blessed.

15-17: Balak's insistence is ironic in view of the final result of Balaam's services: he is unknowingly arranging his own defeat. 21-35: See vv. 7-20 n.



you? Why did you not come? Did you think that I could not do you honour?  
 38 Balaam replied, 'I have come, as you see. But now that I am here, what power have I of myself to say anything? Whatever the word God puts into my  
 39 mouth, that is what I will say.' So Balaam went with Balak till they came to  
 40 Kiriath-huzoth, and Balak slaughtered cattle and sheep and sent them to Balaam and to the chiefs who were with him.  
 41 In the morning Balak took Balaam and led him up to the Heights of Baal, from where he could see the full extent  
 23 of the Israelite host. Then Balaam said to Balak, 'Build me here seven altars and prepare for me seven bulls and  
 2 seven rams.' Balak did as he asked and offered a bull and a ram on each  
 3-4 altar. Then he said to him, 'I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered the bull and the ram on each altar.' Balaam said to Balak, 'Take your stand beside your sacrifice, and let me go off by myself. It may happen that the LORD will meet me. Whatever he reveals to me, I will tell you.' So he  
 5 went forthwith, and God met him. The LORD put words into Balaam's mouth and said, 'Go back to Balak, and speak  
 6 as I tell you.' So he went back, and found Balak standing by his sacrifice, and with him all the Moabite chiefs.  
 7 And Balaam uttered his oracle:

From Aram,<sup>i</sup> from the mountains of the east,

Balak king of Moab has brought me: 'Come, lay a curse for me on Jacob, come, execrate Israel.'

8 How can I denounce whom God has not denounced?

How can I execrate whom the LORD has not execrated?

9 From the rocky heights I see them, I watch them from the rounded hills. I see a people that dwells alone, that has not made itself one with the nations.

Who can count the host<sup>j</sup> of Jacob 10  
 or number the hordes<sup>k</sup> of Israel?  
 Let me die as men die who are righteous,  
 grant that my end may be as theirs!

Then Balak said to Balaam, 'What is 11  
 this you have done? I sent for you to denounce my enemies, and what you have done is to bless them.' But he 12  
 replied, 'Must I not keep to the words that the LORD puts into my mouth?'

Balak then said to him, 'Come with 13  
 me now to another place from which you will see them, though not the full extent of them; you will not see them all. Denounce them for me from there.' So he took him to the Field of the 14  
 Watchers<sup>l</sup> on the summit of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam said to Balak, 'Take your stand 15  
 beside your sacrifice, and I will meet God over there.' The LORD met Balaam 16  
 and put words into his mouth, and said, 'Go back to Balak, and speak as I tell you.' So he went back, and 17  
 found him standing beside his sacrifice, with the Moabite chiefs. Balak asked what the LORD had said, and Balaam 18  
 uttered his oracle:

Up, Balak, and listen:  
 hear what I am charged to say, son of Zippor.

God is not a mortal that he should 19  
 lie,

not a man that he should change his mind.<sup>m</sup>

Has he not spoken, and will he not make it good?

What he has proclaimed, he will surely fulfil.

I have received command to bless; 20

I will bless and I cannot gainsay it.

He has discovered no iniquity in 21  
 Jacob

<sup>i</sup> Or Syria. <sup>j</sup> Or dust.

<sup>k</sup> Or quarter or sands. <sup>l</sup> Or Field of Zophim.

<sup>m</sup> Or feel regret.

22.41-24.25: The oracles of Balaam. 23.1-2: Balaam may have desired the sacrifices in order to examine the markings of the livers for omens (compare Ezek.21.21). 3-5: Balaam looks for omens which will reveal the divine will. 9: Israel's distinctiveness is emphasized in much of the legislation contained in Exod.-Num. 10: *Hordes*: thus fulfilling the promise to the patriarchs (Gen.15.5). Since it is obvious from their numbers that God has blessed Israel, Balaam concludes that he must do likewise (v. 8). 14: *Watchers*: the term is sometimes used in the Ancient Near East for observers of astrological omens. 19: *Change his mind*: from that of the first oracle.

and has seen no mischief in Israel.<sup>n</sup>  
 The LORD their God is with them,  
 acclaimed among them as king.<sup>o</sup>  
 22 What its curving horns are to the  
 wild ox,  
 God is to them, who brought them  
 out of Egypt.  
 23 Surely there is no divination in<sup>p</sup>  
 Jacob,  
 and no augury in<sup>p</sup> Israel;  
 now is the time to say of Jacob  
 and of Israel, 'See what God has  
 wrought!'  
 24 Behold a people rearing up like a  
 lioness,  
 rampant like a lion;  
 he will not couch till he devours the  
 prey  
 and drinks the blood of the slain.  
 25 Then Balak said to Balaam, 'You will  
 not denounce them; then at least do  
 26 not bless them'; and he answered,  
 'Did I not warn you that I must do all  
 27 the LORD tells me?' Balak replied,  
 'Come, let me take you to another place;  
 perhaps God will be pleased to let you  
 denounce them for me from there.'  
 28 So he took Balaam to the summit  
 29 of Peor overlooking Jeshimon, and  
 Balaam told him to build seven altars  
 for him there and prepare seven bulls  
 30 and seven rams. Balak did as Balaam  
 had said, and he offered a bull and a  
 ram on each altar.  
 24 But now that Balaam knew that the  
 LORD wished him to bless Israel, he  
 did not go and resort to divination as  
 before. He turned towards the desert;  
 2 and as he looked, he saw Israel encamped  
 tribe by tribe. The spirit of God  
 3 came upon him, and he uttered his  
 oracle:  
 The very word of Balaam son of  
 Beor,  
 the very word of the man whose  
 sight is clear,  
 4 the very word of him who hears the  
 words of God,  
 who with staring eyes sees in a trance  
 the vision from the Almighty:  
 5 how goodly are your tents, O Jacob,

your dwelling-places, Israel,  
 like long rows of palms,  
 like gardens by a river,  
 like lign-aloes planted by the LORD,  
 like cedars beside the water!  
 The water in his vessels shall  
 overflow,  
 and his seed shall be like great waters  
 so that his king may be taller than  
 Agag,  
 and his kingdom lifted high.  
 What its curving horns are to the  
 wild ox,  
 God is to him, who brought him out  
 of Egypt;  
 he shall devour his adversaries the  
 nations,  
 crunch their bones, and smash their  
 limbs in pieces.  
 When he reclines he couches like a lion,  
 9 like a lioness, and no one dares  
 rouse him.  
 Blessed be they that bless you,  
 and they that curse you be accursed!

At that Balak was very angry with  
 Balaam, beat his hands together and  
 said, 'I summoned you to denounce  
 my enemies, and three times you have  
 persisted in blessing them. Off with  
 you to your own place! I promised to  
 confer great honour upon you, but now  
 the LORD has kept this honour from  
 you.' Balaam answered, 'But I told  
 your own messengers whom you sent:  
 "If Balak gives me all the silver and  
 gold in his house, I cannot disobey the  
 command of the LORD by doing any-  
 thing of my own will, good or bad.  
 What the LORD speaks to me, that is  
 what I will say.'" Now I am going to  
 my own people; but first, I will warn  
 you what this people will do to yours  
 in the days to come.' So he uttered his  
 oracle:

The very word of Balaam son of  
 Beor,  
 the very word of the man whose  
 sight is clear,  
 the very word of him who hears the  
 words of God,  
 who with staring eyes sees in a trance  
 the vision from the Almighty:  
 how goodly are your tents, O Jacob,

<sup>n</sup> Or None can discover calamity in Jacob nor see trouble in Israel.  
<sup>o</sup> Or royal care is bestowed on them. <sup>p</sup> Or against.

23: The techniques which Balak desires are ineffective against Israel. 27: Balak's increasing desperation continues to add to his ultimate defeat (22.15-17 n.). 24.4: *Almighty*: see Gen.17.1 n. 7: *Agag*: if this is the king of the Amalekites of Saul's time (1 Sam.15.8), this part of the blessing

- 16 the very word of him who hears the words of God,  
who shares the knowledge of the Most High,  
who with staring eyes sees in a trance  
the vision from the Almighty:  
17 I see him, but not now;  
I behold him, but not near:  
a star shall come forth out of Jacob,  
a comet arise from Israel.  
He shall smite the squadrons<sup>q</sup> of Moab,  
and beat down all the sons of strife.  
18 Edom shall be his by conquest  
and Seir, his enemy, shall be his.  
Israel shall do valiant deeds;  
19 Jacob shall trample them down,  
the last survivor from Ar shall he destroy.

- 20 He saw Amalek and uttered his oracle:

First of all the nations was Amalek,  
but his end shall be utter destruction.

- 21 He saw the Kenites and uttered his oracle:

Your refuge, though it seems secure,  
your nest, though set on the mountain crag,  
22 is doomed to burning, O Cain.  
How long must you dwell there in my sight?

- 23 He uttered his oracle:

Ah, who are these assembling in the north,

- 24 invaders from the region of Kittim?

They will lay waste Assyria; they will lay Eber waste:  
he too shall perish utterly.

Then Balaam arose and returned home, 25  
and Balak also went on his way.

WHEN THE ISRAELITES WERE IN SHITTIM, 25  
the people began to have intercourse with Moabite women, who invited 2  
them to the sacrifices offered to their gods; and they ate the sacrificial food and prostrated themselves before the gods of Moab. The Israelites joined 3  
in the worship of the Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry with them. He said 4  
to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people and hurl them down to their death before the LORD in the full light of day, that the fury of his anger may turn away from Israel.' So Moses said 5  
to the judges of Israel, 'Put to death, each one of you, those of his tribe who have joined in the worship of the Baal of Peor.'

One of the Israelites brought a 6  
Midianite woman into his family in open defiance of Moses and all the community of Israel, while they were weeping by the entrance of the Tent of the Presence. Phinehas son of Eleazar, 7  
son of Aaron the priest, saw him. He stepped out from the crowd and took up a spear, and he went into the inner 8  
room after the Israelite and transfixed the two of them, the Israelite and the woman, pinning them together. Thus the plague which had attacked the Israelites was brought to a stop; but 9  
twenty-four thousand had already died.

<sup>q</sup> Or heads.

was composed much later than the time of Balaam. 16: *Most high*: see Gen.14.18 n. 17-19: The Davidic conquest of Moab and Edom (2 Sam.8.2,13-14) seems referred to; this may be an indication of the period of authorship of this oracle (compare v. 7 n.). 20: See Exod.17.8-16 n. This may also refer to the time of Saul (1 Sam. ch. 15) or David (1 Sam. ch. 30). 21-22: On the *Kenites*, see Judg.1.16 n. In Heb. Kenite is *qēni*; *nest* (Heb. *qēn*) is a pun on *qēni*, and on the name Cain (Heb. *qayyin*). The smith (see Gen.4.1-26 n.) will himself be smelted. 23-24: The text is obscure at every point. *Kittim* is Cyprus (see Gen.10.4).

25.1-18: *Apostasy to the Moabite gods*. Israel's rebellion against the LORD (11.1-34; ch. 14; 20.1-13; Exod.14.10-14; 15.22-17.7) continues even after survival in the Wilderness and arrival at the border of the promised land. That it occurs again just after the blessing of Balaam (chs. 23-24) is meant as ironic. 2: The charge is religious disloyalty, not sexual immorality, although in the fertility cults of Canaan sexual activity was part of the ritual. Compare Gen.24.3 n. *Sacrificial food*: see Lev.3.3 n. and 7.20 n.; 1 Cor. ch. 8. 3: *Baal*: see Exod.34.13 n. *Peor*: a place (23.28). 4: The *leaders* are responsible for the activity. 5: This seems to be an alternative account of the punishment. 6: Another story may begin here, since the topic switches from Moabite women to Midianite ones. 8: *Inner room*: that part of the sanctuary where the fertility

- 10 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 11 'Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron  
 the priest, has turned my wrath away  
 from the Israelites; he displayed among  
 them the same jealous anger that moved  
 me, and therefore in my jealousy I did  
 12 not exterminate the Israelites. Tell him  
 that I hereby grant him my covenant of  
 13 security of tenure. He and his descen-  
 dants after him shall enjoy the priest-  
 hood under a covenant for all time,  
 because he showed his zeal for his God  
 and made expiation for the Israelites.'  
 14 The name of the Israelite struck down  
 with the Midianite woman was Zimri  
 son of Salu, a chief in a Simeonite  
 15 family, and the Midianite woman's  
 name was Cozbi daughter of Zur, who  
 was the head of a group of fathers'  
 families in Midian.
- 16 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,  
 17-18 'Make the Midianites suffer as they  
 made you suffer with their crafty tricks,  
 and strike them down; their craftiness  
 was your undoing at Peor and in the  
 affair of Cozbi their sister, the daughter  
 of a Midianite chief, who was struck  
 down at the time of the plague that  
 followed Peor.'
- 19 **26** 1 AFTER THE PLAGUE THE LORD SAID TO  
 Moses and Eleazar the priest, son of  
 2 Aaron, 'Number the whole community  
 of Israel by fathers' families, recording  
 everyone in Israel aged twenty years  
 and upwards fit for military service.'  
 3 Moses and Eleazar collected them in  
 the lowlands of Moab by the Jordan  
 4 near Jericho,<sup>7</sup> all who were twenty  
 years of age and upwards, as the LORD  
 had commanded Moses.
- These were the Israelites who came  
 out of Egypt:
- 5<sup>8</sup> Reubenites (Reuben was Israel's  
 eldest son): Enoch, the Enochite family;  
 6 Pallu, the Palluite family; Hezron, the

Hezronite family; Carmi, the Carmite  
 family. These were the Reubenite fam- 7  
 ilies; the number in their detailed list  
 was forty-three thousand seven hundred  
 and thirty. Son of Pallu: Eliab. Sons of 8,9  
 Eliab: Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram.  
 These were the same Dathan and  
 Abiram, conveners of the community,  
 who defied Moses and Aaron and joined  
 the company of Korah in defying the  
 LORD. Then the earth opened its mouth 10  
 and swallowed them up with Korah,  
 and so their company died, while fire  
 burnt up the two hundred and fifty  
 men, and they became a warning sign.  
 The Korahites, however, did not die. 11

Simeonites, by their families: Nemuel, 12  
 the Nemuelite family; Jamin, the Jaminite  
 family; Jachin, the Jachinite  
 family; Zerah, the Zarhite family; Saul, 13  
 the Saulite family. These were the  
 14 Simeonite families; the number in their  
 detailed list was twenty-two thousand  
 two hundred.

Gadites, by their families: Zephon, 15  
 the Zephonite family; Haggi, the Hag-  
 gite family; Shuni, the Shunite family;  
 Ozni, the Oznite family; Eri, the Erite 16  
 family; Arod, the Arodite family; Areli, 17  
 the Arelite family. These were the  
 18 Gadite families; the number in their  
 detailed list was forty thousand five  
 hundred.

The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, 19  
 Shelah, Perez and Zerah; Er and Onan  
 died in Canaan. Judahites, by their 20  
 families: Shelah, the Shelanite family;  
 Perez, the Perezite family; Zerah, the  
 Zarhite family. Perezites: Hezron, the 21  
 Hezronite family; Hamul, the Hamulite  
 family. These were the families of 22  
 Judah; the number in their detailed list  
 was seventy-six thousand five hundred.

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds saying.*  
<sup>s</sup> *Verses 5-50: cp. Gen. 46. 8-25; Exod. 6. 14, 15; 1 Chr.*  
*chs. 4-8.*

ritual was celebrated. That the plague has not been mentioned previously supports the possibility that a new unit began in v. 6. 13: Phinehas is specifically granted the priesthood for zealous deeds (compare Exod.32.26-29), though he was entitled to this through his descent from Aaron (Exod.6.25), to whose descendants the office was promised forever (Exod.29.9). 16-18: These verses, possibly the latest part of the chapter, shift the blame from the Israelites (vv. 1-5) to the Midianites (vv. 6-15) and anticipate the events of ch. 31.

26.1-65: The second census, taken in anticipation of the invasion of the promised land. It seeks to show that, despite the hardships of the Wilderness and the deaths from divine punishment (11.1-3,33-34; 14.44-45; 16.1-35,46-50; 21.1-3,6), the population remained constant. For a possible origin of the census, see 1.20-46 n. 7: Contrast 1.21. Reuben evidently continued to decline in number. See the prayer in Deut.33.6. 9: *Dathan and Abiram*: see 16.1-40. 14: On

- 23 Issacharites, by their families: Tola, the Tolaite family; Pua, the Puite family; Jashub, the Jashubite family; 43  
24 Shimron, the Shimronite family. These were the families of Issachar; the number in their detailed list was sixty-four thousand four hundred.
- 25 Asherites, by their families: Imna, the 44  
Imnite family; Ishvi, the Ishvite family; Beriah, the Beriite family. Beriite 45  
26 families: Heber, the Heberite family; Malchiel, the Malchielite family. The daughter of Asher was named Serah. 46  
27 These were the Asherite families; the number in their detailed list was fifty-three thousand four hundred. 47
- 28 Josephites, by their families: Naphtalites, by their families: Jah- 48  
29 Manasseh and Ephraim. Manassites: zeel, the Jahzeelite family; Guni, the Gunite family; Jezer, the Jezerite 49  
30 Machir, the Machirite family. Machir was the father of Gilead; Gilead, the Gileadite family. Gileadites: Jeezer, the Jeezerite family; Helek, the Helekite 50  
31 family; Asriel, the Asrielite family; Shechem, the Shechemite family; Shemida, the Shemidaite family; Hephher, the Hephherite family. Zelophehad son of Hephher had no sons, only daughters; their names were Mahlah, Noah, 51  
32 Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. These were the families of Manasseh; the number in their detailed list was fifty-two thousand seven hundred. 52
- 33 Ephraimites, by their families: Shuthelah, the Shuthalhite family; Becher, the Bachrite family; Tahan, the Tahanite family. Shuthalhites: Eran, the Eranite family. These were the Ephraimite families; the number in their detailed list was thirty-two thousand five hundred. These were the Josephites, by families. 53
- 34 Benjamites, by their families: Bela, the Belaite family; Ashbel, the Ashbelite family; Ahiram, the Ahiramite family; Shupham, the Shuphamite family; Hupham, the Huphamite family. 54  
35 These were the families of Levi: the 55  
36 Libnite, Hebronite, Mahlite, Mushite, and Korahite families. 56  
37 Kohath was the father of Amram; Amram's wife was named Jochebed 57  
38 daughter of Levi, born to him in Egypt. She bore to Amram Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. Aaron's sons were 58  
39 60

Simeon's drastic decline, compare Gen.49.5-7 n. 28-37: Manasseh is listed first, in keeping with the order of birth given in Gen.41.50-52. This reflects tribal and military prominence (Gen.48.14 n.) which was later reversed (Gen.48.17-19 n.), in keeping with the order of 1.32-35. (Accordingly, the present census may be older than that of ch. 1.) 55-56: Since *lots* were thought to reveal the divine will (see Exod.28.15 n.), such apportionment confessed the LORD's sovereignty over the land (compare Lev.25.1-55 n., 23 n.). 57-62: See 3.14-39.

Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.  
 61 Nadab and Abihu died because they presented illicit fire before the LORD.

62 In the detailed lists of Levi the number of males, aged one month and upwards, was twenty-three thousand. They were recorded separately from the other Israelites because no property was allotted to them among the Israelites

63 These were the detailed lists prepared by Moses and Eleazar the priest when they numbered the Israelites in the lowlands of Moab by the Jordan near  
 64 Jericho. Among them there was not a single one of the Israelites whom Moses and Aaron the priest had recorded in  
 65 the wilderness of Sinai; for the LORD had said they should all die in the wilderness. None of them was still living except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

27 A claim was presented by the daughters of Zelophehad son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah,  
 2 Milcah and Tirzah. They appeared at the entrance of the Tent of the Presence before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chiefs, and all the community, and  
 3 spoke as follows: 'Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among the company of Korah which combined together against the LORD; he died for  
 4 his own sin and left no sons. Is it right that, because he had no son, our father's name should disappear from his family? Give us our property on the same footing as our father's brothers.'

5 So Moses brought their case before the LORD, and the LORD spoke to Moses  
 7 and said, 'The claim of the daughters of Zelophehad is good. You must allow them to inherit on the same footing as their father's brothers. Let their father's  
 8 patrimony pass to them. Then say this to the Israelites: "When a man dies leaving no son, his patrimony shall pass

to his daughter. If he has no daughter, 9  
 you shall give it to his brothers. If he 10  
 has no brothers, you shall give it to his father's brothers. If his father had no 11  
 brothers, then you shall give possession to the nearest survivor in his family, and he shall inherit. This shall be a legal precedent for the Israelites, as the LORD has commanded Moses."

The LORD said to Moses, 'Go up this 12  
 mountain, Mount Abarim, and look out over the land which I have given to the Israelites. Then, when you have 13  
 looked out over it, you shall be gathered to your father's kin like your brother Aaron; for you and Aaron 14  
 disobeyed my command when the community disputed with me in the wilderness of Zin: you did not uphold my holiness before them at the waters.' These were the waters of Meribah-by-Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

Then Moses said, 'Let the LORD, the 15,16  
 God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over the community to go 17  
 out and come in at their head, to lead them out and bring them home, so that the community of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd.' The 18  
 LORD answered Moses, 'Take Joshua son of Nun, a man endowed with spirit; lay your hand on him and set 19  
 him before Eleazar the priest and all the community. Give him his commission in their presence, and delegate some of 20  
 your authority to him, so that all the community of the Israelites may obey him. He must appear before Eleazar 21  
 the priest, who will obtain a decision for him by consulting the Urim before the LORD; at his word they shall go out and shall come home, both Joshua and the whole community of the Israelites.'

Moses did as the LORD had com- 22  
 manded him. He took Joshua, presented him to Eleazar the priest and the whole community, laid his hands on him and 23  
 gave him his commission, as the LORD had instructed him.

27.1-11: Women's right to receive property in the promised land. This precedent-setting case is anticipated in 26.33 and clarified in ch. 36. Similar concern for preserving family property is expressed in Lev. ch. 25; 1 Kgs. 21.1-3.

27.12-23: Moses' successor is appointed. 13: See 20.22-29. 14: See 20.1-13. 17: *Go out and come in*: at the head of the army. 19-21: In the postexilic community, the priesthood retained ultimate authority over military affairs (see Introduction to Lev.); thus Joshua *must appear before Eleazar . . . who will obtain a decision. Urim*: see Exod. 28.15 n.

28 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,  
 2 Give this command to the Israelites:  
 See that you present my offerings, the  
 food for the food-offering of soothing  
 odour, to me at the appointed time.  
 3 Tell them: This is the food-offering  
 which you shall present to the LORD:  
 the regular daily whole-offering of two  
 4 yearling rams without blemish. One  
 you shall sacrifice in the morning and  
 the second between dusk and dark.  
 5 The grain-offering shall be a tenth of  
 an ephah of flour mixed with a quarter  
 6 of a hin of oil of pounded olives. (This  
 was the regular whole-offering made at  
 Mount Sinai, a soothing odour, a food-  
 7 offering to the LORD.) The wine for the  
 proper drink-offering shall be a quarter  
 of a hin to each ram; you are to pour  
 out this strong drink in the holy place  
 8 as an offering to the LORD. You shall  
 sacrifice the second ram between dusk  
 and dark, with the same grain-offering  
 as at the morning sacrifice and with the  
 proper drink-offering; it is a food-  
 offering of soothing odour to the  
 LORD.  
 9 For the sabbath day: two yearling  
 rams without blemish, a grain-offering  
 of two tenths of an ephah of flour  
 mixed with oil, and the proper drink-  
 10 offering. This whole-offering, presented  
 every sabbath, is in addition to the  
 regular whole-offering and the proper  
 drink-offering.  
 11 On the first day of every month you  
 shall present a whole-offering to the  
 LORD, consisting of two young bulls,  
 one ram and seven yearling rams with-  
 12 out blemish. The grain-offering shall  
 be three tenths of flour mixed with oil  
 for each bull, two tenths of flour mixed  
 13 with oil for the full-grown ram, and one  
 tenth of flour mixed with oil for each  
 young ram. This is a whole-offering, a  
 food-offering of soothing odour to the  
 14 LORD. The proper drink-offering shall  
 be half a hin of wine for each bull, a  
 third for the full-grown ram and a

quarter for each young ram. This is the  
 whole-offering to be made, month by  
 month, throughout the year. Further, 15  
 one he-goat shall be sacrificed as a sin-  
 offering to the LORD, in addition to the  
 regular whole-offering and the proper  
 drink-offering.

The Passover of the LORD shall be 16  
 held on the fourteenth day of the first  
 month, and on the fifteenth day there 17  
 shall be a pilgrim-feast; for seven days  
 you must eat only unleavened cakes.  
 On the first day there shall be a sacred 18  
 assembly; you shall not do your daily  
 work. As a food-offering, a whole- 19  
 offering to the LORD, you shall present  
 two young bulls, one ram, and seven 20  
 yearling rams, all without blemish.  
 You shall offer the proper grain-offer-  
 ings of flour mixed with oil, three tenths  
 for each bull, two tenths for the ram,  
 and one tenth for each of the seven 21  
 young rams; and as a sin-offering, 22  
 one he-goat to make expiation for you.  
 All these you shall offer in addition to 23  
 the morning whole-offering, which is  
 the regular sacrifice. You shall repeat 24  
 this daily till the seventh day, presenting  
 food as a food-offering of soothing  
 odour to the LORD, in addition to the  
 regular whole-offering and the proper  
 drink-offering. On the seventh day 25  
 there shall be a sacred assembly; you  
 shall not do your daily work.

On the day of Firstfruits, when you 26  
 bring to the LORD your grain-offering  
 from the new crop at your Feast of  
 Weeks, there shall be a sacred assembly;  
 you shall not do your daily work. You 27  
 shall bring a whole-offering as a sooth-  
 ing odour to the LORD: two young  
 bulls, one full-grown ram, and seven 28  
 yearling rams. The proper grain-offering  
 shall be of flour mixed with oil, three 29  
 tenths for each bull, two tenths for the  
 one ram, and a tenth for each of the 30  
 seven young rams, and there shall be  
 one he-goat as a sin-offering to make 31  
 expiation for you; they shall all be

28.1-29.40: The sacrificial calendar. This is a summary of all the sacrifices to be made by the community and is an expansion of Lev. ch. 23 (and of Ezek.45.18-46.15). (For offerings by individuals, see 29.39 and Lev. chs. 1-7.) The definitive statement on the subject, it is placed just after the note of Moses' impending death (27.12-23). 2: *Soothing odour*: see Exod.29.18 n. 3-8: See Exod.29.38-42; Lev.6.8-13. 9-10: Ezek.46.4-5 differs considerably. 11-15: The lunar calendar, with these sacrifices at the new moon, was dominant in postexilic times. Compare 10.10; Isa.1.14; Amos 8.5. 16-26: See Exod.12.1-27; 13.3-10; Lev. 23.5-8. 26-31: See Exod.

without blemish. All these you shall offer in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

29 On the first day of the seventh month there shall be a sacred assembly; you shall not do your daily work. It shall be a day of acclamation. You shall sacrifice a whole-offering as a soothing odour to the LORD: one young bull, one full-grown ram, and seven yearling rams, without blemish. Their proper grain-offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three tenths for the bull, two tenths for the one ram, and one tenth for each of the seven young rams, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering to make expiation for you. This is in addition to the monthly whole-offering and the regular whole-offering with their proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings according to custom; it is a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD.

7 On the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a sacred assembly, and you shall mortify yourselves; you shall not do any work. You shall bring a whole-offering to the LORD as a soothing odour: one young bull, one full-grown ram, and seven yearling rams; they shall all be without blemish. The proper grain-offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three tenths for the bull, two tenths for the one ram, and one tenth for each of the seven young rams, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the expiatory sin-offering and the regular whole-offering, with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month there shall be a sacred assembly. You shall not do your daily work, but shall keep a pilgrim-feast to the LORD for seven days. As a whole-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD, you shall bring thirteen young bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams; they shall all be without blemish. The proper grain-offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three tenths for each of the thirteen bulls, two

tenths for each of the two rams, and one tenth for each of the fourteen young rams, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the second day: twelve young bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the third day: eleven bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering, with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the fourth day: ten bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the fifth day: nine bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the sixth day: eight bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with

23.16; 34.22; Lev.23.15-21. 29.1-6: This day is called the "new year" in the calendar in Lev. ch. 23 (see Lev.23.24-25 n.). 7-11: The Day of Atonement (see Lev. ch. 16; 23.26-32). 12-38: The Feast of Ingathering (see Exod.23.16; Lev.23.34-36).



the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

On the seventh day: seven bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

The eighth day you shall keep as a closing ceremony; you shall not do your daily work. As a whole-offering, a food-offering of soothing odour to the LORD, you shall bring one bull, one full-grown ram, and seven yearling rams, without blemish, together with the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings for bulls, full-grown rams, and young rams, as prescribed according to their number, and there shall be one he-goat as a sin-offering, in addition to the regular whole-offering with the proper grain-offering and drink-offering.

These are the sacrifices which you shall offer to the LORD at the appointed seasons, in addition to the votive offerings, the freewill offerings, the whole-offerings, the grain-offerings, the drink-offerings, and the shared-offerings.

Moses told the Israelites exactly what the LORD had commanded him.

**30** THEN MOSES SPOKE TO THE HEADS OF the Israelite tribes and said, This is the LORD's command: When a man makes a vow to the LORD or swears an oath and so puts himself under a binding obligation, he must not break his word. Every word he has spoken, he must make good. When a woman, still young

and living in her father's house, makes a vow to the LORD or puts herself under a binding obligation, if her father hears of it and keeps silence, then any such vow or obligation shall be valid. But if her father disallows it when he hears of it, none of her vows or obligations shall be valid; the LORD will absolve her, because her father has disallowed it. If the woman is married when she is under a vow or a binding obligation rashly uttered, then if her husband hears of it and keeps silence when he hears, her vow or obligation by which she has bound herself shall be valid. If, however, her husband disallows it when he hears of it and repudiates the vow which she has taken upon herself or the rash utterance with which she has bound herself, then the LORD will absolve her. Every vow by which a widow or a divorced woman has bound herself shall be valid. But if it is in her husband's house that a woman makes a vow or puts herself under a binding obligation by an oath, and her husband, hearing of it, keeps silence and does not disallow it, then every vow and obligation under which she has put herself shall be valid; but if her husband clearly repudiates them when he hears of them, then nothing that she has uttered, whether vow or obligation, shall be valid. Her husband has repudiated them, and the LORD will absolve her.

The husband can confirm or repudiate any vow or oath by which a woman binds herself to mortification. If he maintains silence day after day, he thereby confirms every vow or obligation under which she has put herself: he confirms them, because he kept silence at the time when he heard them. If he repudiates them some time after he has heard them, he shall be responsible for her default.

Such are the decrees which the LORD gave to Moses concerning a husband and his wife and a father and his daughter, still young and living in her father's house.

**30.1-16: Vows taken by women.** Israel's cultic obligations were mandatory only on adult males (Exod.10.7-11; 23.17), but women might volunteer to undertake sacrificial obligations within the limits specified. For other regulations concerning vows, see 6.1-21; Lev. ch. 27; Deut.23.21-23. **2:** On observing such vows, see Eccles.5.4-5. **13: Mortification:** fasting.

11 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID,  
 2 'You are to exact vengeance for Israel  
 on the Midianites and then you will be  
 gathered to your father's kin.'

3 Then Moses spoke to the people in  
 these words: 'Let some men among  
 you be drafted for active service. They  
 shall fall upon Midian and exact ven-  
 4 geance in the LORD's name. You shall  
 send out a thousand men from each of  
 5 the tribes of Israel.' So the men were  
 called up from the clans of Israel, a  
 thousand from each tribe, twelve  
 thousand in all, drafted for active  
 6 service. Moses sent out this force, a  
 thousand from each tribe, with Phinehas  
 son of Eleazar the priest, who was in  
 charge of the holy vessels and of the  
 trumpets to give the signal for the  
 7 battle-cry. They made war on Midian  
 as the LORD had commanded Moses,  
 8 and slew all the men. In addition to  
 those slain in battle they killed the  
 kings of Midian—Evi, Rekem, Zur,  
 Hur, and Reba, the five kings of  
 Midian—and they put to death also  
 9 Balaam son of Beor. The Israelites  
 took captive the Midianite women and  
 their dependants, and carried off all  
 their beasts, their flocks, and their  
 10 property. They burnt all their cities,  
 in which they had settled, and all their  
 11 encampments. They took all the spoil  
 and plunder, both man and beast, and  
 brought them—captives, plunder, and  
 spoil—to Moses and Eleazar the priest  
 and to all the community of the  
 Israelites, to the camp in the lowlands  
 of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all  
 the leaders of the community went to  
 14 meet them outside the camp. Moses  
 spoke angrily to the officers of the  
 army, the commanders of units of a  
 thousand and of a hundred, who were  
 15 returning from the campaign: 'Have  
 you spared all the women?' he said.  
 16 'Remember, it was they who, on  
 Balaam's departure, set about seduc-

ing the Israelites into disloyalty to  
 the LORD that day at Peor, so that the  
 plague struck the community of the  
 LORD. Now kill every male dependant,  
 17 and kill every woman who has had  
 intercourse with a man, but spare for  
 18 yourselves every woman among them  
 who has not had intercourse. You  
 19 yourselves, every one of you who has  
 taken life and every one who has  
 touched the dead, must remain outside  
 the camp for seven days. Purify your-  
 selves and your captives on the third  
 day and on the seventh day, and purify  
 20 also every piece of clothing, every ar-  
 ticle made of skin, everything woven  
 of goat's hair, and everything made of  
 wood.'

Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers 21  
 returning from battle, 'This is a law  
 and statute which the LORD has  
 ordained through Moses. Anything 22-23  
 which will stand fire, whether gold,  
 silver, copper, iron, tin, or lead, you  
 shall pass through fire and then it will  
 be clean. Other things shall be purified  
 by the water of ritual purification;  
 whatever cannot stand fire shall be  
 passed through the water. On the 24  
 seventh day you shall wash your  
 clothes, and then be clean; after this  
 you may re-enter the camp.'

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 25  
 'Count all that has been captured, 26  
 man or beast, you and Eleazar the priest  
 and the heads of families in the  
 community, and divide it equally be- 27  
 tween the fighting men who went on  
 the campaign and the whole com-  
 munity. You shall levy a tax for the 28  
 LORD: from the combatants it shall be  
 one out of every five hundred, whether  
 men, cattle, asses, or sheep, to be taken 29  
 out of their share and given to Eleazar  
 the priest as a contribution for the  
 LORD. Out of the share of the Israelites 30  
 it shall be one out of every fifty taken,  
 whether man or beast, cattle, asses, or  
 sheep, to be given to the Levites who

31.1-54: Vengeance against the Midianites. The chapter is a sequel to 25.16-18 and illustrates the rules for "holy" war. For another instance, see 1 Sam.15.2-33, and for a statement of guidance, see Deut.13.12-17. 6: Phinehas serves here as priest both because of his valor in the previous episode (25.7-13) and because the high priest (Eleazar) must avoid contact with corpses (Lev.21.10-12). 8: Why Balaam should have been in the Midianite camp (contrast 24.25) or been blamed for the incident at Shittim (ch. 25) is unclear. He is viewed negatively also in 2 Pet.2.15-16; Jude 11; Rev.2.14. 19-20: See ch. 19 for the obligatory ritual of purification. 21-24: The various items of booty must likewise be purified (see 19.14-18; Lev.11.24-25 n.);

are in charge of the LORD's Tabernacle.'

31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did as  
the LORD had commanded Moses.  
32 These were the spoils, over and above  
the plunder taken by the fighting men:  
six hundred and seventy-five thousand  
33 sheep, seventy-two thousand cattle,  
34,35 sixty-one thousand asses; and of  
persons, thirty-two thousand girls who  
had had no intercourse with a man.

36 The half-share of those who took  
part in the campaign was thus three  
hundred and thirty-seven thousand  
37 five hundred sheep, the tax for the LORD  
from these being six hundred and  
38 seventy-five; thirty-six thousand cattle,  
39 the tax being seventy-two; thirty  
thousand five hundred asses, the tax  
40 being sixty-one; and sixteen thousand  
41 persons, the tax being thirty-two. Moses  
gave Eleazar the priest the tax levied  
for the LORD, as the LORD had com-  
manded him.

42-43 The share of the community, being  
the half-share for the Israelites which  
Moses divided off from that of the  
combatants, was three hundred and  
thirty-seven thousand five hundred  
44,45 sheep, thirty-six thousand cattle, thirty  
46 thousand five hundred asses, and  
47 sixteen thousand persons. Moses took  
one out of every fifty, whether man or  
beast, from the half-share of the  
Israelites, and gave it to the Levites  
who were in charge of the LORD's  
Tabernacle, as the LORD had com-  
manded him.

48 Then the officers who had com-  
manded the forces on the campaign,  
the commanders of units of a thousand  
49 and of a hundred, came to Moses and  
said to him, 'Sir, we have checked the  
roll of the fighting men who were under  
our command, and not one of them is  
50 missing. So we have brought the gold  
ornaments, the armlets, bracelets,  
finger-rings, earrings, and pendants  
that each man has found, to offer them  
before the LORD as a ransom for our  
lives.'

Moses and Eleazar the priest received 51  
this gold from the commanders of units  
of a thousand and of a hundred, all of  
it craftsman's work, and the gold thus 52  
levied as a contribution to the LORD  
weighed sixteen thousand seven hun-  
dred and fifty shekels; for every man 53  
the army had taken plunder. So Moses 54  
and Eleazar the priest received the gold  
from the commanders of units of a  
thousand and of a hundred, and brought  
it to the Tent of the Presence that the  
LORD might remember Israel.

Now the Reubenites and the Gadites 32  
had large and very numerous flocks,  
and when they saw that the land of  
Jazer and Gilead was good grazing  
country, they came and said to Moses 2  
and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders  
of the community, 'Ataroth, Dibon, 3  
Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Se-  
bam, Nebo, and Beon, the region which 4  
the LORD has subdued before the ad-  
vance of the Israelite community, is  
grazing country, and our flocks are our  
livelihood. If', they said, 'we have 5  
found favour with you, sir, then let this  
country be given to us as our possession,  
and do not make us cross the Jordan.'  
Moses replied to the Gadites and the 6  
Reubenites, 'Are your kinsmen to go  
into battle while you stay here? How 7  
dare you discourage the Israelites from  
crossing over to the land which the  
LORD has given them? This is what 8  
your fathers did when I sent them out  
from Kadesh-barnea to view the land.  
They went up as far as the gorge of 9  
Eshcol and viewed the land, and on  
their return so discouraged the Israelites  
that they would not enter the land  
which the LORD had given them. The 10  
LORD became angry that day, and he  
solemnly swore: "Because they have not 11  
followed me with their whole heart,  
none of the men who came out of  
Egypt, from twenty years old and  
upwards, shall see the land which I  
promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac  
and Jacob." This meant all except 12

fire as the means of doing so has not been specified previously. 50: A ransom was needed because taking a census, even of men returning from battle, was offensive to God (see Exod.30.11-16 n.).

32.1-42: The distribution of the territory east of the Jordan. Possibly the story was preserved in order to encourage future generations east of the Jordan to participate in the military actions of the larger whole. (For an instance of such failure to do so, see Judg.5.15-17.) The episode is reviewed in Deut.3.12-20 and the boundaries involved are outlined in Josh.13.8-32. 8-13: See

Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, who followed the LORD with their whole heart.

13 The LORD became angry with Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years until that whole generation was dead which had done

14 what was wrong in his eyes. And now you are following in your fathers' footsteps, a fresh brood of sinful men to fire the LORD's anger once more against

15 Israel; for if you refuse to follow him, he will again abandon this whole people in the wilderness and you will be the cause of their destruction.'

16 Presently they came forward with this offer: 'We will build folds for our sheep here and towns for our dependants. Then we can be drafted as a fighting force to go at the head of the Israelites until we have brought them to the lands that will be theirs. Meanwhile our dependants can live in the walled towns, safe from the people of the

18 country. We will not return until every Israelite is settled in possession of his patrimony; we will claim no share of the land with them over the Jordan and beyond, because our patrimony has already been allotted to us east of the

20 Jordan.' Moses answered, 'If you stand by your promise, if in the presence of the LORD you are drafted for battle, and the whole draft crosses the Jordan in front of the LORD and remains there until the LORD has driven out his enemies, and the land falls before him, then you may come back and be quit of your obligation to the LORD and to Israel; and this land shall be your possession in the sight of the LORD.

23 But I warn you, if you fail to do all this, you will have sinned against the LORD, and your sin will find you out.

24 So build towns for your dependants and folds for your sheep; but carry out your promise.'

25 The Gadites and Reubenites answered Moses, 'Sir, we are your servants and will do as you command. Our dependants and wives, our flocks and

all our beasts shall remain here in the cities of Gilead; but we, all who have been drafted for active service with the LORD, will cross the river and fight, according to your command.'

Accordingly Moses gave these instructions to Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun and to the heads of the families in the Israelite tribes: 'If the Gadites and Reubenites, all who have been drafted for battle before the LORD, cross the Jordan with you, and if the land falls into your hands, then you shall give them Gilead for their possession. But if, thus drafted, they fail to cross with you, then they shall acquire land alongside you in Canaan.' The Gadites and Reubenites said in response, 'Sir, the LORD has spoken, and we will obey. Once we have been drafted, we will cross over before the LORD into Canaan; then we shall have our patrimony here beyond the Jordan.'

So to the Gadites, the Reubenites, and half the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph, Moses gave the kingdoms of Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, the whole land with its towns and the country round them. The Gadites built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, all of them walled towns with folds for their sheep. The Reubenites built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, Nebo, Baalmeon (whose name was changed), and Sibmah; these were the names they gave to the towns they built. The sons of Machir son of Manasseh invaded Gilead, took it and drove out the Amorite inhabitants; Moses then assigned Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he made his home there. Jair son of Manasseh attacked and took the tent-villages of Ham<sup>t</sup> and called them Havvoth-jair.<sup>u</sup> Nobah attacked and took Kenath and its villages and gave it his own name, Nobah.

<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. their tent-villages.  
<sup>u</sup> That is Tent-villages of Jair.

chs. 13-14. 33: *Half the tribe*: for the settlement of the remainder west of the Jordan, see Josh. 17.1-6.

33.1-49: A review of Israel's itinerary from Egypt to the lowlands of Moab. It has been shaped so as to contain forty stages before the mountains overlooking the promised land are reached (v. 47), in keeping with the forty years in the Wilderness (14.32-33). Relics of older sources

- 33 THESE ARE THE STAGES IN THE JOURNEY of the Israelites, when they were led by Moses and Aaron in their tribal hosts out of Egypt. Moses recorded their starting-points stage by stage as the LORD commanded him. These are their stages from one starting-point to the next:
- 1 The Israelites left Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover; they marched out defiantly in full view of all the Egyptians, while the Egyptians were burying all the first-born struck down by the LORD as a judgement on their gods.
- 2 The Israelites left Rameses and encamped at Succoth.
- 3 They left Succoth and encamped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness.
- 4 They left Etham, turned back near Pi-hahiroth<sup>v</sup> on the east of Baalzephon, and encamped before Migdol.
- 5 They left Pi-hahiroth, passed through the Sea into the wilderness, marched for three days through the wilderness of Etham, and encamped at Marah.
- 6 They left Marah and came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm-trees, and encamped there.
- 7 They left Elim and encamped by the Red Sea.
- 8 They left the Red Sea and encamped in the wilderness of Sin.
- 9 They left the wilderness of Sin and encamped at Dophkah.
- 10 They left Dophkah and encamped at Alush.
- 11 They left Alush and encamped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.
- 12 They left Rephidim and encamped in the wilderness of Sinai.
- 13 They left the wilderness of Sinai and encamped at Kibroth-hattaavah.
- 14 They left Kibroth-hattaavah and encamped at Hazeroth.
- 15 They left Hazeroth and encamped at Rithmah.
- 16 They left Rithmah and encamped at Rimmon-parez.
- 17 They left Rimmon-parez and encamped at Libnah.
- 18 They left Libnah and encamped at 21 Rissah.
- 19 They left Rissah and encamped at 22 Kehelathah.
- 20 They left Kehelathah and encamped 23 at Mount Shapher.
- 21 They left Mount Shapher and en- 24 camped at Haradah.
- 22 They left Haradah and encamped at 25 Makheloth.
- 23 They left Makheloth and encamped 26 at Tahath.
- 24 They left Tahath and encamped at 27 Tarah.
- 25 They left Tarah and encamped at 28 Mithcah.
- 26 They left Mithcah and encamped at 29 Hashmonah.
- 27 They left Hashmonah and encamped 30 at Moseroth.
- 28 They left Moseroth and encamped at 31 Bene-jaakan.
- 29 They left Bene-jaakan and encamped 32 at Hor-haggidgad.
- 30 They left Hor-haggidgad and en- 33 camped at Jotbathah.
- 31 They left Jotbathah and encamped 34 at Ebronah.<sup>w</sup>
- 32 They left Ebronah and encamped at 35 Ezion-geber.
- 33 They left Ezion-geber and encamped 36 in the wilderness of Zin, that is of Kadesh.
- 34 They left Kadesh and encamped on 37 Mount Hor on the frontier of Edom.
- 35 Aaron the priest went up Mount 38 Hor at the command of the LORD and there he died, on the first day of the fifth month in the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt; he was a 39 hundred and twenty-three years old when he died there.
- 36 The Canaanite king of Arad, who 40 lived in the Canaanite Negeb, heard that the Israelites were coming.
- 37 They left Mount Hor and encamped 41 at Zalmonah.
- 38 They left Zalmonah and encamped 42 at Punon.
- 39 They left Punon and encamped at 43 Oboth.

<sup>v</sup> See Exod. 14. 2.<sup>w</sup> Or Abrohan.

have been used, as is evident from several omissions from and additions to the basic account in Exod.-Num. 5-15: See Exod.12.37-19.2. 16-36: See 10.11-20.1. 37-49: See 20.22-22.1.

- 44 They left Oboth and encamped at Iye-abarim on the frontier of Moab.
- 45 They left Iyim and encamped at Dibon-gad.
- 46 They left Dibon-gad and encamped at Almon-diblathaim.
- 47 They left Almon-diblathaim and encamped in the mountains of Abarim east of Nebo.
- 48 They left the mountains of Abarim and encamped in the lowlands of Moab
- 49 by the Jordan near Jericho. Their camp beside the Jordan extended from Beth-jeshimoth to Abel-shittim in the
- 50 lowlands of Moab. In the lowlands of Moab by the Jordan near Jericho the
- 51 LORD spoke to Moses and said, Speak to the Israelites in these words: You will soon be crossing the Jordan to enter
- 52 Canaan. You must drive out all its inhabitants as you advance, destroy all their carved figures and their images of cast metal, and lay their hill-shrines in
- 53 ruins. You must take possession of the land and settle there, for to you I have
- 54 given the land to occupy. You must divide it by lot among your families, each taking its own territory, the large family a large territory and the small family a small. It shall be assigned to them according to the fall of the lot, each tribe and family taking its own
- 55 territory. If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land as you advance, any whom you leave in possession will become like a barbed hook in your eye and a thorn in your side. They shall continually dispute your possession of
- 56 the land, and what I meant to do to them I will do to you.
- 34 The LORD spoke to Moses and said,
- 2 Give these instructions to the Israelites: Soon you will be entering Canaan. This is the land assigned to you as a perpetual patrimony, the land of Canaan thus
- 3 defined by its frontiers. Your southern border shall start from the wilderness of Zin, where it marches with Edom, and run southwards from the end of the
- 4 Dead Sea on its eastern side. It shall then turn from the south up the ascent of Akrabbim and pass by Zin, and its southern limit shall be Kadesh-barnea. It shall proceed by Hazar-addar to Azmon and from Azmon turn towards
- 5 the Torrent of Egypt, and its limit shall be the sea. Your western frontier shall be the Great Sea and the seaboard;
- 6 this shall be your frontier to the west. This shall be your northern frontier: you
- 7 shall draw a line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor and from Mount Hor to
- 8 Lebo-hamath, and the limit of the frontier shall be Zedad. From there it
- 9 shall run to Ziphron, and its limit shall be Hazar-enan; this shall be your frontier to the north. To the east you shall
- 10 draw a line from Hazar-enan to Shepham; it shall run down from
- 11 Shepham to Riblah east of Ain, continuing until it strikes the ridge east of the sea of Kinnereth. The frontier shall
- 12 then run down to the Jordan and its limit shall be the Dead Sea. The land defined by these frontiers shall be your land.
- Moses gave these instructions to the
- 13 Israelites: This is the land which you shall assign by lot, each taking your own territory; it is the land which the LORD has ordered to be given to nine
- 14 tribes and a half tribe. For the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half
- 15 tribe of Manasseh have already occupied their territories, family by family. These two and a half tribes have received their territory here beyond the
- 16 Jordan, east to Jericho, towards the sunrise.
- The LORD spoke to Moses and said,
- 17 These are the men who shall assign the land for you: Eleazar the priest and
- 18 Joshua son of Nun. You shall also take one chief from each tribe to assign the
- 19 land. These are their names:
- from the tribe of Judah: Caleb son of Jephunneh;
- 20 from the tribe of Simeon: Samuel son of Ammihud;
- 21 from the tribe of Benjamin: Elidad son of Kision;
- 22 from the tribe of Dan: the chief Bukki son of Jogli;
- 23 from the Josephites: from Manasseh,

33.50-34.29: Directions for the distribution of territory west of the Jordan. 54: Lot: see 26.55-56 n. for the reason. 55-56: For a slightly different reason for expelling the Canaanites, see Deut. 7.1-6. 34.8: *Lebo-hamath*: see 13.21 n. 14-15: See ch. 32. 19-28: The order is roughly that of the geographical position of the tribes from south to north after the conquest, under

- 24 the chief Hanniel son of Ephod; and from Ephraim, the chief Kemuel son of Shiptan;  
 25 from Zebulun: the chief Elizaphan son of Parnach;  
 26 from Issachar: the chief Paltiel son of Azzan;  
 27 from Asher: the chief Ahihud son of Shelomi;  
 28 from Naphtali: the chief Pedahel son of Ammihud.  
 29 These were the men whom the LORD appointed to assign the territories in the land of Canaan.

- 35 THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES IN THE lowlands of Moab by the Jordan near  
 2 Jericho and said: Tell the Israelites to set aside towns in their patrimony as homes for the Levites, and give them also the common land surrounding the  
 3 towns. They shall live in the towns, and keep their beasts, their herds, and all their livestock on the common land.  
 4 The land of the towns which you give the Levites shall extend from the centre of the town outwards for a thousand  
 5 cubits in each direction. Starting from the town the eastern boundary shall measure two thousand cubits, the southern two thousand, the western two thousand, and the northern two thousand, with the town in the centre. They shall have this as the common land adjoining their towns.  
 6 When you give the Levites their towns, six of them shall be cities of refuge, in which the homicide may take sanctuary; and you shall give them  
 7 forty-two other towns. The total number of towns to be given to the Levites, each with its common land, is forty-  
 8 eight. When you set aside these towns out of the territory of the Israelites, you shall allot more from the larger tribe and less from the smaller; each tribe shall give towns to the Levites in proportion to the patrimony assigned to it.

The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 9  
 Speak to the Israelites in these words: 10  
 You are crossing the Jordan to the land of Canaan. You shall designate 11  
 certain cities to be places of refuge, in which the homicide who has killed a man by accident may take sanctuary. These cities shall be places of refuge 12  
 from the vengeance of the dead man's next-of-kin, so that the homicide shall not be put to death without standing his trial before the community. The 13  
 cities appointed as places of refuge shall be six in number, three east of the Jordan 14  
 and three in Canaan. These six 15  
 cities shall be places of refuge, so that any man who has taken life inadvertently, whether he be Israelite, resident alien, or temporary settler, may take sanctuary in one of them.

If the man strikes his victim with 16  
 anything made of iron and he dies, then he is a murderer: the murderer must be put to death. If a man has a stone in 17  
 his hand capable of causing death and strikes another man and he dies, he is a murderer: the murderer must be put to death. If a man has a wooden thing in 18  
 his hand capable of causing death, and strikes another man and he dies, he is a murderer: the murderer must be put to death. The dead man's next-of-kin shall 19  
 put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death because he had attacked his victim. If the homicide sets upon a 20  
 man openly of malice aforethought or aims a missile at him of set purpose and he dies, or if in enmity he falls 21  
 upon him with his bare hands and he dies, then the assailant must be put to death; he is a murderer. His next-of-kin shall put the murderer to death because he had attacked his victim.

If he attacks a man on the spur of 22  
 the moment, not being his enemy, or hurls a missile at him not of set purpose, or if without looking he throws a 23  
 stone capable of causing death and it hits a man, then if the man dies, pro-

Joshua, thus reflecting the date of its composition; however, Judah unexpectedly appears before Simeon (see 2.3 n.; Gen.34.1-31 n.).

35.1-34: Levitical cities and cities of refuge. 2-8: The Levites, having been set aside for special duties at the sanctuary, are not given a separate allotment of territory (Deut.10.8-9). In compensation, they receive tithes (Num.18.21-24), spoils of war (31.30), special rights at the Jubilee (Lev.25.32-34), and now cities scattered throughout the tribes. See Josh. ch. 21; 1 Chr. 6.54-81. For another perspective on the decline of the tribe of Levi, see Gen.34.1-31 n. 11: *Places of refuge*: see Exod.21.13; Deut.19.1-13; Josh. ch. 20. 12: *From the vengeance*:

vided he was not the man's enemy and was not harming him of set purpose, the community shall judge between the striker and the next-of-kin according to these rules. The community shall protect the homicide from the vengeance of the kinsman and take him back to the city of refuge where he had taken sanctuary. He must stay there till the death of the duly anointed high priest. If the homicide ever goes beyond the boundaries of the city where he has taken sanctuary, and the next-of-kin finds him outside and kills him, then the next-of-kin shall not be guilty of murder. The homicide must remain in the city of refuge till the death of the high priest; after the death of the high priest he may go back to his property. These shall be legal precedents for you for all time wherever you live.

The homicide shall be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses; the testimony of a single witness shall not be enough to bring him to his death. You shall not accept payment for the life of a homicide guilty of a capital offence; he must be put to death. You shall not accept a payment from a man who has taken sanctuary in a city of refuge, allowing him to go back before the death of the high priest and live at large. You shall not defile your land by bloodshed. Blood defiles the land, and expiation cannot be made on behalf of the land for blood shed on it except by the blood of the man that shed it. You shall not make the land which you inhabit unclean, the land in which I dwell; for I, the LORD, dwell among the Israelites.

**36 THE HEADS OF THE FATHERS' FAMILIES** of Gilead son of Machir, son of Manasseh, one of the families of the sons of Joseph, approached Moses and the chiefs, heads of families in Israel, and addressed them. 'Sir,' they said, 'the LORD commanded you to distribute the

land by lot to the Israelites, and you were also commanded to give the patrimony of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. Now if any of them shall be married to a husband from another Israelite tribe, her patrimony will be lost to the patrimony of our fathers and be added to that of the tribe into which she is married, and so part of our allotted patrimony will be lost. Then, when the jubilee year comes round in Israel, her patrimony would be added to the patrimony of the tribe into which she is married, and it would be permanently lost to the patrimony of our fathers' tribe.'

So Moses, instructed by the LORD, gave the Israelites this ruling: 'The tribe of the sons of Joseph is right. This is the LORD's command for the daughters of Zelophehad: They may marry whom they please, but only within a family of their father's tribe. No patrimony in Israel shall pass from tribe to tribe, but every Israelite shall retain his father's patrimony. Any woman of an Israelite tribe who is an heiress may marry a man from any family in her father's tribe. Thus the Israelites shall retain each one the patrimony of his forefathers. No patrimony shall pass from one tribe to another, but every tribe in Israel shall retain its own patrimony.'

The daughters of Zelophehad acted in accordance with the LORD's command to Moses; Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, married sons of their father's brothers. They married within the families of the sons of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their patrimony remained with the tribe of their father's family.

These are the commandments and the decrees which the LORD issued to the Israelites through Moses in the lowlands of Moab by the Jordan near Jericho.

see Josh.20.3. **24:** *Community shall judge:* see v. 12. **28:** Perhaps now the *high priest*, functioning as the monarch in the postexilic community (see Introduction to Lev.), could grant amnesty to all such homicides at the beginning of his rule; or perhaps such amnesty was automatic. **31:** This is in contrast to some Ancient Near Eastern codes.

**36.1-13: An appendix on women's right to receive property.** The basic legislation is contained in 27.1-11. **4:** It is difficult to understand precisely how the Jubilee legislation (Lev. ch. 25) applies. **13:** The concluding statement refers back to chs. 22-36.



# DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy means "second law," a name appropriate because chs. 12–26 repeat much of the legislation found in Exodus–Leviticus–Numbers. In Deuteronomy Moses speaks in the first person in three addresses (1.6–4.40; 5.1–28.68; and 29.1–30.20) given in the plains of Moab, as his farewell to his people. Chapters 31–34 resume in the third person the narrative found at the end of Numbers.

The first address is a review of the Wilderness experience as the basis for exhorting Israel to fidelity in its forthcoming invasion of Canaan. The tone of the legal section is hortatory rather than legislative. The climactic third address (chs. 29–30), in the renewal of the covenant, joins the beckoning future to the record of God's gracious action in the past.

Within the repetition of the laws, a theme recurs that there is to be only one valid sanctuary, this in order for Israel to avoid contamination by the paganism lurking in a multiplicity of local shrines. Since the early nineteenth century, modern scholarship has associated this theme, and hence the book of Deuteronomy, with the religious reformation in 621 of King Josiah (2 Kgs. chs. 22–23), by which the Temple of Jerusalem became the only legitimate shrine. The writing of Deuteronomy is attributed to the age of Josiah, though older traditions are embodied and later materials apparently added (see Introduction to the Pentateuch). The exhortation seems addressed specifically to the kingdom of Judah so as to enable it to escape the fate of conquest and exile suffered by the kingdom of Israel which fell to Assyria in 721 B.C.

Deuteronomy speaks not only to the people assembled before Moses just prior to his death, but to all future generations.

## *Primary charge of Moses to the people*

1 **T**Hese are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel in Transjordan, in the wilderness, that is to say in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran on the one side and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab on the other. (The journey from Horeb through the hill-country of Seir to Kadesh-barnea takes eleven days.)  
2  
3–4 On the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, after the defeat of Sihon king of the Amorites who ruled in Heshbon, and the defeat at Edrei of Og king of Bashan who ruled in Ashtaroth, Moses repeated to the Israelites all the commands that the  
5 LORD had given him for them. It was in Transjordan, in Moab, that Moses resolved to promulgate this law. These  
6 were his words: The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb and said, 'You have stayed on this mountain long  
7 enough; go now, make for the hill-country of the Amorites, and pass on to all their neighbours in the Arabah, in the hill-country, in the Shephelah, in the

Negeb, and on the coast, in short, all Canaan and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the Euphrates. I have laid  
8 the land open before you; go in and occupy it, the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their descendants after them.'

At that time I said to you, 'You are a  
9 burden too heavy for me to carry unaided. The LORD your God has increased you so that today you are as  
10 numerous as the stars in the sky. May the LORD the God of your fathers increase your number a thousand times and may he bless you as he promised.  
11 How can I bear unaided the heavy burden you are to me, and put up with  
12 your complaints? Choose men of wisdom, understanding, and repute for each of your tribes, and I will set them  
13 in authority over you.' Your answer was, 'What you have told us to  
14 do is right.' So I took men of wisdom and repute and set them in  
15 authority over you, some as commanders over units of a thousand, of a hundred, of fifty or of ten, and others

1.1–3.29: A review of Israel's journey from Horeb (Sinai) to the plains of Moab. See 4.44–49 n. The LORD's graciousness, despite repeated rebellion, is stressed in order to instruct future generations. 1.1–5: The setting of Moses' final addresses. 2: *Kadesh-barnea*: Kadesh (Num.20.1). 3: *Eleventh month*: see Gen.7.24 n. 4: See Num.21.21–35. 5: *This law*: chs. 12–26, which contain both a review of previous legislation and much that is new. See 5.22–31 n. 6–7: See Exod.33.1–2. *Amorites*: see Num.21.13 n. *Euphrates*: see Gen.15.18 n. 8: *Forefathers*: Gen.12.1–3; 15.12–21; 26.1–5; 28.10–15. 9–18: Elements of Num.11.14–17 (in vv. 9–12) and Exod.18.13–27 (in vv.

16 as officers, for each of your tribes. And at that time I gave your judges this command: 'You are to hear the cases that arise among your kinsmen and judge fairly between man and man, whether fellow-countryman or resident alien. You must be impartial and listen to high and low alike: have no fear of man, for judgement belongs to God. If any case is too difficult for you, bring it before me and I will hear it.' At the same time I instructed you in all these duties.

19 Then we set out from Horeb, in obedience to the orders of the LORD our God, and marched through that vast and terrible wilderness, as you found it to be, on the way to the hill-country of the Amorites; and so we came to Kadesh-barnea. Then I said to you, 'You have reached the hill-country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is giving us. The LORD your God has indeed now laid the land open before you. Go forward and occupy it in fulfilment of the promise which the LORD the God of your fathers made you; do not be discouraged or afraid.'  
22 But you all came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the country and report back to us about the route we should take and the cities we shall find.' I approved this plan and picked twelve of you, one from each tribe. They set out and made their way up into the hill-country as far as the gorge of Eshcol, which they explored.  
25 They took samples of the fruit of the country and brought them back to us, and made their report: 'It is a rich land that the LORD our God is giving us.'

26 But you refused to go up and rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You muttered treason in your tents and said, 'It was because the LORD hated us that he brought us out of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites to be wiped out. What shall we find up there? Our kinsmen have discouraged us by their report of a people bigger and taller than we are, and of great cities with fortifications

towering to the sky. And they told us they saw there the descendants of the Anakim.'<sup>a</sup>

Then I said to you, 'You must not dread them nor be afraid of them. The LORD your God who goes at your head will fight for you and he will do again what you saw him do for you in Egypt and in the wilderness. You saw there how the LORD your God carried you all the way to this place, as a father carries his son.' In spite of this you did not trust the LORD your God, who went ahead on the journey to find a place for your camp. He went in fire by night to show you the way you should take, and in a cloud by day.

When the LORD heard your complaints, he was indignant and solemnly swore: 'Not one of these men, this wicked generation, shall see the rich land which I swore to give your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and his descendants I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he followed the LORD with his whole heart.' On your account the LORD was angry with me also and said, 'You yourself shall never enter it, but Joshua son of Nun, who is in attendance on you, shall enter it. Encourage him, for he shall put Israel in possession of that land. Your dependants who, you thought, would become spoils of war, and your children who do not yet know good and evil, they shall enter; I will give it to them, and they shall occupy it. You must turn back and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea.'<sup>b</sup>

You answered me, 'We have sinned against the LORD; we will now go up and attack just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And each of you fastened on his weapons, thinking it an easy thing to invade the hill-country. But the LORD said to me, 'Tell them not to go up and not to fight; for I will not be with them, and their enemies will

<sup>a</sup> the descendants . . . Anakim: or the tall men.  
<sup>b</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

13-17) have been combined. 19: See Num.10.11-13.26; 20.1. 20-46: See Num.13.1-14.45. Here, rather than the LORD (Num.13.1-2), it is the people who request spies (v. 22); this is indicative of their lack of faith. 28: *Towering*: built atop hills for defensive purposes. 30: See Exod.14.13-14. 33: See Exod.13.21 n. 37: *On your account*: compare Num.25.4 n.; contrast

43 defeat them.' And I told you this, but you did not listen; you rebelled against the LORD's command and defiantly  
44 went up to the hill-country. The Amorites living in the hills came out against you and like bees they chased you; they  
45 crushed you at Hormah in Seir. Then you came back and wept before the LORD, but he would not hear you or  
46 listen to you. That is why you remained in Kadesh as long as you did.

2 So we turned and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea as the LORD had told me we must do, and we spent many days marching round the hill-country of Seir. Then the LORD  
3 said to me, 'You have been long enough marching round these hills; 4 turn towards the north. And give the people this charge: "You are about to go through the territory of your kinsmen the descendants of Esau who live in Seir. Although they are afraid of you, 5 be on your guard and do not provoke them; for I shall not give you any of their land, not so much as a foot's-breadth: I have given the hill-country of Seir to Esau as a possession. You may purchase food from them for silver, and eat it, and you may buy<sup>c</sup> 6 water to drink.'" The LORD your God has blessed you in everything you have undertaken; he has watched your journey through this great wilderness; these forty years the LORD your God has been with you and you have gone short  
8 of nothing. So we went on past our kinsmen, the descendants of Esau who live in Seir, and along the road of the Arabah which comes from Elath and Ezion-geber, and we turned and followed the road to the wilderness of  
9 Moab. There the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass the Moabites nor provoke them to battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a  
10 possession.' (The Emim once lived there—a great and numerous people,  
11 as tall as the Anakim. The Rephaim also were reckoned as Anakim; but the

Moabites called them Emim. The  
12 Horites lived in Seir at one time, but the descendants of Esau occupied their territory: they destroyed them as they advanced and then settled in the land instead of them, just as Israel did in their own territory which the LORD gave them.) 'Come now, cross the  
13 gorge of the Zared.' So we went across. The journey from Kadesh-barnea to  
14 the crossing of the Zared took us thirty-eight years, until the whole generation of fighting men had passed away as the LORD had sworn that they would. The LORD's hand was raised  
15 against them, and he rooted them out of the camp to the last man.

When the last of the fighting men  
16 among the people had died, the LORD  
17 spoke to me, 'Today', he said, 'you are to cross by Ar<sup>d</sup> which lies on the frontier of Moab, and when you reach the  
19 territory of the Ammonites, you must not harass them or provoke them to battle, for I will not give you any Ammonite land as a possession; I have assigned it to the descendants of Lot.' (This also is reckoned as the territory of  
20 the Rephaim, who lived there at one time; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummim. They were a great and  
21 numerous people, as tall as the Anakim, but the LORD destroyed them as the Ammonites advanced and occupied their territory instead of them, just as  
22 he had done for the descendants of Esau who lived in Seir. As they advanced, he destroyed the Horites so that they occupied their territory and took possession instead of them: so it is to this day. It was Caphtorites from  
23 Caphtor who destroyed the Avvim who lived in the hamlets near Gaza, and settled in the land instead of them.) 'Come, set out on your journey and  
24 cross the gorge of the Arnon, for I have put Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his territory into your hands. Begin to occupy it and provoke him to battle. Today I will begin to put the  
25

<sup>c</sup> Or dig for. <sup>d</sup> by Ar: or the gully.

Num.20.12 n. 2.1–25: From Kadesh to the Amorite border (Num.20.14–21.15). 1: *Way of the Red Sea*: see Num.14.25 n. 4: *Go through*: contrast Num.20.14–21. 7: *Short of nothing*: contrast Num. chs. 11; 20. 9: The *Moabites* and *Ammonites* (v. 19) were relatives of Israel (Gen.19.30–38; 11.27). 14: *Thirty-eight*: this is a different tradition from v. 7, which places this span of time at Kadesh (see Num.13.26 n.). 23: *Caphtor*: Crete (or possibly Asia Minor); the

fear and dread of you upon all the peoples under heaven; if they so much as hear a rumour of you, they will quake and tremble before you.'

26 Then I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with these peaceful overtures: 'Grant us passage through your country by the highway: we will keep to the highway, trespassing neither to right nor to left, and we will pay you the full price for the food we eat and the water we drink. The descendants of Esau who live in Seir granted us passage, and so did the Moabites who live in Ar. We will simply pass through your land on foot, until we cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.' But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to grant us passage; for the LORD your God had made him stubborn and obstinate, in order that he and his land might become subject to you, as it still is. So the LORD said to me, 'Come, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his territory into your hands. Begin now to occupy his land.' Then Sihon with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz, and the LORD our God delivered him into our hands; we killed him with his sons and all his people. We captured all his cities at that time and put to death everyone in the cities, men, women, and dependants; we left no survivor. We took the cattle as booty and plundered the cities we captured. From Aroer on the edge of the gorge of the Arnon and the level land of the gorge, as far as Gilead, no city walls were too lofty for us; the LORD our God laid them all open to us. But you avoided the territory of the Ammonites, both the parts along the gorge of the Jabbok and their cities in the hills, thus fulfilling all that the LORD our God had commanded.

3 Next we turned and advanced along the road to Bashan. Og king of Bashan, with all his people, came out against us at Edrei. The LORD said to me, 'Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hands, with all his people and his land. Deal with him

as you dealt with Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon.' So the LORD our God also delivered Og king of Bashan into our hands, with all his people. We slaughtered them and left no survivor, and at the same time we captured all his cities; there was not a single town that we did not take from them. In all we took sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan; all these were fortified cities with high walls, gates, and bars, apart from a great many open settlements. Thus we put to death all the men, women, and dependants in every city, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon. All the cattle and the spoil from the cities we took as booty for ourselves.

At that time we took from these two Amorite kings in Transjordan the territory that runs from the gorge of the Arnon to Mount Hermon (the mountain that the Sidonians call Sirion and the Amorites Senir), all the cities of the tableland, and the whole of Gilead and Bashan as far as Salcah and Edrei, cities in the kingdom of Og in Bashan. (Only Og king of Bashan remained as the sole survivor of the Rephaim. His sarcophagus of basalt<sup>e</sup> was nearly fourteen feet long and six feet wide, and it may still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah.)

At that time, when we occupied this territory, I assigned to the Reubenites and Gadites the land beyond Aroer on the gorge of the Arnon and half the hill-country of Gilead with its towns. The rest of Gilead and the whole of Bashan the kingdom of Og, all the region of Argob, I assigned to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All Bashan used to be called the land of the Rephaim. Jair son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob as far as the Geshurite and Maacathite border. There are tent-villages in Bashan still called by his name, Havvoth-jair.<sup>f</sup>) To Machir I assigned Gilead, and to the Reubenites and the Gadites I assigned land from Gilead to the gorge of the Arnon, that

<sup>e</sup> Or iron. <sup>f</sup> That is Tent-villages of Jair.

Philistine invasion is meant (Amos 9.7; Gen. 9.27 n.). 2.26-3.11: Victory over the Amorites (Num.21.21-35). 30: *Made him stubborn*: see Exod.4.21 n. 35: *No survivor*: on "holy" war, see 20.1-20. 3.11: *Sarcophagus*: such stone coffins were widely used in the area. 12-20: Dis-

is to the middle of the gorge; and its territory ran<sup>g h</sup> to the gorge of the Jab-  
 17 bok, the Ammonite frontier, and included the Arabah, with the Jordan and adjacent land, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah, that is the Dead Sea, below the watershed of Pisgah on  
 18 the east. At that time I gave you this command: 'The LORD your God has given you this land to occupy; let all your fighting men be drafted and cross at the head of their fellow-Israelites.  
 19 Only your wives and dependants and your livestock—I know you have much livestock—shall stay in the towns I have  
 20 given you. This you shall do until the LORD gives your kinsmen security as he has given it to you, and until they too occupy the land which the LORD your God is giving them on the other side of the Jordan; then you may return to the possession which I have given you, every man to his own.'  
 21 At that time also I gave Joshua this charge: 'You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; he will do the same to all the kingdoms into which  
 22 you will cross over. Do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God himself will fight for you.'  
 23 At that same time I pleaded with the  
 24 LORD, 'O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to show to thy servant thy greatness and thy strong hand: what god is there in heaven or on earth who can match thy  
 25 works and mighty deeds? Let me cross over and see that rich land which lies beyond the Jordan, and the fine hill-  
 26 country and the Lebanon.' But because of you the LORD brushed me aside and would not listen. 'Enough!' he answered. 'Say no more about this. Go to the top of Pisgah and look west and north, south and east; look well at what you see, for you shall not cross  
 28 this river Jordan. Give Joshua his commission, encourage him and

strengthen him; for he will lead this people across, and he will put them in possession of the land you see before you.'

So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

NOW, ISRAEL, LISTEN TO THE STATUTES 4 and laws which I am teaching you, and obey them; then you will live, and go in and occupy the land which the LORD the God of your fathers is giving you. You must not add anything to my 2 charge, nor take anything away from it. You must carry out all the commandments of the LORD your God which I lay upon you.

You saw with your own eyes what 3 the LORD did at Baal-peor; the LORD your God destroyed among you every man who went over to the Baal of Peor, but you who held fast to the 4 LORD your God are all alive today. I 5 have taught you statutes and laws, as the LORD my God commanded me; these you must duly keep when you enter the land and occupy it. You must 6 observe them carefully, and thereby you will display your wisdom and understanding to other peoples. When they hear about these statutes, they will say, 'What a wise and understanding people this great nation is!' What great 7 nation has a god<sup>i</sup> close at hand as the LORD our God is close to us whenever we call to him? What great nation is 8 there whose statutes and laws are just, as is all this law which I am setting before you today? But take good care: 9 be on the watch not to forget the things that you have seen with your own eyes, and do not let them pass from your minds as long as you live, but teach them to your sons and to your sons' 10 sons. You must never forget that day  
 g that is . . . ran: or including the bed of the gorge and the adjacent strip of land . . .  
 h and its territory ran: prob. rdg.; Heb. and territory and . . .  
 i Or gods.

tribution of the Amorite territory (Num. ch. 32). 21–28: Moses' successor (see 31.1–29 n.). 26: *Because of you*: see 1.37 n. 27: See 34.1–4.

4.1–43: An exhortation to obey the law after the settlement in Canaan. 1: *Now . . . listen*: the LORD's previous gracious acts should motivate obedience. Compare Exod.20.2 n.; Lev.18.2 n. 2: The prohibition against altering the wording follows Ancient Near Eastern legislative custom and is motivated by fear that the new situation in Canaan would lead to deviation. 3: An illustration of the consequences of disobedience, taken from Num. ch. 25. 8: *Today*: on possible liturgical reenactment of the past, see 5.1–3 n.; Exod.13.8 n. 10–11: See Exod.19.10–19. *Fire*:

when you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, and the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people before me; I will make them hear my words and they shall learn to fear me all their lives on earth, and they shall teach their sons to do so.' Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain. The mountain was ablaze with fire to the very skies: there was darkness, cloud, and thick mist. When the LORD spoke to you from the fire you heard a voice speaking, but you saw no figure; there was only a voice. He announced the terms of his covenant to you, bidding you observe the Ten Words,<sup>j</sup> and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. At that time the LORD charged me to teach you statutes and laws which you should observe in the land into which you are passing to occupy it.

15 On the day when the LORD spoke to you out of the fire on Horeb, you saw no figure of any kind; so take good care not to fall into the degrading practice of making figures carved in relief, in the form of a man or a woman, or of any animal on earth or bird that flies in the air, or of any reptile on the ground or fish in the waters under the earth. Nor must you raise your eyes to the heavens and look up to the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be led on to bow down to them and worship them; the LORD your God assigned these for the worship of<sup>k</sup> the various peoples under heaven. But you are the people whom the LORD brought out of Egypt, from the smelting-furnace, and took for his own possession, as you are to this day. The LORD was angry with me on your account and swore that I should not cross the Jordan nor enter the rich land which the LORD your God is giving you for your possession.

22 I shall die in this country; I shall not cross the Jordan, but you are about to cross and occupy that rich land. Be

careful not to forget the covenant which the LORD your God made with you, and do not make yourselves a carved figure of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous god.

When you have children and grandchildren and grow old in the land, if you then fall into the degrading practice of making any kind of carved figure, doing what is wrong in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, I summon heaven and earth to witness against you this day: you will soon vanish from the land which you are to occupy after crossing the Jordan. You will not live long in it; you will be swept away. The LORD will disperse you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations to which the LORD will lead you. There you will worship gods made by human hands out of wood and stone, gods that can neither see nor hear, neither eat nor smell. But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him, if indeed you search with all your heart and soul. When you are in distress and all these things come upon you, you will in days to come turn back to the LORD your God and obey him. The LORD your God is a merciful god; he will never fail you nor destroy you, nor will he forget the covenant guaranteed by oath with your forefathers.

Search into days gone by, long before your time, beginning at the day when God created man on earth; search from one end of heaven to the other, and ask if any deed as mighty as this has been seen or heard. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the fire, as you heard it, and remain alive? Or did ever a god attempt to come and take a nation for himself

<sup>j</sup> Or Ten Commandments.

<sup>k</sup> assigned . . . worship of; or created these for.

compare Gen.15.17 n. *Darkness*: compare Exod.19.9 n. *Cloud*: see Exod.19.9 n.; compare Exod.13.21 n. **12**: *No figure*: the LORD's self-revelation, which Israel regarded as the center of her faith, is cited in support of Exod.20.4. To the Canaanites, idols were an indispensable part of worship. **13**: *Covenant*: see Exod.20.1-21 n. **15-16**: On the reason for the prohibition, see Exod.20.4 n. **17-19**: Compare Gen.1.14 n., 20 n., 28 n. **21**: See 1.37 n. **26**: *Summon heaven and earth*: This is very old covenant (legal) terminology, originating in a polytheistic environment, and surviving in later times. The gods of those domains served as witnesses to an agreement between parties, and their testimony was invoked in case of violation (Deut.30.19 n.; 31.28; see Isa.1.2; Mic.6.1-2). **32-33**: See Exod.20.18-21. **32**: See 28.64; 32.7. **34**: See Exod. chs. 1-15.

away from another nation, with a challenge, and with signs, portents, and wars, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with great deeds of terror, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt in the sight of you all?  
 35 You have had sure proof that the LORD is God; there is no other. From heaven he let you hear his voice for your instruction, and on earth he let you see his great fire, and out of the fire you  
 36 heard his words. Because he loved your fathers and chose their children after them, he in his own person brought you out of Egypt by his great strength,  
 37 so that he might drive out before you nations greater and more powerful than you and bring you in to give you their land in possession as it is today.  
 38 This day, then, be sure and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other.  
 39 You shall keep his statutes and his commandments which I give you today; then all will be well with you and with your children after you, and you will live long in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.  
 40 Then Moses set apart three cities in the east, in Transjordan, to be places of refuge for the homicide who kills a man without intent, with no previous enmity between them. If he takes sanctuary in one of these cities his life shall be safe.  
 41 The cities were: Bezer-in-the-Wilderness on the tableland for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.  
 42 This is the law which Moses laid down for the Israelites. These are the precepts, the statutes, and the laws which Moses proclaimed to the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt

and were in Transjordan in the valley 46 opposite Beth-peor in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon. Moses and the Israelites had defeated him when they came out of Egypt and had occupied his territory 47 and the territory of Og king of Bashan, the two Amorite kings in the east, in Transjordan. The territory ran from 48 Aroer on the gorge of the Arnon to Mount Sirion, that is Hermon; and all the Arabah on the east, in Transjordan, as far as the Sea of the Arabah below the watershed of Pisgah.

Moses summoned all Israel and said 5 to them: Listen, O Israel, to the statutes and the laws which I proclaim in your hearing today. Learn them and be careful to observe them. The LORD our God 2 made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our forefathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, all of us who are alive and are here this day. The LORD spoke with you face to 4 face on the mountain out of the fire. I stood between the LORD and you at that time to report the words of the LORD; for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain. And the LORD said:

I am the LORD your God who 6 brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other god<sup>l</sup> to set 7 against me.

You shall not make a carved image 8 for yourself nor the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or 9 worship<sup>m</sup> them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous god. I punish the children for the sins of the fathers to

*l Or gods. m Or or be led to worship . . .*

37: Here, for the first time, the LORD's election of Israel is explained as the result of love (see 7.7-8). It should evoke a responding love which results in obedience (6.5). 41-43: A once independent fragment whose relationship to the present context is not clear. *Places of refuge*: compare 19.1-13; Num.35.9-34.

4.44-49: An older historical preface. At one stage in the collection and writing of materials attributed to Moses in the plains of Moab, this section may have been the opening. At a later stage, these verses provided the setting for 4.1-43; the brief historical review of vv. 46b-49 was expanded into 2.24-3.17, which was preceded by an account summarizing the journey from Sinai (Horeb) onward (1.6-2.23); thereafter a new introduction (1.1-5) was written.

5.1-31: A review of the covenant at Sinai. 1-3: Israel's past acceptance of the covenant obligations is to turn out to be of no consequence unless the covenant becomes the contemporary experience of the present generation. The passage may be part of a liturgy by means of which the relationship was regularly renewed. See 31.9-13; Josh.24.1-28. 6-21: This version of the Ten Commandments (see Exod.20.1-21 n.) is substantially that of Exod.20.2-17, except for the

10 the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. But I keep faith with thousands, with<sup>n</sup> those who love me and keep my commandments.

11 You shall not make wrong use of the name of the LORD your God; the LORD will not leave unpunished the man who misuses his name.

12 Keep the sabbath day holy as the LORD your God commanded you. You have six days to labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; that day you shall not do any work, neither you, your son or your daughter, your slave or your slave-girl, your ox, your ass, or any of your cattle, nor the alien within your gates, so that your slaves and slave-girls may rest as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and for that reason the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

16 Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that you may live long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

17 You shall not commit murder.

18 You shall not commit adultery.

19 You shall not steal.

20 You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour.

21 You shall not covet your neighbour's wife; you shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house, his land, his slave, his slave-girl, his ox, his ass, or on anything that belongs to him.

22 These Commandments the LORD spoke in a great voice to your whole assembly on the mountain out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick mist; then he said no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was

ablaze with fire, all the heads of your tribes and the elders came to me and said, 'The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire: today we have seen that God may speak with men and they may still live. Why should we now risk death? for this great fire will devour us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God again, we shall die. Is there any mortal man who has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the fire, as we have, and has lived? You shall go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says, and report to us all that the LORD our God has said to you; we will listen and obey.'

When the LORD heard these words which you spoke to me, he said, 'I have heard what this people has said to you; every word they have spoken is right. Would that they always had such a heart to fear me and to observe all my commandments, so that all might be well with them and their children for ever! Go, and tell them to return to their tents, but you yourself stand here beside me, and I will set forth to you all the commandments, the statutes and laws which you shall teach them to observe in the land which I am giving them to occupy.'

You shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn from it to right or to left. You must conform to all the LORD your God commands you, if you would live and prosper and remain long in the land you are to occupy.

These are the commandments, statutes, and laws which the LORD your God commanded me to teach you to observe in the land into which you are passing to occupy it, a land flowing with milk and honey, so that you may fear the LORD your God and keep all his statutes and commandments which

*n* with . . . with: or for a thousand generations with . . .

added motivation for Sabbath observance. 22–31: The purpose in the prefatory verses (4.44–49) and the review (5.1–33) here become specific: the fear exhibited by the people (Exod.20.18–21) necessitated that Moses act as mediator. Thus, some of the legislation received while he was alone atop the mountain has not yet been conveyed to the people; now the laws for the new life in Canaan are to be disclosed.

5.32–11.32: Exhortations and warnings to revere the law after the settlement in Canaan.

6.1–25: Fidelity to the one LORD. Much of the chapter may be viewed as an elaboration of the first commandment (5.7). 1: *Commandments* is singular in MT, and possibly refers to vv. 4–5.



I am giving you, both you, your sons, and your descendants all your lives, and so that you may live long. If you listen, O Israel, and are careful to observe them, you will prosper and increase greatly as the LORD the God of your fathers promised you.

Hear, O Israel, the LORD<sup>o</sup> is our God, one LORD, and you must love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul and strength. These commandments which I give you this day are to be kept in your heart; you shall repeat them to your sons, and speak of them indoors and out of doors, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on the hand and wear them as a phylactery on the forehead; write them up on the door-posts of your houses and on your gates.

The LORD your God will bring you into the land which he swore to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would give you, a land of great and fine cities which you did not build, houses full of good things which you did not provide, rock-hewn cisterns which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive-groves which you did not plant. When you eat your fill there, be careful not to forget the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall fear the LORD your God, serve him alone and take your oaths in his name. You must not follow other gods, gods of the nations that are around you; if you do, the LORD your God who is in your midst will be angry with you, and he will sweep you away off the face of the earth, for the LORD your God is a jealous god.

You must not challenge the LORD your God as you challenged him at

Massah.<sup>p</sup> You must diligently keep the 17 commandments of the LORD your God as well as the precepts and statutes which he gave you. You must do what 18 is right and good in the LORD's eyes so that all may go well with you, and you may enter and occupy the rich land which the LORD promised by oath to your forefathers; then you shall drive 19 out all your enemies before you, as the LORD promised.

When your son asks you in time to 20 come, 'What is the meaning of the precepts, statutes, and laws which the LORD our God gave you?', you shall 21 say to him, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand, sending 22 great disasters, signs, and portents against the Egyptians and against Pharaoh and all his family, as we saw for ourselves. But he led us out from 23 there to bring us into the land and give it to us as he had promised to our forefathers. The LORD commanded us to 24 observe all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God; it will be for our own good at all times, and he will continue to preserve our lives. It will be counted 25 to our credit if we keep all these commandments in the sight of the LORD our God, as he has bidden us.'

WHEN THE LORD YOUR GOD BRINGS YOU 7 into the land which you are entering to occupy and drives out many nations before you—Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you— when the LORD your God delivers them 2 into your power and you defeat them, you must put them to death. You must

*o* See note on Exod. 3. 15. *p* That is Challenge.

The specific *statutes and laws* are delayed until ch. 12. 2: *Milk and honey*: see Exod. 3.8 n. 4-9: These verses are a standard preface to private and public prayer in the Jewish tradition. They are called the Shema, from the initial word which means "Hear!" The Shema is virtually a Jewish "creed." 4-5: These verses are described as the greatest commandment in Mk. 12.28-34. 4: *One LORD*: the only God (4.35,39; Isa.45.18). 5: *Heart*: intellect, will. *Soul*: self, total being. Compare Gen.2.7 n. *Strength*: determination. See 4.37 n. 8: *Sign*: see Exod.13.9 n. *Phylactery*: see Exod.13.16 n. 10-15: This theme, central to the entire book, is expanded in ch. 8. 16: *Massah*: see Exod.17.2-7. *To challenge the LORD* means to require his granting of material blessings as a prerequisite for worshiping him. 20-25: These verses may be part of the ancient Passover liturgy (Exod.12.26-27 and 13.8-9; compare Exod.15.1-21 n.).

7.1-26: *The inhabitants of Canaan*. The reason for the injunctions in the chapter is given in v. 4. Compare Exod. 20.1-21 n. 2: *Put them to death*: on rules for "holy" war, see 20.1-20. Those who gathered the Deuteronomic traditions believed that the kingdom of Israel had suffered defeat through succumbing to Canaanite influence (compare 2 Kgs.17.1-23). The

not make a treaty with them or spare  
 3 them. You must not intermarry with  
 them, neither giving your daughters  
 to their sons nor taking their daughters  
 4 for your sons; if you do, they will draw  
 your sons away from the LORD<sup>q</sup> and  
 make them worship other gods. Then  
 the LORD will be angry with you and  
 5 will quickly destroy you. But this is  
 what you must do to them: pull down  
 their altars, break their sacred pillars,  
 hack down their sacred poles and  
 6 destroy their idols by fire, for you are a  
 people holy to the LORD your God; the  
 LORD your God chose you out of all  
 nations on earth to be his special  
 possession.

7 It was not because you were more  
 numerous than any other nation that  
 the LORD cared for you and chose you,  
 for you were the smallest of all nations;  
 8 it was because the LORD loved you and  
 stood by his oath to your forefathers,  
 that he brought you out with his strong  
 hand and redeemed you from the land  
 of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh  
 9 king of Egypt. Know then that the  
 LORD your God is God, the faithful  
 God; with those who love him and  
 keep his commandments he keeps  
 covenant and faith for a thousand gen-  
 10 erations, but those who defy him and  
 show their hatred for him he repays  
 with destruction: he will not be slow to  
 requite any who so hate him.

11 You are to observe these command-  
 ments, statutes, and laws which I give  
 you this day, and keep them.

12 If you listen to these laws and are  
 careful to observe them, then the LORD  
 your God will observe the sworn coven-  
 ant he made with your forefathers  
 13 and will keep faith with you. He will  
 love you, bless you and cause you to  
 increase. He will bless the fruit of your  
 body and the fruit of your land, your  
 corn and new wine and oil, the off-  
 spring of your herds, and of your  
 lambing flocks, in the land which he  
 swore to your forefathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above every other  
 14 nation; neither among your people nor  
 among your cattle shall there be im-  
 potent male or barren female. The  
 15 LORD will take away all sickness from  
 you; he will not bring upon you any of  
 the foul diseases of Egypt which you  
 know so well, but will bring them upon  
 all your enemies. You shall devour  
 16 the nations which the LORD your God  
 is giving over to you. Spare none of  
 them, and do not worship their gods;  
 that is the snare which awaits you.

You may say to yourselves, "These  
 17 nations outnumber us, how can we  
 drive them out?" But you need have no  
 18 fear of them; only remember what the  
 LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to  
 the whole of Egypt, the great challenge  
 19 which you yourselves witnessed, the  
 signs and portents, the strong hand and  
 the outstretched arm by which the  
 LORD your God brought you out. He  
 will deal thus with all the nations of  
 whom you are afraid. He will also  
 20 spread panic among them until all who  
 are left or have gone into hiding perish  
 before you. Be in no dread of them, for  
 21 the LORD your God is in your midst, a  
 great and terrible god. He will drive out  
 22 these nations before you little by little.  
 You will not be able to exterminate  
 them quickly, for fear the wild beasts  
 become too numerous for you. The  
 23 LORD your God will deliver these  
 nations over to you and will throw  
 them into great panic in the hour of  
 their destruction. He will put their  
 24 kings into your hands, and you shall  
 wipe out their name from under heaven.  
 When you destroy them, no man will  
 be able to withstand you. Their idols  
 25 you shall destroy by fire; you must not  
 covet the silver and gold on them and  
 take it for yourselves, or you will be en-  
 snared by it; for these things are  
 abominable to the LORD your God.  
 You must not introduce any abomin-  
 26 able idol into your houses and thus

*q* *Prob. rdg.; Heb. me.*

measures described here are meant to protect the kingdom of Judah from a similar catastrophe. *Not make a treaty*: this is in marked contrast to earlier attitudes (Gen.21.22-32 and 26.26-31). **5: Pillars; poles**: see Exod.34.13 n. 9-10: See Exod.34.6-7 n. 12: *Forefathers*: see 1.8 n. 13-14: The emphasis upon the LORD as the source of material blessings is a polemic against the Canaanite gods of fertility. See Hos.2.2-13 for a classic prophetic stance of the type reflected in Deut. 26: *Ban*: the state of being accursed (see Exod.22.20 n.).

bring yourselves under solemn ban along with it. You shall hold it loathsome and abominable, for it is forbidden under the ban.

- 8 You must carefully observe everything that I command you this day so that you may live and increase and may enter and occupy the land which the LORD promised to your forefathers upon oath. You must remember all that road by which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness to humble you, to test you and to discover whether or no it was in your heart to keep his commandments. He humbled you and made you hungry; then he fed you on manna which neither you nor your fathers had known before, to teach you that man cannot live on bread alone but lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. The clothes on your backs did not wear out nor did your feet swell all these forty years. Take this lesson to heart: that the LORD your God was disciplining you as a father disciplines his son; and keep the commandments of the LORD your God, conforming to his ways and fearing him. For the LORD your God is bringing you to a rich land, a land of streams, of springs and underground waters gushing out in hill and valley, a land of wheat and barley, of vines, fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of olives, oil, and honey. It is a land where you will never live in poverty nor want for anything, a land whose stones are iron-ore and from whose hills you will dig copper. You will have plenty to eat and will bless the LORD your God for the rich land that he has given you.
- 11 Take care not to forget the LORD your God and do not fail to keep his commandments, laws, and statutes which I give you this day. When you have plenty to eat and live in fine

houses of your own building, when 13 your herds and flocks increase, and your silver and gold and all your possessions increase too, do not become 14 proud and forget the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; he led you through 15 the vast and terrible wilderness infested with poisonous snakes and scorpions, a thirsty, waterless land, where he caused water to flow from the hard rock; he fed you in the wilderness on 16 manna which your fathers did not know, to humble you and test you, and in the end to make you prosper. Nor 17 must you say to yourselves, 'My own strength and energy have gained me this wealth', but remember the LORD 18 your God; it is he that gives you strength to become prosperous, so fulfilling the covenant guaranteed by oath with your forefathers, as he is doing now.

If you forget the LORD your God 19 and adhere to other gods, worshipping them and bowing down to them, I give you a solemn warning this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will be 20 destroyed because of your disobedience to the LORD your God, as surely as were the nations whom the LORD destroyed at your coming.

Listen, O Israel; this day you will 9 cross the Jordan to occupy the territory of nations greater and more powerful than you, and great cities with walls towering to the sky. They are great and 2 tall people, the descendants of the Anakim, of whom you know, for you have heard it said, 'Who can withstand the sons of Anak?' Know then this day 3 that it is the LORD your God himself who goes at your head as a devouring fire; he will subdue them and destroy them at your approach; you shall drive them out and overwhelm them, as he promised you.

8.1-20: Injunction for life in the promised land. The lesson learned through hardship, that "man cannot live on bread alone" (v. 3), must not be forgotten amidst the abundance of Canaan. 2: The hardships of the wilderness, against which Israel rebelled and was punished (see Num. 25.1-18 n.), are reinterpreted as discipline in preparation for life in "a rich land" (v. 7). 3: *Manna*: see Num.11.6 n. It was given, not alone to satisfy physical hunger, but to remind man of his dependence upon God. 4: This tradition is not found outside Deut. 15: *Snakes*: see Num.21.4-9. *Rock*: see Num.20.2-11.

9.1-10.11: The basis for the granting of the land. It was the wickedness of the Canaanites that led to their displacement, not the merit of Israel. Indeed, the latter would have been entirely destroyed in the Wilderness were it not for the intercession of Moses. 2: *Anakim*: see 1.28;

- 4 When the LORD your God drives them out before you, do not say to yourselves, 'It is because of my own merit that the LORD has brought me in to occupy this land.' It is not because of your merit or your integrity that you are entering their land to occupy it; it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, and to fulfil the promise which the LORD made to your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- 6 Know then that it is not because of any merit of yours that the LORD your God is giving you this rich land to occupy; indeed, you are a stubborn people. Remember and never forget, how you angered the LORD your God in the wilderness: from the day when you left Egypt until you came to this place you have defied the LORD. In Horeb you roused the LORD's anger, and the LORD in his wrath was on the point of destroying you. When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights without food or drink.
- 10 Then the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and upon them were all the words the LORD spoke to you out of the fire, upon the mountain on the day of the assembly. At the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant, and said to me, 'Make haste down from the mountain because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have done a disgraceful thing. They have already turned aside from the way which I told them to follow and have cast for themselves an image of metal.'
- 13 Then the LORD said to me, 'I have considered this people and I find them a stubborn people. Let me be, and I will destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and of you alone I will make a nation more powerful and numerous than they.' So I turned and went down the mountain, and it was ablaze; and I had the two tablets of the covenant in my hands. When I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God and had cast for yourselves an image of a bull-calf, and had already turned aside from the way the LORD had told you to follow, I took the two tablets and flung them down and shattered them in the sight of you all. Then once again I lay prostrate before the LORD, forty days and forty nights without food or drink, on account of all the sins that you had committed, and because you had done what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and provoked him to anger. I dreaded the LORD's anger and his wrath which threatened to destroy you; and once again the LORD listened to me. The LORD was greatly incensed with Aaron also and would have killed him; so I prayed for him as well at that same time. I took the calf, that sinful thing that you had made, and burnt it and pounded it, grinding it until it was as fine as dust; then I flung its dust into the torrent that flowed down the mountain. You also roused the LORD's anger at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah. Again, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea with orders to advance and occupy the land which he was giving you, you defied the LORD your God and did not trust him or obey him. You were defiant from the day that the LORD first knew you. Forty days and forty nights I lay prostrate before the LORD because he had threatened to destroy you, and I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy thy people, thy own possession, whom thou didst redeem by thy great power and bring out of Egypt by thy strong hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin; otherwise the people in the land out of which thou didst lead us

Num.13.22,27-28. 9: See Exod.24.12-18. 11-21: See Exod. ch. 32. 20: The prayer for Aaron is not recorded in Exod. ch. 32. 21: *Into the torrent*: contrast Exod.32.20. 22-24: These verses interrupt the context and logically belong before the post-Sinai itinerary in 10.6-7. They heighten the need for the intercessory prayer which follows. 22: *Taberah*: Num.11.1-3. *Massah*: Exod. 17.1-7; compare Num.20.2-13. *Kibroth-hattaavah*: Num.11.4-34. 23: See Num. chs. 13-14.

will say, "It is because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them and because he hated them, that he has led them out to kill them in the wilderness." But they are thy people, thy own possession, whom thou didst bring out by thy great strength and by thy outstretched arm.'

10 AT THAT TIME THE LORD SAID TO ME, 'Cut two tablets of stone like the first, and make also a wooden chest, an Ark.  
2 Come to me on the mountain, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke in pieces, and you shall put them into the Ark.' So I made the Ark of acacia-wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain taking the tablets with me.  
4 Then in the same writing as before, the LORD wrote down the Ten Words<sup>r</sup> which he had spoken to you out of the fire, upon the mountain on the day of the assembly, and the LORD gave them to me. I turned and came down the mountain, and I put the tablets in the Ark that I had made, as the LORD had commanded me, and there they have remained ever since.  
6<sup>s</sup> (The Israelites journeyed by stages from Beeroth-bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried; and his son Eleazar succeeded him in the priesthood. From there they came to Gudgodah and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of many ravines. At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, to attend on the LORD and minister to him, and to give the blessing in his name, as they have done to this day. That is why the

Levites have no holding or patrimony with their kinsmen; the LORD is their patrimony, as he promised them.)

I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as I did before, and once again the LORD listened to me; he consented not to destroy you. The LORD said to me, 'Set out now at the head of the people so that they may enter and occupy the land which I swore to give to their forefathers.'

What then, O Israel, does the LORD your God ask of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to conform to all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all your heart and soul. This you will do by keeping the commandments of the LORD and his statutes which I give you this day for your good. To the LORD your God belong heaven itself, the highest heaven, the earth and everything in it; yet the LORD cared for your forefathers in his love for them and chose their descendants after them. Out of all nations you were his chosen people as you are this day. So now you must circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and not be stubborn any more, for the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and terrible God. He is no respecter of persons and is not to be bribed; he secures justice for widows and orphans, and loves the alien who lives among you, giving him food and clothing. You too must love the alien, for you once lived as aliens in Egypt. You must fear the LORD your God, serve him, hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise, your God who has done for you these great and

<sup>r</sup> Or Ten Commandments.  
<sup>s</sup> Verses 6, 7: cp. Num. 33, 31, 32.

25-29: This prayer is prior to the breaking of the tablets in Exod.32.11-13. 10.1-11: The renewal of the covenant. The theme of Israel's unworthiness to inherit the land is resumed only in vv. 10-11. 1: See Exod.34.1, which contains no mention of the Ark. 6-7: Since these verses, like 9.22-24, cover the itinerary after the departure from Sinai (Num.33.16,30-33), they logically belong after v. 11. They may allude to examples of Israel's unworthiness which have not been preserved in the OT. Placed here, they emphasize that Israel would not have entered the land but for the prayers of Moses (vv. 10-11). *Beeroth-bene-jaakan*: the Bene-jaakan of Num. 33.30-31, where the order is reversed. Aaron died on Mount Hor according to Num.20.22-29; 33.37-39. *Gudgodah*: possibly the (Hor-hag)gidgad of Num.33.32. 8-9: This event should follow 9.29, according to Exod.32.26-29. The point that the Levites did not share in Aaron's sin is emphasized by their being set apart after his death. 10: The narrative resumes from v. 5. 10.12-11.32: A final exhortation to future obedience. 12: *What then* refers to the conclusions to be drawn from the historical review (9.7-10.11). Compare 4.1 n.; Mic.6.4-8. The answer is summarized in a single sentence, repeating 6.4-5 (see 6.1 n.). 12-13: One keeps the commandments not for fear or desire of reward, but as an expression of love and gratitude. 16: *Circumcise*

22 terrible things which you have seen with your own eyes. When your forefathers went down into Egypt they were only seventy strong, but now the LORD your God has made you countless as the stars in the sky.

11 You shall love the LORD your God and keep for all time the charge he laid upon you, the statutes, the laws, and 2 the commandments. This day you know the discipline of the LORD, though your children who have neither known nor experienced it do not; you know his greatness, his strong hand and out- 3 stretched arm, the signs he worked and his acts in Egypt against Pharaoh the 4 king and his country, and all that he did to the Egyptian army, its horses and chariots, when he caused the waters of the Red Sea to flow over them as they pursued you. In this way the LORD destroyed them, and so things remain 5 to this day. You know what he did for you in the wilderness as you journeyed 6 to this place, and what he did to Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them in the sight of all Israel, together with their households and their tents and every 7 living thing in their company. With your own eyes you have seen the mighty work that the LORD did.

8 You shall observe all that I command you this day, so that you may have strength to enter and occupy the 9 land into which you are crossing, and so that you may live long in the land which the LORD swore to your fore- fathers to give them and their descen- 10 dants, a land flowing with milk and honey. The land which you are entering to occupy is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where, after sowing your seed, you irrigated it 11 by foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you are crossing to occupy is a land of mountains and valleys watered by the rain of heaven. 12 It is a land which the LORD your God tends<sup>f</sup> and on which his eye rests from

year's end to year's end. If you pay 13 heed to the commandments which I give you this day, and love the LORD your God and serve him with all your heart and soul, then I will send rain 14 for your land in season, both autumn and spring rains, and you will gather your corn and new wine and oil, and I 15 will provide pasture in the fields for your cattle: you shall eat your fill. Take 16 good care not to be led astray in your hearts nor to turn aside and serve other gods and prostrate yourselves to them, or the LORD will become angry with 17 you: he will shut up the skies and there will be no rain, your ground will not yield its harvest, and you will soon vanish from the rich land which the LORD is giving you. You shall take 18 these words of mine to heart and keep them in mind; you shall bind them as a sign on the hand and wear them as a phylactery on the forehead. Teach 19 them to your children, and speak of them indoors and out of doors, when you lie down and when you rise. Write 20 them up on the door-posts of your houses and on your gates. Then you 21 will live long, you and your children, in the land which the LORD swore to your forefathers to give them, for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

If you diligently keep all these com- 22 mandments that I now charge you to observe, by loving the LORD your God, by conforming to his ways and by hold- 23 ing fast to him, the LORD will drive out all these nations before you and you shall occupy the territory of nations greater and more powerful than you. 24 Every place where you set the soles of your feet shall be yours. Your borders shall run from the wilderness to<sup>u</sup> the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea. No man 25 will be able to withstand you; the LORD your God will put the fear and dread of

<sup>f</sup> which . . . tends: or whose soil the LORD your God has made firm.  
<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. and.

. . . your hearts: see Jer.4.3-4 n. 22: Seventy: see Exod.1.5 n. 11.2: This day: see 5.1-3 n. Discipline: see 8.5; Lev.26.18 n. 6: Dathan and Abiram: see Num.16.1-17.13 n.; note here the absence of mention of Korah. 17: If Israel worships the gods of Canaan (idolizes material property), nature will fail and demonstrate their powerlessness (see 8.1-20 n.). 18-21: See 6.6-9. 24: Your borders: for the LORD's covenant with Abraham, see Gen.15.18 and note there.

you upon the whole land on which you set foot, as he promised you. Understand that this day I offer you the choice of a blessing and a curse. The blessing will come if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God which I give you this day, and the curse if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God but turn aside from the way that I command you this day and follow other gods whom you do not know.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you are entering to occupy, there on Mount Gerizim you shall pronounce the blessing and on Mount Ebal the curse. (These mountains are on the other side of the Jordan, close to Gilgal beside the terebinth of Moreh, beyond the road to the west which lies in the territory of the Canaanites of the Arabah.) You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and occupy the land which the LORD your God is giving you; you shall occupy it and settle in it, and you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and laws which I set before you this day.

#### God's laws delivered by Moses

12 THESE ARE THE STATUTES AND LAWS that you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD the God of your fathers is giving you to occupy as long as you live on earth. You shall demolish all the sanctuaries where the nations whose place you are taking worship their gods, on mountain-tops and hills and under every spreading tree. You shall pull down their altars and break their sacred pillars, burn their sacred poles and hack down the

idols of their gods and thus blot out the name of them from that place.

You shall not follow such practices in the worship of the LORD your God, but you shall resort to the place which the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to receive his Name that it may dwell there. There you shall come and bring your whole-offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, your vows and freewill offerings, and the first-born of your herds and flocks. There you shall eat before the LORD your God; so you shall find joy in whatever you undertake, you and your families, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

You shall not act as we act here today, each of us doing what he pleases, for till now you have not reached the place of rest, the patrimony which the LORD your God is giving you. You shall cross the Jordan and settle in the land which the LORD your God allots you as your patrimony; he will grant you peace from all your enemies on every side, and you will live in security. Then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place which the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—your whole-offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, and all the choice gifts that you have vowed to the LORD. You shall rejoice before the LORD your God with your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who live in your settlements because they have no holding or patrimony among you.

See that you do not offer your whole-offerings in any place at random, but offer them only at the place which the LORD will choose in one of your tribes,

26-28: Examples of *blessing* and *curse* are given in vv. 16-17, 22-25; on their place in the covenant ceremony, see Lev.26.1-46 n. 29: See 27.11-28.68.

12.1-32: **The one legitimate sanctuary.** The command for centralization of worship, presented under three aspects (vv. 2-7,8-12,13-28), was intended to prevent the Canaanite influence and practices at local shrines (vv. 29-31). 1: Here begin the laws, continuing to 26.15. See 1.5 n. 2-3: See ch. 7. 4: Israel's uniqueness is enhanced in the sanctuary. Compare Exod.20.25 n.; 23.19 n.; 28.42-43; Lev.15.16-18 n. 5: *The place*: Jerusalem. Prior to 621 n.c. (see Introduction), worship had been conducted throughout the land without criticism (Josh.18.1; 24.1,26; 1 Sam.1.3; 10.8; see Deut.27.5 n.). Although the LORD is present in the sanctuary where his *Name* is invoked, he is not bound to the sanctuary as gods of many temples in the ancient world were limited by their "dwellings." 6: For the various kinds of *offerings*, see Lev. chs. 1-7; *vows*, Lev. ch. 27; *tithes*, Num.18.21-32. 12: *Levites*: see Num.35.1-8. 13-28: In earlier periods, every slaughter of an animal was a religious act, to be performed at the local sanctuary. With centralization, a distinction is drawn between sacrifice and slaughter for food. The distinction,

and there you must do all I command  
 15 you. On the other hand, you may  
 freely kill for food in all your settle-  
 ments, as the LORD your God blesses  
 you. Clean and unclean alike may eat it,  
 as they would eat the meat of gazelle  
 16 or buck. But on no account must you  
 eat the blood; pour it out on the  
 17 ground like water. In all your settle-  
 ments you may not eat any of the tithe  
 of your corn and new wine and oil, or  
 any of the first-born of your cattle and  
 sheep, or any of the gifts that you vow,  
 or any of your freewill offerings and  
 18 contributions; but you shall eat it be-  
 fore the LORD your God in the place  
 that the LORD your God will choose—  
 you, your sons and daughters, your  
 male and female slaves, and the  
 Levites in your settlements; so you shall  
 find joy before the LORD your God in  
 19 all that you undertake. Be careful not  
 to neglect the Levites in your land as  
 long as you live.

20 When the LORD your God extends  
 your boundaries, as he has promised  
 you, and you say to yourselves, 'I  
 would like to eat meat', because you  
 have a craving for it, then you may  
 21 freely eat it. If the place that the LORD  
 your God will choose to receive his  
 Name is far away, then you may  
 slaughter a beast from the herds or  
 flocks which the LORD has given you  
 and freely eat it in your own settlements  
 22 as I command you. You may eat it as  
 you would the meat of gazelle or buck;  
 both clean and unclean alike may eat  
 23 it. But you must strictly refrain from  
 eating the blood, because the blood is  
 the life; you must not eat the life with  
 24 the flesh. You must not eat it, you must  
 pour it out on the ground like water.  
 25 If you do not eat it, all will be well with  
 you and your children after you; for  
 you will be doing what is right in the  
 26 eyes of the LORD. But such holy-gifts as  
 you may have and the gifts you have  
 vowed, you must bring to the place

which the LORD will choose. You must 27  
 present your whole-offerings, both the  
 flesh and the blood, on the altar of the  
 LORD your God; but of your shared-  
 offerings you shall eat the flesh, while  
 the blood is to be poured on the altar  
 of the LORD your God. See that you 28  
 listen and do all that I command you,  
 and then it will go well with you and  
 your children after you for ever; for  
 you will be doing what is good and right  
 in the eyes of the LORD your God.

When the LORD your God extermi- 29  
 nates, as you advance, the nations  
 whose country you are entering to  
 occupy, you shall take their place and  
 settle in their land. After they have 30  
 been destroyed, take care that you are  
 not ensnared into their ways. Do not  
 inquire about their gods and say, 'How  
 do these nations worship their gods? I  
 too will do the same.' You must not do 31  
 for the LORD your God what they do,  
 for all that they do for their gods is  
 hateful and abominable to the LORD.  
 As sacrifices for their gods they even  
 burn their sons and their daughters.

See that you observe everything I 32  
 command you: you must not add any-  
 thing to it, nor take anything away  
 from it.

When a prophet or dreamer appears 13  
 among you and offers you a sign or a  
 portent and calls on you to follow 2  
 other gods whom you have not known  
 and worship them, even if the sign or  
 portent should come true, do not listen 3  
 to the words of that prophet or that  
 dreamer. God is testing you through  
 him to discover whether you love the  
 LORD your God with all your heart and  
 soul. You must follow the LORD your 4  
 God and fear him; you must keep his  
 commandments and obey him, serve 5  
 him and hold fast to him. That prophet  
 or that dreamer shall be put to death,  
 for he has preached rebellion against  
 the LORD your God who brought you  
 out of Egypt and redeemed you from

however, is absent from the priestly code, which came at a later time (Lev.17.4,5 nn.). 15: An unclean person, however, could not participate in a sacrifice (compare Lev. 7.20-21; Num.18.11). For the rules governing uncleanness, see Lev. chs. 11-15; Num. ch. 19. 16: *Blood*: see Lev. 17.10-12. 31: *Burn their sons*: see Exod.13.13 n.; Lev.18.21 n.

13.1-18: *The treatment of enticers to apostasy*. For a reason behind such extreme measures, see 7.2 n. 1: Throughout the ancient world dreams were regarded as a medium of divine communication (Gen.15.12 n.; 41.25; Num.12.6). 3: *Testing*: a divine action continuing from



that land of slavery; he has tried to lead you astray from the path which the LORD your God commanded you to take. You must rid yourselves of this wickedness.

6 If your brother, your father's son or your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife of your bosom or your dearest friend should entice you secretly to go and worship other gods—gods whom neither you nor  
7 your fathers have known, gods of the people round about you, near or far, at  
8 one end of the land or the other—then you shall not consent or listen. You shall have no pity on him, you shall not  
9 spare him nor shield him, you shall put him to death; your own hand shall be the first to be raised against him and  
10 then all the people shall follow. You shall stone him to death, because he tried to lead you astray from the LORD your God who brought you out of  
11 Egypt, out of the land of slavery. All Israel shall hear of it and be afraid; never again will anything as wicked as this be done among you.

12-13 When you hear that miscreants have appeared in any of the cities which the LORD your God is giving you to occupy, and have led its inhabitants astray by calling on them to serve other gods  
14 whom you have not known, then you shall investigate the matter carefully. If, after diligent examination, the report proves to be true and it is shown that this abominable thing has been done  
15 among you, you shall put the inhabitants of that city to the sword; you shall lay the city under solemn ban together with everything in it. You shall gather all its goods into the square and burn both city and goods as a complete offering to the LORD your God; and it shall remain a mound of  
16 ruins, never to be rebuilt. Let nothing out of all that has been laid under the ban be found in your possession, so that the LORD may turn from his anger and

show you compassion; and in his compassion he will increase you as he swore to your forefathers, provided  
18 that you obey the LORD your God and keep all his commandments which I give you this day, doing only what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

**YOU ARE THE SONS OF THE LORD YOUR 14**  
God: you shall not gash yourselves nor shave your forelocks in mourning for the dead. You are a people holy to the  
2 LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you out of all peoples on earth to be his special possession.

You shall not eat any abominable  
3 thing. These are the animals you may  
4 eat: ox, sheep, goat, buck, gazelle, roe-  
5 buck, wild-goat, white-rumped deer, long-horned antelope, and rock-goat.  
6 You may eat any animal which has a  
parted foot or a cloven hoof and also  
7 chews the cud; those which only chew  
the cud or only have a parted or cloven  
8 hoof you may not eat. These are: the camel, the hare, and the rock-badger,<sup>v</sup> because they chew the cud but do not have cloven hoofs; you shall regard them as unclean; and the pig, because  
8 it has a cloven hoof but does not chew the cud, you shall regard as unclean. You shall not eat their flesh or even touch their dead carcasses. Of creatures  
9 that live in water you may eat all those that have fins and scales, but you may  
10 not eat any that have neither fins nor scales; you shall regard them as unclean. You may eat all clean birds.  
11 These are the birds you may not eat:  
12 the griffon-vulture,<sup>w</sup> the black vulture, the bearded vulture,<sup>x</sup> the kite, every  
13 kind of falcon, every kind of crow,<sup>y</sup> the desert-owl, the short-eared owl,  
14 the long-eared owl, every kind of hawk, the tawny owl, the screech-owl,  
15 the little owl, the horned owl, the  
16 osprey, the fisher-owl, the stork,<sup>z</sup> every  
18

<sup>v</sup> Or rock-rabbit.    <sup>w</sup> Or eagle.    <sup>x</sup> Or ossifrage.  
<sup>y</sup> Or raven.    <sup>z</sup> Or heron.

the Wilderness experience (8.2). 6-11: No loyalty may be placed ahead of that which belongs to the LORD. See 7.1-26 n.; compare Mt.10.34-39.

14.1-21: Restrictions on mourning custom and diet. This was intended to stress Israel's uniqueness and to prevent participation in the cult of the Canaanite gods. 1: Possibly these rites were connected with the worship of the dead (26.14; Num.19.1-22 n.) or of the fertility gods who were thought to "die" and "arise" with the cycle of vegetation. Compare Ezek.8.14; Zech.12.11. 3-20: See Lev.11.1-23; see also Lev.11.1-47 n. on eating clean and unclean animals.

kind of cormorant, the hoopoe, and the bat.

19 All teeming winged creatures you shall regard as unclean; they may not be eaten. You may eat every clean insect.

21 You shall not eat anything that has died a natural death. You shall give it to the aliens who live in your settlements, and they may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

22 Year by year you shall set aside a tithe of all the produce of your seed, of everything that grows on the land.

23 You shall eat it in the presence of the LORD your God in the place which he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—the tithe of your corn and new wine and oil, and the first-born of your cattle and sheep, so that for all time you may learn to fear the LORD your

24 God. When the LORD your God has blessed you with prosperity, and the place which he will choose to receive his Name is far from you and the journey too great for you to be able to carry your tithe, then you may exchange it for silver. You shall tie up the silver and take it with you to the place which the LORD your God will choose. There you shall spend it as you will on cattle or sheep, wine or strong drink, or whatever you desire; you shall consume it there with rejoicing, both you and your family, in the presence of the LORD your God. You must not neglect the Levites who live in your settlements; for they have no holding or patrimony among you.

28 At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce for that year and leave it in your settlements so that the Levites, who have no holding or patrimony among you, and the aliens, orphans, and widows in your settlements may

come and eat their fill. If you do this the LORD your God will bless you in everything to which you set your hand.

At the end of every seventh year you shall make a remission of debts. This is how the remission shall be made: everyone who holds a pledge shall remit the pledge of anyone indebted to him. He shall not press a fellow-countryman for repayment, for the LORD's year of remission has been declared.<sup>a</sup> You may press foreigners; but if it is a fellow-countryman that holds anything of yours, you must remit all claim upon it. There will never be any poor among you if only you obey the LORD your God by carefully keeping these commandments which I lay upon you this day; for the LORD your God will bless you with great prosperity in the land which he is giving you to occupy as your patrimony. When the LORD your God blesses you, as he promised, you will lend to men of many nations, but you yourselves will not borrow; you will rule many nations, but they will not rule you.

When one of your fellow-countrymen in any of your settlements in the land which the LORD your God is giving you becomes poor, do not be hard-hearted or close-fisted with your countryman in his need. Be open-handed towards him and lend him on pledge as much as he needs. See that you do not harbour iniquitous thoughts when you find that the seventh year, the year of remission, is near, and look askance at your needy countryman and give him nothing. If you do, he will appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give freely to him and do not begrudge him your bounty, because it is for this very bounty that the LORD your God will bless you in everything that you do or undertake. The poor will always be with you in the land, and for that reason

<sup>a</sup> Or has come.

21: *A natural death*: see Lev.17.15; compare Exod.22.31 n. On boiling a *kid*, see Exod.23.19 n. 14.22–29: **Tithing and centralization.** 23–27: One intent was to deprive local sanctuaries of support. 28–29: Since it was not possible for all of the abundance of Levites to serve at the central sanctuary (18.6–8), many continued to live throughout the land (Num.35.1–8) and to receive tithes like the poor.

15.1–23: **The sabbatical year.** The rest granted the land every seventh year in acknowledgment of the LORD's ownership (Lev.25.2–7) or for the use of the poor (Exod.23.10–11) must now be accompanied by a cancellation of debts. Compare the termination of sale or lease of property at

I command you to be open-handed with your countrymen, both poor and distressed, in your own land.

- 12 When a fellow-Hebrew, man or woman, sells himself to you as a slave, he shall serve you for six years and in the seventh year you shall set him free.
- 13 But when you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed. Give to him lavishly from your flock, from your threshing-floor and your wine-press. Be generous to him, because the LORD
- 18 your God has blessed you. Do not take it amiss when you have to set him free, for his six years' service to you has been worth twice<sup>b</sup> the wage of a hired man. Then the LORD your God will
- 15 bless you in everything you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you; that is why I am giving you this command today.
- 16 If, however, a slave is content to be with you and says, 'I will not leave you, I love you and your family', then you shall take an awl and pierce through his ear to the door, and he will be your slave for life. You shall treat a slave-girl in the same way.
- 19<sup>c</sup> You shall dedicate to the LORD your God every male first-born of your herds and flocks. You shall not plough with the first-born of your cattle, nor shall you shear the first-born of your sheep.
- 20 Year by year you and your family shall eat them in the presence of the LORD your God, in the place which the LORD
- 21 will choose. If any animal is defective, if it is lame or blind, or has any other serious defect, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. Eat it in your settlements; both clean and unclean alike may eat it as they would the meat

of gazelle or buck. But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water.

OBSERVE THE MONTH OF ABIB AND KEEP 16 the Passover to the LORD your God, for it was in that month that the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. You shall slaughter a lamb, a kid, or a calf as a Passover victim to the LORD your God in the place which he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. You shall eat nothing leavened with it. For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes, the bread of affliction. In urgent haste you came out of Egypt, and thus as long as you live you shall commemorate the day of your coming out of Egypt. No leaven shall be seen in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the flesh which you have slaughtered in the evening of the first day remain overnight till morning. You may not slaughter the Passover victim in any of the settlements which the LORD your God is giving you, but only in the place which he will choose as a dwelling for his Name; you shall slaughter the Passover victim in the evening as the sun goes down, the time of your coming out of Egypt. You shall boil it and eat it in the place which the LORD your God will choose, and then next morning you shall turn and go to your tents. For six days you shall eat unleavened cakes, and on the seventh day there shall be a closing ceremony in honour of the LORD your God; you shall do no work.

Seven weeks shall be counted: start

<sup>b</sup> worth twice: or equivalent to.  
<sup>c</sup> Verse 18 transposed to follow verse 14.

the Jubilee (Lev.25.8-34). 12: While a foreigner might be enslaved for six years (Exod.21.2), a fellow Israelite could only be reduced to a "hired man" until the Jubilee (Lev.25.39-40). In understanding the word "Hebrew" here to mean "Israelite"—at times it does not; see Gen. 10.21 n.; Exod.21.2 n.—the term of service as a hired man is reduced from a maximum of fifty years to six. *Woman*: see Exod.21.7 n. 13-14: This was not required by an earlier law (Exod.21.1-4). 17: *To the door*: see Exod.21.6 n. 19: *First-born*: see Exod.13.2 n. 20: *Year by year*: the centralization of worship and hence great distance from Jerusalem made sacrifice on the eighth day (Exod.22.30) impractical. 21: *Defective*: see Lev. 12.4 n.

16.1-17: *The annual pilgrim-feasts*, hereafter to be celebrated only at the central sanctuary. Formerly, with the exception of Passover (which was kept in the home: Exod.12.21-27), they had been observed at the local shrines. Other special days which do not require the bringing of offerings, such as the New Year and the Day of Atonement (Lev.23.23-32; Num.29.1-11), are not mentioned here. 1: *Abib*: see Exod.13.4 n. *Passover*: see Exod.12.1-27; 13.1-16. 2: *Calf*: a general term for an animal allowed for sacrifice at the sanctuary. In Exod.12.3-5 only "lamb" and "kid" are specified. 3: *Unleavened cakes*: see Exod.12.15 n. 9-12: *The Feast of Weeks*:

counting the seven weeks from the time when the sickle is put to the standing corn; then you shall keep the pilgrim-feast of Weeks to the LORD your God and offer a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that the LORD your God has given you. You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, with your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites who live in your settlements, and the aliens, orphans, and widows among you. You shall rejoice in the place which the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and remember that you were slaves in Egypt. You shall keep and observe all these statutes.

You shall keep the pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles<sup>d</sup> for seven days, when you bring in the produce from your threshing-floor and winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast, with your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites, aliens, orphans, and widows who live in your settlements. For seven days you shall keep this feast to the LORD your God in the place which he will choose, when the LORD your God gives you his blessing in all your harvest and in all your work; you shall keep the feast with joy.

Three times a year all your males shall come into the presence of the LORD your God in the place which he will choose: at the pilgrim-feasts of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles. No one shall come into the presence of the LORD empty-handed. Each of you shall bring such a gift as he can in proportion to the blessing which the LORD your God has given you.

You shall appoint for yourselves judges and officers, tribe by tribe, in every settlement which the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall dispense true justice to the people. You shall not pervert the course of justice or show favour, nor shall you accept a bribe; for bribery makes the wise man

blind and the just man give a crooked answer. Justice, and justice alone, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not plant any kind of tree as a sacred pole beside the altar of the LORD your God which you shall build. You shall not set up a sacred pillar, for the LORD your God hates them.

You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep that has any defect or serious blemish, for that would be abominable to the LORD your God.

If so be that, in any one of the settlements which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman is found among you who does what is wrong in the eyes of the LORD your God, by breaking his covenant and going to worship other gods and prostrating himself before them or before the sun and moon and all the host of heaven—a thing that I have forbidden—then, if it is reported to you or you hear of it, make thorough inquiry. If the report proves to be true, and it is shown that this abominable thing has been done in Israel, then bring the man or woman who has done this wicked deed to the city gate and stone him to death. Sentence of death shall be carried out on the testimony of two or of three witnesses: no one shall be put to death on the testimony of a single witness. The first stones shall be thrown by the witnesses and then all the people shall follow; thus you shall rid yourselves of this wickedness.

When the issue in any lawsuit is beyond your competence, whether it be a case of blood against blood, plea against plea, or blow against blow, that is disputed in your courts, then go up without delay to the place which the LORD your God will choose. There you

*d Or Booths or Arbours.*

see Exod.23.16 n.; Lev.23.15–21. **13–15: The Feast of Tabernacles:** see Exod.23.16 n.; Lev.23.33–35,39–43.

**16.18–17.13: Centralization of the judicial system.** **18:** Guidance for the local courts. **21–22: Pole; pillar:** see Exod.34.13 n. The verses belong typically with 12.30–31. **17.1: Blemish:** see Lev.12.4 n. **2–5:** See ch. 13 for similar instances; for the reason, see 7.2 n. **6:** So also 19.15; Num.35.30. For a procedure in the absence of witnesses, see Num.5.11–31. **8–13:** The ultimate authority in case of litigation (1.17; see Exod.18.13–26 n.).

must go to the levitical priests or to the judge then in office; seek their guidance, and they will pronounce the sentence. You shall act on the pronouncement which they make from the place which the LORD will choose. See that you carry out all their instructions. 10  
 11 Act on the instruction which they give you, or on the precedent that they cite; do not swerve from what they tell you, 12 either to right or to left. Anyone who presumes to reject the decision either of the priest who ministers there to the LORD your God, or of the judge, shall die; thus you will rid Israel of wickedness. Then all the people will hear of it and be afraid, and will never again show such presumption. 13  
 14 When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and occupy it and settle in it, and you then say, 'Let us appoint over us a king, as all the surrounding nations do', you shall appoint as king the man whom the LORD your God will choose. You shall appoint over you a man of your own race; you must not appoint a foreigner, one who is not of your own race. He shall not acquire many horses, nor, to add to his horses, shall he cause the people to go back to Egypt, for this is what the LORD said to you, 'You shall never go back that way.' 15  
 17 He shall not acquire many wives and so be led astray; nor shall he acquire great quantities of silver and gold for himself. When he has ascended the throne of the kingdom, he shall make a copy of this law in a book at the dictation 18 of the levitical priests. He shall keep it by him and read from it all his life, so

that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and keep all the words of this law and observe these statutes. In this way 20 he shall not become prouder than his fellow-countrymen, nor shall he turn from these commandments to right or to left; then he and his sons will reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

The levitical priests, the whole tribe 18 of Levi, shall have no holding or patrimony in Israel; they shall eat the food-offerings of the LORD, their patrimony. They shall have no patrimony among their fellow-countrymen; 2 the LORD is their patrimony, as he promised them.

This shall be the customary due of 3 the priests from those of the people who offer sacrifice, whether a bull or a sheep: the shoulders, the cheeks, and the stomach shall be given to the priest. You shall give him also the firstfruits 4 of your corn and new wine and oil, and the first fleeces at the shearing of your flocks. For it was he whom the LORD 5 your God chose from all your tribes to attend on the LORD and to minister in the name of the LORD, both he and his sons for all time.

When a Levite comes from any 6 settlement in Israel where he may be lodging to the place which the LORD will choose, if he comes in the eagerness of his heart and ministers in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow-Levites who attend on the LORD 7 there, he shall have an equal share of food with them, besides what he may inherit from his father's family. 8

When you come into the land which 9 the LORD your God is giving you, do

17.14-20: Regulations concerning kingship. This office had been established during the eleventh century, accompanied by both positive and negative attitudes (1 Sam. chs. 8-12; see also Judg. 8.22-23; 9.1-21). The point here is that the role of the king must not be patterned after those of the surrounding nations. 15: *God will choose*: legitimate kings are to be approved and anointed by the LORD's spokesmen, as were Saul (1 Sam. chs. 9-10) and David (1 Sam. chs. 15-16). See Hos. 8.4. *Foreigner*: possibly an allusion to Queen Jezebel (a Phoenician from the city of Sidon, 1 Kgs. 16.31), who violated the customs of Israel by introducing the worship of her foreign god (1 Kgs. chs. 18-19; 21). 16-17: The economic and military policies of Solomon (1 Kgs. 10.26-29), as well as his many marriages to foreign women (1 Kgs. 11.1-8), may be alluded to here. 18: *This law*: namely, chs. 12-26.

18.1-8: Support for the centralized priesthood. For the early history of the tribe of Levi, see Gen. 34.1-31 n.; for their rise to the priestly office, see Exod. 32.26-29 n. Here, the entire tribe serves as priests, but in the postexilic period the descendants of Aaron received special designation (Num. 16.1-17.13 n.). 3-5: See Num. 35.2-8 n. 6: *Any settlement*: local sanctuary (14.28-29 n.). Those Levites unable or unwilling to transfer to the central shrine (2 Kgs. 23.8-9) remained in their cities (12.18-19; 14.27,29) or moved to the cities set aside for them (Num. 35.1-8).

18.9-22: The office of prophet. 9-13: Various Canaanite ways of seeking the divine will are

not learn to imitate the abominable  
 10 customs of those other nations. Let no  
 one be found among you who makes  
 his son or daughter pass through fire,  
 no augur or soothsayer or diviner or  
 11 sorcerer, no one who casts spells or  
 traffics with ghosts and spirits, and no  
 12 necromancer. Those who do these  
 things are abominable to the LORD,  
 and it is because of these abominable  
 practices that the LORD your God is  
 13 driving them out before you. You shall  
 be whole-hearted in your service of the  
 LORD your God.

14 These nations whose place you are  
 taking listen to soothsayers and augurs,  
 but the LORD your God does not per-  
 15 mit you to do this. The LORD your God  
 will raise up a prophet from among you  
 like myself, and you shall listen to him.  
 16 All this follows from your request to the  
 LORD your God on Horeb on the day  
 of the assembly. There you said, 'Let  
 us not hear again the voice of the LORD  
 our God, nor see this great fire again,  
 17 or we shall die.' Then the LORD said to  
 18 me, 'What they have said is right. I will  
 raise up for them a prophet like you,  
 one of their own race, and I will put  
 my words into his mouth. He shall con-  
 19 vey all my commands to them, and if  
 anyone does not listen to the words  
 which he will speak in my name I will  
 20 require satisfaction from him. But the  
 prophet who presumes to utter in my  
 name what I have not commanded  
 him or who speaks in the name of  
 21 other gods—that prophet shall die.' If  
 you ask yourselves, 'How shall we  
 recognize a word that the LORD has not  
 22 uttered?', this is the answer: When the  
 word spoken by the prophet in the  
 name of the LORD is not fulfilled and  
 does not come true, it is not a word  
 spoken by the LORD. The prophet has

spoken presumptuously; do not hold  
 him<sup>e</sup> in awe.

WHEN THE LORD YOUR GOD EXTERM- 19  
 inates the nations whose land he is  
 giving you, and you take their place  
 and settle in their cities and houses,  
 you shall set apart three cities in the 2  
 land which he is giving you to occupy.  
 Divide into three districts the territory 3  
 which the LORD your God is giving you  
 as patrimony, and determine where  
 each city shall lie. These shall be places  
 in which homicides may take sanctuary.

This is the kind of homicide who 4  
 may take sanctuary there and save his  
 life: the man who strikes another with-  
 out intent and with no previous enmity  
 between them; for instance, the man 5  
 who goes into a wood with his mate to  
 fell trees, and, when cutting a tree, he  
 relaxes his grip on the axe,<sup>f</sup> the head  
 glances off the tree, hits the other man  
 and kills him. The homicide may take  
 sanctuary in any one of these cities, and  
 his life shall be safe. Otherwise, when 6  
 the dead man's next-of-kin who had  
 the duty of vengeance pursued him in  
 the heat of passion, he might overtake  
 him if the distance were great, and take  
 his life, although the homicide was not  
 liable to the death-penalty because there  
 had been no previous enmity on his  
 part. That is why I command you to set 7  
 apart three cities.

If the LORD your God extends your 8  
 boundaries, as he swore to your fore-  
 fathers, and gives you the whole land  
 which he promised to them, because 9  
 you keep all the commandments that I  
 am laying down today and carry them  
 out by loving the LORD your God and

<sup>e</sup> Or it.

<sup>f</sup> when . . . axe: or as he swings the axe to cut a tree.

contrasted with the LORD's initiative in speaking through a prophet (vv. 14–19). 10: *Pass through fire*: see Lev.18.21 n.; 2 Kgs.16.3; 21.6. *Augur*: see Num.22.7 n. *Soothsayer*: see Lev.19.26 n. 11: *Necromancer*: one who consults the dead for oracles (see Lev.19.31 n.). 15: On the origin of the prophetic office in Moses' time, see Num.11.27–30 n. 16: *You said*: see Exod.20.18–21. 17–18: The people's fear of God is interpreted as a permanent state and hence the office of mediator (5.22–31 n.) is necessary in every succeeding age. For the development in much later times of the idea of a prophet like Moses, see Jn.6.14 n.; 7.40. Acts 3.17–24 applies the passage to Jesus. 20: See 13.1–5. 21–22: History is to be the final judge of the truth of uttered prophecies. On "false prophets" see Jer. ch. 28 and 1 Kgs.22.1–28.

19.1–13: *Cities of refuge for the accidental homicide*. They must be conveniently located throughout the land, since the local altars which served the purpose (Exod.21.14; 1 Kgs.1.50–53) were to be closed (ch. 12). See also Num.35.9–34.

by conforming to his ways for all time, then you shall add three more cities of refuge to these three. Let no innocent blood be shed in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as your patrimony, or blood-guilt will fall on you.

11 When one man is the enemy of another, and he lies in wait for him, attacks him and strikes him a blow so that he dies, and then takes sanctuary in one of these cities, the elders of his own city shall send to fetch him; they shall hand him over to the next-of-kin, and he shall die. You shall show him no mercy, but shall rid Israel of the guilt of innocent blood; then all will be well with you.

14 Do not move your neighbour's boundary stone, fixed by the men of former times in the patrimony which you shall occupy in the land the LORD your God gives you for your possession.

15 A single witness may not give evidence against a man in the matter of any crime or sin which he commits: a charge must be established on the evidence of two or of three witnesses.

16 When a malicious witness comes forward to give false evidence against a man, and the two disputants stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges then in office, if, after careful examination by the judges, he be proved to be a false witness giving false evidence against his fellow, you shall treat him as he intended to treat his fellow, and thus rid yourselves of this wickedness. The rest of the people when they hear of it will be afraid: never again will anything as wicked as this be done among you. You shall show no mercy: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

20 WHEN YOU TAKE THE FIELD AGAINST AN enemy and are faced by horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them; for the

LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to join battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army in these words: 'Hear, O Israel, this day you are joining battle with the enemy; do not lose heart, or be afraid, or give way to panic in face of them; for the LORD your God will go with you to fight your enemy for you and give you the victory.' Then the officers shall address the army in these words: 'Any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it shall go back to his house; or he may die in battle and another man dedicate it. Any man who has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use it shall go back home; or he may die in battle and another man use it. Any man who has pledged himself to take a woman in marriage and has not taken her shall go back home; or he may die in battle and another man take her.' The officers shall further address the army: 'Any man who is afraid and has lost heart shall go back home; or his comrades will be discouraged as he is.' When these officers have finished addressing the army, commanders shall be appointed to lead it.

When you advance on a city to attack it, make an offer of peace. If the city accepts the offer and opens its gates to you, then all the people in it shall be put to forced labour and shall serve you. If it does not make peace with you but offers battle, you shall besiege it, and the LORD your God will deliver it into your hands. You shall put all its males to the sword, but you may take the women, the dependants, and the cattle for yourselves, and plunder everything else in the city. You may enjoy the use of the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God gives you. That is what you shall do to cities at a great distance, as opposed to those which belong to nations near at

19.14-21: **Boundary markers and witnesses.** This is related topically to the previous section by the mention of districts (v. 3) and boundaries (v. 8). 14: On the preservation of ancestral property, see Num.27.1-11 n. 15: See 17.6 n. 16: The giving of *false evidence* is forbidden in Exod.20.16, but no penalty is given there. 21: See Exod.21.23-25 n.

20.1-20: **Rules for warfare.** 5-7: The reluctance of such individuals to participate enthusiastically would, like fear (v. 8), infect the other troops. 6: A *vineyard* could not be harvested until the fifth year (Lev.19.23-25). 7: The exemption of the newlywed was for one year (24.5). 10-15: Procedure for remote cities which offer little danger of cultic contamination. For an

16 hand. In the cities of these nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you as a patrimony, you shall not  
 17 leave any creature alive. You shall annihilate them—Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites—as the LORD your God commanded you, so that they may not  
 18 teach you to imitate all the abominable things that they have done for their gods and so cause you to sin against the LORD your God.

19 When you are at war, and lay siege to a city for a long time in order to take it, do not destroy its trees by taking the axe to them, for they provide you with food; you shall not cut them down. The trees of the field are not men that  
 20 you should besiege them. But you may destroy or cut down any trees that you know do not yield food, and use them in siege-works against the city that is at war with you, until it falls.

21 When a dead body is found lying in open country, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to occupy, and it is not known who struck the  
 2 blow, your elders and your judges shall come out and measure the distance to the surrounding towns to find which is  
 3 nearest. The elders of that town shall take a heifer that has never been  
 4 mated<sup>g</sup> or worn a yoke, and bring it down to a ravine where there is a stream that never runs dry and the ground is never tilled or sown, and there in the  
 5 ravine they shall break its neck. The priests, the sons of Levi, shall then come forward; for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the LORD, and their voice shall be decisive in all cases of  
 dispute and assault. Then all the elders  
 6 of the town nearest to the dead body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck has been broken in the ravine. They shall solemnly declare:  
 7 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did we witness the bloodshed. Accept expiation, O LORD, for thy  
 8 people Israel whom thou hast redeemed, and do not let the guilt of innocent blood rest upon thy people Israel: let this bloodshed be expiated on their behalf.' Thus, by doing what  
 9 is right in the eyes of the LORD, you shall rid yourselves of the guilt of innocent blood.

When you wage war against your  
 10 enemy and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take some of them captive, then if you see a  
 11 comely woman among the captives and take a liking to her, you may marry her. You shall bring her into your house,  
 12 where she shall shave her head, pare her nails, and discard the clothes which  
 13 she had when captured. Then she shall stay in your house and mourn for her father and mother for a full month. After that you may have intercourse with her; you shall be her husband and she your wife. But if you no longer find  
 14 her pleasing, let her go free. You must not sell her, nor treat her harshly, since you have had your will with her.

When a man has two wives, one  
 15 loved and the other unloved, if they both bear him sons, and the son of the unloved wife is the elder, then, when the  
 16 day comes for him to divide his property among his sons, he shall not treat the son of the loved wife as his first-

<sup>g</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. put to work.*

illustration, see Num. ch. 31. 16–18: Procedure for nearby cities (7.1–5). For an illustration, see Josh. 6.15–27.

21.1–25.19: A collection of civil laws unrelated to centralization.

21.1–9: Expiation for an unsolved murder. Topically, the unit belongs with 19.1–13. Since the blood of the murderer is not available for expiation (Num. 35.33) and the land is hence polluted, an animal substitute is used. The removal of guilt is symbolized by the washing of hands and by the blood being carried away by the stream (compare Lev. 14.5–7 n.). The earliest form of this ritual may have been a Canaanite sacrifice to the gods of the underworld (compare Num. 19.1–22 n.). 4: *Ravine*: a traditional place of sacrifice to underworld deities (2 Chr. 33.6; Isa. 57.5–6). *Streams* were thought to flow up from the underworld source; the Canaanites personified these as divine judges. Hence, springs were often the sites of sanctuaries where legal disputes were resolved. *Never tilled*: barren ground was once thought to be the domain of demons. 7–9: The ritual act is largely only a formality, and is made effective by prayer to the LORD.

21.10–22.12: Miscellaneous laws. 10–14: This belongs topically with 20.1–20. 18–21: Execution of an incorrigible son. The complaint must be lodged by both parents and evaluated by legal



17 born in contempt of his true first-born, the son of the unloved wife. He shall recognize the rights of his first-born, the son of the unloved wife, and give him a double share of all that he possesses; for he was the firstfruits of his manhood, and the right of the first-born is his.

18 When a man has a son who is disobedient and out of control, and will not obey his father or his mother, or pay attention when they punish him, 19 then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of the town, at the town gate. 20 They shall say to the elders of the town, 'This son of ours is disobedient and out of control; he will not obey us, 21 he is a wastrel and a drunkard.' Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death, and you will thereby rid yourselves of this wickedness. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

22 When a man is convicted of a capital offence and is put to death, you shall 23 hang him on a gibbet; but his body shall not remain on the gibbet overnight; you shall bury it on the same day, for a hanged man is offensive<sup>h</sup> in the sight of God. You shall not pollute the land which the LORD your God is giving you as your patrimony.

**22** WHEN YOU SEE A FELLOW-COUNTRY- 2 man's ox or sheep straying, do not 3 ignore it but take it back to him. If the owner is not a near neighbour and you do not know who he is, take the animal into your own house and keep it with you until he claims it, and then give it 3 back to him. Do the same with his ass or his cloak or anything else that your fellow-countryman has lost, if you find it. You may not ignore it.

4 When you see your fellow-country- man's ass or ox lying on the road, do not ignore it; you must help him to lift it to its feet again.

5 No woman shall wear an article of man's clothing, nor shall a man put on woman's dress; for those who do these

things are abominable to the LORD your God.

When you come across a bird's nest 6 by the road, in a tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs in it and the mother-bird on the nest, do not take both mother and young. Let the 7 mother-bird go free, and take only the young; then you will prosper and live long.

When you build a new house, put a 8 parapet along the roof, or you will bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if anyone should fall from it.

You shall not sow your vineyard with 9 a second crop, or the full yield will be forfeit, both the yield of the seed you sow and the fruit of the vineyard.

You shall not plough with an ox and 10 an ass yoked together.

You shall not wear clothes woven 11 with two kinds of yarn, wool and flax together.

You shall make twisted tassels on the 12 four corners of your cloaks which you wrap round you.

When a man takes a wife and after 13 having intercourse with her turns against her and brings trumped-up 14 charges against her, giving her a bad name and saying, 'I took this woman and slept with her and did not find proof of virginity in her', then the girl's 15 father and mother shall take the proof of her virginity to the elders of the town, at the town gate. The girl's 16 father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, and he has turned against her. He has 17 trumped up a charge and said, "I have not found proofs of virginity in your daughter." Here are the proofs.' They shall then spread the garment before the elders of the town. The elders shall 18 take the man and punish him: they shall fine him a hundred pieces of 19 silver because he has given a bad name to a virgin of Israel, and hand them to the girl's father. She shall be his wife: he is not free to divorce her all his life

<sup>h</sup> Or accursed.

authorities. 22.1-4: See Exod.23.4-5. 5: The effect of the regulation was to prevent Israelites from attending Canaanite worship where priests and worshippers wore the dress of the opposite sex. 9-11: The origin of these prohibitions is obscure. *A second crop*: compare Lev.25.4 n., 23 n. *Two kinds of yarn*: see Lev.19.19 n. 12: *Tassels*: see Num.15.37-40.

22.13-30: *Sexual relations*. 15: *Proof*: a bloodstained sheet. 19: On *divorce*, compare 24.1-4.

20 long. If, on the other hand, the accusation is true and no proof of the girl's virginity is found, then they shall bring her out to the door of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has committed an outrage in Israel by playing the prostitute in her father's house: you shall rid yourselves of this wickedness.

22 When a man is discovered lying with a married woman, they shall both die, the woman as well as the man who lay with her: you shall rid Israel of this wickedness.

23 When a virgin is pledged in marriage to a man and another man comes upon her in the town and lies with her, you shall bring both of them out to the gate of that town and stone them to death; the girl because, although in the town, she did not cry for help, and the man because he dishonoured another man's wife: you shall rid yourselves of this wickedness. If the man comes upon such a girl in the country and rapes her, then the man alone shall die because he lay with her. You shall do nothing to the girl, she has done nothing worthy of death: this deed is like that of a man who attacks another and murders him, for the man came upon her in the country and, though the girl cried for help, there was no one to rescue her.

28 When a man comes upon a virgin who is not pledged in marriage and forces her to lie with him, and they are discovered, then the man who lies with her shall give the girl's father fifty pieces of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has dishonoured her. He is not free to divorce her all his life long.

30 A man shall not take his father's

wife: he shall not bring shame on his father.

No man whose testicles have been crushed or whose organ has been severed shall become a member of the assembly of the LORD.

No descendant of an irregular union, even down to the tenth generation, shall become a member of the assembly of the LORD.

No Ammonite or Moabite, even down to the tenth generation, shall become a member of the assembly of the LORD. They shall never become members of the assembly of the LORD, because they did not meet you with food and water on your way out of Egypt, and because they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram-naharaim<sup>i</sup> to revile you. The LORD your God refused to listen to Balaam and turned his denunciation into a blessing, because the LORD your God loved you. You shall never seek their welfare or their good all your life long.

You shall not regard an Edomite as an abomination, for he is your own kin; nor an Egyptian, for you were aliens in his land. The third generation of children born to them may become members of the assembly of the LORD.

When you are encamped against an enemy, you shall be careful to avoid any foulness. When one of your number is unclean because of an emission of seed at night, he must go outside the camp; he may not come within it. Towards evening he shall wash himself in water, and at sunset he may come back into the camp. You shall have a sign outside the camp showing where you can withdraw. With your equip-

<sup>i</sup> That is Aram of Two Rivers.

22: See Lev.20.10. The Ten Commandments (Exod.20.14) do not specify a penalty. 23-27: The violation is more against one's neighbor than against the girl, as the next regulation makes clear. 28-29: See Exod.22.16-17. 30: See 27.20; Lev.18.8; 20.11.

23.1-14: Exclusion from the community worship. Since the initial categories are sexual, this unit logically follows the previous one. 1: For more general regulations concerning imperfection, see Lev.12.4 n.; 13.1-46 n. 2: Irregular union: possibly those described in Lev.18.6-18. 3-6: The basis for exclusion shifts from sexual irregularities to ancestry and historical events. Recurring warfare with Ammonites and Moabites lies behind this prohibition. 4: Num. chs. 21-24 do not mention Ammonite participation in the Balaam episode. 7: Brother: Gen.25.24-26. That the Edomites are here accepted, despite their one-time hostility to Israel (see Num.20.14-21), suggests that this passage is very late in origin, reflecting a time when the age-old hostilities had ceased. The basis for the view of the Egyptians here is unknown. 9-14: These supplements to the rules for "holy" warfare (20.1-20) are included here because they deal with temporary disqualification from the sacred assembly. 10-11: See Lev.15.16-17.

ment you will have a trowel, and when you squat outside, you shall scrape a hole with it and then turn and cover  
 14 your excrement. For the LORD your God goes about in your camp, to keep you safe and to hand over your enemies as you advance, and your camp must be kept holy for fear that he should see something indecent and go with you no further.

15 You shall not surrender to his master a slave who has taken refuge with you.  
 16 Let him stay with you anywhere he chooses in any one of your settlements, wherever suits him best; you shall not force him.

17 No Israelite woman shall become a temple-prostitute, and no Israelite man shall prostitute himself in this way.

18 You shall not allow a common prostitute's fee, or the pay of a male prostitute, to be brought into the house of the LORD your God in fulfilment of any vow, for both of them are abominable to the LORD your God.

19 You shall not charge interest on anything you lend to a fellow-countryman, money or food or anything else on which interest can be charged. You may charge interest on a loan to a foreigner but not on a loan to a fellow-countryman, for then the LORD your God will bless you in all you undertake in the land which you are entering to occupy.

21 When you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not put off its fulfilment; otherwise the LORD your God will require satisfaction of you and you will be guilty of sin. If you choose not to make a vow, you will not be guilty of sin; but if you voluntarily make a vow to the LORD your God, mind what you say and do what you have promised.

24 When you go into another man's vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you wish to satisfy your hunger, but you may not put any into your basket.

25 When you go into another man's standing corn, you may pluck ears to

rub in your hands, but you may not put a sickle to his standing corn.

When a man has married a wife, but she does not win his favour because he finds something shameful in her, and he writes her a note of divorce, gives it to her and dismisses her; and suppose after leaving his house she goes off to become the wife of another man, and this next husband turns against her and writes her a note of divorce which he gives her and dismisses her, or dies after making her his wife—then in that case her first husband who dismissed her is not free to take her back to be his wife again after she has become for him unclean. This is abominable to the LORD; you must not bring sin upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you as your patrimony.

When a man is newly married, he shall not be liable for military service or any other public duty. He shall remain at home exempt from service for one year and enjoy the wife he has taken.

No man shall take millstones, or even the upper one alone, in pledge; that would be taking a life in pledge.

When a man is found to have kidnapped a fellow-countryman, an Israelite, and to have treated him harshly and sold him, he shall die: you shall rid yourselves of this wickedness.

Be careful how you act in all cases of malignant skin-disease; be careful to observe all that the levitical priests tell you; I gave them my commands which you must obey. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam, on your way out of Egypt.

When you make a loan to another man, do not enter his house to take a pledge from him. Wait outside, and the man whose creditor you are shall bring the pledge out to you. If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in the cloak he has pledged. Give it back to him at sunset so that he may sleep in it and

23.15–25.19: **Miscellaneous laws.** 15–16: In contrast, other Ancient Near Eastern codes provided the death penalty for harboring a fugitive slave. 17–18: See Gen.38.21 n. 19–20: See Exod.22.25; Lev.25.35–38. 21–23: See Lev. ch. 27; Num. ch. 30. 24–25: See 24.19–22. *Rub in your hands*: to remove the husks before eating. See Mt.12.l. 24.1–4: The intent is to prevent impulsive divorce. 1: *Shameful*: probably not adultery, which carried the death penalty (22.22). 5: See 20.5–7; Exod.19.15 n. 6: *Millstones*: used to grind grain, the dietary staple. 7: See Exod.21.16. 8: See Lev. chs. 13–14. 9: See Num. ch. 12. 12–13: The regulation made loans

bless you; then it will be counted to your credit in the sight of the LORD your God.

14 You shall not keep back the wages of a man who is poor and needy, whether a fellow-countryman or an alien living in your country in one of your settlements. Pay him his wages on the same day before sunset, for he is poor and his heart is set on them: he may appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; a man shall be put to death only for his own sin.

17 You shall not deprive aliens and orphans of justice nor take a widow's cloak in pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; that is why I command you to do this.

19 When you reap the harvest in your field and forget a swathe, do not go back to pick it up; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake.

20 When you beat your olive-trees, do not strip them afterwards; what is left shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

21 When you gather the grapes from your vineyard, do not glean afterwards; what is left shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt; that is why I command you to do this.

25 When two men go to law and present themselves for judgement, the judges shall try the case; they shall acquit the innocent and condemn the guilty. If the guilty man is sentenced to be flogged, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence; the number of strokes shall correspond to the gravity of the offence. They may

give him forty strokes, but not more; otherwise, if they go further and exceed this number, your fellow-countryman will have been publicly degraded.

You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the corn.

When brothers live together and one of them dies without leaving a son, his widow shall not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall have intercourse with her; he shall take her in marriage and do his duty by her as her husband's brother. The first son she bears shall perpetuate the dead brother's name so that it may not be blotted out from Israel. But if the man is unwilling to take his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not do his duty by me.' At this the elders of the town shall summon him and reason with him. If he still stands his ground and says, 'I will not take her', his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders; she shall pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face and declare: 'Thus we requite the man who will not build up his brother's family.' His family shall be known in Israel as the House of the Unshod Man.

When two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes near to drag her husband clear of his opponent, if she puts out her hand and catches hold of the man's genitals, you shall cut off her hand and show her no mercy.

You shall not have unequal weights in your bag, one heavy, the other light. You shall not have unequal measures in your house, one large, the other small. You shall have true and correct weights and true and correct measures, so that you may live long in the land which the LORD your God is giving

available to those least able to provide surety. 14-15: See Lev.19.13; Jer.22.13. 16: Inherited guilt (5.9-10) must not be punished by human agents (for instances to the contrary, see Josh. 7.24-26; 2 Sam.21.1-9). On the rejection of inherited guilt, see Exod.20.5 n. 19-22: See Lev. 19.9-10; 23.22; for related legislation, see Exod.23.10-11. 20: See also 10.18; 14.29. 25.2: The presence of the *judge* assures that punishment is not exceeded. 4: For similar concern for animals, see 5.14; 22.4,6-7; Exod.23.11. 5-10: The *duty* of levirate marriage (from the Latin *levir*, "brother-in-law") was adopted not only to preserve the family name, but to keep the property intact (compare Num.27.1-11 n.). See Gen.38.8,10,26 nn.; Ruth 4.1-13 and notes. 11-12: The wish to avoid causing an inability to beget offspring links this unit topically with the previous one. 13-16: See Lev.19.35-36. 17-19: See Exod.17.8-16 n.

16 you. All who commit these offences, all who deal dishonestly, are abominable to the LORD.  
 17 Remember what the Amalekites did to you on your way out of Egypt, how they met you on the road when you were faint and weary and cut off your rear, which was lagging behind exhausted: they showed no fear of God.  
 19 When the LORD your God gives you peace from your enemies on every side, in the land which he is giving you to occupy as your patrimony, you shall not fail to blot out the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven.

26 WHEN YOU COME INTO THE LAND WHICH the LORD your God is giving you to occupy as your patrimony and settle in it, you shall take the firstfruits of all the produce of the soil, which you gather in from the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and put them in a basket. Then you shall go to the place which the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and come to the priest, whoever he shall be in those days. You shall say to him, 'I declare this day to the LORD your God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us.'  
 4 The priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. Then you shall solemnly recite before the LORD your God: 'My father was a homeless<sup>j</sup> Aramaean who went down to Egypt with a small company and lived there until they became a great, powerful, and numerous nation. But the Egyptians ill-treated us, humiliated us and imposed  
 7 cruel slavery upon us. Then we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers for help, and he listened to us and saw our humiliation, our hardship and distress;

and so the LORD brought us out of 8 Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying deeds, and with signs and portents. He 9 brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now I have brought the 10 firstfruits of the soil which thou, O LORD, hast given me.' You shall then set the basket before the LORD your God and bow down in worship before him. You shall all rejoice, you and the 11 Levites and the aliens living among you, for all the good things which the LORD your God has given to you and to your family.

When you have finished taking a 12 tithe of your produce in the third year, the tithe-year, you shall give it to the Levites and to the aliens, the orphans, and the widows. They shall eat it in your settlements and be well fed. Then 13 you shall declare before the LORD your God: 'I have rid my house of the tithe that was holy to thee and given it to the Levites, to the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, according to all the commandments which thou didst lay upon me. I have not broken or forgotten any of thy commandments. I have not eaten 14 any of the tithe while in mourning, nor have I rid myself of it for unclean purposes, nor offered any of it to<sup>k</sup> the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God: I have done all that thou didst command me. Look down from heaven, 15 thy holy dwelling-place, and bless thy people Israel and the ground which thou hast given to us as thou didst swear to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

This day the LORD your God com- 16 mands you to keep these statutes and

*j* Or wandering.  
*k* Or for.

26.1-15: Liturgies for the bringing of firstfruits and tithes. 2: Firstfruits were offered at the pilgrim-feasts (16.1-17) of Unleavened Bread (Lev.23.6-14), Weeks (16.9-12; Num.28.26-31), and Tabernacles-Ingathering (16.13-15; Exod.23.16). The place: Jerusalem; see 12.5 n. 5-10: An ancient liturgical summary of Israel's history. 5: Father: Jacob. 6: Us: see 5.1-3 n.; Exod.13.8 n. 10: And now: see 4.1 n. 12-15: See 14.28-29. 14: While in mourning: that is, while "unclean" from contact with the corpse (Num.19.11-16) and able to transfer "uncleanness" to the sacred tithe (Hag.2.12-13; Lev.11.24-25 n.). To the dead: see 14.1 n.; 21.1-9 n.

26.16-30.20: Ratification of the covenant in Moab. The covenant stipulations given (Exod. ch. 20) and received (Exod. ch. 24) at Sinai are viewed as extended to the end of the Wilderness period. The present generation now accepts the expansions (29.1) and is urged to renew its dedication regularly thereafter (31.9-13).

26.16-19: A fragment of the covenant renewal ceremony. The section is a part of a larger liturgy connected with covenant renewal. It included the recitation of the LORD's demands

laws: be careful to observe them with  
 17 all your heart and soul. You have  
 recognized the LORD this day as your  
 God; you are to conform to his ways,  
 to keep his statutes, his command-  
 ments, and his laws, and to obey him.  
 18 The LORD has recognized you this day  
 as his special possession, as he promised  
 you, and to keep his commandments;  
 19 he will raise you high above all the  
 nations which he has made, to bring  
 him praise and fame and glory, and to  
 be a people holy to the LORD your  
 God, according to his promise.

*Concluding charge of Moses  
 to the people*

27 MOSES, WITH THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL,  
 gave the people this charge: 'Keep all  
 the commandments that I lay upon you  
 2 this day. On the day that you cross the  
 Jordan to the land which the LORD  
 your God is giving you, you shall set up  
 great stones and plaster them over.  
 3 You shall inscribe on them all the  
 words of this law, when you have  
 crossed over to enter the land which the  
 LORD your God is giving you, a land  
 flowing with milk and honey, as the  
 LORD the God of your fathers promised  
 4 you. When you have crossed the  
 Jordan you shall set up these stones on  
 Mount Ebal, as I command you this  
 5 day, and cover them with plaster. You  
 shall build an altar there to the LORD  
 your God: it shall be an altar of stones  
 on which you shall use no tool of iron.  
 6 You shall build the altar of the LORD  
 your God with blocks of undressed  
 stone, and you shall offer whole-

offerings upon it to the LORD your  
 God. You shall slaughter shared- 7  
 offerings and eat them there, and  
 rejoice before the LORD your God.  
 You shall inscribe on the stones all the 8  
 words of this law, engraving them with  
 care.'

Moses and the levitical priests spoke 9  
 to all Israel. 'Be silent, Israel, and listen;  
 this day you have become a people  
 belonging to the LORD your God.  
 Obey the LORD your God, and observe 10  
 his commandments and statutes which  
 I lay upon you this day.'

That day Moses gave the people this 11  
 command: 'Those who shall stand for  
 the blessing of the people on Mount  
 Gerizim when you have crossed the  
 Jordan are these: Simeon, Levi, Judah,  
 Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. Those 13  
 who shall stand on Mount Ebal for the  
 curse are these: Reuben, Gad, Asher,  
 Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.'

The Levites, in the hearing of all 14  
 Israel, shall intone these words:

'A curse upon the man who carves 15  
 an idol or casts an image, anything  
 abominable to the LORD that crafts-  
 men make, and sets it up in secret': the  
 people shall all respond and say,  
 'Amen.'

'A curse upon him who slights his 16  
 father or his mother': the people shall  
 all say, 'Amen.'

'A curse upon him who moves his 17  
 neighbour's boundary stone': the peo-  
 ple shall all say, 'Amen.'

'A curse upon him who misdirects a 18  
 blind man': the people shall all say,  
 'Amen.'

'A curse upon him who withholds 19  
 justice from the alien, the orphan, and

(v. 16; chs. 12-26), the acceptance of him as the only God (v. 17; 6.1-25), and his promise that Israel will remain as his people (vv. 18-19), as a prelude to the close (28.68) of the second of Moses' three addresses. On the terminology involved, see Exod.6.7 n.

27.1-28.68: Provision for the renewal of the covenant at Shechem, an event anticipated in 11.29-32 and found in Josh.8.30-35. Josh. ch. 24 may be intended as an example for the regular observance of the ceremony at Shechem. 4: *Mount Ebal*: opposite Mount Gerizim (v. 12) and near Shechem. 5: *Altar*: perhaps this may have been the earliest location of the central sanctuary demanded in ch. 12. If so, after the Assyrian conquest in 721 B.C., the "chosen" place was understood as not here, but Jerusalem (12.5 n.). 6: *Undressed stone*: see Exod.20.25 n. 9-10: These verses interrupt the ceremony prescribed for Shechem and continue the account of covenant renewal in Moab (26.16-19), resumed again in 29.1. 11-13: The ceremony of blessing and cursing. Their content is amplified in ch. 28. For their role in contracts, see Lev.26.1-46 n.; Deut.11.26-28 n. 14-26: An ancient list of twelve brief curses. Since most of them are directed against violations of covenant stipulations, they have been added to the present ceremony. They are announced by Levites rather than the six tribes of v. 13. 15: See 5.8; compare 12.1-4. 16: Compare 5.16; 21.18-21. 17: See 19.14. 18: See Lev.19.14. 19: See 24.17. 20: See 22.30.

the widow': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

20 'A curse upon him who lies with his father's wife, for he brings shame upon his father': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

21 'A curse upon him who lies with any animal': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

22 'A curse upon him who lies with his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

23 'A curse upon him who lies with his wife's mother': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

24 'A curse upon him who strikes another man in secret': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

25 'A curse upon him who takes reward to kill a man with whom he has no feud': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

26 'A curse upon any man who does not fulfil this law by doing all that it prescribes': the people shall all say, 'Amen.'

**28** IF YOU WILL OBEY THE LORD YOUR GOD by diligently observing all his commandments which I lay upon you this day, then the LORD your God will raise you high above all nations of the

2 earth, and all these blessings shall come to you and light upon you, because you obey the LORD your God:

3 A blessing on you in the city; a blessing on you in the country.

4 A blessing on the fruit of your body, the fruit of your land and of your cattle, the offspring of your herds and of your lambing flocks.

5 A blessing on your basket and your kneading-trough.

6 A blessing on you as you come in; and a blessing on you as you go out.

7 May the LORD deliver up the enemies who attack you and let them be put to rout before you. Though they come out against you by one way, they shall flee before you by seven ways.

8 May the LORD grant you a blessing

in your granaries and in all your labours; may the LORD your God bless you in the land which he is giving you.

The LORD will set you up as his own holy people, as he swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and conform to his ways. Then all people on earth shall see that the LORD has named you as his very own, and they shall go in fear of you. The LORD will make you prosper greatly in the fruit of your body and of your cattle, and in the fruit of the ground in the land which he swore to your forefathers to give you. May the LORD open the heavens for you, his rich treasure house, to give rain upon your land at the proper time and bless everything to which you turn your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; the LORD will make you the head and not the tail: you shall be always at the top and never at the bottom, when you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I give you this day to keep and to fulfil. You shall turn neither to the right nor to the left from all the things which I command you this day nor shall you follow after and worship other gods.

**BUT IF YOU DO NOT OBEY THE LORD** your God by diligently observing all his commandments and statutes which I lay upon you this day, then all these maledictions shall come to you and light upon you:

A curse upon you in the city; a curse upon you in the country.

A curse upon your basket and your kneading-trough.

A curse upon the fruit of your body, the fruit of your land, the offspring of your herds and of your lambing flocks.

A curse upon you as you come in; and a curse upon you as you go out.

May the LORD send upon you starvation, burning thirst, and dysentery,<sup>1</sup> whatever you are about, until you are

<sup>1</sup> Or cursing, confusion, and rebuke.

21: See Exod.22.19. 22-23: See 23.2 n. 24: See 5.17; 21.1-9. 28.1: The ceremony continues from 27.13. 3-6: Six blessings are given, in agreement with the number of tribes in 27.12. They emphasize that the LORD is the source of fertility of flock and soil, rather than the Canaanite gods (see 7.13-14 n.). 7-14: Amplification of the blessings. 7: *Seven ways*: compare Lev.26.18 n. 16-19: Six curses that are the reverse of the blessings. 20-46: Amplification of the curses.

destroyed and quickly perish for your evil doings, because you have forsaken me.

21 May the LORD cause pestilence to haunt you until he has exterminated you out of the land which you are entering to occupy; may the LORD afflict you with wasting disease and recurrent fever, ague and eruptions; with drought, black blight and red; and may these plague you until you perish.

22 May the LORD strike you with pestilence, and the earth beneath you iron. May the LORD turn the rain upon your country into fine sand, and may dust come down upon you from the sky until you are blotted out.

23 May the LORD put you to rout before the enemy. Though you go out against them by one way, you shall flee before them by seven ways. May you be repugnant to all the kingdoms on earth. May your bodies become food for the birds of the air and the wild beasts, with no man to scare them away.

24 May the LORD strike you with Egyptian boils and with tumours, scabs, and itches, for which you will find no cure. May the LORD strike you with madness, blindness, and bewilderment; so that you will grope about in broad daylight, just as a blind man gropes in darkness, and you will fail to find your way. You will also be oppressed and robbed, day in, day out, with no one to save you. A woman will be pledged to you, but another shall ravish her; you will build a house but not live in it; you will plant a vineyard but not enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat any of it; and before your eyes your ass will be stolen and will not come back to you; your sheep will be given to the enemy, and there will be no one to recover them. Your sons and daughters will be given to another people while you look on; your eyes will strain after them all day long, and you will be powerless. A nation whom you do not know shall eat the fruit of your land and all your toil, and your lot will be nothing

but brutal oppression. The sights you see will drive you mad. May the LORD strike you on knee and leg with malignant boils for which you will find no cure; they will spread from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. May the LORD give you up, and the king whom you have appointed, to a nation whom neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a horror, a byword, and an object-lesson to all the peoples amongst whom the LORD disperses you.

You will carry out seed for your fields in plenty, but you will harvest little; for the locusts will devour it. You will plant vineyards and cultivate them, but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes; for the grub will eat them. You will have olive-trees all over your territory, but you will not anoint yourselves with their oil; for your olives will drop off. You will bear sons and daughters, but they will not remain yours because they will be taken into captivity. All your trees and the fruit of the ground will be infested with the mole-cricket. The alien who lives with you will raise himself higher and higher, and you will sink lower and lower. He will lend to you but you will not lend to him: he will be the head and you the tail.

All these maledictions will come upon you; they will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed because you did not obey the LORD your God by keeping the commandments and statutes which he gave you. They shall be a sign and a portent to you and your descendants for ever, because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and with a glad heart for all your blessings. Then in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and extreme want, you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, and they will put a yoke of iron on your neck when they have subdued you. May the LORD raise against you a nation from afar, from

22: Seven afflictions (Lev.26.18 n.). 27: The plague once directed toward the Egyptians (Exod. 9.8-12) would now strike Israel. 30: Contrast 20.5-7. 47-68: An expansion of the curses, possibly alluding to the fate of the kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C., when the Assyrians destroyed



the other end of the earth, who will swoop upon you like a vulture, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of grim aspect with no reverence for age and no pity for the young. They will devour the young of your cattle and the fruit of your land, when you have been subdued. They will leave you neither corn, nor new wine nor oil, neither the offspring of your herds nor of your lambing flocks, until you are annihilated. They will besiege you in all your cities until they bring down your lofty impregnable walls, those city walls throughout your land in which you trust. They will besiege you within all your cities, throughout the land which the LORD your God has given you. Then you will eat your own children, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you. The pampered, delicate man will not share with his brother, or the wife of his bosom, or his own remaining children, any of the meat which he is eating, the flesh of his own children. He is left with nothing else because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you within your cities. The pampered, delicate woman, the woman who has never even tried to put a foot to the ground, so delicate and pampered she is, will not share with her own husband or her son or her daughter the afterbirth which she expels, or any boy or girl that she may bear. She will herself eat them secretly in her extreme want, because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you within your cities.

If you do not observe and fulfil all the law written down in this book, if you do not revere this honoured and dreaded name, this name 'the LORD<sup>m</sup> your God', then the LORD will strike you and your descendants with unimaginable plagues, malignant and persistent, and with sickness, per-

sistent and severe. He will bring upon you once again all the diseases of Egypt which you dread, and they will cling to you. The LORD will bring upon you sickness and plague of every kind not written down in this book of the law, until you are destroyed. Then you who were countless as the stars in the sky will be left few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. Just as the LORD took delight in you, prospering and increasing you, so now it will be his delight to destroy and exterminate you, and you will be uprooted from the land which you are entering to occupy. The LORD will scatter you among all peoples from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will worship other gods whom neither you have known nor your forefathers, gods of wood and stone. Among those nations you will find no peace, no rest for the sole of your foot. Then the LORD will give you an unquiet mind, dim eyes, and failing appetite. Your life will hang continually in suspense, fear will beset you night and day, and you will find no security all your life long. Every morning you will say, 'Would God it were evening!', and every evening, 'Would God it were morning!', for the fear that lives in your heart and the sights that you see. The LORD will bring you sorrowing back to Egypt by that very road of which I said to you, 'You shall not see that road again'; and there you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves and slave-girls, but there will be no buyer.

These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant which he made with them on Horeb.

MOSES SUMMONED ALL THE ISRAELITES and said to them: 'You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his

<sup>m</sup> See note on Exod. 3. 15.

the country and took most of its population into captivity (2 Kgs.17.1-6). 62: *Few in number:* a reversal of the promise to Abraham (Gen.15.5). 68: *Of which I said:* compare 17.16.

29.1-30.20: *The third address of Moses. 1: The covenant* is a renewal of the Sinai covenant. For its conditions, see 28.1,15,63; 30.1,5,7,9. 2-8: *Recitation of previous history* (for the reason,

3 servants, and to the whole land, the  
 4 great challenge which you yourselves  
 5 witnessed, those great signs and por-  
 6 tents, but to this day the LORD has not  
 7 given you a mind to learn, or eyes to  
 8 see, or ears to hear. I led you for forty  
 9 years in the wilderness; your clothes  
 10 did not wear out on you, nor did your  
 11 sandals wear out and fall off your feet;  
 12 you ate no bread and drank no wine or  
 13 strong drink, in order that you might  
 14 learn that I am the LORD your God.  
 15 You came to this place where Sihon  
 16 king of Heshbon and Og king of  
 17 Bashan came to attack us, and we de-  
 18 feated them. We took their land and  
 19 gave it as patrimony to the Reubenites,  
 20 the Gadites, and half the tribe of  
 21 Manasseh. You shall observe the pro-  
 22 visions of this covenant and keep them  
 23 so that you may be successful in all  
 24 you do.  
 25 'You all stand here today before the  
 26 LORD your God, tribal chiefs, elders,  
 27 and officers, all the men of Israel, with  
 28 your dependants, your wives, the aliens  
 29 who live in your camp—all of them,  
 30 from those who chop wood to those  
 31 who draw water—and you are ready to  
 32 accept the oath and enter into the  
 33 covenant which the LORD your God is  
 34 making with you today. The covenant  
 35 is to constitute you his people this day,  
 36 and he will be your God, as he prom-  
 37 ised you and as he swore to your fore-  
 38 fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It  
 39 is not with you alone that I am making  
 40 this covenant and this oath, but with all  
 41 those who stand here with us today  
 42 before the LORD our God and also with  
 43 those who are not here with us today.  
 44 For you know how we lived in Egypt  
 45 and how we and you, as we passed  
 46 through the nations, saw their loath-  
 47 some idols and the false gods they  
 48 had, the gods of wood and stone, of  
 49 silver and gold. If there should be  
 50 among you a man or woman, family or  
 51 tribe, who is moved today to turn  
 52 from the LORD our God and to go  
 53 worshipping the gods of those nations  
 54 —if there is among you such a root  
 55 from which springs gall and worm-

wood, then when he hears the terms of  
 this oath, he may inwardly flatter him-  
 self and think, "All will be well with me  
 even if I follow the promptings of my  
 stubborn heart"; but this will bring  
 everything to ruin. The LORD will not  
 be willing to forgive him; for then his  
 anger and resentment will overwhelm  
 this man, and the denunciations pre-  
 scribed in this book will fall heavily on  
 him, and the LORD will blot out his  
 name from under heaven. The LORD  
 will single him out from all the tribes of  
 Israel for disaster to fall upon him,  
 according to the oath required by the  
 covenant and prescribed in this book  
 of the law.

"The next generation, your sons who  
 follow you and the foreigners who  
 come from distant countries, will see  
 the plagues of this land and the ulcers  
 which the LORD has brought upon its  
 people, the whole land burnt up with  
 brimstone and salt, so that it cannot  
 be sown, or yield herb or green plant.  
 It will be as desolate as were Sodom  
 and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim,  
 when the LORD overthrew them in his  
 anger and rage. Then they, and all the  
 nations with them, will ask, "Why has  
 the LORD so afflicted this land? Why  
 has there been this great outburst of  
 wrath?" The answer will be: "Because  
 they forsook the covenant of the LORD  
 the God of their fathers which he  
 made with them when he brought them  
 out of Egypt. They began to worship  
 other gods and to bow down to them,  
 gods whom they had not known and  
 whom the LORD had not assigned to  
 them. The anger of the LORD was  
 roused against that land, so that he  
 brought upon it all the maledictions  
 written in this book. The LORD up-  
 rooted them from their soil in anger,  
 in wrath and great fury, and banished  
 them to another land, where they are  
 to this day."

"There are things hidden, and they  
 belong to the LORD our God, but what  
 is revealed belongs to us and our  
 children for ever; it is for us to observe  
 all that is prescribed in this law.

see 4.1 n.). 5: See 8.4; 2.7. 7-8: A summary of 2.26-3.17. 9: Chs. 12-26. 13: *His people; your god:* 26.17-18; Exod.6.7 n. *Forefathers:* see 1.8 n. 15: *Today:* see 5.1-3 n. 18: *Wormwood:* a bitter drug. 23: *Brimstone:* sulphur. *Admah and Zeboyim:* see Gen.10.19. 26: *Assigned:* see 32.8-9 n.

30 'When these things have befallen you, the blessing and the curse of which I have offered you the choice, if you and your sons take them to heart there in all the countries to which the LORD  
 2 your God has banished you, if you turn back to him and obey him heart and soul in all that I command you  
 3 this day, then the LORD your God will show you compassion and restore your fortunes. He will gather you again from all the countries to which he has  
 4 scattered you. Even though he were to banish you to the four corners of the world, the LORD your God will gather you from there, from there he will  
 5 fetch you home. The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your forefathers occupied, and you will occupy it again; then he will bring you prosperity and make you more numerous than your forefathers were. The  
 6 LORD your God will circumcise<sup>n</sup> your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and you will live.  
 7 Then the LORD your God will turn all these denunciations against your enemies and the foes who persecute  
 8 you. You will then again obey the LORD and keep all his commandments  
 9-10 which I give you this day. The LORD your God will make you more than prosperous in all that you do, in the fruit of your body and of your cattle and in the fruits of the earth; for, when you obey the LORD your God by keeping his commandments and statutes, as they are written in this book of the law, and when you turn back to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, he will again rejoice over you and be good to you, as he rejoiced over your forefathers.  
 11 'The commandment that I lay on you this day is not too difficult for you,  
 12 it is not too remote. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up

to heaven for us to fetch it and tell it to us, so that we can keep it?" Nor is it  
 13 beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea for us to fetch it and tell it to us, so that we can keep  
 14 it?" It is a thing very near to you, upon your lips and in your heart ready to be kept.

'Today I offer you the choice of life  
 15 and good, or death and evil. If you  
 16 obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I give you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by conforming to his ways and by keeping his commandments, statutes, and laws, then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to occupy. But if your heart turns away and you  
 17 do not listen and you are led on to bow down to other gods and worship them, I tell you this day that you will perish;  
 18 you will not live long in the land which you will enter to occupy after crossing the Jordan. I summon heaven and  
 19 earth to witness against you this day: I offer you the choice of life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life and then you and your descendants will live; love the LORD your God, obey him  
 20 and hold fast to him: that is life for you and length of days in the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'

Moses finished speaking these words  
 31 to all Israel, and then he said, 'I am  
 2 now a hundred and twenty years old, and I can no longer move about as I please; and the LORD has told me that I may not cross the Jordan. The LORD  
 3 your God will cross over at your head and destroy these nations before your advance, and you shall occupy their lands; and, as he directed, Joshua will lead you across. The LORD will do to  
 4 these nations as he did to Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites, and to their

<sup>n</sup> Or incline.

30.1-10: Exile and return. An expansion of 4.29-31, possibly written either during the Exile of Israel (721 B.C.: see 28.47-68 n.) or Judah (587 B.C.) in order to encourage those whose situation then appeared hopeless (see 26.5-10 n.). 15-18: The passage gives the precise blessing and curse pronounced after the acceptance of the covenant (as in 27.11-28.68; see 27.11-13 n.). 19: The summoning of witnesses closes the covenant ceremony (4.26 n.).

31.1-29: The appointment of Moses' successor (vv. 1-8, 14-23; compare Num.27.12-23) alternates with the provisions for writing, preserving, and reciting the law (vv. 9-13, 24-27). 2: *Hundred and twenty*: eighty (Exod.7.7) plus the forty in the Wilderness (2.7). *I may not cross*: see 1.37 n. 3: *At your head and destroy*: see 9.3. *As he directed*: 3.23-28. 4: See Num.21.21-35.

5 lands; he will destroy them. The LORD will deliver them into your power, and you shall do to them as I commanded you. Be strong, be resolute; you must not dread them or be afraid, for the LORD your God himself goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.  
 7 Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, 'Be strong, be resolute; for it is you who are to lead this people into the land which the LORD swore to give their forefathers, and you are to bring them into possession of it. The LORD himself goes at your head; he will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not be discouraged or afraid.'  
 9 Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.  
 10 Moses gave them this command: 'At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time for the year of remission, at the pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to enter the presence of the LORD your God in the place which he will choose, you shall read this law publicly in the hearing of all Israel. Assemble the people, men, women, and dependants, together with the aliens who live in your settlements, so that they may listen, and learn to fear the LORD your God and observe all these laws with care. Their children, too, who do not know them, shall hear them, and learn to fear the LORD your God all their lives in the land which you will occupy after crossing the Jordan.'

*Joshua appointed successor to Moses*

14 THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'THE TIME OF your death is drawing near; call Joshua, and then come and stand in the Tent of the Presence so that I may give him his commission.' So Moses and

Joshua went and took their stand in the Tent of the Presence; and the LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance of the tent.

The LORD said to Moses, 'You are about to die like your forefathers, and this people, when they come into the land and live among foreigners, will go wantonly after their gods; they will abandon me and break the covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger will be roused against them, and I will abandon them and hide my face from them. They will be an easy prey, and many terrible disasters will come upon them. They will say on that day, "These disasters have come because our God is not among us." On that day I will hide my face because of all the evil they have done in turning to other gods.'

'Now write down this rule of life and teach it to the Israelites; make them repeat it, so that it may be on record against them. When I have brought them into the land which I swore to give to their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey, and they have plenty to eat and grow fat, they will turn to other gods and worship them, they will spurn me and break my covenant; and many calamities and disasters will follow. Then this rule of life will confront them as a record, for it will not be forgotten by their descendants. For even before I bring them into the land which I swore to give them, I know which way their thoughts incline already.'

That day Moses wrote down this rule of life and taught it to the Israelites. The LORD gave Joshua son of Nun his commission in these words: 'Be strong, be resolute; for you shall bring the Israelites into the land which I swore to give them, and I will be with you.'

*o* rule of life: or song. *p* Prob. rdg.; Heb. He.

10: Year of remission: see 15.1-18. Tabernacles: see 16.13-15 n. 11-13: Provision for public reading was a regular part of Ancient Near Eastern treaties (covenants), and the festival would be the occasion for renewal (27.1-28.68 n.) 14-15: These verses are conceptually and linguistically related to Exod.33.7-11; Num.11.16-17, 24-25. 16-22: These verses intrude; they anticipate ch.32, the "Song of Moses" (v. 19, Tfn. o), which may have been sung as part of the covenant renewal ceremony. Thus the Song, like the "book of the law" (vv. 24-27), would serve as a "witness" to God's graciousness in the past and as a challenge to Israel's life in the future.

- 24 When Moses had finished writing  
down these laws in a book, from be-  
25 ginning to end, he gave this command  
to the Levites who carried the Ark of  
26 the Covenant of the LORD: 'Take this  
book of the law and put it beside the  
Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your  
27 God to be a witness against you. For I  
know how defiant and stubborn you  
are; even during my lifetime you have  
defied the LORD; how much more, then,  
will you do so when I am dead?  
28 Assemble all the elders of your tribes  
and your officers; I will say all these  
things in their hearing and will sum-  
mon heaven and earth to witness  
29 against them. For I know that after my  
death you will take to degrading  
practices and turn aside from the way  
which I told you to follow, and in days  
to come disaster will come upon you,  
because you are doing what is wrong  
in the eyes of the LORD and so  
provoking him to anger.'
- Two historical poems*
- 30 MOSES RECITED THIS SONG FROM  
beginning to end in the hearing of the  
whole assembly of Israel:
- 32 Give ear to what I say, O heavens,  
earth, listen to my words;  
2 my teaching shall fall like drops of  
rain,  
my words shall distil like dew,  
like fine rain upon the grass  
and like the showers on young plants.
- 3 When I call aloud the name of the  
LORD,<sup>q</sup>  
you shall respond, 'Great is our God,  
4 the creator<sup>r</sup> whose work is perfect,  
and all his ways are just,  
a faithful god, who does no wrong,  
righteous and true is He!'
- Perverse and crooked generation  
whose faults have proved you no  
children of his,  
is this how you repay the LORD,  
6 you brutish and stupid people?  
Is he not your father who formed  
you?  
Did he not make you and establish  
you?  
Remember the days of old,  
7 think of the generations long ago;  
ask your father to recount it  
and your elders to tell you the tale.
- When the Most High parcelled out  
8 the nations,  
when he dispersed all mankind,  
he laid down the boundaries of  
every people  
according to the number of the sons  
of God;  
9 but the LORD's share was his own  
people,  
Jacob was his allotted portion.  
10 He found him in a desert land,  
in a waste and howling void.  
He protected and trained him,  
he guarded him as the apple of his  
eye,  
11 as an eagle watches over its nest,  
hovers above its young,  
spreads its pinions and takes them  
up,  
and carries them upon its wings.  
The LORD alone led him,  
12 no alien god at his side.  
He made him ride on the heights of  
13 the earth  
and fed him on the harvest of the  
fields;  
he satisfied him with honey from the  
craggs  
and oil from the flinty rock,  
14 curds from the cattle, milk from the  
ewes,  
the fat of lambs' kidneys,
- q Or the name JEHOVAH. r Or rock.*

23: This verse is a sequel to vv.14–15. 26: *Beside the Ark*: symbolizing its authority and making it accessible for public reading (vv. 10–11). Compare 10.1–5. 28: *Witness*: see 30.19 n.

31.30–32.47: The "Song of Moses." See 31.16–22 n. The song is linked to the previous chapter by the summoning of heaven and earth (31.28 and 32.1). In reality, it is an appended psalm, perhaps older than Deut. itself. 32.1–4: *Invocation*. 5–6: *An accusation of ingratitude* (see 4.1 n.). 7: *A call to consider the past*.

32.8–14: *Recitation of the LORD's gracious deeds*. 8–9: *The sons of God* are minor figures in the divine council (Gen.1.26 n.) to whom the *Most High* has assigned governorship of the nations, retaining Israel for himself. 10: This may be part of a tradition that Israel became the LORD's people in the Wilderness (see also Hos.9.10), against the dominant view, e.g. Gen. ch. 12.

<p>of rams, the breed of Bashan, and of goats, with the finest flour of wheat; and he drank wine from the blood of the grape.</p> <p>15 Jacob ate and was well fed, Jeshurun grew fat and unruly,<sup>s</sup> he grew fat, he grew bloated and sleek. He forsook God who made him and dishonoured the Rock of his salvation.</p> <p>16 They roused his jealousy with foreign gods and provoked him with abominable practices.</p> <p>17 They sacrificed to foreign demons that are no gods, gods who were strangers to them; they took up with new gods from their neighbours, gods whom your fathers did not acknowledge.</p> <p>18 You forsook the creator<sup>t</sup> who begot you and cared nothing for God who brought you to birth.</p> <p>19 The LORD saw and spurned them; his own sons and daughters provoked him.</p> <p>20 'I will hide my face from them,' he said; 'let me see what their end will be, for they are a mutinous generation, sons who are not to be trusted.</p> <p>21 They roused my jealousy with a god of no account, with their false gods they provoked me; so I will rouse their jealousy with a people of no account, with a brutish nation I will provoke them.</p> <p>22 For fire is kindled by my anger, it burns to the depths of Sheol; it devours earth and its harvest</p>	<p>and sets fire to the very roots of the mountains.</p> <p>I will heap on them one disaster after another, 23 I will use up all my arrows on them; pangs of hunger, ravages of plague, 24 and bitter pestilence. I will harry them with the fangs of wild beasts and the poison of creatures that crawl in the dust.</p> <p>The sword will make orphans in the streets 25 and widows in their own homes; it will take toll of young man and maid, of babes in arms and old men. I had resolved to strike them down 26 and to destroy all memory of them, but I feared that I should be 27 provoked by their foes, that their enemies would take the credit and say, "It was not the LORD, it was we who raised the hand that did this."'</p> <p>They are a nation that lacks good counsel 28 devoid of understanding. If only they had the wisdom to understand this 29 and give thought to their end! How could one man pursue a thousand of them, 30 how could two put ten thousand to flight, if their Rock had not sold them to their enemies, if the LORD had not handed them over? For the enemy have no Rock like ours, 31 in themselves they are mere fools. Their vines are vines of Sodom, 32</p>
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<sup>s</sup> Or and kicked.    <sup>t</sup> Or rock.

15-18: Israel's ungrateful response. 15: *Jeshurun*: an occasional, ancient name for Israel (33.5.26).

32.19-47: God's judgment. 19: The historical event to which *spurned them* refers is uncertain; the allusion is meant as a warning for future generations. 22: *Sheol*: Num.16.30 n. Destruction of the *harvest* demonstrates the powerlessness of the gods of fertility (7.13-14 n.; 8.1-10 n.). In all, seven evils are enumerated (28.22 n.). 26-35: God's reflections upon his judgment. It cannot be a final one, lest Israel's neighbors misunderstand the cause. When Israel is restored, God's sovereignty over both punishment and deliverance will be evident. The passage 30.1-10, however, demands repentance as the prerequisite for restoration. 27: Compare Isa.10.12-15. 28: *They*: the enemies who have defeated Israel. 30: *One man*: of the enemy. *Thousand*: of Israel. That such a small force defeated Israel indicates that it was God's will. *Rock*: a common Ancient Near Eastern divine title denoting permanence. 31: The speaker shifts from God to

grown on the terraces of Gomorrah;  
 their grapes are poisonous,  
 the clusters bitter to the taste.  
 33 Their wine is the venom of serpents,  
 the cruel poison of asp;  
 34 all this I have in reserve,  
 sealed up in my storehouses  
 35 till the day of punishment and  
 vengeance,  
 till the moment when they slip and  
 fall;  
 for the day of their downfall is near,  
 their doom is fast approaching.  
 36 The LORD will give his people justice  
 and have compassion on his  
 servants;  
 for he will see that their strength is  
 gone:  
 alone, or defended by his clan, no  
 one is left.

37 He will say, 'Where are your gods,  
 the rock in which you sought  
 shelter,  
 38 the gods who ate the fat of your  
 sacrifices  
 and drank the wine of your drink-  
 offerings?  
 Let them rise to help you!  
 Let them give you shelter!  
 39 See now that I, I am He,  
 and there is no god beside me:  
 I put to death and I keep alive,  
 I wound and I heal;  
 there is no rescue from my grasp.  
 40 I lift my hand to heaven  
 and swear: As I live for ever,  
 41 when I have whetted my flashing  
 sword,  
 when I have set my hand to  
 judgement,  
 then I will punish my adversaries  
 and take vengeance on my enemies.  
 42 I will make my arrows drunk with  
 blood,  
 my sword shall devour flesh,  
 blood of slain and captives,  
 the heads of the enemy princes.'  
 43 Rejoice with him, you heavens,  
 bow down, all you gods, before him;

for he will avenge the blood of his  
 sons  
 and take vengeance on his adversaries;  
 he will punish those who hate him  
 and make expiation for his people's  
 land.

This is the song that Moses came and 44  
 recited in the hearing of the people, he  
 and Joshua son of Nun.

Moses finished speaking to all Israel, 45  
 and then he said, 'Take to heart all 46  
 these warnings which I solemnly give  
 you this day: command your children  
 to be careful to observe all the words of 47  
 this law. For you they are no empty  
 words; they are your very life, and by  
 them you shall live long in the land  
 which you are to occupy after crossing  
 the Jordan.'

That same day the LORD spoke to 48  
 Moses and said, 'Go up this mount 49  
 Abarim, Mount Nebo in Moab, to the  
 east of Jericho, and look out over the  
 land of Canaan that I am giving to the  
 Israelites for their possession. On this 50  
 mountain you shall die and be gath-  
 ered to your father's kin, just as  
 Aaron your brother died on Mount  
 Hor and was gathered to his father's  
 kin. This is because both of you were 51  
 unfaithful to me at the waters of  
 Meribah-by-Kadesh in the wilderness  
 of Zin, when you did not uphold my  
 holiness among the Israelites. You shall 52  
 see the land from a distance but you  
 may not enter the land I am giving to  
 the Israelites.'

THIS IS THE BLESSING THAT MOSES THE 33  
 man of God pronounced upon the  
 Israelites before his death:

The LORD came from Sinai 2  
 and shone forth from Seir.  
 He showed himself from Mount Paran,  
 and with him were myriads of holy  
 ones<sup>u</sup>

<sup>u</sup> and with . . . holy ones: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and he came  
 from myriads of holiness.

the congregation. 36–42: The renunciation of foreign gods and the anticipation of deliverance.  
 43: Closing hymn of praise. 45–47: The insertion of the "Song of Moses" seems to sever these  
 verses from the context in 31.29.

32.48–52: Moses prepares for his death. For related materials, see 3.23–28; Num.20.1–13.

33.1–29: The "Blessing of Moses," a second psalm appended to Deut. (see 31.30–32.47 n.).  
 1: *Pronounced before his death*: see Gen.27.4 n., 33–35 n. for deathbed blessing or curse.

- streaming along at his right hand.
- 3 Truly he loves his people  
and blesses his saints.<sup>v</sup>  
They sit at his feet  
and receive his instruction,
- 4 the law which Moses laid upon us,  
as a possession for the assembly of  
Jacob.
- 5 Then a king arose<sup>w</sup> in Jeshurun,  
when the chiefs of the people were  
assembled  
together with all the tribes of Israel.
- 6 Of Reuben he said:<sup>x</sup>  
  
May Reuben live and not die out,  
but may he be few in number.
- 7 And of Judah he said this:  
  
Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah  
and join him to his people,  
thou whose hands fight for him,  
who art his helper against his foes.
- 8 Of Levi he said:  
  
Thou didst give thy Thummim to  
Levi,  
thy Urim to thy loyal servant  
whom thou didst prove at Massah,  
for whom thou didst plead at the  
waters of Meribah,
- 9 who said of his parents, I do not  
know them,  
who did not acknowledge his  
brothers,  
nor recognize his children.  
They observe thy word  
and keep thy covenant;  
they teach thy precepts to Jacob,  
thy law to Israel.  
They offer thee the smoke of  
sacrifice  
and offerings on thy altar.
- 10 they teach thy precepts to Jacob,  
thy law to Israel.  
They offer thee the smoke of  
sacrifice  
and offerings on thy altar.
- 11 Bless all his powers,<sup>y</sup> O LORD,  
and accept the work of his hands.  
Strike his adversaries hip and thigh,  
and may his enemies rise no more.
- Of Benjamin he said: 12  
  
The LORD's beloved dwells in  
security,  
the High God<sup>z</sup> shields him all the  
day long,  
and he dwells under his protection.
- Of Joseph he said: 13  
  
The LORD's blessing is on his land  
with precious fruit watered from  
heaven above  
and from the deep that lurks below,  
with precious fruit ripened by the 14  
sun,  
precious fruit, the produce of the  
months,  
with all good things from the 15  
ancient mountains,  
the precious fruit of the everlasting  
hills,  
the precious fruits of earth and all 16  
its store,  
by the favour of him who dwells in  
the burning bush.  
This shall rest<sup>a</sup> upon the head of  
Joseph,  
on the brow of him who was prince  
among<sup>b</sup> his brothers.  
In majesty he shall be like a first- 17  
born ox,  
his horns those of a wild ox  
with which he will gore nations  
and drive<sup>c</sup> them to the ends of earth.  
Such will be the myriads of  
Ephraim,  
and such the thousands of Manasseh.
- Of Zebulun he said: 18  
  
Rejoice, Zebulun, when you sally  
forth,

<sup>v</sup> Or holy ones.

<sup>w</sup> Or Then there was a king . . .

<sup>x</sup> Of Reuben he said: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>y</sup> Or skill.

<sup>z</sup> the High God: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. upon him.*

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *cp. Gen. 49. 26*; *Heb. has an unintelligible form.*

<sup>b</sup> him . . . among: *or the one cursed by.*

<sup>c</sup> and drive: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. together.*

5: *Jeshurun*: see 32.15 n. 6: On the decline of *Reuben* as a tribal power (*May Reuben live . . . but . . . be few in number*), see Gen.49.3-4 n.; Num.26.7 n. That Simeon is not mentioned at all suggests that it had ceased to exist as a tribe and hence the present passage was composed later than the "Blessing of Jacob" (see Gen.49.5-7 n.). 8: *Levi*: see 18.1-8 n. for references to the development of the tribe and priesthood. *Thummim*; *Urim*: see Exod.28.15 n. *Massah*; *Meribah*: for the loyalty of the Levites see Exod.32.25-29. The *Massah-Meribah* incidents lack specific mention of the Levites. 12: *High God*: see Gen.14.18 n. 16: *Burning bush*: see Exod.3.2.



rejoice in your tents, Issachar.  
 19 They shall summon nations to the  
 mountain,  
 there they will offer true sacrifices,  
 for they shall suck the abundance of  
 the seas  
 and draw out<sup>d</sup> the hidden wealth of  
 the sand.

20 Of Gad he said:

Blessed be Gad, in his wide domain;  
 he couches like a lion  
 tearing an arm or a scalp.

21 He chose the best for himself,  
 for to him was allotted a ruler's  
 portion,  
 when the chiefs of the people were  
 assembled together.  
 He did what the LORD deemed right,  
 observing his ordinances for Israel.

22 Of Dan he said:

Dan is a lion's cub  
 springing out from Bashan.

23 Of Naphtali he said:

Naphtali is richly favoured  
 and full of the blessings of the LORD;  
 his patrimony stretches to the sea and  
 southward.

24 Of Asher he said:

Asher is most blest of sons,  
 may he be the favourite among<sup>e</sup> his  
 brothers  
 and bathe his feet in oil.

25 May your bolts be of iron and  
 bronze,  
 and your strength last as long as you  
 live.

26 There is none like the God of  
 Jeshurun

who rides the heavens to your help,  
 riding the clouds in his glory,

who humbled the gods of old 27  
 and subdued<sup>f</sup> the ancient powers;  
 who drove out the enemy before you  
 and gave the word to destroy.

Israel lives in security, 28  
 the tribes of Jacob by themselves,  
 in a land of corn and wine<sup>g</sup>  
 where the skies drip with dew.

Happy are you, people of Israel, 29  
 peerless, set free;  
 the LORD is the shield that guards  
 you,  
 the Blessed One is your glorious  
 sword.

Your enemies come cringing to you,  
 and you shall trample their bodies  
 under foot.

### The death of Moses

THEN MOSES WENT UP FROM THE LOW- 34  
 lands of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the  
 top of Pisgah, eastwards from Jericho,  
 and the LORD showed him the whole 2  
 land: Gilead as far as Dan; the whole of  
 Naphtali; the territory of Ephraim and 3  
 Manasseh, and all Judah as far as the  
 western sea; the Negeb and the Plain; 3  
 the valley of Jericho, the Vale of Palm 4  
 Trees, as far as Zoar. The LORD said to 4  
 him, 'This is the land which I swore to  
 Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that I would 5  
 give to their descendants. I have let you  
 see it with your own eyes, but you shall 6  
 not cross over into it.'

There in the land of Moab Moses the 5  
 servant of the LORD died, as the LORD 6  
 had said. He was buried in a valley in 6  
 Moab opposite Beth-peor, but to this 7  
 day no one knows his burial-place. 7  
 Moses was a hundred and twenty years 7  
 old when he died; his sight was not 8  
 dimmed nor had his vigour failed. The 8  
 Israelites wept for Moses in the low-  
 lands of Moab for thirty days; then the

<sup>d</sup> draw out: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>e</sup> Or of.

<sup>f</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. under.*

<sup>g</sup> Or new wine.

17: *Ephraim; Manasseh*: see Gen.49.22 n. 19: *Mountain*: possibly Mount Tabor (Judg.4.12-14; Hos.5.1). 20: *Tearing an arm*: see Gen.49.19 n. 23: *Sea*: of Galilee.

34.1-12: *The death of Moses*, which resumes the narrative from 32.52. Vv. 1-6 may once have concluded the account of the division of the territory east of the Jordan (Num. ch. 32) and have become separated from it by the later insertion of other traditions. 1: *Nebo*: (32.49); *Pisgah* (3.27): either variant traditions have been combined, or *Pisgah* is the very peak of *Nebo*. 4: See Gen.12.7; 28.13. 5: See 32.50; Josh.1.1-2. 7: *A hundred and twenty years*: see 31.2 n.

time of mourning for Moses was  
 9 ended. And Joshua son of Nun was  
 filled with the spirit of wisdom, for  
 Moses had laid his hands on him, and  
 the Israelites listened to him and did  
 what the LORD had commanded Moses.  
 10 There has never yet risen in Israel a  
 prophet like Moses, whom the LORD

knew face to face: remember all the 11  
 signs and portents which the LORD sent  
 him to show in Egypt to Pharaoh and  
 all his servants and the whole land;  
 remember the strong hand of Moses 12  
 and the terrible deeds which he did in  
 the sight of all Israel.

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9: See 31.7-8, 14-15, 23. 10: *Face to face*: See Exod.33.11 and Num.12.6-8. While on the surface the meaning is that Moses was able to see the invisible Deity, it is likely that this is not the intent; the intent, rather, is to speak of the unique stature of Moses. The thought that a Moses could see the Deity is a relic of early times, before the view matured that the Deity is invisible.

# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

This book, the story of the conquest of Canaan, follows on the wanderings in the Wilderness. Modern criticism considers Joshua to be part of a unique and extensive history, a writing that carried on the account of the Wilderness period in Deuteronomy and that included Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings; the entirety is known as the "Deuteronomic history." Joshua begins with the crossing of the Jordan River and the destruction of Jericho (chs. 1-6). The conquest of the south through battles and alliances is next described (chs. 7-10). A final battle at Hazor in the north completes the conquest (ch. 11). After a short summary of Joshua's triumphs (ch. 12), the account deals with the division of the land among the tribes (chs. 13-22). The final two chapters present Joshua's farewell discourse, the covenant ceremony at Shechem, and the death of Joshua (chs. 23-24). God is pictured as closely involved in the events; he is a God of Battles, whose power is clearly manifested in the conquest.

Comparison with the Book of Judges indicates that the story of the conquest in Joshua is very much idealized and that the conquest was, in fact, quite complicated and much less decisive and less complete (see 13.1-6 and 17.12-18) than the book repeatedly suggests.

## *Israel's entry into the promised land*

1 **A**FTER THE DEATH OF MOSES THE  
2 servant of the LORD, the LORD  
3 said to Joshua son of Nun, his  
4 assistant, 'My servant Moses is dead;  
5 now it is for you to cross the Jordan,  
6 you and this whole people of Israel,  
7 to the land which I am giving them.  
8 Every place where you set foot is yours:  
9 I have given it to you, as I promised  
10 Moses. From the desert and the  
11 Lebanon to the great river, the river  
12 Euphrates, and across all the Hittite  
13 country westwards to the Great Sea,<sup>a</sup>  
14 all this shall be your land. No one will  
15 ever be able to stand against you: as I  
16 was with Moses, so will I be with  
17 you; I will not fail you or forsake you.  
18 Be strong, be resolute; it is you who  
19 are to put this people in possession of  
20 the land which I swore to give to their  
21 fathers. Only be strong and resolute;  
22 observe diligently all the law which  
23 my servant Moses has given you.

You must not turn from it to right or  
left, if you would prosper wherever  
you go. This book of the law must  
ever be on your lips; you must keep it  
in mind day and night so that you may  
diligently observe all that is written  
in it. Then you will prosper and be  
successful in all that you do. This is  
my command: be strong, be resolute;  
do not be fearful or dismayed, for the  
LORD your God is with you wherever  
you go.' Then Joshua told the officers  
to pass through the camp and give this  
order to the people: 'Get food ready  
to take with you; for within three days  
you will be crossing the Jordan to  
occupy the country which the LORD  
your God is giving you to possess.'  
To the Reubenites, the Gadites, and  
the half tribe of Manasseh, Joshua  
said, 'Remember the command which  
Moses the servant of the LORD gave you  
when he said, "The LORD your God  
will grant you security here and will

<sup>a</sup> Or the Mediterranean Sea.

### 1.1-12.24: Israel's entry into the promised land.

1.1-9: The command to conquer the land. The invasion of Canaan came *after the death of Moses*: he had been forbidden to lead it (Num.20.12). *Joshua* was from the tribe of Ephraim (Num.13.8,16). 2: *Jordan*: this river was the eastern boundary of Canaan. 4: The extent of the promised land (see Gen.15.18; Deut.1.7) is here: the *desert* to the south; the *Lebanon* mountains to the northwest; the *river Euphrates* to the east; the *Hittite country*, northern Syria, at one time part of the Hittite empire; *westwards to the Great Sea*, the Mediterranean. This extent exceeds considerably the boundaries indicated by chs. 13-19 and Judg.20.1. 7-8: *This book of the law* refers to the Book of Deut., which teaches that fidelity to the law brings prosperity (see Deut. ch. 6).

1.10-18: Preparations for the invasion. 12: *The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh* were Transjordanian tribes (see Num. ch. 32 and 32.1-42 n.), who would return home after the conquest (v. 15). The conquest, according to the Book of Joshua, is the work of the entire people; in Judg. it is the work of isolated tribes.

14 give you this territory." Your wives and dependants and your herds may stay east of the Jordan in the territory which Moses has given you, but for yourselves, all the warriors among you must cross over as a fighting force at the head of your kinsmen. You must 15 help them, until the LORD grants them security like you and they too take possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. You may then return to the land which is your own possession, the territory which Moses the servant of the LORD has given you east of the Jordan.' 16 They answered Joshua, 'Whatever you tell us, we will do; wherever you send us, we will go. As we obeyed Moses, so will we obey you; and may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses! Whoever rebels against your authority, and fails to carry out all your orders, shall be put to death. Only be strong and resolute.'

2 Joshua son of Nun sent two spies out from Shittim secretly with orders to reconnoitre the country. The two men came to Jericho and went to the house of a prostitute named Rahab, and spent 2 the night there. It was reported to the king of Jericho that some Israelites had arrived that night to explore the 3 country. So the king sent to Rahab and said, 'Bring out the men who have come to you and are now in your house; they are here to explore the 4 whole country.' The woman, who had taken the two men and hidden them,<sup>b</sup> replied, 'Yes, the men did come to me, but I did not know where they came from; and when it was time to shut the gate at nightfall, they had gone. I do not know where they were going, but if you hurry after them, you will 6 catch them up.' In fact, she had taken them up on to the roof and concealed them among the stalks of flax which she 7 had laid out there in rows. The messengers went in pursuit of them down

the road to the fords of the Jordan, and the gate was closed as soon as they had gone out. The men had not yet 8 settled down, when Rahab came up to them on the roof and said to them, 'I 9 know that the LORD has given this land to you, that terror of you has descended upon us all, and that because of you the whole country is panic-stricken. For we have heard how the LORD dried 10 up the water of the Red Sea<sup>c</sup> before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings beyond the Jordan, whom you put to death. When we heard 11 this, our courage failed us; your coming has left no spirit in any of us; for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. Swear to me now by the LORD that you 12 will keep faith with my family, as I have kept faith with you. Give me a token of good faith; promise that you 13 will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters and all who belong to them, and save us from death.' The men replied, 'Our lives for 14 yours, so long as you do not betray our business. When the LORD gives us the country, we will deal honestly and faithfully by you.' She then let them 15 down through an opening by a rope; for the house where she lived was on an angle of the wall. 'Take to the hills,' 16 she said, 'or the pursuers will come upon you. Hide yourselves there for three days until they come back, and then go on your way.' The men warned 17 her that they would be released from the oath she had made them take unless 18 she did what they told her. 'When we enter the land,' they said, 'you must fasten this strand of scarlet cord in the opening through which you have lowered us, and get everybody together here in the house, your father and mother, your brothers and all your family. If anybody goes out of doors 19

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. him.    <sup>c</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

2.1-24: The spies at Jericho and Rahab. Since Rahab was a prostitute, visitors to her could fail to arouse attention. 1: *Shittim*: the Israelite camp, in the lowlands of Moab just east of the Jordan (Num.33.49). *Jericho* was the main city in the lower Jordan valley and guarded the westward way to the central highlands. Archaeologists have not yet succeeded in finding any definite remains of the Jericho of Joshua's time. 10: *Sihon and Og*: see Num.21.21-35. 11: Rahab's profession of faith has a Deuteronomic ring to it; see Deut.4.39. Heb.11.31 emphasizes Rahab's faith; Jas.2.25, her works. 17-21: These verses are considered by some to be a fragment from a separate tradition. 18: The *scarlet cord* is not mentioned after v. 21.

into the street, his blood shall be on his own head; we shall be quit of the oath. But if a hand is laid on anyone who stays indoors with you, his blood shall be on our heads. Remember too that, if you betray our business, then we shall be quit of the oath you have made us take.' She replied, 'It shall be as you say', and sent them away. They set off, and she fastened the strand of scarlet cord in the opening.

The men made their way into the hills and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. They had searched all along the road, but had not found them.<sup>d</sup> The two men then turned and came down from the hills, crossed the river and returned to Joshua son of Nun. They told him all that had happened to them and said to him, 'The LORD has put the whole country into our hands, and now all its people are panic-stricken at our approach.'

Joshua rose early in the morning, and he and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, where they encamped before crossing the river. At the end of three days the officers passed through the camp, and gave this order to the people: 'When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God being carried forward by the levitical priests, then you too shall leave your positions and set out. Follow it, but do not go close to it; keep some distance behind, about a thousand yards. This will show you the way you are to go, for you have not travelled this way before.' Joshua then said to the people, 'Hallow yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do a great miracle among you.' To the priests he said, 'Lift up the Ark of the Covenant and pass in front of the people.' So they lifted up the Ark of

the Covenant and went in front of the people. Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Today I will begin to make you stand high in the eyes of all Israel, and they shall know that I will be with you as I was with Moses. Give orders to the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant, and tell them that when they come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, they are to take their stand in the river.'

Then Joshua said to the Israelites, 'Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. By this you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will drive out before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites: the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, the lord of all the earth, is to cross the Jordan at your head. Choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe. When the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD, the lord of all the earth, set foot in the waters of the Jordan, then the waters of the Jordan will be cut off; the water coming down from upstream will stand piled up like a bank.' So the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan, with the priests in front of them carrying the Ark of the Covenant. Now the Jordan is in full flood in all its reaches throughout the time of harvest. When the priests reached the Jordan and dipped their feet in the water at the edge, the water coming down from upstream was brought to a standstill; it piled up like a bank for a long way back, as far as Adam, a town near Zarethan. The waters coming down to the Sea of the

<sup>d</sup> three days . . . found them: or three days while the pursuers scoured the land and searched all along the road, but did not find them.

<sup>e</sup> of the LORD: prob. rdg., cp. verse 17; Heb. om.

3.1-17: The crossing of the Jordan. In 3.1-5.12 there is a deliberate general parallelism with the account of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exod. 3: *The Ark of the Covenant* was a sign of the presence of God (Exod.25.8,10 nn.); it was carried into battle as a war palladium, a "safeguard" (see Num.10.35-36; 1 Sam.4.3-22). *Levitical priests*: see Num.3.6-10. 4: *Keep some distance behind*: to show reverence to the Ark and to the presence of God; see 2 Sam.6.6-7. 5: *Hallow yourselves*: refers to a ritual purification before a religious ceremony; see Exod. 19.10,15. 10: On these peoples, see Deut.7.1; Gen.10.15-20. 13: *Piled up like a bank* recalls Exod.14.22; see 4.23. Some scholars regard this incident as a ceremony commemorating the crossing of the Red Sea. 15: *Throughout the time of harvest*: in the spring, the melting snow of Mount Hermon brings the Jordan to full flood. 16: *Adam* is about eighteen miles north of Jericho; *Zarethan* is about twelve miles farther north. *Arabah*: the extensive geological depression in which the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and areas further south, were situated. It is often rendered "desert."

Arabah, the Dead Sea, were completely cut off, and the people crossed over  
 17 opposite Jericho. The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD stood firm on the dry bed in the middle of the Jordan; and all Israel passed over on dry ground until the whole nation had crossed the river.

4 WHEN THE WHOLE NATION HAD FINISHED crossing the Jordan, the LORD  
 2 said to Joshua, 'Take twelve men from 3 the people, one from each tribe, and order them to lift up twelve stones from this place, out of the middle of the Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood firm. They are to carry them across and set them down in the  
 4 camp where you spend the night.' Joshua summoned the twelve men whom he had chosen out of the Israelites,  
 5 one man from each tribe, and said to them, 'Cross over in front of the Ark of the LORD your God as far as the middle of the Jordan, and let each of you take a stone and hoist it on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes  
 6 of Israel. These stones are to stand as a memorial among you; and in days to come, when your children ask you  
 7 what these stones mean, you shall tell them how the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD when it crossed the Jordan. Thus these stones will always be a reminder to the Israelites.'  
 8 The Israelites did as Joshua had commanded: they lifted up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, as the LORD had instructed Joshua, one for each of the tribes of Israel, carried them across to the camp and set them down there.  
 9 Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the priests stood who carried the Ark of the Covenant, and there  
 10 they are to this day. The priests carrying the Ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until every command

which the LORD had told Joshua to give to the people was fulfilled, and the people had made good speed across. When all the people had finished crossing, then the Ark of the LORD crossed, and the priests with it.<sup>f</sup> At the head  
 12 of the Israelites, there crossed over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, as a fighting force, as Moses had told them to do; about forty thousand strong, drafted  
 13 for active service, they crossed over to the lowlands of Jericho in the presence of the LORD to do battle.

That day the LORD made Joshua  
 14 stand very high in the eyes of all Israel, and the people revered him, as they had revered Moses all his life.

The LORD said to Joshua, 'Com-  
 15,16 mand the priests carrying the Ark of the Tokens to come up from the Jordan.' So Joshua commanded the  
 17 priests to come up from the Jordan; and when the priests carrying the  
 18 Ark of the Covenant of the LORD came up from the river-bed, they had no sooner set foot on dry land than the waters of the Jordan came back to their place and filled up all its reaches as before. On the tenth day of the first  
 19 month the people came up out of the Jordan and camped in Gilgal in the district east of Jericho, and there  
 20 Joshua set up the twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, 'In days to come, when your descendants ask their  
 22 fathers what these stones mean, you shall explain that the Jordan was dry when Israel crossed over, and that the  
 23 LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan in front of you until you had gone across, just as the LORD  
 24 your God did at the Red Sea when he dried it up for us until we had crossed. Thus all people on earth will know how strong is the hand of the LORD; and thus they will stand in awe of the LORD your God for ever.'

<sup>f</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds before the people.*

4.1-5.1: Twelve memorial stones. There are traces of two traditions: one speaks of twelve stones to be set up at Gilgal (4.1-8), the other of twelve stones set up in the Jordan (9-13). 12: The Transjordanian tribes crossed first. 19: *The first month* was Abib (March-April), later called Nisan (Exod.12.2 n.). *Gilgal* was somewhere near Jericho; later it became an important sanctuary in the tribe of Benjamin (see 1 Sam.11.15; 2 Sam.19.15,40). Amos (4.4; 5.5) and Hos. (4.15; 9.15; 12.11) spoke against the worship there.

5 When all the Amorite kings to the west of Jordan and all the Canaanite kings by the sea-coast heard that the LORD had dried up the waters before the advance of the Israelites until they had crossed, their courage melted away and there was no more spirit left in them for fear of the Israelites.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, 'Make knives of flint, seat yourself, and make Israel a circumcised people again.' Joshua thereupon made knives of flint and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath-haaraloth.<sup>g</sup> This is why Joshua circumcised them: all the males who came out of Egypt, all the fighting men, had died in the wilderness on the journey from Egypt. The people who came out of Egypt had all been circumcised, but not those who had been born in the wilderness during the journey. For the Israelites travelled in the wilderness for forty years, until the whole nation, all the fighting men among them, had passed away, all who came out of Egypt and had disobeyed the voice of the LORD. The LORD swore that he would not allow any of these to see the land which he had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. So it was their sons, whom he had raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised; they were uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the journey. When the circumcision of the whole nation was complete, they stayed where they were in camp until they had recovered. The LORD then said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away from you the reproaches of the Egyp-

tians.' Therefore the place is called Gilgal<sup>h</sup> to this very day.

The Israelites encamped in Gilgal, and at sunset on the fourteenth day of the month they kept the Passover in the lowlands of Jericho. On the day after the Passover, they ate their unleavened cakes and parched grain, and that day it was the produce of the country. It was from that day, when they first ate the produce of the country, that the manna ceased. The Israelites received no more manna; and that year they ate what had grown in the land of Canaan.

When Joshua came near Jericho he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and said, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' And the man said to him, 'I am here as captain of the army of the LORD.' Joshua fell down before him, face to the ground, and said, 'What have you to say to your servant, my lord?' The captain of the LORD's army said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy'; and Joshua did so.

JERICHO WAS BOLTED AND BARRED against the Israelites; no one went out, no one came in. The LORD said to Joshua, 'Look, I have delivered Jericho and her king<sup>i</sup> into your hands. You shall march round the city with all your fighting men, making the circuit of it once, for six days running. Seven priests shall go in front of the Ark carrying

<sup>g</sup> That is the Hill of Foreskins.

<sup>h</sup> That is Rolling Stones.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds the fighting men.

5.2-9: Circumcision of Israelites at Gilgal. Circumcision was primitively a rite of initiation for marriage and for admission into full membership in the community; in the later traditions of Israel it became a sign of God's covenant relationship with his people (Gen.17.9-14 n.); it took on its full importance with the Babylonian Exile. 2: *Knives of flint*: used because religious ceremonies tend to preserve ancient ways of doing things; the Israelites were already familiar with the use of metal. *A circumcised people again*: see vv. 4-7. 3: *Gibeath-haaraloth* means "the hill of the foreskins." 6: *Until the whole nation, all the fighting men, had passed away*: see Num.14.20-38. 9: *Reproaches*: the allusion is unclear; possibly the reproaches were for being uncircumcised. The Heb. contains a pun, *Gilgal* and *rolled away*. The meaning of Gilgal is "circle" (of stones), a circle recalling a wheel which can roll.

5.10-12: Passover at Gilgal. 10: The first Passover in Canaan. 12: On manna see Exod. ch. 16 and notes.

5.13-15: A theophany. Joshua meets the captain of the army of the LORD (compare Num.22.22; 2 Kgs.6.17). The story is fragmentary, for a sequel seems expected, but is not given (compare Exod.3.5-12).

6.1-27: The capture of Jericho. The divine mandate was for the Israelites to march around the city once a day for six days, carrying the Ark and blowing trumpets. On the seventh day the procession moved around the city seven times; then, the shout of the Israelites was enough to

seven trumpets made from rams' horns. On the seventh day you shall march round the city seven times and the priests shall blow their trumpets. 5 At the blast of the rams' horns, when you hear the trumpet sound, the whole army shall raise a great shout; the wall of the city will collapse and the army shall advance, every man straight ahead.' So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and gave them their orders: 'Take up the Ark of the Covenant; let seven priests with seven trumpets of ram's horn go in front of the Ark of the LORD.' Then he said to the army, 'March on and make the circuit of the city, and let the men drafted from the two and a half tribes go in front of the Ark of the LORD.' 8 When Joshua had spoken to the army, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of ram's horn before the LORD passed on and blew the trumpets, with the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD following them. The drafted men marched in front of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rearguard followed the Ark, the trumpets sounding as they marched. But Joshua ordered the army not to shout, or to raise their voices or utter a word, till the day came when he would tell them to shout; then they were to give a loud shout. Thus he caused the Ark of the LORD to go round the city, making the circuit of it once, and then they went back to the camp and spent the night there. Joshua rose early in the morning and the priests took up the Ark of the LORD. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of ram's horn went marching in front of the Ark of the LORD, blowing the trumpets as they went, with the drafted men in front of them and the rearguard following the Ark of the LORD, the trumpets sounding as they marched. They marched round the city once on the second day and returned to the camp; 15 this they did for six days. But on the seventh day they rose at dawn and marched seven times round the city in the same way; that was the only day on which they marched round seven times. The seventh time the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua said to the army, 'Shout! The LORD has given you the city. The city shall be under solemn ban: everything in it belongs to the LORD. No one is to be spared except the prostitute Rahab and everyone who is with her in the house, because she hid the men whom we sent. And you must beware of coveting anything that is forbidden under the ban; you must take none of it for yourselves; this would put the Israelite camp itself under the ban and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold, all the vessels of copper and iron, shall be holy; they belong to the LORD and they must go into the LORD's treasury.' So they blew the trumpets, and when the army heard the trumpet sound, they raised a great shout, and down fell the walls. The army advanced on the city, every man straight ahead, and took it. Under the ban they destroyed everything in the city; they put everyone to the sword, men and women, young and old, and also cattle, sheep, and asses. But the two men who had been sent out as spies were told by Joshua to go into the prostitute's house and bring out her and all who belonged to her, as they had sworn to do. So the young men went and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out the whole family and left them outside the Israelite camp. They then set fire to the city and everything in it, except that they deposited the silver and gold and the vessels of copper and iron in the treasury of the LORD's house. Thus Joshua spared the lives of Rahab the prostitute, her household and all who belonged to her, because she had hidden the men whom Joshua had sent to Jericho as spies;

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overthrow the walls; on Jericho see 2.1 n. 4: *Seven*, often a sacred number, occurs repeatedly in this chapter. 5: The *shout* is part of the ritual of the Ark (see Num.10.5-9; 1 Sam.4.5; 2 Sam.6.15). 17: *Solemn ban* is a technical term meaning that the city and all that is in it is to be offered as a holocaust to God (see v. 21); no booty is allowed to be taken (but see 8.2) and any deviation would be a sacrilege to be severely punished (see v. 18; 7.1; 1 Sam.15.14-23); the only exception is mentioned in vv. 19 and 24. 24: *The LORD's house* is an anachronism, since



26 she and her family settled permanently among the Israelites. It was then that Joshua laid this curse on Jericho:

May the LORD's curse light on the man who comes forward to rebuild this city of Jericho: the laying of its foundations shall cost him his eldest son, the setting up of its gates shall cost him his youngest.

27 Thus the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the country.

7 But the Israelites defied the ban: Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the forbidden things, and the LORD was angry with the Israelites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho with orders to go up to Ai, near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and see how the land lay; so the men went up and explored Ai. They returned to Joshua and reported that there was no need for the whole army to move: 'Let some two or three thousand men go forward to attack Ai. Do not make the whole army toil up there; the population is small.'

4 And so about three thousand men went up, but they turned tail before the men of Ai, who killed some thirty-six of them; they chased them all the way from the gate to the Quarries<sup>j</sup> and killed them on the pass. At this the courage of the people melted and flowed away like water. Joshua and the elders of Israel rent their clothes and flung themselves face downwards to the ground; they lay before the Ark of the LORD till evening and threw dust on their heads. Joshua said, 'Alas, O Lord GOD, why didst thou bring this people across the Jordan only to hand us over to the Amorites to be destroyed? If only we had been content

to settle on the other side of the Jordan! I beseech thee, O Lord; what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by the enemy? When the Canaanites and all the natives of the country hear of this, they will come swarming around us and wipe us off the face of the earth. What wilt thou do then for the honour of thy great name?'

The LORD said to Joshua, 'Stand up; why lie prostrate on your face? Israel has sinned: they have broken the covenant which I laid upon them, by taking forbidden things for themselves. They have stolen them, and concealed it by mingling them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies: they are put to flight because they have brought themselves under the ban. Unless they destroy every single thing among them that is forbidden under the ban, I will be with them no longer. Stand up; you must hallow the people; tell them they must hallow themselves for tomorrow. Tell them, These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: You have forbidden things among you, Israel; you cannot stand against your enemies until you have rid yourselves of them. In the morning come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe which the LORD chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan which the LORD chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family which the LORD chooses shall come forward man by man. The man who is chosen as the harbinger of forbidden things shall be burnt, he and all that is his, because he has broken the covenant of the LORD and committed outrage in Israel.' Early in the morning Joshua rose and brought Israel forward tribe by tribe,

*j Or to Shebarim.*

the Temple did not yet exist. 26: The fulfillment of this curse is narrated in 1 Kgs.16.34.

7.1-26: **The setback at Ai.** 1: This verse foreshadows the narrative in vv. 6-21. 2: *Ai* was in the central highlands northwest of Jericho. Archaeology indicates that it was in ruins (for *Ai* means "ruin") in Joshua's time, yet these ruins could have served as an outpost for Bethel (MT adds Bethel in 8.17). Many scholars think that there was behind this story a battle for the important site, *Bethel*, and not for *Ai*; the Book of Joshua, otherwise, has no account of the capture of Bethel (but see Judg.1.22-26). *Beth-aven* means "house of wickedness," referring to Bethel in Hos.4.15 (see Amos 5.5); some regard *near Beth-aven* as a gloss. 11: That *Israel has sinned* because one man (see v. 1) has trespassed reflects the ancient unitary view of society. 14: *The LORD chooses*: probably by the casting of lots; on sacred lots see Exod.28.15 n.; 1 Sam.

and the tribe of Judah was chosen.  
 17 He brought forward the clans of Judah, and the clan of Zerah was chosen; then the clan of Zerah family by family, and the family of Zabdi  
 18 was chosen. He brought that family forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen.  
 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, give honour to the LORD the God of Israel and make your confession to him: tell me what you have done,  
 20 hide nothing from me.' Achan answered Joshua, 'I confess, I have sinned against the LORD the God of Israel. This is what  
 21 I did: among the booty I caught sight of a fine mantle from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels. I coveted them and I took them. You will find them hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.'  
 22 So Joshua sent messengers, who ran to the tent, and there was the stuff<sup>k</sup> hidden in the tent with the silver underneath. They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out before the LORD. Then  
 24 Joshua took Achan son of Zerah, with the silver, the mantle, and the bar of gold, together with his sons and daughters, his oxen, his asses, and his sheep, his tent, and everything he had, and he and all Israel brought them up to the Vale of Achor.<sup>l</sup> Joshua said, 'What trouble you have brought on us! Now the LORD will bring trouble on you.' Then all the Israelites stoned  
 26 him to death; and they raised a great pile of stones over him, which remains to this day. So the LORD's anger was abated. That is why to this day that place is called the Vale of Achor.

8 THE LORD SAID TO JOSHUA, 'DO NOT be fearful or dismayed; take the whole

army and attack Ai. I deliver the king of Ai into your hands, him and his people, his city and his country. Deal  
 2 with Ai and her king as you dealt with Jericho and her king; but you may keep for yourselves the cattle and any other spoil that you may take. Set an ambush for the city to the west of it.' So Joshua and all the army prepared  
 3 for the assault on Ai. He chose thirty thousand fighting men and dispatched them by night, with these orders: 'Lie  
 4 in ambush to the west of the city, not far from it, and all of you hold yourselves in readiness. I myself will  
 5 approach the city with the rest of the army, and when the enemy come out to meet us as they did last time, we shall take to flight before them. Then they  
 6 will come out and pursue us until we have drawn them away from the city, thinking that we have taken to flight as we did last time. While we are in flight, come out from your ambush  
 7 and occupy the city; the LORD your God will deliver it into your hands. When  
 8 you have taken it, set it on fire. Thus you will do what the LORD commands. These are your orders.' So  
 9 Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place of ambush and waited between Bethel and Ai to the west of Ai, while Joshua spent the night with the army.

Early in the morning Joshua rose,  
 10 mustered the army and marched against Ai, he himself and the elders of Israel at his head. All the armed  
 11 forces with him marched on until they came within sight of the city. They encamped north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city; but Joshua  
 12 took some five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai to the west of the city.<sup>m</sup> When  
 14

<sup>k</sup> Or the mantle.

<sup>l</sup> That is Trouble.

<sup>m</sup> So Sept.; Heb. adds (13) So the army pitched camp to the north of the city, and the rearguard to the west, while Joshua went that night into the valley.

14.40-42. 24-25: The unitary concept of society required that Achan and all he had be purged from Israel (see Num.16.16-35). *Achor*: a pun, for it is from the same root as the Heb. word *trouble* (see Hos.2.15). 26: *A great pile of stones* marked the burial places of criminals (see 8.29; 10.27; 2 Sam.18.17). *To this day*: a fixed formula in stories told to explain curious surviving facts, names, and institutions (see 4.9; 8.28-29; 9.27; 10.27).

8.1-29: **Victory at Ai.** Israel, now free from Achan's guilt, easily captures and destroys Ai by a clever stratagem. 9: *Bethel*, later one of the chief shrines of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kgs. 12.28-30; see also Gen.28.10-22), is about one and one-quarter miles northwest of Ai; see 7.2 n. 12: *Five thousand*: thirty thousand is the figure in v. 3. 13: See Tfn. m. 15: *Towards the wilder-*

the king of Ai saw them, he and the citizens rose with all speed that morning and marched out to do battle against Israel; he did not know that there was an ambush set for him to the west of the city. Joshua and all the Israelites made as if they were routed by them and fled towards the wilderness, and all the people in the city were called out in pursuit. So they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. Not a man was left in Ai; they had all gone out in pursuit of the Israelites and during the pursuit had left the city undefended.

18 Then the LORD said to Joshua, 'Point towards Ai with the dagger you are holding, for I will deliver the city into your hands.' So Joshua pointed with his dagger towards Ai. At his signal, the men in ambush rose quickly from their places and, entering the city at a run, took it and promptly set fire to it. 20 The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke from the city already going up to the sky; they were powerless to make their escape in any direction, and the Israelites who had feigned flight towards the wilderness turned on their pursuers. For when Joshua and all the Israelites saw that the ambush had seized the city and that smoke was already going up from it, they turned and fell upon the men of Ai. 22 Those who had come out to meet the Israelites were now hemmed in with Israelites on both sides of them, and the Israelites cut them down until there was not a single survivor, nor had any escaped. The king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua. 24 When the Israelites had cut down to the last man all the citizens of Ai who were in the open country or in the wilderness to which they had pursued them, and the massacre was complete, they all turned back to Ai and put it to the sword. The number who were killed that day, men and women, was

twelve thousand, the whole population of Ai. Joshua held out his dagger and did not draw back his hand until he had put to death all who lived in Ai; but the Israelites kept for themselves the cattle and any other spoil that they took, following the word of the LORD spoken to Joshua. So Joshua burnt Ai to the ground, and left it the desolate ruined mound it remains to this day. He hanged the king of Ai on a tree and left him there till sunset; and when the sun had set, he gave the order and they cut him down and flung down his body at the entrance of the city gate. Over the body they raised a great pile of stones, which is there to this day.

At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD the God of Israel on Mount Ebal. The altar was of blocks of undressed stone on which no tool of iron had been used, following the commands given to the Israelites by Moses the servant of the LORD, as is described in the book of the law of Moses. At the altar they offered whole-offerings to the LORD, and slaughtered share-offerings. There in the presence of the Israelites he engraved on blocks<sup>n</sup> of stone a copy of the law of Moses. And all Israel, elders, officers, and judges, took their stand on either side of the Ark, facing the levitical priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD—all Israel, native and alien alike. Half of them stood facing Mount Gerizim and half facing Mount Ebal, to fulfil the command of Moses the servant of the LORD that the blessing should be pronounced first. Then Joshua recited the whole of the blessing and the cursing word by word, as they are written in the book of the law. There was not a single word of all that Moses had commanded which he did not read aloud before the whole congregation of Israel, including the

<sup>n</sup> Or on the blocks.

*ness*: eastward. **18: Point towards Ai with the dagger**: this is obviously not an ordinary signal (see v. 26) but a symbolic gesture (see Exod.17.8-13; 2 Kgs.13.14-19).

**8.30-35: Mount Ebal: the building of an altar and reading of the Law**. These verses interrupt the story of the conquest and probably are not in their original position here (see ch. 24 for events in the same area). Josh. here carries out the prescriptions of Deut.27.4-13 (see also Deut.11.29-30). The events take place just west of Shechem, about twenty miles north of Ai, with Mount Ebal to the north and Mount Gerizim (v. 33) to the south.

women and dependants and the aliens resident in their company.

- 9 When the news of these happenings reached all the kings west of the Jordan, in the hill-country, the Shephelah, and all the coast of the Great Sea running up to the Lebanon, the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, 2 Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites agreed to join forces and fight against Joshua and Israel.
- 3 When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard how Joshua had dealt with 4 Jericho and Ai, they adopted a ruse of their own. They went and disguised themselves, with old sacking for their asses, old wine-skins split and 5 mended, old and patched sandals for their feet, old clothing to wear, and by way of provisions nothing but dry and 6 mouldy bread. They came to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, 'We have come from a distant country to ask 7 you now to grant us a treaty.' The Israelites said to the Hivites, 'But maybe you live in our neighbourhood: if so, how can we grant you a treaty?' 8 They said to Joshua, 'We are your slaves.' Joshua asked them who they were and where they came from. 9 'Sir,' they replied, 'our country is very far away, and we have come because of the renown of the LORD your God. We have heard of his fame, of all that 10 he did to Egypt, and to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan who lived at Ashtaroth. 11 Our elders and all the people of our country told us to take provisions for the journey and come to meet you, and say, "We are your slaves; please 12 grant us a treaty." Look at our bread; it was hot from the oven when we packed it at home on the day we came 13 away. Now it is dry and mouldy. Look at the wine-skins; they were new when

we filled them, and now they are all split; look at our clothes and our sandals, worn out by the long journey.' The chief men of the community accepted some of their provisions and did not at first seek guidance from the LORD. So Joshua received 15 them peaceably and granted them a treaty, promising to spare their lives, and the chiefs pledged their faith to them on oath.

16 Within three days of granting them the treaty, the Israelites learnt that they were in fact neighbours and lived near by. So the Israelites set out 17 and on the third day they reached their cities; these were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. The 18 Israelites did not slaughter them, because of the oath which the chief men of the community had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel, but the people were all indignant with 19 their chiefs. The chiefs all replied to the assembled people, 'But we swore an oath to them by the LORD the God of Israel; we cannot touch them now. 20 What we will do is this: we will spare their lives so that the oath which we swore to them may bring no harm upon us. But though their lives must be 21 spared, they shall be set to chop wood and draw water for the community.' The people agreed to do as their chiefs had said. Joshua summoned the 22 Gibeonites and said, 'Why did you play this trick on us? You told us that you live a long way off, when you are near neighbours. There is a curse upon 23 you for this: for all time you shall provide us with slaves, to chop wood and draw water for the house of my God.' They answered Joshua. 'We were told, 24 sir, that the LORD your God had commanded Moses his servant to give you the whole country and to exterminate all its inhabitants; so because of you we were in terror of our lives, and

9.1-27: **The stratagem of the Gibeonites.** 1: The victories at Jericho and Ai lead to a coalition against Israel. 3-15: *The inhabitants of Gibeon* gained a treaty by pretending to be from a *distant country*; in Deut.20.10-18, Israel was permitted to make peace only with those who lived at a great distance; those near at hand were to be annihilated. *Gibeon* is modern El-Jib, about seven miles southwest of Ai; but the Gibeonites also dwelt in three neighboring cities (v. 17). 7: The Gibeonites are called *Hivites* (see 11.19); they were possibly an isolated non-Canaanite group. Their towns are listed in v. 17. 10: *Sihon and Og*: Num.21.21-35. 14: Sharing in the *provisions* would constitute a treaty. 20: An *oath* once made, even in error, could not be broken. 21: The Gibeonites were to perform menial services at the temple (see 1 Kgs.9.20-21;

25 that is why we did this. We are in your  
power: do with us whatever you think  
26 right and proper.' What he did was  
this: he saved them from death at the  
hands of the Israelites, and they did not  
27 kill them; but thenceforward he set  
them to chop wood and draw water for  
the community and for the altar of the  
LORD. And to this day they do it at the  
place which the LORD chose.

10 When Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem  
heard that Joshua had captured Ai and  
destroyed it (for Joshua had dealt with  
Ai and her king as he had dealt with  
Jericho and her king), and that the  
inhabitants of Gibeon had made their  
peace with Israel and were living  
2 among them, he was greatly alarmed;  
for Gibeon was a large place, like a  
royal city: it was larger than Ai, and  
3 its men were all good fighters. So  
Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to  
Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king  
of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish,  
and Debir king of Eglon, and said,  
4 'Come up and help me, and we will  
attack the Gibeonites, because they  
have made their peace with Joshua and  
5 the Israelites.' So the five Amorite  
kings, the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron,  
Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, joined  
forces and advanced to take up their  
positions for the attack on Gibeon.  
6 But the men of Gibeon sent this  
message to Joshua in the camp at  
Gilgal: 'We are your slaves, do not  
abandon us, come quickly to our relief.  
All the Amorite kings in the hill-  
country have joined forces against us;  
7 come and help us.' So Joshua went up  
from Gilgal with all his forces and all  
8 his fighting men. The LORD said to  
Joshua, 'Do not be afraid of them; I  
have delivered them into your hands,

and not a man will be able to stand  
against you.' Joshua came upon them 9  
suddenly, after marching all night from  
Gilgal. The LORD threw them into con- 10  
fusion before the Israelites, and Joshua  
defeated them utterly in Gibeon; he  
pursued them down the pass of Beth-  
horon and kept up the slaughter as far  
as Azekah and Makkedah. As they 11  
were fleeing from Israel down the pass,  
the LORD hurled great hailstones at  
them out of the sky all the way to  
Azekah: more died from the hailstones  
than the Israelites slew by the sword.

On that day when the LORD 12  
delivered the Amorites into the hands of  
Israel, Joshua spoke with the LORD,  
and he said in the presence of Israel:

Stand still, O Sun, in Gibeon;  
stand, Moon, in the Vale of Aijalon.

So the sun stood still and the moon 13  
halted until a nation had taken  
vengeance on its enemies, as indeed is  
written in the Book of Jashar.<sup>o</sup> The sun  
stayed in mid heaven and made no  
haste to set for almost a whole day.  
Never before or since has there been 14  
such a day as this day on which the  
LORD listened to the voice of a man;  
for the LORD fought for Israel. So 15  
Joshua and all the Israelites returned  
to the camp at Gilgal.

The five kings fled and hid themselves 16  
in a cave at Makkedah, and Joshua 17  
was told that they had been found  
hidden in this cave. Joshua replied, 18  
'Roll some great stones to the mouth  
of the cave and post men there to keep  
watch over the kings. But you must 19  
not stay; keep up the pursuit, attack  
your enemies from the rear and do not

<sup>o</sup> Or the Book of the Upright.

Ezek. 44.4-8 n.). 27: *The place . . . chose*: a conventional allusion to Jerusalem in Deut. (e.g. 12.5) and related books.

10.1-27: **Israel's victory over the five kings.** Joshua comes to the rescue of the Gibeonites when they are attacked by a coalition of five Amorite cities; the Israelite capture of Jericho and Ai impelled that coalition. 3: *Hebron*: twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The other three places are about fifteen to thirty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. 10: *The pass of Beth-horon* led westward to the coastal plain. 11: *More died from the hailstones than the Israelites slew* is the writer's way of expressing his belief that the victories were miracles accomplished by God's intervention rather than by military skill. 12: *Aijalon* is about ten miles west of Gibeon. 13: *Jashar*: "upright." *The Book of Jashar* was an ancient collection of Heb. poetry now lost (compare 2 Sam. 1.18). The poetic imagery of *Stand still, O Sun . . .* is repeated literally in the prose to glorify the LORD, and Joshua too. 16-27: The fugitive kings are captured, humiliated, and killed; their bodies were then returned to the caves in which they had hidden.

let them reach their cities; the LORD your God has delivered them into your hands.' When Joshua and the Israelites had finished the work of slaughter and all had been put to the sword—except a few survivors who escaped and entered the fortified cities—the whole army rejoined Joshua at Makkedah in peace; not a man of the Israelites suffered so much as a scratch on his tongue. Then Joshua said, 'Open the mouth of the cave, and bring me out those five kings.' They did so; they brought the five kings out of the cave, the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. When they had brought them to Joshua, he summoned all the Israelites and said to the commanders of the troops who had served with him, 'Come forward and put your feet on the necks of these kings.' So they came forward and put their feet on their necks. Joshua said to them, 'Do not be fearful or dismayed; be strong and resolute; for the LORD will do this to every enemy you fight against.' And he struck down the kings and slew them; then he hung their bodies on five trees, where they remained hanging till evening. At sunset, on Joshua's orders they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave in which they had hidden; they piled great stones against its mouth, and there the stones are to this day.<sup>p</sup>

28 On that same day, Joshua captured Makkedah and put both king and people to the sword, destroying both them and every living thing in the city. He left no survivor, and he dealt with the king of Makkedah as he had dealt with the king of Jericho. Then Joshua and all the Israelites marched on from Makkedah to Libnah and attacked it. The LORD delivered the city and its king to the Israelites, and they put its people and every living thing in it to the sword; they left no survivor there, and dealt with its king as they had dealt with the king of Jericho. From Libnah Joshua and all

the Israelites marched on to Lachish, took up their positions and attacked it. The LORD delivered Lachish into their hands; they took it on the second day and put every living thing in it to the sword, as they had done at Libnah.

Meanwhile Horam king of Gezer had advanced to the relief of Lachish; but Joshua struck them down, both king and people, and not a man of them survived. Then Joshua and all the Israelites marched on from Lachish to Eglon, took up their positions and attacked it; that same day they captured it and put its inhabitants to the sword, destroying every living thing in it as they had done at Lachish. From Eglon Joshua and all the Israelites advanced to Hebron and attacked it. They captured it and put its king to the sword together with every living thing in it and in all its villages; as at Eglon, he left no survivor, destroying it and every living thing in it. Then Joshua and all the Israelites wheeled round towards Debir and attacked it. They captured the city with its king, and all its villages, put them to the sword and destroyed every living thing; they left no survivor. They dealt with Debir and its king as they had dealt with Hebron and with Libnah and its king.

So Joshua massacred the population of the whole region—the hill-country, the Negeb, the Shephelah, the watersheds—and all their kings. He left no survivor, destroying everything that drew breath, as the LORD the God of Israel had commanded. Joshua carried the slaughter from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, over the whole land of Goshen and as far as Gibeon. All these kings he captured at the same time, and their country with them, for the LORD the God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned with all the Israelites to the camp at Gilgal.

When Jabin king of Hazor heard of all this, he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and

*p* and there . . . day: *or* on this very day.

10.28–43: Summary of Joshua's conquests in the south. After the defeat of the five kings, Israel had no difficulty in conquering the whole of southern Palestine (but see 13.1–6).

11.1–23: The conquest of the north. When the northern Canaanite rulers, hearing of Israel's victories in the south, unite to oppose her, they are overwhelmingly defeated. 1: Hazor was one

2 Akshaph, to the northern kings in the hill-country, in the Arabah opposite Kinnereth, in the Shephelah, and in the district of Dor on the west, 3 the Canaanites to the east and the west, the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites in the hill-country, and the Hivites below Hermon in the 4 land of Mizpah. They took the field with all their forces, a great horde countless as the grains of sand on the sea-shore, among them a great number 5 of horses and chariots. All these kings made common cause, and came and camped at the waters of Merom to 6 fight against Israel. The LORD said to Joshua, 'Do not be afraid of them, for at this time tomorrow I shall deliver them to Israel all dead men; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots.' So Joshua and his army 7 surprised them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. The 8 LORD delivered them into the hands of Israel; they struck them down and pursued them as far as Greater Sidon, Misrephoth on the west, and the Vale of Mizpah on the east. They struck them down until not a man was 9 left alive. Joshua dealt with them as the LORD had commanded: he hamstrung their horses and burnt their chariots. 10 At this point Joshua turned his forces against Hazor, formerly the head of all these kingdoms. He captured the city and put its king to death with the 11 sword. They killed every living thing in it and wiped them all out; they spared nothing that drew breath, and 12 Hazor itself they destroyed by fire. So Joshua captured these kings and their cities and put them to the sword, destroying them all, as Moses the servant 13 of the LORD had commanded. The cities whose ruined mounds are still standing were not burnt by the Israel-

ites; it was Hazor alone that Joshua burnt. The Israelites plundered all these 14 cities and kept for themselves the cattle and any other spoil they took; but they put every living soul to the sword until they had destroyed every one; they did not leave alive any one that drew breath. The LORD laid his com- 15 mands on his servant Moses, and Moses laid these same commands on Joshua, and Joshua carried them out. Not one of the commands laid on Moses by the LORD did he leave unfulfilled.

And so Joshua took the whole 16 country, the hill-country, all the Negeb, all the land of Goshen, the Shephelah, the Arabah, and the Israelite hill-country with the adjoining lowlands. His conquests extended from the bare 17 mountain which leads up to Seir as far as Baal-gad in the Vale of Lebanon under Mount Hermon. He took prisoner all their kings, struck them down and put them to death. It was a long 18 war that he fought against all these kingdoms. Except for the Hivites who 19 lived in Gibeon, not one of their cities came to terms with the Israelites; all were taken by storm. It was the 20 LORD's purpose that they should offer an obstinate resistance to the Israelites in battle, and that thus they should be annihilated without mercy and utterly destroyed,<sup>q</sup> as the LORD had commanded Moses.

It was then that Joshua proceeded to 21 wipe out the Anakim from the hill-country, from Hebron, Debir, Anab, all the hill-country of Judah and all the hill-country of Israel, destroying both 22 them and their cities. No Anakim were left in the land taken by the Israelites; they survived only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

<sup>q</sup> offer . . . destroyed: or obstinately engage the Israelites in battle so that they should annihilate them without mercy, only that he might destroy them . . .

of the largest cities of Galilee. Excavations have shown its importance in antiquity, and confirm a capture of the city at about the period of time indicated in this narrative. The other three places in this verse are all between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. 2: *Arabah*: see 3.16 n. *Kinnereth*: the ancient name for the Sea of Galilee. *Shephelah*: the low hill country immediately east of the Mediterranean plain. *Dor*: on the coast, west of Megiddo. *Hivites*: see 9.7 n. 5: *The waters of Merom*: probably the brook which flows from Merom (modern Meiron) into the Sea of Galilee at its northwest corner. 8: *Sidon*: the great Phoenician seaport to the north of Palestine. *Misrephoth*: on the Mediterranean coast, west of Hazor. *Mizpah*: see v. 3. 16-20: A summary of the victories in the south and the north. 17: *Seir*: a synonym for Edom. 20: *The LORD's purpose*: see Deut.7.2-6; 20.16-18. 21: *Anakim* were reputed to be men of gigantic size (see Num.13.33; Deut.2.10-11). In Josh. they seem to be an aristocracy in

23 Thus Joshua took the whole country, fulfilling all the commands that the LORD had laid on Moses; he assigned it as Israel's patrimony, allotting to each tribe its share; and the land was at peace.

12 These are the names of the kings of the land whom the Israelites slew, and whose territory they occupied beyond the Jordan towards the sunrise from the gorge of the Arnon as far as Mount Hermon and all the Arabah on the east. Sihon the Amorite king who lived in Heshbon: his rule extended from Aroer, which is on the edge of the gorge of the Arnon, along the middle of the gorge and over half Gilead as far as the gorge of the Jabbok, the Ammonite frontier; along the Arabah as far as the eastern side of the Sea of Kinnereth and as far as the eastern side of the Sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, by the road to Beth-jeshimoth and from Teman under the watershed of Pishgah. Og king of Bashan, one of the survivors of the Rephaim, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei: he ruled over Mount Hermon, Salcah, all Bashan as far as the Geshurite and Maacathite borders, and half Gilead as far as the boundary of Sihon king of Heshbon. Moses the servant of the LORD put them to death, he and the Israelites, and he gave their land to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, as their possession.

7 These are the names of the kings whom Joshua and the Israelites put to death beyond the Jordan to the west, from Baal-gad in the Vale of Lebanon as far as the bare mountain that leads up to Seir. Joshua gave their land to the Israelite tribes to be their possession according to their allotted shares,

in the hill-country, the Shephelah, the Arabah, the watersheds, the wilderness, and the Negeb; lands of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The king of Jericho; the king of Ai which is beside Bethel; the king of Jerusalem; the king of Hebron; the king of Jarmuth; the king of Lachish; the king of Eglon; the king of Gezer; the king of Debir; the king of Geder; the king of Hormah; the king of Arad; the king of Libnah; the king of Adullam; the king of Makkedah; the king of Bethel; the king of Tappuah; the king of Hopher; the king of Aphek; the king of Aphek<sup>r</sup>-in-Sharon; the king of Madon; the king of Hazor; the king of Shimron-meron; the king of Akshaph; the king of Taanach; the king of Megiddo; the king of Kedesh; the king of Jokneam-in-Carmel; the king of Dor in the district of Dor; the king of Gaiam-in-Galilee; the king of Tirzah: thirty-one kings in all, one of each town.

*The division of the land among  
the tribes*

BY THIS TIME JOSHUA HAD BECOME very old, and the LORD said to him, 'You are now a very old man, and much of the country remains to be occupied. The country which remains is this: all the districts of the Philistines and all the Geshurite country (this is reckoned as Canaanite territory from Shihor to the east of Egypt as far north as Ekron; and it belongs to the five lords of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron);

<sup>r</sup> of Aphek: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

the hill country around Hebron and in the coastal towns; in 14.12-15 and 15.13-15 Caleb, not Joshua, is their conqueror. 23: Nothing remained to be done but to divide the land among the tribes.

12.1-24: Summary of Israel's victories. 1-6: Moses' victories in Transjordan (see Deut. 2.26-3.11). 6: On the land of the Transjordan tribes, see Deut. 3.12-17. 7-24: Joshua's conquests west of the Jordan. Some of these names were not mentioned previously. The "kings" were merely local chieftains.

13.1-33: The beginning of the distribution of the land. The distribution continues through ch. 18. 2-7: These territories were still unconquered, even though ideally they were to be part of Israel according to 1.4 and Num. 34.1-12. 2: The Philistines came from Caphtor (Deut. 2.23 n.). They settled on the coast of Palestine (which gets its name from them) shortly after 1200 B.C.; their five districts are listed in v. 3. Not Semites, they did not practice circumcision. They were mortal enemies of Israel for over 200 years. *Geshurite country*: south of the Philistine



all the districts of the Avvim on the  
 4 south; all the Canaanite country from  
 the low-lying land which belongs to the  
 Sidonians as far as Aphek, the Amorite  
 5 frontier; the land of the Gebalites and  
 all the Lebanon to the east from Baal-  
 gad under Mount Hermon as far as  
 6 Lebo-hamath. I will drive out in favour  
 of the Israelites all the inhabitants  
 of the hill-country from the Lebanon  
 as far as Misrephoth on the west, and  
 all the Sidonians. In the mean time  
 you are to allot all this to the Israelites  
 for their patrimony, as I have com-  
 7 manded you. Distribute this land now  
 to the nine tribes and half the tribe of  
 8 Manasseh for their patrimony.' For half  
 the tribe of Manasseh and<sup>s</sup> with them  
 the Reubenites and the Gadites had  
 each taken their patrimony which  
 Moses gave them east of the Jordan,  
 as Moses the servant of the LORD had  
 9 ordained. It started from Aroer which  
 is by the edge of the gorge of the  
 Arnon, and the level land half-way  
 along the gorge, and included all the  
 tableland from Medeba as far as Dibon;  
 10 all the cities of Sihon, the Amorite  
 king who ruled in Heshbon, as far as  
 11 the Ammonite frontier; and it also  
 included Gilead and the Geshurite  
 Maacathite territory, and all Mount  
 Hermon and the whole of Bashan as  
 far as Salcah, all the kingdom of Og  
 which he ruled from both Ashtaroth  
 and Edrei in Bashan. He was a survivor  
 of the remnant of the Rephaim, but  
 Moses put them both to death and occu-  
 13 pied their lands. But the Israelites did  
 not drive out the Geshurites and the  
 Maacathites; the Geshurites and the  
 Maacathites live among the Israelites  
 14 to this day. The tribe of Levi, how-  
 ever, received no patrimony; the LORD  
 the God of Israel is their patrimony,  
 as he promised them.

15 So Moses allotted territory to the  
 tribe of the Reubenites family by  
 16 family. Their territory started from

Aroer which is by the edge of the  
 gorge of the Arnon, and the level land  
 half-way along the gorge, and in-  
 cluded all the tableland as far as Mede-  
 17 ba; Heshbon and all its cities on the  
 tableland, Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-  
 18 baal-meon, Jahaz, Kedemoth, Me-  
 phaath, Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth-  
 19 shahar on the hill in the Vale, Beth-  
 20 peor, the watershed of Pisgah, and  
 Beth-jeshimoth, all the cities of the  
 21 tableland, all the kingdom of Sihon  
 the Amorite king who ruled in Hesh-  
 bon, whom Moses put to death together  
 with the princes of Midian, Evi, Rekem,  
 Zur, Hur, and Reba, the vassals of  
 Sihon who dwelt in the country. Ba-  
 22 laam son of Beor, who practised augury,  
 was among those whom the Israelites  
 put to the sword. The boundary of the  
 23 Reubenites was the Jordan and the  
 adjacent land: this is the patrimony  
 of the Reubenites family by family,  
 both the cities and their hamlets.

Moses allotted territory to the Gad-  
 24 ites family by family. Their territory  
 25 was Jazer, all the cities of Gilead and  
 half the Ammonite country as far as  
 Aroer which is east of Rabbah. It  
 26 reached from Heshbon as far as  
 Ramoth-mizpeh and Betonim, and  
 from Mahanaim as far as the boundary  
 of Lo-debar; it included in the valley  
 27 Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth,  
 and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom  
 of Sihon king of Heshbon. The bound-  
 ary was the Jordan and the adjacent  
 land as far as the end of the Sea of  
 Kinnereth east of the Jordan. This is  
 28 the patrimony of the Gadites family  
 by family, both the cities and their  
 hamlets.

Moses allotted territory to the half  
 29 tribe of Manasseh: it was for half the  
 tribe of the Manassites family by  
 family. Their territory ran from  
 30 Mahanaim and included all Bashan,  
 all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan

<sup>s</sup> For half . . . Manasseh and; *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

cities; see 1 Sam.27.7-8. 3: *Avvim* lived around Gaza. 4-6: This is unconquered territory on the northern edges of Palestine. 7: This is done in chs. 14-19. 8-32: The land east of the Jordan is allotted to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh; see Num. ch. 32 and Deut.3.12-17. The boundaries of Reuben and Gad were pushed back when the Ammonite and Moabite kingdoms developed. The origins of the half-tribe of Manasseh are obscure. 13: That the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites . . . is the first of several passages (14.6-13; 15.13-19,63; 16.10; 17.12-18; Judg.1.19,21,27-35) derived from an ancient source, which indicate that the conquest was less complete than the late editor of Joshua usually states. 14: *Levi*: see ch. 21.

and all Havvoth-jair in Bashan—sixty cities. Half Gilead, and Ashtaroth and Edrei the royal cities of Og in Bashan, belong to the sons of Machir son of Manasseh on behalf of half the Machirites family by family.

These are the territories which Moses allotted to the tribes as their patrimonies in the lowlands of Moab east of the Jordan. But to the tribe of Levi he gave no patrimony: the LORD the God of Israel is their patrimony, as he promised them.

Now follow the possessions which the Israelites acquired in the land of Canaan, as Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the Israelite tribes allotted them. They were assigned by lot, following the LORD's command given through Moses, to the nine and a half tribes. To two and a half tribes Moses had given patrimonies beyond the Jordan; but he gave none to the Levites as he did to the others. The tribe of Joseph formed the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. The Levites were given no share in the land, only cities to dwell in, with their common land for flocks and herds. So the Israelites, following the LORD's command given to Moses, assigned the land.

Now the tribe of Judah had come to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, 'You remember what the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me at Kadesh-barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from there to explore the land, and I brought back an honest report. The others who went with me discouraged the people, but I loyally carried out the purpose of the LORD my God. Moses swore an oath

that day and said, "The land on which you have set foot shall be your patrimony and your sons' after you as a possession for ever; for you have loyally carried out the purpose of the LORD my God." Well, the LORD spared my life as he promised; it is now forty-five years since he made this promise to Moses, at the time when Israel was journeying in the wilderness. Today I am eighty-five years old. I am still as strong as I was on the day when Moses sent me out; I am as fit now for war as I was then and am ready to take the field again. Give me today this hill-country which the LORD then promised me. You heard on that day that the Anakim were there and their cities were large and well fortified. Perhaps the LORD will be with me and I shall dispossess them as he promised.' Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him Hebron for his patrimony, and that is why Hebron remains to this day in the patrimony of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite. It is because he loyally carried out the purpose of the LORD the God of Israel. Formerly the name of Hebron was Kiriath-arba. This Arba was the chief man of the Anakim. And the land was at peace.

This is the territory allotted to the tribe of the sons of Judah family by family. It started from the Edomite frontier at the wilderness of Zin and ran as far as the Negeb at its southern end, and it had a common border with the Negeb at the end of the Dead Sea, where an inlet of water bends towards the Negeb. It continued from the south by the ascent of Akrabbim, passed by Zin, went up from the south of Kadesh-barnea, passed by Hezron, went on to Addar and turned round to Karka. It then passed along to Azmon, reached the Torrent of Egypt, and its limit was

**14.1-5: General introduction to the allotment of land.**

**14.6-15: Hebron assigned to Caleb.** Caleb in Num.13.6; 34.19 is of the tribe of Judah, but is here and in Num.32.12 a Kenizzite, therefore a non-Israelite (see v. 14; Gen.15.19); he receives land *within the tribe of Judah* as Moses had promised (see Num.14.24) because he "showed a different spirit" than the others sent to explore the land (Num.13.30; 14.6-9). Some scholars think that Caleb and some other non-Israelite elements had penetrated Canaan from the south along with some elements of Judah and Simeon; this opinion is based on a comparison of Judg.1.16-17 and Num.21.3 as well as Judg.1.9-15 and Josh.15.13-19.

**15.1-63: The territory allotted to Judah.** In this and the following sections the boundaries of each tribe are described as they existed before the rise of the monarchy. **1-12:** These are the boundaries of Judah: vv. 2-4, the southern, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean; vv. 5-11,

the sea. This was their southern boundary.

5 The eastern boundary is the Dead Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan and the adjacent land northwards from the inlet of the sea, at the mouth of the  
6 Jordan. The boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah; it passes north of Beth-arabah and thence to the stone of  
7 Bohan son of Reuben, thence to Debir from the Vale of Achor, and then turns north to the districts<sup>l</sup> in front of the ascent of Adummim south of the gorge. The boundary then passes the waters of En-shemesh and the limit  
8 there is En-rogel. It then goes up by the Valley of Ben-hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusites (that is Jerusalem). Thence it goes up to the top of the hill which faces the Valley of Hinnom on the west; this is at the northern end  
9 of the Vale of Rephaim. The boundary then bends round from the top of the hill to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah, runs round to the cities of Mount Ephron and round to Baalah, that is Kiriath-jearim. It then continues westwards from Baalah to Mount Seir, passes on to the north side of the slope of Mount Jearim, that is Kesalon, down to Beth-shemesh and on to  
11 Timnah. The boundary then goes north to the slope of Ekron, bends round to Shikkeron, crosses to Mount Baalah and reaches Jabneel; its limit  
12 is the sea. The western boundary is the Great Sea and the land adjacent. This is the whole circuit of the boundary of the tribe of Judah family by family.  
13 Caleb son of Jephunneh received his share of the land within the tribe of Judah as the LORD had said to Joshua. It was Kiriath-arba, that is Hebron. This Arba was the ancestor of the Anakim. Caleb drove out the three Anakim: these were Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai, descendants of Anak.  
15 From there he attacked the inhabitants of Debir; the name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-sepher. Caleb announced that whoever should attack Kiriath-sepher and capture it would receive his daughter Achsah in

marriage. Othniel, son of Caleb's  
17 brother Kenaz, captured it, and Caleb gave him his daughter Achsah. When  
18 she came to him, he incited her to ask her father for a piece of land. As she sat on the ass, she made a noise, and Caleb asked her, 'What did you mean by that?' She replied, 'I want a favour  
19 from you. You have put me in this dry Negeb; you must give me pools of water as well.' So Caleb gave her the upper pool and the lower pool.

This is the patrimony of the tribe  
20 of the sons of Judah family by family. These are the cities belonging to the  
21 tribe of Judah, the full count. By the Edomite frontier in the Negeb: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah,  
22 Ararah,<sup>u</sup> Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, Ziph,  
23,24 Telem, Bealoth, Hazor-hadattah,  
25 Kerioth-hezron, Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Bethpelet, Hazar-shual, Beersheba and its  
26 villages, Baalah, Iyim, Ezem, Eltolad,  
27,28 Kesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah,  
29,30 Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain,  
31 and Rimmon: in all, twenty-nine cities with their hamlets.

In the Shephelah: Eshtaol, Zorah,  
33 Ashnah, Zanoah, En-gannim, Tapuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh,  
34,35 Azekah, Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, namely both parts of Gederah: fourteen cities with their hamlets. Zenan,  
36 Hadashah, Migdal-gad, Dilan, Mizpeh, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eg-  
37,38 lon, Cabbon, Lahmas, Kithlish, Geder-  
39,40 oth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their hamlets. Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Jiphtah,  
41,42 Ashnah, Nezip, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their hamlets. Ekron, with its villages and  
43,44 hamlets, and from Ekron westwards, all the cities near Ashdod and their  
45,46 hamlets. Ashdod with its villages and hamlets, Gaza with its villages and  
47 hamlets as far as the Torrent of Egypt and the Great Sea and the land adjacent.

<sup>l</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, cp. 18. 17; Heb. to Gilgal.  
<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg.*: Heb. Adadah.

the eastern, the Dead Sea; and the northern, from the mouth of the Jordan to the Mediterranean, passing just south of Jerusalem; v. 12, the western, the Mediterranean. 13-19: Another reference to Caleb (compare 14.6-15); vv. 14-19 are almost identical with Judg.1.11-15. 20-63: A list of

48 In the hill-country: Shamir, Jattir,  
 49 Socoh, Dannah, Kiriath-sannah, that  
 50 is Debir, Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim,  
 51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven  
 52 cities in all with their hamlets. Arab,  
 53 Dumah, Eshan, Janim, Beth-tappuah,  
 54 Aphek,<sup>v</sup> Humtah, Kiriath-arba, that is  
 55 Hebron, and Zior: nine cities in all  
 56 with their hamlets. Maon, Carmel,  
 57 Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Za-  
 58 noah, Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten  
 59 cities in all with their hamlets. Halhul,  
 60 Beth-zur, Gedor, Maarath, Beth-  
 61 anoth, and Eltekon: six cities in all  
 62 with their hamlets. Tekoa, Ephrathah,  
 63 that is Bethlehem, Peor, Etam, Culom,  
 64 Tatam, Sores, Carem, Gallim, Baither,  
 65 and Manach: eleven cities in all with  
 66 their hamlets. Kiriath-baal, that is  
 67 Kiriath-jearim, and Rabbah: two cities  
 68 with their hamlets.

61 In the wilderness: Beth-arabah,  
 62 Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, Ir-melach,  
 63 and En-gedi: six cities with their  
 64 hamlets.

63 At Jerusalem, the men of Judah  
 were unable to drive out the Jebusites  
 who lived there, and to this day  
 Jebusites and men of Judah live  
 together in Jerusalem.

16 This is the lot that fell to the sons  
 of Joseph: the boundary runs from  
 the Jordan at Jericho, east of the waters  
 of Jericho by the wilderness, and goes up  
 from Jericho into the hill-country to  
 2 Bethel. It runs on from Bethel to Luz  
 and crosses the Archite border at  
 3 Ataroth.<sup>w</sup> Westwards it descends to the  
 boundary of the Japhletites as far as the  
 boundary of Lower Beth-horon and  
 4 Gezer; its limit is the sea. Here Manas-  
 seh and Ephraim the sons of Joseph  
 received their patrimony.

5 This was the boundary of the  
 Ephraimites family by family: their  
 eastern boundary ran from Ataroth-  
 6 addar up to Upper Beth-horon. It  
 continued westwards to Michmethath  
 on the north, going round by the

east of Taanath-shiloh and passing by  
 it on the east of Janoah. It descends 7  
 from Janoah to Ataroth and Naarath,  
 touches Jericho and continues to the  
 Jordan, and from Tappuah it goes 8  
 westwards by the gorge of Kanah; and  
 its limit is the sea. This is the patri-  
 mony of the tribe of Ephraim family  
 by family. There were also cities 9  
 reserved for the Ephraimites within the  
 patrimony of the Manassites, each of  
 these cities with its hamlets. They did 10  
 not however drive out the Canaanites  
 who dwelt in Gezer; the Canaanites  
 have lived among the Ephraimites  
 to the present day but have been subject  
 to forced labour in perpetuity.

This is the territory allotted to the 17  
 tribe of Manasseh, Joseph's eldest  
 son. Machir was Manasseh's eldest  
 son and father of Gilead, a fighting  
 man; Gilead and Bashan were allotted  
 to him.

The rest of the Manassites family by 2  
 family were the sons of Abiezer, the  
 sons of Helek, the sons of Asriel, the  
 sons of Shechem, the sons of Hopher,  
 and the sons of Shemida; these were  
 the male offspring of Manasseh son  
 of Joseph family by family.

Zelophehad son of Hopher, son of 3  
 Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manas-  
 seh, had no sons but only daughters:  
 their names were Mahlah, Noah,  
 Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. They 4  
 presented themselves before Eleazar  
 the priest and Joshua son of Nun,  
 and before the chiefs, and they said,  
 'The LORD commanded Moses to  
 allow us to inherit on the same footing  
 as our kinsmen.' They were therefore  
 given a patrimony on the same footing  
 as their father's brothers according to  
 the commandment of the LORD.

There fell to Manasseh's lot ten 5  
 shares, apart from the country of  
 Gilead and Bashan beyond the Jordan,  
 because Manasseh's daughters had 6

<sup>v</sup> Or Aphekah. <sup>w</sup> Ataroth-addar in 16. 5; 18. 13.

Judah's towns by districts. Many think this list was taken from an official register of the subdivisions of the kingdom of Judah, either after the division of Judah and Israel in 922 B.C., or perhaps in the time of Josiah (626-609). 63: See 2 Sam. 5.6-9.

16.1-17.18: The territory allotted to the Joseph tribes. The two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh receive the central highlands. 1-4: The southern boundary ran roughly from the Jordan at Jericho to Bethel, then slightly south toward Gezer and on to the Mediterranean. 5-10: The boundaries of Ephraim were south of Manasseh, but some Ephraimite cities were within Manasseh (v. 9). 17.1-6: Arrangements for Manasseh. 2: *The rest of the Manassites*: those not

received a patrimony on the same footing as his sons. The country of Gilead belonged to the rest of Manasseh's sons. The boundary of Manasseh reached from Asher as far as Michmethath, which is to the east of Shechem, and thence southwards towards Jashub by<sup>x</sup> En-tappuah. The territory of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah itself was on the border of Manasseh and belonged to Ephraim. The boundary then followed the gorge of Kanah to the south of the gorge (these cities<sup>y</sup> belong to Ephraim, although they lie among the cities of Manasseh), the boundary of Manasseh being on the north of the gorge; its limit was the sea. The southern side belonged to Ephraim and the northern to Manasseh, and their boundary was the sea. They marched with Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. But in Issachar and Asher, Manasseh possessed Bethshean and its villages, Ibleam and its villages, the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages. (The third is the district of Dor.<sup>z</sup>) The Manassites were unable to occupy these cities; the Canaanites maintained their hold on that part of the country. When the Israelites grew stronger, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, but they did not drive them out.

The sons of Joseph appealed to Joshua and said, 'Why have you given us only one lot and one share as our patrimony? We are a numerous people; so far the LORD has blessed us.' Joshua replied, 'If you are so numerous, go up into the forest in the territory of the Perizzites and the Rephaim and clear it for yourselves. You are their near neighbours<sup>a</sup> in the hill-country of Ephraim.' The sons of Joseph said, 'The hill-country is not enough for us; besides, all the Canaan-

ites have chariots of iron, those who inhabit the valley beside Bethshean and its villages and also those in the Vale of Jezreel.' Joshua replied to the tribes of Joseph, that is Ephraim and Manasseh: 'You are a numerous people with great resources. You shall not have one lot only. The hill-country is yours. It is forest land; clear it and it shall be yours to its furthest limits. The Canaanites may be powerful and equipped with chariots of iron, but you will be able to drive them out.'

THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF THE ISRAELITES met together at Shiloh and established the Tent of the Presence there. The country now lay subdued at their feet, but there remained seven tribes among the Israelites who had not yet taken possession of the patrimonies which would fall to them. Joshua therefore said to them, 'How much longer will you neglect to take possession of the land which the LORD the God of your fathers has given you? Appoint three men from each tribe whom I may send out to travel through the whole country. They shall make a register showing the patrimony suitable for each tribe, and come back to me, and then it can be shared out among you in seven portions. Judah shall retain his boundary in the south, and the house of Joseph their boundary in the north. You shall register the land in seven portions, bring the lists here, and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the LORD our God. Levi has no share among you, because his share is the priesthood of the LORD; and Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh have each taken possession of their patrimony east of the Jordan, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.' So the men set out on their journeys. Joshua ordered the

<sup>x</sup> Jashub by: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the inhabitants of.

<sup>y</sup> these cities: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>z</sup> The third . . . Dor: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* The three districts.

<sup>a</sup> You are . . . neighbours: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

already settled east of the Jordan (vv. 1,5-6; 13.29-31). 7-13: The boundaries of Manasseh. 11-13: *Shiloh*, in Ephraim, ten miles north of Bethel, was the new religious center, replacing Gilgal; see 19.51; 21.2; 22.9,12; Judg.18.31; 1 Sam.1.3; 4.3-4. *Tent of the Presence*:

18.1-19.51: *The territory of the seven other tribes.* 1-10: Preparations for the further division of the land. 1: *Shiloh*, in Ephraim, ten miles north of Bethel, was the new religious center, replacing Gilgal; see 19.51; 21.2; 22.9,12; Judg.18.31; 1 Sam.1.3; 4.3-4. *Tent of the Presence*:

emissaries to survey the country: 'Go through the whole country,' he said, 'survey it and return to me, and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh.' So the men went and passed through the country; they registered it on a scroll, city by city, in seven portions, and came to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh. Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and distributed the land there to the Israelites in their proper shares.

11 This is the lot which fell to the tribe of the Benjamites family by family. The territory allotted to them lay between the territory of Judah and Joseph. Their boundary at its northern corner starts from the Jordan; it goes up the slope on the north side of Jericho, continuing westwards into the hill-country, and its limit there is the wilderness of Beth-aven. From there it runs on to Luz, to the southern slope of Luz, that is Bethel, and down to Ataroth-addar over the hill-country south of Lower Beth-horon. The boundary then bends round at the west corner southwards from the hill-country above Beth-horon, and its limit is Kiriath-baal, that is Kiriath-jearim, a city of Judah. This is the western side. The southern side starts from the edge of Kiriath-jearim and ends<sup>b</sup> at the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. It goes down to the edge of the hill to the east of the Valley of Ben-hinnom, north of the Vale of Rephaim, down the Valley of Hinnom, to the southern slope of the Jebusites and so to En-rogel. It then bends round north and comes out at En-shemesh, goes on to the districts in front of the ascent of Adummim and thence down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. It passes to the northern side of the slope facing the Arabah and goes down to the Arabah, passing the northern slope of Beth-hoglah, and its limit is the northern inlet of the Dead Sea, at the southern mouth of the Jordan. This forms the southern bound-

dary. The Jordan is the boundary on the east side. This is the patrimony of the Benjamites, the complete circuit of their boundaries family by family.

The cities belonging to the tribe of the Benjamites family by family are: Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, Kephrah-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba: twelve cities in all with their hamlets. Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zela, Eleph, Jebus, that is Jerusalem, Gibeah, and Kiriath-jearim: fourteen cities in all with their hamlets. This is the patrimony of the Benjamites family by family.

The second lot cast was for Simeon, 19 the tribe of the Simeonites family by family. Their patrimony was included in that of Judah. For their patrimony they had Beersheba,<sup>c</sup> Moladah, Hazarshual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhen: in all, thirteen cities and their hamlets. They had Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities and their hamlets, all the hamlets round these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramath-negeb. This was the patrimony of the tribe of Simeon family by family. The patrimony of the Simeonites was part of the land allotted to the men of Judah, because their share was larger than they needed. The Simeonites therefore had their patrimony within the territory of Judah.

The third lot fell to the Zebulunites family by family. The boundary of their patrimony extended to Shadud.<sup>d</sup> Their boundary went up westwards as far as Maralah and touched Dabbesheth and the gorge east of Jokneam. It turned back from Shadud eastwards towards the sunrise up to the border of Kisloth-tabor, on to Daberath and up to Japhia. From there it crossed eastwards towards the sunrise to Gath-

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds westwards and ends . . .  
<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 4, 28; Heb. adds and Sheba.  
<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Sarid (similarly in verse 12).

see Exod. 26.1-37 n.; 33.7-11 n. 11-28: The territory of Benjamin, between Judah and Joseph. 19.1-9: The territory of Simeon lay within Judah, because the Judahite share was larger than they needed (v. 9). Simeon had once been powerful (see Gen.34.1-31 n.; 49.5-7 n.); it seems secondary to Judah here and is not mentioned in the blessings of Deut. ch. 33. Some scholars believe it disappeared as a separate tribe. 10-48: The territory of the Galilee tribes.

14 hepher, to Ittah-kazin, out to Rimmon,  
and bent round<sup>e</sup> to Neah. The north-  
ern boundary went round to Hannathon,  
and its limits were the Valley of  
15 Jiphtah-el, Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron,  
Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities in  
16 all with their hamlets. These cities and  
their hamlets were the patrimony of  
Zebulun family by family.

17 The fourth lot cast was for the sons  
18 of Issachar family by family. Their  
boundary included Jezreel, Kesulloth,  
19 Shunem, Hapharaim, Shion, Anahar-  
ath, Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, Remeth,  
20,21 En-gannim, En-haddah, and Beth-  
pazzez. The boundary touched Tabor,  
22 Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and  
its limit was the Jordan: sixteen cities  
23 with their hamlets. This was the pat-  
rimony of the tribe of the sons of  
Issachar family by family, both cities  
and hamlets.

24 The fifth lot cast was for the tribe  
of the Asherites family by family.  
25 Their boundary included Helkath,  
26 Hali, Beten, Akshaph, Alammelech,  
Amad, and Mishal; it touched Carmel  
on the west and the swamp of Lib-  
27 nath. It then turned back towards the  
east to Beth-dagon, touched Zebulun  
and the Valley of Jiphtah-el on the  
north at Beth-emek and Neiel, and  
reached Cabul on its northern side,  
28 and Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, and  
29 Kanah as far as Greater Sidon. The  
boundary turned at Ramah, going as  
far as the fortress city of Tyre, and then  
back again to Hosah, and its limits to  
the west were Mehalbeh, Achzib,  
30 Acco,<sup>f</sup> Aphek, and Rehob: twenty-  
two cities in all with their hamlets.  
31 This was the patrimony of the tribe of  
Asher family by family, these cities and  
their hamlets.

32 The sixth lot cast was for the sons of  
33 Naphtali family by family. Their bound-  
ary started from Heleph and from  
Elon-bezaananim and ran past  
Adami-nekeb and Jabneel as far as  
Lakkum, and its limit was the Jordan.  
34 The boundary turned back westwards

to Aznoth-tabor and from there on to  
Hukok. It touched Zebulun on the  
south, Asher on the west, and the low-  
lying land by the Jordan on the east.  
Their fortified cities were Ziddim, 35  
Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth,  
Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Ed- 36,37  
rei, En-hazor, Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, 38  
Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh: nine-  
teen cities with their hamlets. This was 39  
the patrimony of the tribe of Naphtali  
family by family, both cities and  
hamlets.

The seventh lot cast was for the tribe 40  
of the sons of Dan family by family.  
The boundary of their patrimony 41  
was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, Shaal-  
42 abbin, Aijalon, Jithlah, Elon, Timnah,  
43 Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath,  
44 Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon; and 45,46  
on the west Jarkon was the boundary  
opposite Joppa. But the Danites, 47  
when they lost this territory, marched  
against Leshem, attacked it and cap-  
tured it. They put its people to the sword,  
occupied it and settled in it; and they  
renamed the place Dan after their  
ancestor Dan. This was the patrimony 48  
of the tribe of the sons of Dan family  
by family, these cities and their ham-  
lets.

So the Israelites finished allocating 49  
the land and marking out its frontiers;  
and they gave Joshua son of Nun a  
patrimony within their territory. They 50  
followed the commands of the LORD  
and gave him the city for which he  
asked, Timnath-serah in the hill-country  
of Ephraim, and he rebuilt the city and  
settled in it.

These are the patrimonies which 51  
Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of  
Nun and the heads of families assigned  
by lot to the Israelite tribes at Shiloh  
before the LORD at the entrance of  
the Tent of the Presence. Thus they  
completed the distribution of the  
land.

<sup>e</sup> and bent round: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* which stretched.  
<sup>f</sup> Mehalbeh . . . Acco: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from the district  
of Achzib and Ummah.

10-16: *Zebulun*. 17-23: *Issachar*. 24-31: *Asher*. 32-39: *Naphtali*. 40-48: *Dan* never conquered these southern lands west of Benjamin (vv. 41-46); after being forced out, by the Amorites (Judg. 1.34-35) or by the Philistines (Judg. chs. 13-16), they then emigrated north (v. 47) to Leshem (Laish); see Judg. 18.27. 49-51: These verses conclude the distribution of land to the tribes.

20 THE LORD SPOKE TO JOSHUA AND COM-  
 2 manded him to say this to the Israelites:  
 'You must now appoint your cities of  
 3 refuge, of which I spoke to you  
 through Moses. They are to be places  
 where the homicide, the man who  
 kills another inadvertently without  
 intent, may take sanctuary. You shall  
 4 single them out as cities of refuge  
 from the vengeance of the dead man's  
 next-of-kin. When a man takes sanctu-  
 5 ary in one of these cities, he shall  
 halt at the entrance of the city gate  
 and state his case in the hearing of the  
 elders of that city; if they admit him  
 into the city, they shall grant him a  
 6 place where he may live as one of  
 themselves. When the next-of-kin  
 comes in pursuit, they shall not sur-  
 render him: he struck down his fellow  
 without intent and had not previously  
 7 been at enmity with him. The homicide  
 may stay in that city until he stands  
 trial before the community. On the  
 death of the ruling high priest, he may  
 return to the city and home from  
 8 which he had fled.' They dedicated  
 Kedesh in Galilee in the hill-country  
 of Naphtali, Shechem in the hill-country  
 of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba, that is  
 Hebron, in the hill-country of Judah.  
 9 Across the Jordan eastwards from  
 Jericho they appointed these cities:  
 from the tribe of Reuben, Bezer-in-  
 the-wilderness on the tableland, from  
 the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead,  
 10 and from the tribe of Manasseh, Golan  
 in Bashan. These were the appointed  
 cities where any Israelite or any alien  
 residing among them might take  
 sanctuary. They were intended for  
 any man who killed another inad-  
 11 vertently, to ensure that no one should  
 die at the hand of the next-of-kin until  
 he had stood his trial before the com-  
 12 munity.

The heads of the Levite families 21  
 approached Eleazar the priest and  
 Joshua son of Nun and the heads of  
 the families of the tribes of Israel. They 2  
 came before them at Shiloh in the  
 land of Canaan and said, 'The LORD  
 gave his command through Moses that  
 we were to receive cities to live in,  
 together with the common land  
 belonging to them for our cattle.' The 3  
 Israelites therefore gave part of their  
 patrimony to the Levites, the following  
 cities with their common land, accord-  
 4 ing to the command of the LORD.

This is the territory allotted to the 4  
 Kohathite family: those Levites who  
 were descended from Aaron the priest  
 received thirteen cities chosen by lot  
 from the tribes of Judah, Simeon,  
 and Benjamin; the rest of the Kohath- 5  
 ites were allotted family by family<sup>g</sup>  
 ten cities from the tribes of Ephraim,  
 Dan, and half Manasseh.

The Gershonites were allotted fam- 6  
 ily by family thirteen cities from the  
 tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali,  
 and the half tribe of Manasseh in  
 Bashan.

The Merarites were allotted family 7  
 by family twelve cities from the tribes  
 of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

So the Israelites gave the Levites 8  
 these cities with their common land,  
 allocating them by lot as the LORD had  
 commanded through Moses.

The Israelites designated the follow- 9  
 ing cities out of the tribes of Judah  
 and Simeon for those sons of Aaron 10  
 who were of the Kohathite families  
 of the Levites, because their lot came  
 out first. They gave them Kiriath-arba 11  
 (Arba was the father of Anak), that is  
 Hebron, in the hill-country of Judah,  
 and the common land round it, but 12

<sup>g</sup> family by family: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from the families  
 (similarly in verse 6).

20.1-9: **Cities of refuge.** These are cities to which an accused murderer might flee until his case was judged; see Exod.21.12-13; Num.35.12; Deut.4.41-43; 19.1-13. 3: The dead man's *next-of-kin* had the obligation of avenging his death; the word "next-of-kin" is translated "avenger" or "vindicator" by some; it is "ransomer" when used of God in Isa.41.14, and "guardian" in Prov.23.11. 4: *The city gate* was the place where the *elders* of the city met; business was also normally transacted there; see Ruth 4.1. The gate was not merely an entrance, but also a building, often containing several rooms and more than one story.

21.1-42: **The cities allotted to the tribe of Levi.** This tribe, because of its religious functions, did not receive an allotment of territory; see 13.14,33; 18.7. It was given the six cities of refuge of ch. 20 and forty-two others in all the tribes with rights to pasture land nearby; see Num. 35.1-34 n. The disapproval of Levi in Gen.49.5-7 does not seem to be reflected here.



they gave the open country near the city, and its hamlets, to Caleb son of Jephunneh as his patrimony.

13<sup>h</sup> To the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, a city of refuge for the homicide, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, 14 Holon, Debir, Ashan,<sup>i</sup> Juttah, and 15, 16 Beth-shemesh, each with its common land: nine cities from these two tribes. 17 They also gave cities from the tribe 18 of Benjamin, Gibeon, Geba, Anathoth, and Almon, each with its common 19 land: four cities. The number of the cities with their common land given to the sons of Aaron the priest was thirteen.

20 The cities which the rest of the Kohathite families of the Levites received by lot were from the tribe of 21 Ephraim. They gave them Shechem, a city of refuge for the homicide, in the 22 hill-country of Ephraim, Gezer, Kibzaim, and Beth-horon, each with its 23 common land: four cities. From the tribe of Dan, they gave them Eltekeh, 24 Gibbethon, Aijalon, and Gath-rimmon, each with its common land: four 25 cities. From the half tribe of Manasseh, they gave them Taanach and Gath-rimmon, each with its common land: 26 two cities. The number of the cities belonging to the rest of the Kohathite families with their common land was ten.

27 The Gershonite families of the Levites received, out of the share of the half tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan, a city of refuge for the homicide, and Be-ashtaroth,<sup>j</sup> each with its 28 common land: two cities. From the tribe of Issachar they received Kishon, 29 Daberah, Jarmuth, and En-gannim, each with its common land: four 30 cities. From the tribe of Asher they received Mishal, Abdon, Helkath, 31 and Rehob, each with its common 32 land: four cities. From the tribe of Naphtali they received Kedesh in Galilee, a city of refuge for the homicide, Hammoth-dor, and Kartan, each with its common land: three cities.

33 The number of the cities of the Gershonite families with their common land was thirteen.

From the tribe of Zebulun the rest 34 of the Merarite families of the Levites received Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmon,<sup>k</sup> 35 and Nahalal, each with its common land: four cities. East of the Jordan at 36 Jericho, from the tribe of Reuben they were given Bezer-in-the-wilderness on the tableland, a city of refuge for the homicide, Jahaz, Kedemoth, and 37 Mephaath, each with its common land: four cities. From the tribe of Gad 38 they received Ramoth in Gilead, a city of refuge for the homicide, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer, each with its 39 common land: four cities in all. Twelve 40 cities in all fell by lot to the rest of the Merarite families of the Levites.

The cities of the Levites within the 41 Israelite patrimonies numbered forty-eight in all, with their common land. Each city had its common land round 42 it, and it was the same for all of them.

Thus the LORD gave Israel all the land 43 which he had sworn to give to their forefathers; they occupied it and settled in it. The LORD gave them security on 44 every side as he had sworn to their forefathers. Of all their enemies not a man could withstand them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hands. Not a word of the LORD's 45 promises to the house of Israel went unfulfilled; they all came true.

AT THAT TIME JOSHUA SUMMONED THE 22 Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and said to them, 2 'You have observed all the commands of Moses the servant of the LORD, and you have obeyed me in all the commands that I too have laid upon you. All this time you have not deserted 3 your brothers; up to this day you have diligently observed the charge laid on you by the LORD your God. And now 4 that the LORD your God has given your brothers security as he promised them, you may turn now and go to your homes in your own land, the land which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan.

<sup>h</sup> Verses 13-39: cp. 1 Chr. 6. 57-81.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 6. 59; Heb. Ain.

<sup>j</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Be-ashtarath.

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 19. 13; 1 Chr. 6. 77; Heb. Dimnah.

- 5 But take good care to keep the commands and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God; to conform to his ways; to observe his commandments; to hold fast to him; to serve him with your whole heart and soul.
- 6 Joshua blessed them and dismissed them; and they went to their homes.
- 7-8 He sent them home with his blessing, and with these words: 'Go to your homes richly laden, with great herds, with silver and gold, copper and iron, and with large stores of clothing. See that you share with your kinsmen the spoil you have taken from your enemies.'
- Moses had given territory to one half of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, and Joshua gave territory to the other half west of the Jordan among their kinsmen.
- 9 So the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh left the rest of the Israelites and went from Shiloh in Canaan on their way into Gilead, the land which belonged to them according to the decree of the LORD given through Moses. When these tribes came to Geliloth by the Jordan,<sup>1</sup> they built a great altar there by the river for all to see. The Israelites heard that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh had built the altar facing the land of Canaan, at Geliloth by the Jordan opposite the Israelite side. When the news reached them, all the community of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh to advance against them with a display of force. At the same time the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest into the land of Gilead, to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and ten leading men with him, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each of them the head of a household among the clans of Israel.
- 15 They came to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh in the land of Gilead, and remonstrated with them in these words: 'We speak for the whole community of the LORD. What is this treachery you have committed against the God of Israel? Are you ceasing to follow the LORD and building your own altar this day in defiance of the LORD? Remember our offence at Peor, for which a plague fell upon the community of the LORD; to this day we have not been purified from it. Was that offence so slight that you dare cease to follow the LORD today? If you defy the LORD today, then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel. If the land you have taken is unclean, then cross over to the LORD's own land, where the Tabernacle of the LORD now rests, and take a share of it with us; but do not defy the LORD and involve us in your defiance by building an altar of your own apart from the altar of the LORD our God. Remember the treachery of Achan son of Zerach, who defied the ban and the whole community of Israel suffered for it. He was not the only one who paid for that sin with his life.'
- Then the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh remonstrated with the heads of the clans of Israel: 'The LORD the God of gods, the LORD the God of gods, he knows, and Israel must know: if this had been an act of defiance or treachery against the LORD, you could not save us today. If we had built ourselves an altar meaning to forsake the LORD, or had offered whole-offerings and grain-offerings upon it, or had presented shared-offerings, the LORD himself would exact punishment. The truth is that we have done this for fear that the day may come when your sons will say to ours, "What have you to do with the LORD, the God of Israel? The LORD put the Jordan as a boundary between our sons and your sons. You have no share in the LORD, you men of Reuben and Gad." Thus your sons will prevent

<sup>1</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds which was in Canaan.*

half tribes were free to go home (1.12-18). 22.12: *Shiloh* was the place of the Ark of the Covenant and the Tent of the Presence and its adherents would be opposed to the multiplication of altars. 17: *Offence at Peor*: Num.25.3-5. 20: *Treachery of Achan*: see 7.1. 22-29: The altar is considered only a memorial, a witness between the tribes on the two sides of the Jordan; see v. 34.

our sons from going in awe of the  
 26 LORD. So we resolved to set ourselves  
 to build an altar, not for whole-offerings  
 27 and sacrifices, but as a witness between  
 us and you, and between our descen-  
 dants after us. Thus we shall be able  
 to do service before the LORD, as we  
 do now, with our whole-offerings, our  
 sacrifices, and our shared-offerings;  
 and your sons will never be able to say  
 to our sons that they have no share in  
 28 the LORD. And we thought, if ever they  
 do say this to us and our descendants,  
 we will point to this copy of the altar  
 of the LORD which we have made, not  
 for whole-offerings and not for sacri-  
 fices, but as a witness between us and  
 29 you. God forbid that we should defy  
 the LORD and forsake him this day by  
 building another altar for whole-offer-  
 ings, grain-offerings, and sacrifices, in  
 addition to the altar of the LORD our  
 God which stands in front of his Taber-  
 nacle.'

30 When Phinehas the priest and the  
 leaders of the community, the heads  
 of the Israelite clans, who were with  
 him, heard what the Reubenites, the  
 Gadites, and the Manassites said,  
 31 they were satisfied. Phinehas son of  
 Eleazar the priest said to the Reuben-  
 ites, Gadites, and Manassites, 'We  
 know now that the LORD is in our midst  
 today; you have not acted treacher-  
 ously against the LORD, and thus you  
 have preserved all Israel from punish-  
 32 ment at his hand.' Then Phinehas son  
 of Eleazar the priest and the leaders  
 left the Reubenites and the Gadites in  
 Gilead and reported to the Israelites in  
 33 Canaan. The Israelites were satisfied,  
 and they blessed God and thought no  
 more of attacking Reuben and Gad  
 34 and ravaging their land. The Reuben-  
 ites and Gadites said, 'The altar is a  
 witness between us that the LORD is  
 God', and they named it 'Witness'.

### *Joshua's farewell and death*

23 A LONG TIME HAD PASSED SINCE THE  
 LORD had given Israel security from all  
 the enemies who surrounded them,

and Joshua was now a very old man.  
 He summoned all Israel, their elders 2  
 and heads of families, their judges and  
 officers, and said to them, 'I have be-  
 come a very old man. You have seen 3  
 for yourselves all that the LORD our  
 God has done to these peoples for your  
 sake; it was the LORD God himself  
 who fought for you. I have allotted 4  
 you your patrimony tribe by tribe, the  
 land of all the peoples that I have  
 wiped out and of all these that remain  
 between the Jordan and the Great Sea  
 which lies towards the setting sun.  
 The LORD your God himself drove them 5  
 out for your sake; he drove them out  
 to make room for you, and you  
 occupied their land, as the LORD your  
 God had promised you. Be resolute 6  
 therefore: observe and perform every-  
 thing written in the book of the law of  
 Moses, without swerving to right or to  
 left. You must not associate with the 7  
 peoples that are left among you; you  
 must not call upon their gods by name,  
 nor<sup>m</sup> swear by them nor prostrate  
 yourselves in worship before them.  
 You must hold fast to the LORD your 8  
 God as you have done down to this  
 day. For your sake the LORD has driven 9  
 out great and mighty nations; to this  
 day not a man of them has withstood  
 you. One of you can put to flight a 10  
 thousand, because the LORD your God  
 fights for you, as he promised. Be on 11  
 your guard then, love the LORD your  
 God, for<sup>n</sup> if you do turn away and 12  
 attach yourselves to the peoples that  
 still remain among you, and inter-  
 marry with them and associate with  
 them and they with you, then be sure 13  
 that the LORD will not continue to  
 drive those peoples out to make room  
 for you. They will be snares to entrap  
 you, whips for your backs and barbed  
 hooks in your eyes, until you vanish  
 from the good land which the LORD  
 your God has given you. And now I am 14  
 going the way of all mankind. You  
 know in your heart of hearts that noth-  
 ing that the LORD your God has prom-

<sup>m</sup> you must not call . . . nor: or the name of their gods  
 shall not be your boast, nor must you . . .

<sup>n</sup> Be on . . . for: or Take very good care to love the LORD  
 your God, but . . .

- ised you has failed to come true, every  
 15 word of it. But the same LORD God who  
 has kept his word to you to such good  
 effect can equally bring every kind of  
 evil on you, until he has rooted you out  
 from this good land which he has  
 16 given you. If you break the covenant  
 which the LORD your God has pre-  
 scribed and prostrate yourselves in  
 worship before other gods, then the  
 LORD will be angry with you and you  
 will quickly vanish from the good land  
 he has given you.<sup>7</sup>
- 24 Joshua assembled all the tribes of  
 Israel at Shechem. He summoned the  
 elders of Israel, the heads of families,  
 the judges and officers; and they pre-  
 2 sented themselves before God. Joshua  
 then said this to all the people: 'This  
 is the word of the LORD the God of  
 Israel: "Long ago your forefathers,  
 Terah and his sons Abraham and  
 Nahor, lived beside the Euphrates,  
 3 and they worshipped other gods. I  
 took your father Abraham from  
 beside the Euphrates and led him  
 through the length and breadth of  
 Canaan. I gave him many descendants:  
 4 I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave  
 Jacob and Esau. I put Esau in posses-  
 sion of the hill-country of Seir, but  
 Jacob and his sons went down to  
 5 Egypt. I sent Moses and Aaron, and I  
 struck the Egyptians with plagues—  
 you know well what I did among them  
 —and after that I brought you out;  
 6 I brought your fathers out of Egypt  
 and you came to the Red Sea. The  
 Egyptians sent their chariots and caval-  
 7 7 But when they appealed to the LORD,  
 8 8 he put a screen of darkness between  
 you and the Egyptians, and brought the  
 sea down on them and it covered them;  
 you saw for yourselves what I did to  
 Egypt. For a long time you lived in the  
 wilderness. Then I brought you into  
 the land of the Amorites who lived east  
 of the Jordan; they fought against
- you, but I delivered them into your  
 hands; you took possession of their  
 country and I destroyed them for your  
 sake. The king of Moab, Balak son of  
 9 Zippor, took the field against Israel.  
 He sent for Balaam son of Beor to lay  
 a curse on you, but I would not listen  
 10 to him. Instead of that he blessed you;  
 and so I saved you from the power of  
 Balak. Then you crossed the Jordan  
 11 and came to Jericho. The citizens of  
 Jericho fought against you,<sup>8</sup> but I  
 delivered them into your hands. I  
 12 spread panic before you, and it was  
 this, not your sword or your bow, that  
 drove out the two kings of the Amorites.  
 I gave you land on which you had  
 13 not laboured, cities which you had  
 never built; you have lived in those  
 cities and you eat the produce of vine-  
 yards and olive-groves which you did  
 not plant."
- 'Hold the LORD in awe then, and  
 14 worship him in loyalty and truth. Ban-  
 ish the gods whom your fathers wor-  
 shipped beside the Euphrates and in  
 Egypt, and worship the LORD. But if  
 15 it does not please you to worship the  
 LORD, choose here and now whom  
 you will worship: the gods whom  
 your forefathers worshipped beside  
 the Euphrates, or the gods of the  
 Amorites in whose land you are  
 living. But I and my family, we will  
 worship the LORD.' The people  
 16 answered, 'God forbid that we should  
 forsake the LORD to worship other  
 gods, for it was the LORD our God who  
 17 brought us and our fathers up from  
 Egypt, that land of slavery; it was he  
 who displayed those great signs, before  
 our eyes and guarded us on all our  
 wanderings among the many peoples  
 through whose lands we passed. The  
 18 LORD drove out before us the Amorites  
 and all the peoples who lived in that  
 country. We too will worship the

<sup>8</sup> *Prob. rdg. ; Heb. adds Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites, and Jebusites.*

24.1–33: The covenant at Shechem. The generation born in the desert makes a covenant with the LORD similar to the one which their fathers had entered into at Sinai; see Exod.24.1–11; 34.27–28; compare Josh.8.30–35. Some scholars think that involved here were clans related to Israel who had not taken part in the Exodus events. 1: *Shechem*, in the center of the country, was ideally located for a gathering of the tribes; see 1 Kgs. ch. 12. Its religious history, too, made it ideal for the making of a covenant: see Gen.12.6–7; 33.18–20. 2–13: Joshua recalls the LORD's interventions in favor of Israel; see Deut.6.21–23; 26.5–9. 14–24: Israel pledges loyalty

19 LORD; he is our God.' Joshua answered the people, 'You cannot worship the LORD. He is a holy god, a jealous god, and he will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will turn and bring adversity upon you and, although he once brought you prosperity, he will make an end of you.' The people said to Joshua, 'No; we will worship the LORD.' He said to them, 'You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD and will worship him.' 'Yes,' they answered, 'we are witnesses.' He said to them, 'Then here and now banish the foreign gods that are among you, and turn your hearts to the LORD the God of Israel.' The people said to Joshua, 'The LORD our God we will worship and his voice we will obey.' So Joshua made a covenant that day with<sup>p</sup> the people; he drew up a statute and an ordinance for them in Shechem and wrote its terms in the book of the law of God. He took a great stone and set it up there under the terebinth<sup>q</sup> in the sanctuary of the LORD, and said to all the people, 'This stone is a witness against us; for it has heard all the

<sup>p</sup> Or for.

<sup>q</sup> Or pole.

<sup>r</sup> Or pieces of money (*cp. Gen. 33. 19; Job 42. 11*).

words which the LORD has spoken to us. If you renounce your God, it shall be a witness against you.' Then Joshua dismissed the people, each man to his patrimony.

After these things, Joshua son of Nun the servant of the LORD died; he was a hundred and ten years old. They buried him within the border of his own patrimony in Timnath-serah in the hill-country of Ephraim to the north of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD during the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who well knew all that the LORD had done for Israel.

The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried in Shechem, in the plot of land which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor father of Shechem for a hundred sheep;<sup>r</sup> and they passed into the patrimony of the house of Joseph. Eleazar son of Aaron died and was buried in the hill which had been given to Phinehas his son in the hill-country of Ephraim.

to the LORD. **25-28:** The covenant is established. **25:** The Canaanite god worshiped at Shechem was called Baal-Berith or El-Berith, "god of the covenant" (see Judg.9.4,46); hence the city had covenant associations for the Canaanites too. **26:** Sacred trees were often connected with ancient sanctuaries (Gen.12.6; 13.18; 35.4,8; Judg.9.6), as were stone pillars (Gen.28.18; Exod.24.4; Judg.9.6). **29-31:** Death and burial of Joshua. **30:** *Timnath-serah:* see 19.49-50. **32-33:** The burial of Joseph and Eleazar. *Brought up from Egypt:* see Exod.13.19. *Which Jacob bought:* Gen.33.19.

# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Whereas the Book of Joshua deals with the conquest of Canaan, Judges deals with the subsequent settlement. Largely an account of battles lasting through several generations before the country was securely in Israel's hands, Judges preserves traditions of various tribes and the exploits of their particular heroes, the "judges" (see 2.16 n.).

The opening section (1.1-2.5) describes the settlement of the tribes. It implies that much of Canaan was not yet subjugated, despite the view in Joshua of a complete conquest. The main part of the book, after a moralizing introduction (2.6-3.6), recalls the contribution of the individual judges who are given as a total of twelve, though long narratives are about only five: Ehud (3.12-30); Deborah (chs. 4-5); Gideon (chs. 6-8), ch. 9 treats his wicked son, Abimelech; Jephthah (10.6-12.7); and Samson (chs. 13-16). The other seven are to be found in 3.7-11, 31; 10.1-5; and 12.8-15. An appendix contains an account of the migration of Dan (chs. 17-18) and the trespass of the Benjaminites (chs. 19-21).

The final editor, in preserving these colorful stories, was concerned with the moral lesson that loyalty to God brings national success and disloyalty guarantees disaster. This is the theme also of Deuteronomy, especially Deut. ch. 28. Modern criticism considers Judges to be part of the "Deuteronomistic history" (see Introduction to Josh.).

## *The conquest of Canaan completed*

1 **A**FTER THE DEATH OF JOSHUA THE  
Israelites inquired of the LORD  
which tribe should attack the  
2 Canaanites first. The LORD answered,  
'Judah shall attack. I hereby deliver the  
3 country into his power.' Judah said to  
his brother Simeon, 'Go forward with  
me into my allotted territory, and let us  
do battle with the Canaanites; then I in  
turn will go with you into your territory.'  
4 So Simeon went with him; then Judah  
advanced to the attack, and the LORD  
delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites  
into their hands. They slaughtered ten  
5 thousand of them at Bezek. There they  
came upon Adoni-bezek, engaged him  
in battle and defeated the Canaanites  
6 and Perizzites. Adoni-bezek fled, but  
they pursued him, took him prisoner and  
cut off his thumbs and his great toes.  
7 Adoni-bezek said, 'I once had seventy

king's whose thumbs and great toes were  
cut off picking up the scraps from under  
my table. What I have done God has  
done to me.' He was brought to  
Jerusalem and died there.

The men of Judah made an assault 8  
on Jerusalem and captured it, put its  
people to the sword and set fire to 9  
the city. Then they turned south to fight  
the Canaanites of the hill-country, the 10  
Negeb, and the Shephelah. Judah at-  
tacked the Canaanites in Hebron, 11  
formerly called Kiriath-arba, and de-  
feated Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmi.  
From there they marched against the 12  
inhabitants of Debir, formerly called  
Kiriath-sepher. Caleb said, 'Whoever 13  
attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it,  
to him I will give my daughter Achsah  
in marriage.' Othniel, son of Caleb's 14  
younger brother Kenaz, captured it,  
and Caleb gave him his daughter Ach-  
sah. When she came to him, he incited

**1.1-2.5: The conquest of Canaan completed.** This historical prologue, considered by most scholars to be an ancient document, or derived from one, describes the arduous attempts at conquest by isolated tribes, with the native inhabitants being subjugated rather than exterminated; contrast Josh. chs. 10-11; see Josh.13.13 n.

**1.1-21: The course of conquests.** Compare Josh. ch. 15. Many scholars hold that the ancient document (1.1-2.5 n.) has been shaped to enhance Judah, in which territory Jerusalem lay. **1:** *After the death of Joshua* is probably added so as to accord with Josh.24.29; it contradicts the ensuing narrative; see 2.6-8. *They inquired of the LORD*, probably by using sacred lots; see Exod.28.15 n. **3:** *Simeon*: see Josh.19.1-9 n. **4:** *Perizzites*: see Gen.13.7; Deut.7.1. The location of *Bezek* is uncertain. **5:** *Adoni-bezek* is possibly the same as the Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, of Josh.10.1-3. **8:** *Jerusalem* is portrayed as captured at a later time by David in 2 Sam.5.6-9. **9:** *Negeb*: the southern desert. *Shephelah*: see Josh.11.2 n. **10:** *Hebron*: see Josh.10.36-37. According to v. 20 and Josh.14.6-15 and 15.13-14, it was given to the clan of Caleb. **11-15:** This story occurs also in Josh.15.15-19. **11:** *Debir*: probably the modern Tell Beit

her to ask her father for a piece of land. As she sat on the ass, she made a noise, and Caleb said, 'What did you mean by that?' She replied, 'I want to ask a favour of you. You have put me in this dry Negeb; you must give me pools of water as well.' So Caleb gave her the upper pool and the lower pool.

The descendants of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenite, went up with the men of Judah from the Vale of Palm Trees to the wilderness of Judah which is in the Negeb of Arad and settled among the Amalekites. Judah then accompanied his brother Simeon, attacked the Canaanites in Zephath and destroyed it; hence the city was called Hormah.<sup>a</sup> Judah took Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and the territory of each. The LORD was with Judah and they occupied the hill-country, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the Vale because they had chariots of iron. Hebron was given to Caleb as Moses had directed, and he drove out the three sons of Anak. But the Benjamites did not drive out the Jebusites of Jerusalem; and the Jebusites have lived on in Jerusalem with the Benjamites till the present day.

The tribes of Joseph attacked Bethel, and the LORD was with them. They sent spies to Bethel, formerly called Luz. These spies saw a man coming out of the city and said to him, 'Show us how to enter the city, and we will see that you come to no harm.' So he showed them how to enter, and they put the city to the sword, but let the man and his family go free. He went into Hittite country, built a city and named it Luz, which is still its name today.

Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean with its villages, nor of Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo, with the villages of each of them; the Canaanites held their ground in that region. Later, when Israel became strong, they put them to forced labour, but they never completely drove them out.

Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, but the Canaanites lived among them there.

Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron and Nahalol, but the Canaanites lived among them and were put to forced labour.

Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco and Sidon, of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik and Rehob. Thus the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants and did not drive them out.

Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanite inhabitants and put the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath to forced labour.

The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill-country and did not allow them to come down into the Vale. The Amorites held their ground in Mount Heres and in Aijalon and Shaal-bim, but the tribes of Joseph increased their pressure on them until they reduced them to forced labour.

The boundary of the Edomites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, upwards from Sela.

The angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bokim, and said, 'I brought<sup>b</sup> you up out of Egypt and into

<sup>a</sup> That is Destruction. <sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. I will bring.

Mirsim, southwest of Hebron. **16:** The Kenites, a nomadic tribe, here mentioned as allies of Judah during the invasion of Canaan, settled among the Amalekites. Because of their aid to Israel, they are spared by Saul (1 Sam.15.6). *Amalekites:* see Exod.17.8 n. **17:** *Zephath:* a city in the Negeb; *Hormah* means "destruction." Some scholars think this reference is the same as the incident in Num.21.3. **18:** Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron are three of the five Philistine cities; see Josh.13.2 n. This account of their capture seems to anticipate 2 Sam.8.1; Sept., however, says specifically that Judah "did not" take them; the negative may have been omitted from the MT by a copyist. **19-21:** See Josh.13.13 n. **19:** The Philistines had a monopoly on iron; see 1 Sam.13.19-22.

**1.22-29:** **Conquests of the Joseph tribes.** See Josh. chs. 16-17 and 13.13 n. **22-26:** See Josh. 7.2 n.

**1.30-35:** **The conquests of the Galilee area.** See Josh. chs. 18-19 and 13.13 n. **36:** Boundary of Edom and Judah; see Num.34.3-5.

**2.1-5:** **The moral reason for the delay in the conquest is Israel's infidelity.** See Deut. ch. 28. In 1.28-35 the reason was the enemies' strength. **1:** *The angel:* the words that follow, *I brought you up out of Egypt*, indicate God himself, rather than an angel; see Gen.16.7 n. *Gilgal:* see Josh.4.19 n. *Bokim* is probably Bethel; the word means "weepers" (vv. 4-5).

the country which I vowed I would give to your forefathers. I said, I will never break my covenant with you, and you in turn must make no covenant with the inhabitants of the country; you must pull down their altars. But you did not obey me, and look what you have done! So I said, I will not drive them out before you; they will decoy you, and their gods will shut you fast in the trap.' When the angel of the LORD said this to the Israelites, they all wept and wailed, and so the place was called Bokim;<sup>c</sup> and they offered sacrifices there to the LORD.

*Israel under the judges*

6 JOSHUA DISMISSED THE PEOPLE, AND THE Israelites went off to occupy the country, 7 each man to his allotted portion. As long as Joshua was alive and the elders who survived him—everyone, that is, who had witnessed the whole great work which the LORD had done for Israel—the people worshipped the 8 LORD. At the age of a hundred and ten Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the 9 LORD, died, and they buried him within the border of his own property in Timnath-heres north of Mount Gaash in the hill-country of Ephraim. Of that 10 whole generation, all were gathered to their forefathers, and another generation followed who did not acknowledge the LORD and did not know what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, and worshipped the Baalim.<sup>d</sup> 12 They forsook the LORD, their fathers' God who had brought them out of Egypt, and went after other gods, gods of the races among whom they lived; they bowed before them and provoked 13 the LORD to anger; they forsook the LORD and worshipped the Baal and 14 the Ashtaroth.<sup>e</sup> The LORD in his anger

made them the prey of bands of raiders and plunderers; he sold them to their enemies all around them, and they could no longer make a stand. Every 15 time they went out to battle the LORD brought disaster upon them, as he had said when he gave them his solemn warning, and they were in dire straits.

The LORD set judges over them, who 16 rescued them from the marauding bands. Yet they did not listen even to 17 these judges, but turned wantonly to worship other gods and bowed down before them; all too soon they abandoned the path of obedience to the LORD's commands which their forefathers had followed. They did not obey the LORD. Whenever the LORD set up 18 a judge over them, he was with that judge, and kept them safe from their enemies so long as he lived. The LORD would relent as often as he heard them groaning under oppression and ill-treatment. But as soon as the judge 19 was dead, they would relapse into deeper corruption than their forefathers and give their allegiance to other gods, worshipping them and bowing down before them. They gave up none of their evil practices and their wilful ways. And the LORD was angry with 20 Israel and said, 'This nation has broken the covenant which I laid upon their forefathers and has not obeyed me, and now, of all the nations which 21 Joshua left at his death, I will not drive out to make room for them one single man. By their means I will test Israel, 22 to see whether or not they will keep strictly to the way of the LORD as their forefathers did.' So the LORD left 23 those nations alone and made no haste to drive them out or give them into Joshua's hands.

These are the nations which the 3 LORD left as a means of testing all the

<sup>c</sup> That is Weepers.

<sup>d</sup> The Baalim were Canaanite deities.

<sup>e</sup> The Ashtaroth were Canaanite deities.

2.6-3.6: **Second introduction.** An editor explains the whole history of the age in terms of recurring cycles of prosperity, apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance; "judges" are the deliverers who bring the people back from idolatry (vv. 16-18); deprived of judges the people relapse (v. 19). 8: Joshua's death: see Josh.24.29. 11-13: *Baalim*: male deities; *Ashtaroth*, female; see Tfn. *d* and *e*. 15: *The LORD brought disaster upon them*: all is attributed to God; secondary causes are passed over. 16: *The judges* were military heroes who defended and delivered the people from oppression and then continued to govern them; a divine impulse moves them (see 3.10). 22-23: The native population is allowed to survive to *test* Israel's



Israelites who had not taken part in the battles for Canaan, his purpose being to teach succeeding generations of Israel, or those at least who had not learnt in former times, how to make war. These were: the five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon from Mount Baalhermon as far as Lebo-hamath. His purpose also was to test whether the Israelites would obey the commands which the LORD had given to their forefathers through Moses. Thus the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons; and they worshipped their gods. The Israelites did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and worshipped the Baalim and the Asheroth.<sup>f</sup> The LORD was angry with Israel and he sold them to Cushan-rishathaim, king of Aram-naharaim,<sup>g</sup> who kept them in subjection for eight years. Then the Israelites cried to the LORD for help and he raised up a man to deliver them, Othniel son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz, and he set them free. The spirit of the LORD came upon him and he became judge over Israel. He took the field, and the LORD delivered Cushan-rishathaim king of Aram into his hands; Othniel was too strong for him. Thus the land was at peace for forty years until Othniel son of Kenaz died. Once again the Israelites did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, and because of this he roused Eglon king of Moab against Israel. Eglon mustered the Ammonites and the

Amalekites, advanced to attack Israel and took possession of the Vale of Palm Trees. The Israelites were subject to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years. When they cried to the LORD for help, he raised up a man to deliver them, Ehud son of Gera the Benjamite, who was left-handed. The Israelites sent him to pay their tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Ehud made himself a two-edged sword, only fifteen inches long, which he fastened on his right side under his clothes, and he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Eglon was a very fat man. When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent on the men who had carried it, and he himself turned back from the Carved Stones at Gilgal. 'My lord king,' he said, 'I have a word for you in private.' Eglon called for silence and dismissed all his attendants. Ehud then came up to him as he sat in the roof-chamber of his summer palace and said, 'I have a word from God for you.' So Eglon rose from his seat, and Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right side and drove it into his belly. The hilt went in after the blade and the fat closed over the blade; he did not draw the sword out but left it protruding behind. Ehud went out to the porch, shut the doors on him and fastened them. When he had gone away, Eglon's servants came and, finding the doors fastened, they said, 'He must be relieving himself in the closet of his summer palace.' They waited until they were ashamed to delay any longer, and still he did not open the doors of the roof-chamber. So they took the key and opened the doors; and there was their master lying

<sup>f</sup> Plural of Asherah, the name of a Canaanite goddess.  
<sup>g</sup> That is Aram of Two Rivers.

loyalty to God; see 3.1-4. 3.3: See Josh.13.2-6. 3.4: See Deut.8.2; Judg.2.22. 5: See Deut.7.1. 3.7-11: Othniel. The first judge is from Judah, a tribe of special interest to the author; see 1.1-21 n. The story may be related to 1.12-13. 7: Asheroth is the plural of Asherah and a synonym for Ashtaroth; see 2.11-13 n. 8: Sold: see 2.15 n. Cushan-rishathaim is unknown elsewhere. Aram-naharaim, "Aram of Two Rivers," is a name for Mesopotamia. The geographical improbability of an invasion from Mesopotamia leads some to conjecture that "Aram" should be emended to the more probable "Edom." 10: The Spirit of the LORD came upon him: the judges were impelled or inspired as the prophets were. 11: Land had rest: an editorial formula frequent in Judg.

3.12-30: Ehud and delivery from the Moabites. 12: Moab was immediately east of the Dead Sea, Ammon just north of Moab. Amalek: see Exod.17.8-16 n. 13: Vale of Palm Trees: this is usually considered to allude to Jericho; see 1.16. 19: Carved Stones at Gilgal: see Josh.4.1-5.1 n.

26 on the floor dead. While they had been waiting, Ehud made his escape; he passed the Carved Stones and escaped to Seirah. When he arrived there, he sounded the trumpet in the hill-country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came down from the hills with him at their head. He said to them, 'Follow me, for the LORD has delivered your enemy the Moabites into your hands.' Down they came after him, and they seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and allowed no man to cross. They killed that day some ten thousand Moabites, all of them men of substance and all fighting men; not one escaped. Thus Moab on that day became subject to Israel, and the land was at peace for eighty years.

31 After Ehud there was Shamgar of Beth-anath.<sup>b</sup> He killed six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, and he too delivered Israel.

4 After Ehud's death the Israelites once again did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, so he sold them to Jabin the Canaanite king, who ruled in Hazor. The commander of his forces was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-of-the-Gentiles. The Israelites cried to the LORD for help, because Sisera had nine hundred chariots of iron and had oppressed Israel harshly for twenty years. At that time Deborah wife of Lappidoth,<sup>i</sup> a prophetess, was judge in Israel. It was her custom to sit beneath the Palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill-country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her for justice. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, 'These are the commands of the LORD the God of Israel: "Go and draw ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun and

bring them with you to Mount Tabor, and I will draw Sisera, Jabin's commander, to the Torrent of Kishon with his chariots and all his rabble, and there I will deliver them into your hands.'" Barak answered her, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you will not go, neither will I.' 'Certainly I will go with you,' she said, 'but this venture will bring you no glory, because the LORD will leave Sisera to fall into the hands of a woman.' So Deborah rose and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh and marched up with ten thousand men, and Deborah went with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had parted company with the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and he had pitched his tent at Elon-bezaananim near Kedesh.

Word was brought to Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor; so he summoned all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and his troops, from Harosheth-of-the-Gentiles to the Torrent of Kishon. Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! This day the LORD gives Sisera into your hands. Already the LORD has gone out to battle before you.' So Barak came charging down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men at his back. The LORD put Sisera to rout with all his chariots and his army before Barak's onslaught; but Sisera himself dismounted from his chariot and fled on foot. Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth, and the whole army was put to the sword and perished; not a man was left alive. Meanwhile Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite,

<sup>b</sup> of Beth-anath: or son of Anath.  
<sup>i</sup> wife of Lappidoth: or a spirited woman.

28: The Moabites had been occupying an area west of the Jordan. 29: The massacre of the Moabites.

3.31: **Shamgar.** This notably brief passage is to be found in some manuscripts after 16.31; Shamgar is mentioned in 5.6. The verse separates the stories of Ehud and Deborah, linked together in 4.1. The allusion here to the Philistines also points to a later period; see Josh.13.2 n.

4.1-5.31: **Deborah.** The victory of Deborah and Barak over the Canaanites is told twice, in prose (ch. 4), and in poetry (ch. 5). Ch. 5 is by far older than ch. 4. 2: *Jabin* is not mentioned in ch. 5; in Josh.11.1-5 he organizes a coalition against Joshua. *Hazor*: see Josh.11.1 n. *Harosheth-of-the-Gentiles* is tentatively identified with Tell Amr on the river Kishon; see v. 7 n. 3: The *chariots of iron*: the Hebrews as yet were unskilled in working in iron (1.19 n.; Josh.17.16; 1 Sam.13.19-22) and lacked such chariots. 6: *Naphtali* and *Zebulun* were two of the Galilean tribes; see 1.30,33. *Mount Tabor*: in Galilee north of the plain of Esdraelon. 7: *Torrent of Kishon*: a stream flowing westward, north of Mount Carmel. 11: *Kenite*: see 1.16 n.

because Jabin king of Hazor and the household of Heber the Kenite were  
 18 at peace. Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, 'Come in here, my lord, come in; do not be afraid.' So he went into the tent, and she covered him  
 19 with a rug. He said to her, 'Give me some water to drink; I am thirsty.' She opened a skin full of milk, gave him a drink and covered him up again.  
 20 He said to her, 'Stand at the tent door, and if anybody comes and asks if someone is here, say No.' But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent-peg, picked up a hammer, crept up to him, and drove the peg into his skull as he lay sound asleep. His brains oozed out on the ground, his limbs twitched, and he  
 22 died. When Barak came up in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, 'Come, I will show you the man you are looking for.' He went in with her, and there was Sisera lying  
 23 dead with the tent-peg in his skull. That day God gave victory to the Israelites  
 24 over Jabin king of Canaan, and they pressed home their attacks upon that king of Canaan until they had made an end of him.  
 5 That day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

2 For the leaders, the leaders<sup>j</sup> in Israel, for the people who answered the call, bless ye the LORD.  
 3 Hear me, you kings; princes, give ear; I will sing, I will sing to the LORD. I will raise a psalm to the LORD the God of Israel.  
 4 O LORD, at thy setting forth from Seir, when thou camest marching out of the plains of Edom, earth trembled; heaven quaked; the clouds streamed down in torrents.  
 5 Mountains shook in fear before the LORD, the lord of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.

In the days of Shamgar of Beth-anath,<sup>k</sup> 6  
 in the days of Jael, caravans plied no longer; men who had followed the high roads went round by devious paths. Champions there were none, 7  
 none left in Israel, until I,<sup>l</sup> Deborah, arose, arose, a mother in Israel. They chose new gods, 8  
 they consorted with demons.<sup>m</sup> Not a shield, not a lance was to be seen in the forty thousand of Israel. Be proud at heart, you marshals of 9  
 Israel; you among the people that answered the call, bless ye the LORD. You that ride your tawny she-asses, 10  
 that sit on saddle-cloths, and you that take the road afoot, ponder this well. Hark, the sound of the players 11  
 striking up in the places where the women draw water! It is the victories of the LORD that they commemorate there, his triumphs as the champion of Israel.

Down to the gates came the LORD's people:  
 'Rouse, rouse yourself, Deborah, rouse yourself, lead out the host. Up, Barak! Take prisoners in plenty, son of Abinoam.'  
 Then down marched the column<sup>n</sup> 13 and its chieftains, the people of the LORD marched down<sup>o</sup> like warriors. The men of Ephraim showed a brave 14  
 front in the vale,

*j* Or For those who had flowing locks.  
*k* of Beth-anath: or son of Anath. *l* Or you.  
*m* Or satyrs. *n* Prob. rdg.; Heb. survivor.  
*o* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds to me.

5.1-31: This song is the oldest surviving extended fragment of Heb. literature. At places the text is corrupt and almost unintelligible. 2: *Leaders*: see Tfn. *j*. The unbinding of the hair was a war ritual. 4: The LORD is pictured as coming from *Seir* and *Edom* to help his people; it is the route of the Exodus; note the reference to Sinai in v. 5. The *torrents* here and in v. 21 may refer to a rainstorm which enabled Israelite foot soldiers to overcome the chariots of 4.3,15. For Israel the storm (v. 21) manifested the presence of the LORD. 6: *Caravans plied no longer*: it was a time of anarchy. 14: *Machir*: part of the tribe of Manasseh, established in Gilead east of the Jordan; see Gen.50.23 and Josh.13.31. However, because Gilead took no part in this

<p>crying, 'With you, Benjamin! Your clansmen are here!' From Machir down came the marshals, from Zebulun the bearers of the musterer's staff. 15 Issachar joined with Deborah in the uprising,<sup>p</sup> Issachar stood by Barak; down into the valley they rushed. But Reuben, he was split into factions, great were their heart-searchings. 16 What made you linger by the cattle- pens to listen to the shrill calling of the shepherds?<sup>q</sup> 17 Gilead stayed beyond Jordan; and Dan, why did he tarry by the ships? Asher lingered by the sea-shore, by its creeks he stayed. 18 The people of Zebulun risked their very lives, so did Naphtali on the heights of the battlefield. 19 Kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; no plunder of silver did they take. 20 The stars fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. 21 The Torrent of Kishon swept him away, the Torrent barred his flight, the Torrent of Kishon; march on in might, my soul! 22 Then hammered the hooves of his horses, his chargers galloped, galloped away. 23 A curse on Meroz, said the angel of the LORD; a curse, a curse on its inhabitants,</p>	<p>because they brought no help to the LORD, no help to the LORD and the fighting men. Blest above women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; 24 blest above all women in the tents. He asked for water: she gave him 25 milk, she offered him curds in a bowl fit for a chieftain. She stretched out her hand for the 26 tent-peg, her right hand to hammer the weary. With the hammer she struck Sisera, she crushed his head; she struck and his brains ebbed out. At her feet he sank down, he fell, 27 he lay; at her feet he sank down and fell. Where he sank down, there he fell, done to death. The mother of Sisera peered through 28 the lattice, through the window she peered and shrilly cried, 'Why are his chariots so long coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots so long delayed?' The wisest of her princesses 29 answered her, yes, she found her own answer: 'They must be finding spoil, taking 30 their shares, a wench to each man, two wenches, booty of dyed stuffs for Sisera, booty of dyed stuffs, dyed stuff, and striped, two lengths of striped stuff— to grace the victor's neck.'</p>
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*p* in the uprising; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* my officers.  
*q* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* Reuben was split into factions,  
great were their heart-searchings.

war (v. 17), some scholars think that here Machir is the part of Manasseh west of the Jordan. 15-17: The distant tribes of *Reuben*, *Gilead*, *Dan*, and *Asher* stayed at home. Judah, Simeon, and Levi go unmentioned. *Gilead* may refer to the part of Manasseh east of the Jordan; see v. 14 n. and Josh.13.29-32, or it may refer to the tribe of Gad; see Josh.13.24-28. *Dan* is already conceived of as in the north and associated with Asher, although the migration from the south is described only in ch. 18. 19: *Taanach* and *Megiddo* guarded the passes through the Carmel range. Some scholars think that the mention of *the waters of Megiddo* rather than the city itself indicates that Megiddo was unoccupied at this time; using archaeological evidence they then date the battle here about 1125 B.C. 21: See v. 4 n. 23: *Meroz* is probably a nearby town which took no part in the battle. 24-27: *Sisera* is here struck down apparently while standing; see 4.17-22 where *Jael* killed him while he was asleep. 29-30: The Canaanite women are ironically pictured as waiting for the *spoil*.

- 31 So perish all thine enemies, O LORD;  
but let all who love thee be like the  
sun rising in strength.

The land was at peace for forty years.

- 6 THE ISRAELITES DID WHAT WAS WRONG  
in the eyes of the LORD and he deliv-  
2 ered them into the hands of Midian  
for seven years. The Midianites were  
too strong for Israel, and the Israelites  
were forced to find themselves hollow  
3 places in the mountains, and caves  
and strongholds. If the Israelites had  
sown their seed, the Midianites and  
the Amalekites and other eastern  
tribes would come up and attack  
4 Israel. They then pitched their camps  
in the country and destroyed the  
crops as far as the outskirts of Gaza,  
leaving nothing to support life in  
5 Israel, sheep or ox or ass. They came  
up with their herds and their tents,  
like a swarm of locusts; they and their  
camels were past counting. They had  
come into the land for its growing  
6 crop,<sup>r</sup> and so the Israelites were  
brought to destitution by the Midian-  
ites, and they cried to the LORD for  
7 help. When the Israelites cried to the  
LORD because of what they had suffer-  
8 ed from the Midianites, he sent them  
a prophet who said to them, 'These  
are the words of the LORD the God of  
Israel: I brought you up from Egypt,  
9 that land of slavery. I delivered you  
from the Egyptians and from all  
your oppressors. I drove them out  
before you and gave you their lands.  
10 I said to you, "I am the LORD your God:  
do not stand in awe of the gods of the  
Amorites in whose country you are  
settling." But you did not listen to  
me.'  
11 Now the angel of the LORD came  
and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah  
which belonged to Joash the Abiez-  
rite. His son Gideon was threshing  
wheat in the winepress, so that he

might get it away quickly from the  
Midianites. The angel of the LORD 12  
showed himself to Gideon and said,  
'You are a brave man, and the LORD  
is with you.' Gideon said, 'But pray, 13  
my lord, if the LORD really is with us,  
why has all this happened to us?  
What has become of all those wonder-  
ful deeds of his, of which we have  
heard from our fathers, when they told  
us how the LORD brought us out of  
Egypt? But now the LORD has cast us  
off and delivered us into the power of  
the Midianites.' The LORD turned to 14  
him and said, 'Go and use this strength  
of yours to free Israel from the power  
of the Midianites. It is I that send  
you.' Gideon said, 'Pray, my lord, 15  
how can I save Israel? Look at my  
clan: it is the weakest in Manasseh,  
and I am the least in my father's  
family.' The LORD answered, 'I will be 16  
with you, and you shall lay low all  
Midian as one man.' He replied, 'If I 17  
stand so well with you, give me a sign  
that it is you who speak to me. Please 18  
do not leave this place until I come  
with my gift and lay it before you.'  
He answered, 'I will stay until you  
come back.' So Gideon went in, pre- 19  
pared a kid and made an ephah of  
flour into unleavened cakes. He put  
the meat in a basket, poured the broth  
into a pot and brought it out to him  
under the terebinth. As he approached,  
the angel of God said to him, 'Take the 20  
meat and the cakes, and put them here  
on the rock and pour out the broth',  
and he did so. Then the angel of the 21  
LORD reached out the staff in his hand  
and touched the meat and the cakes  
with the tip of it. Fire sprang up from  
the rock and consumed the meat and  
the cakes; and the angel of the LORD  
was no more to be seen. Then Gideon 22  
knew that it was the angel of the LORD  
and said, 'Alas, Lord GOD! Then it is

<sup>r</sup> for its growing crop: *or* and laid it waste.

6.1-8.35: Gideon and delivery from the Midianites, a kindred people (Gen.25.1-6) who were desert nomads. 3-4: These nomadic raiders were pasturing their flocks on Israelite crops. 8: The appearance of a *prophet*, as here, is frequent in the Deuteronomic books, especially Kgs. 10: *You did not listen to me*: the Israelites had adopted the worship of the Baalim who, the native *Amorites* thought, guaranteed good crops; see vv. 25-32 and 2.11-13. 11: *The angel of the LORD*: see 2.1 n. In v. 14 it is the LORD, not an angel, who speaks. *Terebinth* refers to a sacred tree; see Gen.12.6. The location of *Ophrah* is not known beyond its being in Manasseh.

true: I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.' But the LORD said to him, 'Peace be with you; do not be afraid, you shall not die.' So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it Jehovah-shalom.<sup>s</sup> It stands to this day at Ophrah-of-the-Abiezrites.

That night the LORD said to Gideon, 'Take a young bull of your father's, the yearling bull,<sup>t</sup> tear down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father and cut down the sacred pole which stands beside<sup>u</sup> it. Then build an altar of the proper pattern<sup>v</sup> to the LORD your God on the top of this earth-work;<sup>w</sup> take the yearling bull and offer it as a whole-offering with the wood of the sacred pole that you cut down.' So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. He was afraid of his father's family and his fellow-citizens, and so he did it by night, and not by day. When the citizens rose early in the morning, they found the altar of Baal overturned and the sacred pole which had stood beside it cut down and the yearling bull offered up as a whole-offering on the altar which he had built. They asked each other who had done it, and, after searching inquiries, were told that it was Gideon son of Joash. So the citizens said to Joash, 'Bring out your son. He has overturned the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole beside it, and he must die.' But as they crowded round him Joash retorted, 'Are you pleading Baal's cause then? Do you think that it is for you to save him? Whoever pleads his cause shall be put to death at dawn. If Baal is a god, and someone has torn down his altar, let him take up his own cause.' That day Joash named Gideon Jerubbaal,<sup>x</sup> saying, 'Let Baal plead his

cause against this man, for he has torn down his altar.'

All the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the eastern tribes joined forces, crossed the river and camped in the Vale of Jezreel. Then the spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; he sounded the trumpet and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. He sent messengers all through Manasseh; and they too were called out. He sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet the others. Gideon said to God, 'If thou wilt deliver Israel through me as thou hast promised—now, look, I am putting a fleece of wool on the threshing-floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I shall be sure that thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as thou hast promised.' And that is what happened. He rose early next day and wrung out the fleece, and he squeezed enough dew from it to fill a bowl with water. Gideon then said to God, 'Do not be angry with me, but give me leave to speak once again. Let me, I pray thee, make one more test with the fleece. This time let the fleece alone be dry, and all the ground be covered with dew.' God let it be so that night: the fleece alone was dry, and on all the ground there was dew.

Jerubbaal, that is Gideon, and all the people with him rose early and pitched camp at En-harod;<sup>y</sup> the Midianite camp was in the vale to the north of the hill of Moreh. The LORD said to Gideon, 'The people with you are more than I need to deliver Midian

<sup>s</sup> That is the LORD is peace.

<sup>t</sup> the yearling bull: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the second bull, seven years old.

<sup>u</sup> Or on.

<sup>v</sup> of . . . pattern: or with the stones in rows.

<sup>w</sup> Or stronghold or refuge.

<sup>x</sup> That is Let Baal plead. <sup>y</sup> That is Spring of Fright.

The Abiezrites were a small clan within Manasseh; see v. 15. 24: *Jehovah-shalom*: see Tfn. s. 25–32: Gideon destroys the altar of Baal. 25: *The sacred pole*: the object which symbolized the goddess Asherah; see 3.7 n. 32: This popular explanation of *Jerubbaal*, "*Let Baal plead*," is not the natural one; a person with this name, which really means "May Baal take action," would be a worshiper of Baal, not a foe. Other difficulties in the Gideon stories indicate that several different sources have not been perfectly fused; vv. 25–32 are unrelated to the context. 33–40: Gideon's military preparations. 33: *Vale of Jezreel* was at the eastern end of the valley of Esdraelon. 34: *The Spirit of the LORD*: compare 3.10 n. 36–40: The incident of the *fleece* is a sign additional to that of vv. 17–21.

7.1–8.35: Gideon routs the Midianites. 1: *En-harod* was on the northern slopes of Mount Gilboa. It means "spring of fright"; see v. 3. *The hill of Moreh* was in the plain between Mount

into their hands: Israel will claim the glory for themselves and say that it is their own strength that has given them the victory. Now make a proclamation for all the people to hear, that anyone who is scared or frightened is to leave Mount Galud<sup>z</sup> at once and go back home.' Twenty-two thousand of them went, and ten thousand were left.

4 The LORD then said to Gideon, 'There are still too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will separate them for you there. When I say to you, "This man shall go with you", he shall go; and if I say, "This man shall not go with you", he shall not go.' So Gideon brought the people down to the water and the LORD said to him, 'Make every man who laps the water with his tongue like a dog stand on one side, and on the other every man who goes down on his knees and drinks.' The number of those who lapped was three hundred, and all the rest went down on their knees to drink, putting their hands to their mouths. The LORD said to Gideon, 'With the three hundred men who lapped I will save you and deliver Midian into your hands, and all the rest may go home.'

8 So Gideon sent all these Israelites home, but he kept the three hundred, and they took with them the jars<sup>a</sup> and the trumpets which the people had. The Midianite camp was below him in the vale.

9 That night the LORD said to him, 'Go down at once and attack the camp, for I have delivered it into your hands. If you are afraid to do so, then go down first with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. That will give you courage to go down and attack the camp.' So he and his servant Purah went down to the part of the camp where the fighting men lay. Now the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the eastern tribes were so many that they lay there in the valley like a swarm of locusts; there was no counting their camels; in number they

were like grains of sand on the sea-shore. When Gideon came close, there was a man telling his companion a dream. He said, 'I dreamt that I saw a hard, stale barley-cake rolling over and over through the Midianite camp; it came to a tent, hit it<sup>b</sup> and turned it upside down, and the tent collapsed.' The other answered, 'Depend upon it, this is the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has delivered Midian and the whole army into his hands.' When Gideon heard the story of the dream and its interpretation, he prostrated himself. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and said, 'Up! The LORD has delivered the camp of the Midianites into your hands.' He divided the three hundred men into three companies, and gave every man a trumpet and an empty jar with a torch inside it. Then he said to them, 'Watch me: when I come to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and my men blow our trumpets, you too all round the camp will blow your trumpets, and shout, "For the LORD and for Gideon!"'

Gideon and the hundred men who were with him reached the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch; the sentries had just been posted. They blew their trumpets and smashed their jars. The three companies all blew their trumpets and smashed their jars, then grasped the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right, and shouted, 'A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!' Every man stood where he was, all round the camp, and the whole camp leapt up in a panic and fled. The three hundred blew their trumpets, and throughout the camp the LORD set every man against his neighbour. The army fled as far as Beth-shittah in Zererah, as far as the ridge of Abel-meholah by Tabbath. The Israelites

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Mount Gilead.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. provisions.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and it fell.

Tabor and Mount Gilboa. 4-7: The test as presented is a literary device; the number of Gideon's warriors is reduced in order to make clear that the victory belongs to the LORD. 8: *The jars and the trumpets*: see vv. 16-22. Lighted torches are concealed in the jars. 10-15: Another sign of victory for Gideon. 13-14: The *barley-cake* symbolizes settled farmers, the *tent* the nomadic Midianites. 22: *Bethshittah* . . . *Tabbath*: all the places mentioned here are east of the Jordan.

from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh were called out and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent men through all the hill-country of Ephraim with this message: 'Come down and cut off the Midianites. Hold the fords of the Jordan against them as far as Beth-barah.' So all the Ephraimites were called out and they held the fords of the Jordan as far as Beth-barah. They captured the two Midianite princes, Oreb and Zeeb. Oreb they killed at the Rock of Oreb, and Zeeb by the Winepress of Zeeb, and they kept up the pursuit of the Midianites; afterwards they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb across the Jordan to Gideon.

8 The men of Ephraim said to Gideon, 'Why have you treated us like this? Why did you not summon us when you went to fight Midian?'; and they reproached him violently. But he said to them, 'What have I done compared with you? Are not Ephraim's gleanings better than the whole vintage of Abiezer? God has delivered Oreb and Zeeb, the princes of Midian, into your hands. What have I done compared with you?' At these words of his, their anger died down.

4 Gideon came to the Jordan, and he and his three hundred men crossed over to continue the pursuit, weary though they were. He said to the men of Succoth, 'Will you give these men of mine some bread, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian?' But the chief men of Succoth replied, 'Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give your army bread?' Gideon said, 'For that, when the LORD delivers Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, I will thresh your bodies with desert thorns and briars.' He went on from there to

Penuel and made the same request; the men of Penuel answered like the men of Succoth. He said to the men of Penuel, 'When I return safely, I will pull down your castle.'

Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army of fifteen thousand men. These were all that remained of the whole host of the eastern tribes; a hundred and twenty thousand armed men had fallen in battle. Gideon advanced along the track used by the tent-dwellers east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and his attack caught the army when they were off their guard. Zebah and Zalmunna fled; but he went in pursuit of these Midianite kings and captured them both; and their whole army melted away.

As Gideon son of Joash was returning from the battle by the Ascent of Heres, he caught a young man from Succoth. He questioned him, and one by one he numbered off the names of the rulers of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven in all. Gideon then came to the men of Succoth and said, 'Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me. "Are Zebah and Zalmunna", you said, "already in your hands, that we should give your weary men bread?"' Then he took the elders of the city and he disciplined those men of Succoth with desert thorns and briars. He also pulled down the castle of Penuel and put the men of the city to death. Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, 'What of the men you killed in Tabor?' They answered, 'They were like you, every one had the look of a king's son.' 'They were my brothers,' he said, 'my mother's sons. I swear by the LORD, if you had let them live I would not have killed you'; and he said to his eldest son Jether, 'Up with you, and kill them.' But he was still only a lad, and did not

24-25: *Oreb and Zeeb* are captured and executed by the Ephraimites. The summons to Ephraim to hold *the fords of the Jordan*, after the Midianites had already fled across it, is another example of imperfectly fused accounts; see 6.32 n. 8.2-3: Gideon placates the Ephraimites by assuring them that their *gleanings*, that is, their accomplishments, are more important and valuable than his own, the *vintage of Abiezer* (6.11 n.). This is probably a proverbial saying. 4-12: Gideon asks for supplies, continues the pursuit of the Midianites, and kills their kings. *Zebah and Zalmunna*. This seems to be a somewhat different version of 7.24-8.3. 5-17: The other places mentioned in this section were east of the Jordan. 10: The numbers seem exaggerated. 18-19: That Gideon's *brothers* had been killed at Mount Tabor by Midianites is not recorded in the account in ch. 6, nor is the personal motive given there. On



- draw his sword, because he was afraid.
- 21 So Zebah and Zalmunna said, 'Rise up yourself and dispatch us, for you have a man's strength.' So Gideon rose and killed them both, and he took the crescents from the necks of their camels.
- 22 After this the Israelites said to Gideon, 'You have saved us from the Midianites; now you be our ruler, you and your son and your grandson.'
- 23 Gideon replied, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son; the LORD will rule over you.' Then he said, 'I have a request to make: will every one of you give me the earrings from his booty?'—for the enemy wore golden earrings,
- 24 being Ishmaelites. They said, 'Of course, we will give them.' So a cloak was spread out and every man threw on to it the golden earrings from his booty.
- 25 The earrings for which he asked weighed seventeen hundred shekels of gold; this was in addition to the crescents and pendants and the purple cloaks worn by the Midianite kings, not counting the chains on the necks of their camels.
- 26 Gideon made it into an ephod and he set it up in his own city of Ophrah. All the Israelites turned wantonly to its worship, and it became a trap to catch Gideon and his household.
- 27 Thus the Midianites were subdued by the Israelites; they could no longer hold up their heads. For forty years the land was at peace, all the lifetime of Gideon, that is Jerubbaal son of Joash; and he retired to his own home. Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. He had a concubine who lived in Shechem, and she also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.
- 28 Gideon son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in his father's grave at Ophrah-of-the-Abiezrites. After his death, the Israelites again went wantonly to the worship of the Baalim and made Baal-berith their god. They for-
- got the LORD their God who had delivered them from their enemies on every side, and did not show to the family of Jerubbaal, that is Gideon, the loyalty that was due to them for all the good he had done for Israel.
- ABIMELECH SON OF JERUBBAAL WENT 9 to Shechem to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the clan of his mother's family. 'I beg 2 you,' he said, 'whisper a word in the ears of the chief citizens of Shechem. Ask them which is better for them: that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, should rule over them, or one man. Tell them to remember that I am their own flesh and blood.' So his 3 mother's brothers repeated all this to each of them on his behalf; and they were moved to come over to Abimelech's side, because, as they said, he was their brother. They gave him 4 seventy pieces of silver from the temple of Baal-berith, and with these he hired idle and reckless men, who followed him. He came to his father's 5 house in Ophrah and butchered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal, on a single stone block, all but Jotham the youngest, who survived because he had hidden himself. Then 6 all the citizens of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together and made Abimelech king beside the old propped-up terebinth at Shechem.
- When this was reported to Jotham, 7 he went and stood on the summit of Mount Gerizim. He cried at the top of his voice: 'Listen to me, you citizens of Shechem, and may God listen to you:
- 'Once upon a time the trees came to 8 anoint a king, and they said to the olive-tree: Be king over us. But the 9 olive-tree answered: What, leave my rich oil by which gods and men are honoured, to come and hold sway over the trees?

blood vengeance, see Josh.20.3. 21: *Crescents*: ornaments, possibly amulets. 22-23: Gideon refuses hereditary kingship. 24-27: Here the *ephod* is some kind of image; elsewhere it is a sacred garment (Exod.25.7 n.). It brought disaster to Gideon's family. 28-35: The section in part seems misplaced. Perhaps vv. 28-29, at least, belong after v. 23.

9.1-57: Abimelech, son of Jerubbaal (Gideon). 1: *Jerubbaal*: see 6.32 n. *Shechem*: see Josh. 24.1 n. It guarded the important highway between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. 4: *Baal-berith*: see Josh.24.25 n. 6: *Beth-millo* probably refers to the fortified section of Shechem, the castle of vv. 46, 49. *Terebinth*: see Josh.24.26. 7-21: Jotham denounces Abimelech. 8-15: In

10 'So the trees said to the fig-tree: Then will you come and be king over us? But the fig-tree answered: What, leave my good fruit and all its sweetness, to come and hold sway over the trees?

12 'So the trees said to the vine: Then will you come and be king over us? But the vine answered: What, leave my new wine which gladdens gods and men, to come and hold sway over the trees?

14 'Then all the trees said to the thorn-bush: Will you then be king over us? And the thorn said to the trees: If you really mean to anoint me as your king, then come under the protection of my shadow; if not, fire shall come out of the thorn and burn up the cedars of Lebanon.'

16 Then Jotham said, 'Now, have you acted fairly and honestly in making Abimelech king? Have you done the right thing by Jerubbaal and his household? Have you given my father his due—who fought for you, and threw himself into the forefront of the battle and delivered you from the Midianites? Today you have risen against my father's family, butchered his seventy sons on a single stone block, and made Abimelech, the son of his slave-girl, king over the citizens of Shechem because he is your brother. 19 In this day's work have you acted fairly and honestly by Jerubbaal and his family? If so, I wish you joy in Abimelech and wish him joy in you! 20 If not, may fire come out of Abimelech and burn up the citizens of Shechem and all Beth-millo; may fire also come out from the citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo and burn up Abimelech.' 21 After which Jotham slipped away and made his escape; he came to Beer, and there he settled out of reach of his brother Abimelech.

22 After Abimelech had been prince over Israel for three years, God sent an evil spirit to make a breach between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, and they played him false. This was done on purpose, so that the

violent murder of the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might recoil on their brother Abimelech who did the murder and on the citizens of Shechem who encouraged him to do it. The citizens of Shechem set men to lie in wait for him on the hill-tops, but they robbed all who passed that way, and so the news reached Abimelech.

Now Gaal son of Ebed came with his kinsmen to Shechem, and the citizens of Shechem transferred their allegiance to him. They went out into the country-side, picked the early grapes in their vineyards, trod them in the winepress and held festival. They went into the temple of their god, where they ate and drank and reviled Abimelech. 'Who is Abimelech,' said Gaal son of Ebed, 'and who are the Shechemites, that we should be his subjects? Have not this son of Jerubbaal and his lieutenant Zebul been subjects of the men of Hamor the father of Shechem? Why indeed should we be subject to him? If only this people were in my charge I should know how to get rid of Abimelech! I would say to him, "Get your men together, and come out and fight." When Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, he was very angry. He resorted to a ruse and sent messengers to Abimelech to say, 'Gaal son of Ebed and his kinsmen have come to Shechem and are turning the city against you. Get up now in the night, you and the people with you, and lie in wait in the open country. Then be up in the morning at sunrise, and advance rapidly against the city. When he and his people come out, do to him what the situation demands.' So Abimelech and his people rose in the night, and lay in wait to attack Shechem, in four companies. Gaal son of Ebed came out and stood in the entrance of the city gate, and Abimelech and his people rose from their hiding-place. Gaal saw them and said to Zebul, 'There are people coming down from the tops of the hills', but Zebul replied, 'What you see is the

this antimonarchic parable, the useless thorn-bush aspires to be king, but useful trees do not. 22-25: A quarrel between Abimelech and the Shechemites. 26-41: Abimelech crushes Gaal's rebellion. 28: Abimelech lived at Arumah (v. 41); Shechem was governed by his deputy *Zebul*.

shadow of the hills, looking like men.'  
 37 Once more Gaal said, 'There are people coming down from the central ridge of the hills, and one company is coming along the road of the Soothsayers' Terebinth.' Then Zebul said to him, 'Where are your brave words now? You said, "Who is Abimelech that we should be subject to him?" Are not these the people you despised? Go out and fight him.' Gaal led the citizens of Shechem out and attacked  
 40 Abimelech, but Abimelech routed him and he fled. The ground was strewn with corpses all the way to the entrance  
 41 of the gate. Abimelech established himself in Arumah, and Zebul drove away Gaal and his kinsmen and allowed them no place in Shechem.  
 42 Next day the people came out into the open, and this was reported to  
 43 Abimelech. He on his side took his supporters, divided them into three companies and lay in wait in the open country; and when he saw the people coming out of the city, he rose and  
 44 attacked them. Abimelech and the company with him advanced rapidly and took up position at the entrance of the city gate, while the other two companies advanced against all those who were in the open and struck them  
 45 down. Abimelech kept up the attack on the city all that day and captured it; he killed the people in it, pulled the city down and sowed the site with salt.  
 46 When the occupants of the castle of Shechem heard of this, they went into the great hall<sup>c</sup> of the temple of Elberith. It was reported to Abimelech that all the occupants of the castle of  
 48 Shechem had collected together. So he and his people went up Mount Zalmon carrying axes; there he cut brushwood, and took it and hoisted it on his shoulder. He said to his men, 'You see what I am doing; be quick and do  
 49 the same.' So each man cut brushwood; then they followed Abimelech and laid the brushwood against the hall, and burnt it over their heads.

Thus all the occupants of the castle of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

Abimelech then went to Thebez, 50 besieged it and took it. There was a 51 strong castle in the middle of the city, and all the citizens, men and women, took refuge there. They shut themselves in and went on to the roof. Abimelech 52 came up to the castle and attacked it. As he approached the entrance to the castle to set fire to it, a woman threw 53 a millstone down on his head and fractured his skull. He called hurriedly 54 to his young armour-bearer and said, 'Draw your sword and dispatch me, or men will say of me: A woman killed him.' So the young man ran him through and he died. When the 55 Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went back to their homes. 56 It was thus that God requited the crime which Abimelech had committed against his father by the murder of his seventy brothers, and brought all the 57 wickedness of the men of Shechem on their own heads. The curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal came home to them.

After Abimelech, Tola son of Pua, 10 son of Dodo, a man of Issachar who lived in Shamir in the hill-country of Ephraim, came in his turn to deliver Israel. He was judge over Israel for 2 twenty-three years, and when he died he was buried in Shamir.

After him came Jair the Gileadite; 3 he was judge over Israel for twenty-two years. He had thirty sons, who rode 4 thirty asses; they had thirty towns in the land of Gilead, which to this day are called Havvoth-jair.<sup>d</sup> When Jair 5 died, he was buried in Kamon.

Once more the Israelites did what 6 was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, worshipping the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, the deities of Aram and of Sidon and of Moab, of the Ammonites and of the Philistines. They forsook the LORD and did not worship him.

<sup>c</sup> Or vault.    <sup>d</sup> That is Tent-villages of Jair.

42-49: Shechem destroyed. 45: Salt would destroy fertility, implying total destruction.

10.1-5: Two minor judges. 1: Tola: no more is known about him. 3-5: No more is known about Jair; he is mentioned, curiously enough, in Num.32.41, raising the problem of whether he belonged to the age of Moses and Joshua, or the judges.

10.6-12.7: Jephthah and delivery from the Ammonites. 10-16: Here it is the LORD himself,

7 The LORD was angry with Israel, and he sold them to the Philistines and the  
 8 Ammonites, who<sup>e</sup> for eighteen years harassed and oppressed the Israelites who lived beyond the Jordan in the  
 9 Amorite country in Gilead. Then the Ammonites crossed the Jordan to attack Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, so that Israel was in great distress. The Israelites cried to the LORD for help and said, 'We have sinned against thee; we have forsaken our God and  
 11 worshipped the Baalim.' And the LORD said to the Israelites, 'The Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines; the Sidonians too and the Amalekites and the Midianites—all these oppressed you and you cried to me for help; and did not I deliver  
 13 you? But you forsook me and worshipped other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry for help to the gods you have chosen, and let them save you in the day of your distress.' But the Israelites said to the LORD, 'We have sinned. Deal with us as thou wilt; only save us this day, we implore thee.' They banished the foreign gods and worshipped the LORD; and he could endure no longer to see the plight of Israel.

17 Then the Ammonites were called to arms, and they encamped in Gilead, while the Israelites assembled and encamped in Mizpah. The people of Gilead and their chief men said to one another, 'If any man will strike the first blow at the Ammonites, he shall be lord over the inhabitants of Gilead.'

11 Jephthah the Gileadite was a great warrior; he was the son of Gilead by a prostitute. But Gilead had a wife who bore him several sons, and when they grew up they drove Jephthah away; they said to him, 'You have no inheritance in our father's house; you  
 3 are another woman's son.' So Jephthah, to escape his brothers, went away

and settled in the land of Tob, and swept up a number of idle men who followed him.

The time came when the Ammonites  
 4 made war on Israel, and when the  
 5 fighting began, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah from the land of Tob. They said to him, 'Come and be  
 6 our commander so that we can fight the Ammonites.' But Jephthah said to  
 7 the elders of Gilead, 'You drove me from my father's house in hatred. Why come to me now when you are in trouble?' 'It is because of that', they  
 8 replied, 'that we have turned to you now. Come with us and fight the Ammonites, and become lord over all the inhabitants of Gilead.' Jephthah  
 9 said to them, 'If you ask me back to fight the Ammonites and if the LORD delivers them into my hands, then I will be your lord.' The elders of Gilead  
 10 said again to Jephthah, 'We swear by the LORD, who shall be witness between us, that we will do what you say.' Jephthah then went with the elders of  
 11 Gilead, and the people made him their lord and commander. And at Mizpah, in the presence of the LORD, Jephthah repeated all that he had said.

Jephthah sent a mission to the king  
 12 of Ammon to ask what quarrel he had with them that made him invade their country. The king gave Jephthah's men  
 13 this answer: 'When the Israelites came up from Egypt, they took our land from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and the Jordan. Give us back these lands in peace.' Jephthah sent a second  
 14 mission to the king of Ammon, and they said, 'This is Jephthah's answer: Israel did not take either the Moabite country or the Ammonite country. When they came up from Egypt, the  
 16 Israelites passed through the wilderness to the Red Sea<sup>f</sup> and came to Kadesh.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds in that year.

<sup>f</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

rather than a prophet, who rebukes the sinning Israelites. In 11–12, the allusions are broader than to the contents of Judges. MT has Maonites for Midianites. The Maonites may be the same as the Meunites of 2 Chr.20.1; 26.7. **10.17–11.11**: Jephthah, exiled by his own family, is summoned from Tob, in northeastern Gilead, to command the Israelite forces. **11.1**: *Gilead* is ordinarily a geographical name; it is possibly used here because the name of Jephthah's father was unknown. **3**: *Idle men*: probably brigands. **10**: The words recall Gen.31.49, and reflect a covenant between Jephthah and the elders. **11**: This *Mizpah* (there was one in Benjamin) was in Gilead, probably south of the Jabbok river. **12–28**: Negotiations with the king of Ammon fail.

17 They then sent envoys to the king of Edom asking him to grant them passage through his country, but the king of Edom would not hear of it. They sent also to the king of Moab, but he was not willing; so Israel remained in Kadesh. They then passed through the wilderness, skirting Edom and Moab, and kept to the east of Moab. They encamped beside the Arnon, but they did not enter Moabite territory, because the Arnon is the frontier of Moab. Israel then sent envoys to the king of the Amorites, Sihon king of Heshbon, asking him to give them free passage through his country to their destination. But Sihon would not grant Israel free passage through his territory; he mustered all his people, encamped in Jahaz and fought Israel. But the LORD the God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hands of Israel; they defeated them and occupied all the territory of the Amorites in that region. They took all the Amorite territory from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. The LORD the God of Israel drove out the Amorites for the benefit of his people Israel. And do you now propose to take their place? It is for you to possess whatever Kemosh your god gives you; and all that the LORD our God gave us as we advanced is ours. For that matter, are you any better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever quarrel with Israel or attack them? For three hundred years Israelites have lived in Heshbon and its dependent villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the towns by the Arnon. Why did you not oust<sup>g</sup> them during all that time? We have done you no wrong; it is you who are doing us wrong by attacking us. The LORD who is judge will judge this

day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.' But the king of the Ammonites would not listen to the message which Jephthah had sent him.

Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, by Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh over to the Ammonites. Jephthah made this vow to the LORD: 'If thou wilt deliver the Ammonites into my hands, then the first creature that comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return from them in peace shall be the LORD's; I will offer that as a whole-offering.' So Jephthah crossed over to attack the Ammonites, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. He routed them with great slaughter all the way from Aroer to Minnith, taking twenty towns, and as far as Abel-keramim. Thus Israel crushed Ammon. But when Jephthah came to his house in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him with tambourines and dances but his daughter, and she his only child; he had no other, neither son nor daughter. When he saw her, he rent his clothes and said, 'Alas, my daughter, you have broken my heart, such trouble you have brought upon me. I have made a vow to the LORD and I cannot go back.' She replied, 'Father, you have made a vow to the LORD; do to me what you have solemnly vowed, since the LORD has avenged you on the Ammonites, your enemies. But, father, grant me this one favour. For two months let me be, that I may roam<sup>h</sup> the hills with my companions and mourn that I must die a virgin.' 'Go', he said, and he let her depart for two months. She went with her companions and mourned her virginity on the hills. At the end of two months she came back to her father,

<sup>g</sup> Or recover.

<sup>h</sup> Or that I may go down country to . . .

The passage echoes Num. chs. 20–24. 17: See Num.20.14–21. 19–23: See Num.21.21–31. 24: A nation has a right to the land its god gives it. Usually *Kemosh* is god of the Moabites, Milcom (or Molech) god of the Ammonites; compare 1 Kgs.11.5,7. 25: *Balak*: see Num. chs. 22–24. 26: *Three hundred years*: the supposed time between Moses and Jephthah. The number is scarcely precise. 29–33: Jephthah's vow. The point of the pathetic story is that man cannot play fast and loose with God as Jephthah had done in his oath. 29: *The spirit*: see 3.10 n. 31: *Creature*: a human being. See also 2 Kgs.3.27. The Israelites generally abhorred and ultimately prohibited human sacrifice (Lev.18.21; Gen.22.2 n.; Exod.13.13 n.); for an example of its practice, see 2 Kgs.21.6. 34–40: Jephthah fulfills his vow. 37: An Israelite woman could suffer no greater disgrace than to die unmarried and childless; she therefore mourns her virginity.

and he fulfilled the vow he had made; she died a virgin. It became a tradition that the daughters of Israel should go year by year and commemorate the fate of Jephthah's daughter, four days in every year.

12 The Ephraimites mustered their forces and crossed over to Zaphon. They said to Jephthah, 'Why did you march against the Ammonites and not summon us to go with you? We will burn your house over your head.'

2 Jephthah answered, 'I and my people had a feud with the Ammonites, and had I appealed to you for help, you would not have saved us<sup>i</sup> from them.

3 When I saw that we were not to look for help from you, I took my life in my hands and marched against the Ammonites, and the LORD delivered them into my power. Why then do you attack me today?'

Jephthah then mustered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim, and the Gileadites defeated them. The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan and held them against Ephraim. When any Ephraimite who had escaped begged leave to cross, the men of Gilead asked him, 'Are you an Ephraimite?', and if he said, 'No', they would retort, 'Say Shibboleth.' He would say 'Sibboleth', and because he could not pronounce the word properly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. At that time forty-two thousand men of Ephraim lost their lives.

7 Jephthah was judge over Israel for six years; when he died he was buried in his own city in Gilead. After him Ibzan of Bethlehem was judge over Israel. He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave away the thirty daughters in marriage and brought in thirty girls for his sons. He was judge

over Israel for seven years, and when he died he was buried in Bethlehem.

After him Elon the Zebulunite was judge over Israel for ten years. When he died, he was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. Next Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite was judge over Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode each on his own ass. He was judge over Israel for eight years; and when he died he was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim on the hill of the Amalekite.

*Israel oppressed by the Philistines*

ONCE MORE THE ISRAELITES DID WHAT was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, and he delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

There was a man from Zorah of the tribe of Dan whose name was Manoah and whose wife was barren and childless. The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, 'You are barren and have no child, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now you must do as I say: be careful to drink no wine or strong drink, and to eat no forbidden food; you will conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall touch his head, for the boy is to be a Nazirite consecrated to God from the day of his birth. He will strike the first blow to deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines.' The woman went and told her husband; she said to him, 'A man of God came to me; his appearance was that of an angel of God, most terrible to see. I did not ask him where he came from nor did he tell me his name. He said to me, "You shall conceive and give birth to a son.

<sup>i</sup> and had I . . . saved us: or I did appeal to you for help, but you would not save us . . .  
<sup>j</sup> Or the.

40: This mourning ceremony is not mentioned elsewhere. 12.1-7: Jephthah's war with the Ephraimites; see also 8.1-3. 6: *Shibboleth* means "ear of corn" or "flood water." The Ephraimites betrayed themselves by their inability to pronounce the "sh" sound.

12.8-15: *Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon*. These minor judges are otherwise unknown.

13.1-16.31: *Israel oppressed by the Philistines*. The emphasis is on Samson the man, rather than on tribal or national difficulties. Modern criticism considers these stories choice examples of early Israelite folklore. The tribe of *Dan* at this time lived in the southwest, near the Philistine plain; later they moved north (ch. 18). 1-25: Samson's wondrous birth. The chapter seems a late composition, serving as a prologue to the ancient folktales which follow; it is kindred more with the ending, 16.28-31, than with the folktales. The account influences Lk. chs. 1-2. 1: *Philistines*: see Josh. 13.2 n. 2: *Zorah* was about twelve miles west of Jerusalem. 3: *Angel of the LORD*: see 2.1 n. 5: A *Nazirite* was consecrated to God by these special vows, whether for a time or for life; compare Num. 6.1-21. Samson is consecrated for life (v. 7). Since the folktales

From this time onwards drink no wine or strong drink and eat no forbidden food, for the boy is to be a Nazirite consecrated to God from his birth to the day of his death.”<sup>8</sup> Manoah prayed to the LORD, ‘If it please thee, O LORD, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again to tell us what we are to do with the boy who is to be born.’<sup>9</sup> God heard Manoah’s prayer, and the angel of God came again to the woman, who was sitting in the fields; her husband was not with her. The woman ran quickly and said to him, ‘The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me again.’ Manoah went with her at once and approached the man and said, ‘Was it you who talked with my wife?’ He said, ‘Yes, it was I.’ ‘Now when your words come true,’ Manoah said, ‘what kind of boy will he be and what will he do?’ The angel of the LORD answered him, ‘Your wife must be careful to do all that I told her: she must not taste anything that comes from the vine. She must drink no wine or strong drink, and she must eat no forbidden food. She must do what I say.’ Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, ‘May we urge you to stay? Let us prepare a kid for you.’ The angel of the LORD replied, ‘Though you urge me to stay, I will not eat your food; but prepare a whole-offering if you will, and offer that to the LORD.’ Manoah did not perceive that he was the angel of the LORD and said to him, ‘What is your name? For we shall want to honour you when your words come true.’ The angel of the LORD said to him, ‘How can you ask my name? It is a name of wonder.’ Manoah took a kid with the proper grain-offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to him whose works are full of wonder. And while Manoah and his wife were watching, the flame went up from the altar towards heaven, and the angel of the LORD went up in the

flame; and seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell on their faces. The angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah and his wife; and Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. He said to his wife, ‘We are doomed to die, we have seen God’,<sup>k</sup> but she replied, ‘If the LORD had wanted to kill us, he would not have accepted a whole-offering and a grain-offering at our hands; he would not now have let us see and hear all this.’ The woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The boy grew up in Mahaneh-dan between Zorah and Eshtaol, and the LORD blessed him, and the spirit of the LORD began to drive him hard.

Samson went down to Timnath, and there he saw a woman, one of the Philistines. When he came back, he told his father and mother that he had seen a Philistine woman in Timnath and asked them to get her for him as his wife. His father and mother said to him, ‘Is there no woman among your cousins or in all our own people? Must you go and marry one of the uncircumcised Philistines?’ But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, because she pleases me.’ His father and mother did not know that the LORD was at work in this, seeking an opportunity against the Philistines, who at that time were masters of Israel.

Samson<sup>l</sup> went down to Timnath and, when he reached the vineyards there, a young lion came at him growling. The spirit of the LORD suddenly seized him and, having no weapon in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as if it were a kid. He did not tell his parents what he had done. Then he went down and spoke to the woman, and she pleased him. After a time he went down again to take her

<sup>k</sup> Or a god.

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and his father and mother.

attributed Samson’s strength to his hair, these stories were linked to the Nazirite vow. 13–14: Samson’s mother must also observe special prohibitions, since he is consecrated even in the womb. 17–18: On the request to know the name, see Gen.32.29 and Exod.3.13. 22: Compare Exod.33.20–23. 25: See 3.10 n.

14.1–20: Samson’s first wife. 1: *Timnath*, possibly at one time a Philistine town, was in Dan (Josh.19.40) near the border of Judah (Josh.15.10). 3: *Uncircumcised*: see Josh.13.2 n. 4: *Masters of Israel*: because of their higher level of material culture; see 1.19 n. 5–9: Possibly this passage should precede v. 1. 5–6: The Asian *lion* was smaller than the African lion, but

to wife; he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion, and he saw a swarm of bees in it, and honey. He scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave them some and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the lion's carcass. His father went down to see the woman, and Samson gave a feast there as the custom of young men was. When the people saw him, they brought thirty young men to be his escort. Samson said to them, 'Let me ask you a riddle. If you can guess it during the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty lengths of linen and thirty changes of clothing; but if you cannot guess the answer, then you shall give me thirty lengths of linen and thirty changes of clothing.' 'Tell us your riddle,' they said; 'let us hear it.' So he said to them:

Out of the eater came something to eat;  
out of the strong came something sweet.

At the end of three days they had failed to guess the riddle. On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, 'Coax your husband and make him tell you the riddle, or we shall burn you and your father's house. Did you invite us here to beggar us?' So Samson's wife wept over him and said, 'You do not love me, you only hate me. You have asked my kinsfolk a riddle and you have not told it to me.' He said to her, 'I have not told it even to my father and mother; and am I to tell you?' But she wept over him every day until the seven feast days were ended, and on the seventh day, because she pestered him, he told her, and she told the riddle to her kinsfolk. So that same day the men of the city said to Samson before he entered the bridal chamber:<sup>m</sup>

What is sweeter than honey?  
What is stronger than a lion?

and he replied, 'If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.' Then the spirit of the LORD suddenly seized him. He went down to Ashkelon and there he killed thirty men, took their belts and gave their clothes to the men who had answered his riddle; but he was very angry and went off to his father's house. And Samson's wife given in marriage to the friend who had been his groomsman.

After a while, during the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, taking a kid as a present for her. He said, 'I am going to my wife in our bridal chamber', but her father would not let him in. He said, 'I was sure that you hated her, so I gave her in marriage to your groomsman. Her young sister is better than she—take her instead.' But Samson said, 'This time I will settle my score with the Philistines; I will do them some real harm.' So he went and caught three hundred jackals and got some torches; he tied the jackals tail to tail and fastened a torch between each pair of tails. He then set the torches alight and turned the jackals loose in the standing corn of the Philistines. He burnt up standing corn and stooks as well, vineyards and olive groves. The Philistines said, 'Who has done this?' They were told that it was Samson, because the Timnite, his father-in-law, had taken his wife and given her to his groomsman. So the Philistines came and burnt her and her father. Samson said, 'If you do things like this, I swear I will be revenged upon you before I have done.' He smote them hip and thigh with great slaughter; and after that he went down to live in a cave in the Rock of Etam.

The Philistines came up and pitched

<sup>m</sup> he entered . . . chamber: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the sun went down.

Samson's feat is still impressive. 15-18: The motif of a woman wheedling a secret from Samson appears again in 16.4-18. 19: *Ashkelon*: see Josh.13.3.

15.1-8: Samson's revenge. 8: *Hip and thigh* is a proverbial expression whose original significance is unknown.

15.9-20: Samson's further revenge. 9: The location of *Lehi* is unknown; see 2 Sam.23.11. It



10 camp in Judah, and overran Lehi. The men of Judah said, 'Why have you attacked us?' They answered, 'We have come to take Samson prisoner and  
11 serve him as he served us.' So three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the Rock of Etam. They said to Samson, 'Surely you know that the Philistines are our masters? Now see what you have brought upon us.' He answered, 'I only served them as they had served me.' They said to him, 'We have come down to bind you and hand you over to the Philistines.' 'Then you must swear to me', he said, 'that you will not set upon me  
12 yourselves.' They answered, 'No; we will only bind you and hand you over to them, we will not kill you.' So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the cave in the  
14 Rock. He came to Lehi, and when they met him, the Philistines shouted in triumph; but the spirit of the LORD suddenly seized him, the ropes on his arms became like burnt tow and his  
15 bonds melted away. He found the jaw-bone of an ass, all raw, and picked it  
16 up and slew a thousand men. He made this saying:

With the jaw-bone of an ass<sup>n</sup> I have flayed them like asses;<sup>o</sup>  
with the jaw-bone of an ass I have slain a thousand men.

17 When he had said his say, he threw away the jaw-bone; and he called that  
18 place Ramath-lehi.<sup>p</sup> He began to feel very thirsty and cried aloud to the LORD, 'Thou hast let me, thy servant, win this great victory, and must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of  
19 the uncircumcised?' God split open the Hollow of Lehi and water came out of it. Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. This is why the spring in Lehi is called En-hakkore<sup>q</sup> to this day.

20 Samson was judge over Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Samson went to Gaza, and there he  
16 saw a prostitute and went in to spend the night with her. The people of  
2 Gaza heard that Samson had come, and they surrounded him and lay in wait for him all that night at the city gate. During the night, however, they took no action, saying to themselves, 'When day breaks we shall kill him.' Samson lay in bed till midnight; and  
3 when midnight came he rose, seized hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them out, bar and all, hoisted them on to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill east of Hebron.

After this Samson fell in love with a  
4 woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The lords of the  
5 Philistines went up country to see her and said, 'Coax him and find out what gives him his great strength, and how we can master him, bind him and so hold him captive; then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.' So Delilah said to Samson, 6  
'Tell me what gives you your great strength, and how you can be bound and held captive.' Samson replied, 7  
'If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings not yet dry, then I shall become as weak as any other man.' So the  
8 lords of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings not yet dry, and she bound him with them. She had  
9 men already hidden in the inner room, and she cried, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he snapped the bowstrings as a strand of tow snaps when it feels the fire, and his strength was not tamed. Delilah said to Samson, 10  
'I see you have made a fool of me and told me lies. Tell me this time how you can be bound.' He said to her, 11  
'If you bind me tightly with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become as weak as any other man.' So Delilah took new ropes and bound 12

<sup>n</sup> ass: *Heb.* hamor.

<sup>o</sup> I have . . . asses; or I have reddened them blood-red, or I have heaped them in heaps; *Heb.* hamor himmartim.

<sup>p</sup> That is Jaw-bone Hill.

<sup>q</sup> That is the Crier's Spring.

has the same spelling as the word for "jawbone" (vv.15-17). 14: *Tow* or flax. 17: *Ramath-lehi*: see Tfn. p. 19: *En-hakkore*: see Tfn. q.

16.1-3: *Samson's escape*. 1: *Gaza*: see Josh.13.3. 3: *Hebron* was forty miles east of Gaza.

16.4-22: *Samson and Delilah*. 4: *The valley of Sorek* led into the northern end of the Philistine

him with them. Then she cried, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!', while the men waited hidden in the inner room. He snapped the ropes off his arms like pack-thread. Delilah said to him, 'You are still making a fool of me and have told me lies. Tell me: how can you be bound?' He said, 'Take the seven loose locks of my hair and weave them into the warp, and then drive them tight with the beater; and I shall become as weak as any other man.' So she lulled him to sleep, wove the seven loose locks of his hair into the warp, and drove them tight with the beater, and cried, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' He woke from sleep and pulled away the warp and the loom with it.<sup>r</sup> She said to him, 'How can you say you love me when you do not confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and have not told me what gives you your great strength.' She so pestered him with these words day after day, pressing him hard and wearying him to death, that he told her his secret. 'No razor has touched my head,' he said, 'because I am a Nazirite, consecrated to God from the day of my birth. If my head were shaved, then my strength would leave me, and I should become as weak as any other man.' Delilah saw that he had told her his secret; so she sent to the lords of the Philistines and said, 'Come up at once, he has told me his secret.' So the lords of the Philistines came up and brought the money with them. She lulled him to sleep on her knees, summoned a man and he shaved the seven locks of his hair for her. She began to take him captive and his strength left him. Then she cried, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' He woke from his sleep and said, 'I will go out as usual and shake myself'; he did not know that the LORD had left him. The Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza. There they bound him with fetters of bronze, and he was set to grinding corn in the

prison. But his hair, after it had been shaved, began to grow again.

The lords of the Philistines assembled together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon and to rejoice before him. They said, 'Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hands.' The people, when they saw him, praised their god, chanting:

Our god has delivered our enemy  
into our hands,  
the scourge of our land who piled it  
with our dead.

When they grew merry, they said, 'Call Samson, and let him fight to make sport for us.' So they summoned Samson from prison and he made sport before them all. They stood him between the pillars, and Samson said to the boy who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I may lean against them.' The temple was full of men and women, and all the lords of the Philistines were there, and there were about three thousand men and women on the roof watching Samson as he fought. Samson called on the LORD and said, 'Remember me, O Lord GOD, remember me: give me strength only this once, O God, and let me at one stroke be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.' He put his arms round the two central pillars which supported the temple, his right arm round one and his left round the other, and braced himself and said, 'Let me die with the Philistines.' Then Samson leaned forward with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and on all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life. His brothers and all his father's family came down, carried him up to the grave of his father Manoah between Zorah and Eshtaol

<sup>r</sup> the warp . . . with it: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds an unintelligible word.*

plain. 13: *Warp and beater* are weaving terms. 17: See 13.5 n. 20: *LORD had left him*: the Nazirite vow had been broken by the cutting of the hair.

16.23-31: *Samson's heroic death*. 23: *Dagon*: Semitic grain deity, adopted by the Philistines; see 1 Sam.5.2-5.

and buried him there. He had been judge over Israel for twenty years.

*Years of lawlessness*

17 THERE WAS ONCE A MAN NAMED MICAH  
2 from the hill-country of Ephraim. He said to his mother, 'You remember the eleven hundred pieces of silver which were taken from you, and how you called down a curse on the thief in my hearing? I have the money; I took it and now I will give it back to you.'<sup>s</sup> His mother said, 'May the LORD bless 3 you, my son.' So he gave the eleven hundred pieces of silver back to his mother, and she said, 'I now solemnly dedicate this money of mine to the LORD for the benefit of my son, to make 4 a carved idol and a cast image.' He returned the money to his mother, and she took two hundred pieces of silver and handed them to a silversmith, who made them into an idol and an image, which stood in Micah's house.  
5 This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim<sup>t</sup> and installed one of his sons to be his 6 priest. In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what 7 was right in his own eyes. Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the clan of Judah, a Levite named 8 Ben-gershom.<sup>u</sup> He had left the city of Bethlehem to go and find somewhere to live. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill-country of Ephraim.  
9 Micah said to him, 'Where have you come from?' He replied, 'I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am looking for somewhere to live.'  
10 Micah said to him, 'Stay with me and be priest and father to me. I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, and provide you with food and clothes.' The

Levite agreed to stay with the man and was treated as one of his own sons. Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and a member of his household. Micah said, 12 'Now I know that the LORD will make me prosper, because I have a Levite for my priest.' 13

In those days there was no king in 18 Israel and the tribe of the Danites was looking for territory to occupy, because they had not so far come into possession of the territory allotted to them among the tribes of Israel. The Danites 2 therefore sent out five fighting men of their clan from Zorah and Eshtaol to prospect, with instructions to go and explore the land. They came to Micah's house in the hill-country of Ephraim and spent the night there. While they 3 were there, they recognized the speech of the young Levite; they turned there and then and said to him, 'Who brought you here? What are you doing? What is your business here?' He said, 'This 4 is all Micah's doing: he has hired me and I have become his priest.' They 5 said to him, 'Then inquire of God on our behalf whether our mission will be successful.' The priest replied, 'Go in 6 peace. Your mission is in the LORD's hands.' The five men went on their way 7 and came to Laish. There they found the inhabitants living a carefree life, in the same way as the Sidonians, a quiet, carefree folk, with no hereditary king to keep the country under his thumb.<sup>v</sup> They were a long way from the Sidonians, and had no contact with the Aramaeans. So the five men went back 8 to Zorah and Eshtaol, and when their

<sup>s</sup> and now . . . you: *transposed from verse 3.*

<sup>t</sup> Or household gods.

<sup>u</sup> named Ben-gershom: *prob. rdg., cp. 18. 30; Heb. he lodged there.*

<sup>v</sup> with no . . . thumb: *prob. rdg.; Heb. and none humiliating anything in the land with inherited authority.*

17.1-21.25: **Years of lawlessness.** The two tales in these chapters are not concerned with "judges"; they describe anarchy which the authors regard as necessitating the rise of the monarchy.

17.1-18.31: **The origin of the cult of Dan.** 1-6: The laws forbidding images (Exod.20.4,23; 34.17) seem here unknown. 5: *Ephod*: see 8.24-27 n. *Teraphim*: see Tfn. t. 6: On this verse (compare 21.25) see 17.1-21.25 n. 7-13: *Levite* here probably means a priest, not a member of a tribe; in v. 13, the word has a tribal meaning, unless the intention there is to explain that "levite" once meant "priest." 7: *Bethlehem*: five miles south of Jerusalem.

18.1-31: **The migration of the Danites.** The reason for the move northward by the tribe of Dan is not mentioned here; see 13.1-16.31 n. 5: To *inquire of God*: probably by casting lots; see Josh.7.14 n. 7: *Laish*, near the sources of the Jordan, was allied with *the Sidonians*, who were,

9 kinsmen asked their news, they said, 'Come and attack them. It is an excellent country that we have seen. Will you hang back and do nothing about it? Start off now and take possession  
10 of the land. When you get there, you will find a people living a carefree life in a wide expanse of open country. God has delivered it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything on earth.'

11 And so six hundred armed men from the clan of the Danites set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. They went up country and encamped in Kiriath-jearim in Judah: this is why that place to this day is called Mahaneh-dan;<sup>w</sup>  
12 it lies west of Kiriath-jearim. From there they passed on to the hill-country of Ephraim and came to Micah's house. The five men who had been to explore the country round Laish spoke up and said to their kinsmen, 'Do you know that in one of these houses there are now an ephod and teraphim, an idol and an image? Now consider what  
13 you had best do.' So they turned aside to Micah's house and greeted him. The six hundred armed Danites took their stand at the entrance of the gate, and the five men who had gone to explore the country went indoors to take the idol and the image, ephod and teraphim, while the priest was standing at the entrance with the six hundred  
14 armed men. The five men entered Micah's house and took the idol and the image, ephod and teraphim.<sup>x</sup> The priest asked them what they were doing, but they said to him, 'Be quiet;  
15 not a word. Come with us and be our priest and father. Which is better, to be priest in the household of one man or to be priest to a whole tribe and clan in Israel?' This pleased the priest; so he took the ephod and teraphim, the idol and the image, and joined the company. They turned and went off, putting the dependants, the herds, and  
16 the valuables in front. The Danites had gone some distance from Micah's

house, when his neighbours were called out in pursuit and caught up with them. They shouted after them, and the  
17 Danites turned round and said to Micah, 'What is the matter with you? Why have you come after us?' He said,  
18 'You have taken my gods which I made for myself, you have taken the priest, and you have gone off and left me nothing. How dare you say, "What is the matter with you?"' The Danites  
19 said to him, 'Do not shout at us. We are desperate men and if we fall upon you it will be the death of yourself and your family.' With that the Danites  
20 went on their way and Micah, seeing that they were too strong for him, turned and went home.

Thus they carried off the priest and the things Micah had made for himself, and attacked Laish, whose people were quiet and carefree. They put them to the sword and set fire to their city. There was no one to save them, for the city was a long way from Sidon and they had no contact with the Aramaeans,<sup>y</sup> although the city was in the vale near Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the city and settled in it, naming it Dan after  
21 the name of their forefather Dan, a son of Israel; but its original name was Laish. The Danites set up the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the people went into exile. (They set up for themselves  
22 the idol which Micah had made, and it was there as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.)

IN THOSE DAYS WHEN NO KING RULED  
19 in Israel, a Levite was living in the heart of the hill-country of Ephraim. He had taken himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. In a fit of anger  
2 she had left him and had gone to her father's house in Bethlehem in Judah. When she had been there four months,

<sup>w</sup> That is the Camp of Dan.  
<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. the idol of the ephod, and teraphim and image.  
<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. verse 7; Heb. men.

however, far away. 11-26: The theft of Micah's priest and images. 12. *Mahaneh-dan*: see Tfn. w. 30-31: On the two great shrines of the later Northern Kingdom, see 1 Kgs.12.29. 30: *Son of Moses*: the Heb. may also be read as Manasseh. The thrust of the verse is to give the priest's name for the first time.

19.1-21.25: The crime of the Benjaminites at Gibeah and the war against them. 1: *No king*:

3 her husband set out after her with his  
 servant and two asses to appeal to her  
 and bring her back. She brought him  
 in to the house of her father, who  
 4 welcomed him when he saw him. His  
 father-in-law, the girl's father, pressed  
 him and he stayed with him three days,  
 and they were well entertained during  
 5 their visit. On the fourth day, they rose  
 early in the morning, and he prepared  
 to leave, but the girl's father said to  
 his son-in-law, 'Have something to  
 6 eat first, before you go.' So the two  
 of them sat down and ate and drank  
 together. The girl's father said to the  
 man, 'Why not spend the night and  
 7 enjoy yourself?' When he rose to go,  
 his father-in-law urged him to stay,  
 and again he stayed for the night.  
 8 He rose early in the morning on the  
 fifth day to depart, but the girl's father  
 said, 'Have something to eat first.' So  
 they lingered till late afternoon, eating  
 9 and drinking together. Then the man  
 stood up to go with his concubine and  
 servant, but his father-in-law said,  
 'See how the day wears on towards  
 sunset. Spend the night here and enjoy  
 yourself, and then rise early tomorrow  
 10 and set out for home.' But the man  
 would not stay the night; he rose and  
 left. He had reached a point opposite  
 Jebus, that is Jerusalem, with his two  
 11 laden asses and his concubine, and  
 when they were close to Jebus, the  
 weather grew wild and stormy, and  
 the young man said to his master,  
 'Come now, let us turn into this Jebusite  
 12 town and spend the night there.' But  
 his master said to him, 'No, not into a  
 strange town where the people are not  
 13 Israelites; let us go on to Gibeah. Come,  
 we will go and find some other place,  
 and spend the night in Gibeah or  
 14 Ramah.' So they went on until sunset  
 overtook them; they were then near  
 Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin.  
 15 They turned in to spend the night  
 there, and went and sat down in the  
 open street of the town; but nobody  
 took them into his house for the  
 night.

Meanwhile an old man was coming 16  
 home in the evening from his work in  
 the fields. He was from the hill-country  
 of Ephraim, but he lived in Gibeah,  
 where the people were Benjamites.  
 He looked up, saw the traveller in the 17  
 open street of the town, and asked him  
 where he was going and where he came  
 from. He answered, 'We are travelling 18  
 from Bethlehem in Judah to the heart  
 of the hill-country of Ephraim. I come  
 from there; I have been to Bethlehem  
 in Judah and I am going home, but  
 nobody has taken me into his house.  
 I have straw and provender for the 19  
 asses, food and wine for myself, the  
 girl, and the young man; we have all  
 we need, sir.' The old man said, 'You 20  
 are welcome, I will supply all your  
 wants; you must not spend the night  
 in the street.' So he took him inside 21  
 and provided fodder for the asses; they  
 washed their feet, and ate and drank.  
 While they were enjoying themselves, 22  
 some of the worst scoundrels in the  
 town surrounded the house, hurling  
 themselves against the door and  
 shouting to the old man who owned  
 the house, 'Bring out the man who  
 has gone into your house, for us to  
 have intercourse with him.' The owner 23  
 of the house went outside to them  
 and said, 'No, my friends, do nothing  
 so wicked. This man is my guest; do  
 not commit this outrage. Here is my 24  
 daughter, a virgin;<sup>z</sup> let me bring her<sup>a</sup>  
 out to you. Rape her<sup>a</sup> and do to her<sup>a</sup>  
 what you please; but you shall not  
 commit such an outrage against this  
 man.' But the men refused to listen 25  
 to him, so the Levite took hold of his  
 concubine and thrust her outside for  
 them. They assaulted her and abused  
 her all night till the morning, and  
 when dawn broke, they let her go. The 26  
 girl came at daybreak and fell down  
 at the entrance of the man's house  
 where her master was, and lay there  
 until it was light. Her master rose in 27  
 the morning and opened the door of

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and his concubine.  
<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.

see 17.1-21.25 n.; compare 17.6 and 21.25. 10-12: *Jerusalem* was as yet unconquered by the Hebrews; contrast 1.8 but compare 2 Sam.5.6-9. (Extrabiblical sources always refer to it as Jerusalem, never as Jebus.) *Gibeah*, about five miles north of Jerusalem, was later the home of Saul (1 Sam.10.26). 22-26: Compare Gen.19.4-9. Gibeah became proverbial as a place of

the house to set out on his journey, and there was his concubine lying at the door with her hands on the threshold. 28 He said to her, 'Get up and let us be off'; but there was no answer. So he lifted her on to his ass and set off for home. 29 When he arrived there, he picked up a knife, and he took hold of his concubine and cut her up limb by limb into twelve pieces; and he sent them through the length and breadth of Israel. 30 He told the men he sent with them to say to every Israelite, 'Has the like of this happened or been seen from the time the Israelites came up from Egypt till today? Consider this among yourselves and speak your minds.' So everyone who saw them said, 'No such thing has ever happened or been seen before.'

20 All the Israelites, the whole community from Dan to Beersheba and out of Gilead also, left their homes as one man and assembled before the LORD at Mizpah. The leaders of the people and all the tribes of Israel presented themselves in the general assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot-soldiers armed with swords; and the Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah. The Israelites asked how this wicked thing had come about, and the Levite, to whom the murdered woman belonged, answered, 'I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night there. The citizens of Gibeah rose against me that night and surrounded the house where I was, intending to kill me; and they raped my concubine and she died. I took her and cut her in pieces, and sent them through the length and breadth of Israel, because of the filthy outrage they had committed in Israel. Now it is for you, the whole of Israel, to say here and now what you think ought to be done.' All the people rose to their feet as one man and said, 'Not one of us

shall go back to his tent, not one shall return home. This is what we will now do to Gibeah. We will draw lots for the attack: and we will take ten men out of every hundred in all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to collect provisions from the people for those who have taken the field against Gibeah in Benjamin to avenge the outrage committed in Israel.' Thus all the Israelites to a man were massed against the town.

The tribes of Israel sent men all through the tribe of Benjamin saying, 'What is this wicked thing which has happened in your midst? Hand over to us those scoundrels in Gibeah, and we will put them to death and purge Israel of this wickedness.' But the Benjamites refused to listen to their fellow-Israelites. They flocked from their cities to Gibeah to go to war with the Israelites, and that day they mustered out of their cities twenty-six thousand men armed with swords. There were also seven hundred picked men from Gibeah, left-handed men, who could sling a stone and not miss by a hair's breadth. The Israelites, without Benjamin, numbered four hundred thousand men armed with swords, every one a fighting man. The Israelites at once moved on to Bethel, and there they sought an oracle from God, asking, 'Which of us shall attack Benjamin first?', and the LORD's answer was, 'Judah shall attack first.' So the Israelites set out at dawn and encamped opposite Gibeah. They advanced to do battle with Benjamin and drew up their forces before the town. The Benjamites made a sally from Gibeah and left twenty-two thousand of Israel dead on the field that day. The Israelites went up to Bethel,<sup>b</sup> lam-

<sup>b</sup> to Bethel: *prob. rdg., cp. verses 18, 26; Heb. om.*  
<sup>c</sup> Verses 22 and 23 transposed.

shameful wickedness; see Hos.9.9; 10.9. 27-30: The summons to vengeance. 29: Compare 1 Sam.11.7.

20.1-48: The tribes assemble against the Benjaminites. 1: *Dan to Beersheba*: that is, all Israel, from the extreme north to the extreme south. This *Mizpah* was on the northern border of Benjamin (see 11.11 n.). Some scholars believe the assembly (see v. 18) was at Bethel in Ephraim. 12-36a: The Israelites suffer two setbacks, and then by a ruse defeat the Benjaminites. 17: The numbers are greatly exaggerated. 18: See Judg.18.30-31 n. On seeking an oracle, see 18.5 n.

ented before the LORD until evening and inquired whether they should again attack their brother Benjamin.

22 The LORD said, 'Yes, attack him.' Then the Israelites took fresh courage and again formed up on the same ground

24 as the first day. So the second day they

25 advanced against the Benjamites, who sallied out from Gibeah to meet them and laid another eighteen thousand

26 armed men low. The Israelites, the whole people, went back to Bethel, where they sat before the LORD lamenting and fasting until evening, and they offered whole-offerings and

27 shared-offerings before the LORD. In those days the Ark of the Covenant of

28 God was there, and Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, served before the LORD.<sup>d</sup> The Israelites inquired of the LORD and said, 'Shall we again march out to battle against Benjamin our brother or shall we desist?' The LORD answered, 'Attack him: tomorrow I will deliver him into your hands.'

29 Israel then posted men in ambush all round Gibeah.

30 On the third day the Israelites advanced against the Benjamites and drew up their forces at Gibeah as they had

31 before; and the Benjamites sallied out to meet the army. They were drawn away from the town and began the attack as before by killing a few Israelites, about thirty,<sup>e</sup> on the highways which led across open country, one to Bethel and the other to Gibeah.

32 They thought they were defeating them once again, but the Israelites had planned a retreat to draw them away from the town out on to the highways.

33 Meanwhile the main body of Israelites left their positions and re-formed in Baal-tamar, while those in ambush, ten thousand picked men all told, burst out from their position in the neighbourhood of Gibeah and came in on the east of the town. There was soon heavy fighting; yet the Benjamites did not suspect the disaster that was threatening them. So the LORD put Benjamin to flight before Israel, and on that day the Israelites killed twenty-

five thousand one hundred Benjamites, all armed men.

The men of Benjamin now saw that 36 they had been defeated, for all that the Israelites, trusting in the ambush which they had set by Gibeah, had given way before them. The men in ambush 37 made a sudden dash on Gibeah, fell on the town from all sides and put all the inhabitants to the sword. The 38 agreed signal between the Israelites and those in ambush<sup>f</sup> was to be a column of smoke sent up from the town. The Israelites then faced about 39 in the battle; and Benjamin began to cut down the Israelites, killing about thirty of them,<sup>g</sup> in the belief that they were defeating them as they had done in the first encounter. As the column of smoke began to go up from the town, the Benjamites looked back and thought the whole town was going up in flames. When the Israelites faced about, the 41 Benjamites saw that disaster had overtaken them and were seized with panic. They turned and fled before the 42 Israelites in the direction of the wilderness, but the fighting caught up with them and soon those from the town were among them, cutting them down. They hemmed in the Benjamites, pursuing them without respite,<sup>h</sup> and overtook them at a point to the east of Gibeah. Eighteen thousand of the Benjamites 44 fell, all of them fighting men. The survivors turned and fled into the wilderness towards the Rock of Rimmon. The Israelites picked off the stragglers on the roads, five thousand of them, and chased them until they had cut down and killed two thousand more. Twenty-five thousand armed 46 men of Benjamin fell in battle that day, all fighting men. The six hundred who survived turned and fled into the wilderness as far as the Rock of Rimmon, and there they remained for four months. The Israelites then turned 48 back to deal with the Benjamites, and put to the sword the people in the

*d* Or before the Ark. *e* Or about thirty wounded men.  
*f* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds an unintelligible word.  
*g* to cut . . . them: or to kill about thirty wounded men among the Israelites.  
*h* without respite: or from Nohah.

27-28: Since only here in Judg. is the Ark mentioned, these verses are often regarded as a late insertion. *Phinehas*: see Num.25.6-13. 36b-48: This is a second, fuller account of the ambush and victory of vv. 29-36.

towns and the cattle, every creature that they found; they also set fire to every town within their reach.

21 In Mizpah the Israelites had bound themselves by oath that none of them would marry his daughter to a Benjamite. The people now came to Bethel and remained there in God's presence till sunset, raising their voices in loud lamentation. They said, 'O LORD God of Israel, why has it happened in Israel that one tribe should this day be lost to Israel?' Next day the people rose early, built an altar there and offered whole-offerings and shared-offerings. At that the Israelites asked themselves whether among all the tribes of Israel there was anyone who did not go up to the assembly before the LORD; for under the terms of the great oath anyone who had not gone up to the LORD at Mizpah was to be put to death. And the Israelites felt remorse over their brother Benjamin, because, as they said, 'This day Israel has lost one whole tribe.' So they asked, 'What shall we do for wives for those who are left? We have sworn to the LORD not to give any of our daughters to them in marriage. Is there anyone in all the tribes of Israel who did not go up to the LORD at Mizpah? Now it happened that no one from Jabesh-gilead had come to the camp for the assembly; so when they held a roll-call of the people, they found that no inhabitant of Jabesh-gilead was present. Thereupon the community sent off twelve thousand fighting men with orders to go and put the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead to the sword, men, women, and dependants. 'This is what you shall do,' they said: 'put to death every male person, and every woman who has had intercourse with a man, but spare any who are virgins.' This they did. Among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead they found four hundred young women who were virgins and had not had intercourse with a man, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh in Canaan. Then the whole com-

munity sent messengers to the Benjamites at the Rock of Rimmon to parley with them, and peace was proclaimed. At this the Benjamites came back, and were given those of the women of Jabesh-gilead who had been spared; but these were not enough.

The people were still full of remorse over Benjamin because the LORD had made this gap in the tribes of Israel, and the elders of the community said, 'What shall we do for wives for the rest? All the women in Benjamin have been massacred.' They said, 'Heirs there must be for the remnant of Benjamin who have escaped! Then Israel will not see one of its tribes blotted out. We cannot give them our own daughters in marriage because we have sworn that there shall be a curse on the man who gives a wife to a Benjamite.' Then they bethought themselves of the pilgrimage in honour of the LORD, made every year to Shiloh, the place which lies to the north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway from Bethel to Shechem and to the south of Lebonah. They said to the Benjamites, 'Go and hide in the vineyards and keep watch. When the girls of Shiloh come out to dance, sally out of the vineyards, and each of you seize one of them for his wife; then make your way home to the land of Benjamin. Then, if their fathers or brothers come and complain to you, say to them, "Let us keep them with your approval, for none of us has captured a wife in battle. Had you offered them to us, the guilt would be yours."'

All this the Benjamites did. They carried off as many wives as they needed, snatching them as they danced; then they went their way and returned to their patrimony, rebuilt their cities and settled in them. The Israelites also dispersed by tribes and families, and every man went back to his own patrimony.

In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

21.1-25: The rehabilitation of Benjamin. Two accounts (vv. 1-15 and 16-25) are blended. 5-15: *Jabesh-gilead* was east of the Jordan. 12: On the sparing of *virgins* in warfare, compare Num.31.17-18. 15-25: No other biblical data are available about this festival which was perhaps the occasion of agricultural fertility rites. 19: On *Shiloh* pilgrimages see 1 Sam.1.3,21.



# RUTH

Ruth was a Moabite woman who, after the death of her Judean husband, chose to give up the security of her homeland to return to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi (ch. 1). There Ruth's loyalty and devotion to Naomi brought her to the notice of Boaz, a relative of her late husband. Boaz married Ruth (2.1-4.12), and through this marriage she became the great-grandmother of David (4.13-22).

The opening verse sets the story in the period of the Judges. Some scholars consider Ruth a postexilic literary creation, though perhaps based on an older tale; on this view, it was intended to counteract the harsh decrees of Ezra and Nehemiah against foreign wives (Ezra 10.1-5; Neh. 13.23-27). Others, however, date it much earlier, during the reigns of the first kings of Judah, before bitter enmity toward Moab had developed; furthermore, Davidic connections with Moab are indicated by 1 Sam.22.3-4, and it is argued that a foreign extraction would hardly have been attributed to David without any basis.

In the Hebrew Bible it is found in the Writings, in some MSS. in first place; it is placed after Judges in the Sept. and Vg. In the synagogue traditions, Ruth, one of the five Megilloth ("Scrolls"), is read in public at the Feast of Weeks ("Pentecost").

## *Naomi and Ruth*

1 LONG AGO, IN THE TIME OF THE  
Judges, there was a famine in the  
Land, and a man from Bethlehem in  
Judah went to live in the Moabite  
country with his wife and his two  
2 sons. The man's name was Elimelech,  
his wife's name was Naomi, and the  
names of his two sons Mahlon and  
Chilion. They were Ephrathites from  
Bethlehem in Judah. They arrived in  
the Moabite country and there they  
stayed.  
3 Elimelech Naomi's husband died,  
so that she was left with her two sons.  
4 These sons married Moabite women,  
one of whom was called Orpah and  
the other Ruth. They had lived there  
5 about ten years, when both Mahlon  
and Chilion died, so that the woman  
was bereaved of her two sons as well  
6 as of her husband. Thereupon she set  
out with her two daughters-in-law to  
return home, because she had heard  
while still in the Moabite country that  
the LORD had cared for his people and  
7 given them food. So with her two  
daughters-in-law she left the place  
where she had been living, and took  
8 the road home to Judah. Then Naomi  
said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go

back, both of you, to your mothers'  
homes. May the LORD keep faith with  
you, as you have kept faith with the  
dead and with me; and may he grant 9  
each of you security in the home of a  
new husband.' She kissed them and  
they wept aloud. Then they said to 10  
her, 'We will return with you to your  
own people.' But Naomi said, 'Go 11  
back, my daughters. Why should you  
go with me? Am I likely to bear any  
more sons to be husbands for you?  
Go back, my daughters, go. I am too 12  
old to marry again. But even if I could  
say that I had hope of a child, if I  
were to marry this night and if I were  
to bear sons, would you then wait 13  
until they grew up? Would you then  
refrain from marrying? No, no, my  
daughters, my lot is more bitter than  
yours, because the LORD has been  
against me.' At this they wept again. 14  
Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law  
and returned to her people, but Ruth  
clung to her.

'You see,' said Naomi, 'your sister- 15  
in-law has gone back to her people and  
her gods;<sup>a</sup> go back with her.' 'Do not 16  
urge me to go back and desert you',  
Ruth answered. 'Where you go, I will  
go, and where you stay, I will stay.  
<sup>a</sup> Or god.

1.1-22: Naomi and Ruth. 1-5: Introduction. 1: *Bethlehem in Judah* distinguishes it from Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun (Josh.19.15). *Moab*: east of the Dead Sea. In the late biblical period the Moabites were regarded as special enemies of the Israelites; see Deut.23.3-6 n. 2: *Ephrathites from Bethlehem*: they belonged to a Judean clan settled in Bethlehem; see 1 Chr. 2.50-51. 6-18: Ruth chooses to return to Judah with Naomi. 8: *Your mothers' homes* refers to the women's part of the dwelling; see S. of S.3.4. 11: *More sons to be husbands for you*: according to levirate law; see Deut.25.5-10. 15-18: Orpah goes back to *her gods*, the gods of Moab, or

Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. I swear a solemn oath before the LORD your God: nothing but<sup>b</sup> death shall divide us.' When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more, and the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was in great excitement about them, and the women said, 'Can this be Naomi?' 'Do not call me Naomi,'<sup>c</sup> she said, 'call me Mara,'<sup>d</sup> for it is a bitter lot that the Almighty has sent me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi? The LORD has pronounced against me; the Almighty has brought disaster on me.' This is how Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth the Moabitess, returned with her from the Moabite country. The barley harvest was beginning when they arrived in Bethlehem.

#### Ruth and Boaz

2 NOW NAOMI HAD A KINSMAN ON HER husband's side, a well-to-do man of the family of Elimelech; his name was Boaz. Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'May I go out to the corn-fields and glean behind anyone who will grant me that favour?' 'Yes, go, my daughter', she replied. So Ruth went gleaning in the fields behind the reapers. As it happened, she was in that strip of the fields which belonged to Boaz of Elimelech's family, and there was Boaz coming out from Bethlehem. He greeted the reapers, saying, 'The LORD be with you'; and they replied, 'The LORD bless you.' 5 Then he asked his servant in charge

of the reapers, 'Whose girl is this?' 'She is a Moabite girl', the servant answered, 'who has just come back with Naomi from the Moabite country. She asked if she might glean and gather among the swathes behind the reapers. She came and has been on her feet with hardly a moment's rest<sup>e</sup> from daybreak till now.' Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Listen to me, my daughter: do not go and glean in any other field, and do not look any further, but keep close to my girls. Watch where the men reap, and follow the gleaners; I have given them orders not to molest you. If you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the men have filled.' She fell prostrate before him and said, 'Why are you so kind as to take notice of me when I am only a foreigner?' Boaz answered, 'They have told me all that you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people you did not know before. The LORD reward your deed; may the LORD the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, give you all that you deserve.' 'Indeed, sir,' she said, 'you have eased my mind and spoken kindly to me; may I ask you as a favour not to treat me only as one of your slave-girls?'<sup>f</sup> When meal-time came round, Boaz said to her, 'Come here and have something to eat, and dip your bread into the sour wine.' So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and still had some left over. When she got up

<sup>b</sup> I swear . . . nothing but: or The LORD your God do so to me and more if . . .

<sup>c</sup> That is Pleasure.

<sup>d</sup> That is Bitter.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds in the house.

<sup>f</sup> may I . . . slave-girls?: or if you please, treat me as one of your slave-girls.

to her god (Tfn. a), i.e. Kemosh, the chief god of Moab. Ruth chooses Israel and Israel's God. However, Orpah is not being condemned here; there are no villains in the Book of Ruth. Though the setting is in the time of the judges, the characters seem unmarked by the violent spirit manifested in the Book of Judg. Vv. 16-17 are poetic prose, and reflect a meter found in Hebrew poetry. 19-22: Naomi and Ruth arrive in Bethlehem. 22: *The barley harvest* usually began in April.

2.1-4.22: *Ruth and Boaz*. 1-3: While gleaning, Ruth happens to come to the field owned by Boaz, a relative of her father-in-law Elimelech (1.2). 2: Hebrew law allowed the poor to glean, i.e. to pick up the grain left in the fields after the reapers had finished (Lev.19.9-10; Deut. 24.19-22). 4-7: Ruth meets Boaz. 5: In the Orient every woman belonged to someone: to father, husband, brother, or master. 8-16: The kindness of Boaz. 15-16: Boaz goes beyond the

to glean, Boaz gave the men orders. 'She', he said, 'may glean even among the sheaves; do not scold her. Or you may even pull out some corn from the bundles and leave it for her to glean, without reproving her.'

17 So Ruth gleaned in the field till evening, and when she beat out what she had gleaned, it came to about a bushel of barley. She took it up and went into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then Ruth brought out what she had saved from her meal and gave it to her. 19 Her mother-in-law asked her, 'Where did you glean today? Which way did you go? Blessings on the man who kindly took notice of you.' So she told her mother-in-law whom she had been working with. 'The man with whom I worked today', she said, 'is called Boaz.' 'Blessings on him from the LORD', said Naomi. 'The LORD has kept faith with the living and the dead. For this man is related to us and is our next-of-kin.' 'And what is more,' said Ruth the Moabitess, 'he told me to stay close to his men until they had finished all his harvest.' 'It is best for you, my daughter,' Naomi answered, 'to go out with his girls; let no one catch you in another field.' So she kept close to his girls, gleaning with them till the end of both barley and wheat harvests; but she lived with her mother-in-law.

3 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, 'My daughter, I want to see you happily settled. Now there is our kinsman Boaz; you were with his girls. Tonight he is winnowing barley at his threshing-floor. Wash and anoint yourself, put on your cloak and go down to the threshing-floor, but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, take

note of the place where he lies. Then go in, turn back the covering at his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do.' 'I will do whatever you tell me', Ruth answered. So she went down to the threshing-floor and did exactly as her mother-in-law had told her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, he felt at peace with the world and went to lie down at the far end of the heap of grain. She came in quietly, turned back the covering at his feet and lay down. About midnight something disturbed the man as he slept; he turned over and, lo and behold, there was a woman lying at his feet. 'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am your servant, Ruth', she replied. 'Now spread your skirt over your servant, because you are my next-of-kin.' He said, 'The LORD has blessed you, my daughter. This last proof of your loyalty is greater than the first; you have not sought after any young man, rich or poor. Set your mind at rest, my daughter. I will do whatever you ask; for, as the whole neighbourhood knows, you are a capable woman. Are you sure that I am the next-of-kin? There is a kinsman even closer than I. Spend the night here and then in the morning, if he is willing to act as your next-of-kin, well and good; but if he is not willing, I will do so; I swear it by the LORD. Now lie down till morning.' So she lay at his feet till morning, but rose before one man could recognize another; and he said, 'It must not be known that a woman has been to the threshing-floor.' Then he said, 'Bring me the cloak you have on, and hold it out.' So she held it out, and he put in six measures of barley and lifted it on her back, and she went to the town. When she came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, 'How did things go with you, my daughter?' Ruth told her all that the man had

requirement of Hebrew law (see v. 2). 17-23: Ruth relates her experiences to Naomi. 20: The *next-of-kin*, a technical term, had certain rights and obligations: to restore the property which an impoverished kinsman had lost (Lev.25.25; see Ruth 4.3-4) and to marry the widow of a relative without male offspring (see 1.11-13; 4.5-6; Deut.25.5-10). It is also the term for a blood avenger (Num.35.12; 19.21). Boaz, however (3.12-13), is not the nearest next-of-kin. 23: These harvests ended in June.

3.1-18. The threshing-floor incident. 1-5: Naomi's instructions. These relate to ordinary bridal customs. 6-13: Carried out, Naomi's instructions win the assent of Boaz. 9: To spread one's skirt over someone symbolizes marriage; compare Ezek.16.8. *Next-of-kin*: see 2.20 n. 14-18: Boaz's concern for Ruth's good name.

- 17 done for her. 'He gave me these six measures of barley,' she said; 'he would not let me come home to my mother-in-law empty-handed.' Naomi answered, 'Wait, my daughter, until you see what will come of it. He will not rest until he has settled the matter today.'
- 4 Now Boaz had gone up to the city gate, and was sitting there; and, after a time, the next-of-kin of whom he had spoken passed by. 'Here,' he cried, calling him by name, 'come and sit down.' He came and sat down. Then Boaz stopped ten elders of the town, and asked them to sit there, and they did so. Then he said to the next-of-kin, 'You will remember the strip of field that belonged to our brother Elimelech. Naomi has returned from the Moabite country and is selling it. I promised to open the matter with you, to ask you to acquire it in the presence of those who sit here, in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are going to do your duty as next-of-kin, then do so, but if not, someone must do it. So tell me, and then I shall know; for I come after you as next-of-kin.' He answered, 'I will act as next-of-kin.' Then Boaz said, 'On the day when you acquire the field from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's wife, so as to perpetuate the name of the dead man with his patrimony.' Thereupon the next-of-kin said, 'I cannot act myself, for I should risk losing my own patrimony. You must therefore do my duty as next-of-kin. I cannot act.'
- 7 Now in those old days, when property was redeemed or exchanged, it was the custom for a man to pull off his sandal and give it to the other party. This was the form of attestation in Israel. So the next-of-kin said to Boaz, 'Acquire it for yourself', and pulled off his sandal. Then Boaz declared to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses today that I have acquired from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Mahlon and Chilion; and, further, that I have myself acquired Ruth the Moabite, wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the deceased with his patrimony, so that his name may not be missing among his kindred and at the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.' Then the elders and all who were at the gate said, 'We are witnesses. May the LORD make this woman, who has come to your home, like Rachel and Leah, the two who built up the house of Israel. May you do great things in Ephrathah and keep a name alive in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring of the LORD will give you by this girl.'
- So Boaz took Ruth and made her his wife. When they came together, the LORD caused her to conceive and she bore Boaz a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the LORD today, for he has not left you without a next-of-kin. May the dead man's name be kept alive in Israel. The child will give you new life and cherish you in your old age; for your daughter-in-law

**4.1-12: The nearer relative foregoes his right.** 1: *The city gate*: the customary place for commerce and public transactions. 2: *Ten elders* were to give a legal decision, as well as witness the settlement of business affairs. 3-4: *The strip of field* is hitherto unmentioned. Compare 2.20 n. 5: Boaz at first mentions only the field and not Ruth; a masterful storyteller is here keeping his audience in suspense about whether Ruth will become the wife of Boaz. Ruth is referred to as *the dead man's wife*, although it is Elimelech, and not his son, who has been mentioned in v. 3. 6: *Risk*: the matter is not completely clear. The first *next-of-kin*, who is unnamed, is apparently afraid that to preserve another man's line could so bring it about that his property could go to a new son born to him, rather than to his older children. That is, he was ready to redeem the land, but not to enter into a next-of-kin marriage. 7-8: The procedure is somewhat different from Deut.25.7-10. There the woman herself shows her contempt for the man unwilling to marry her; here the first next-of-kin is only publicly surrendering his right and obligation. The two passages possibly represent quite different stages in the development of Hebrew law, with Ruth an earlier one. 9-12: Boaz assumes the obligations, both to the property and to Ruth. 11-12: Like *Rachel and Leah*; see Gen.35.23-26. *Ephrathah*: another name for Bethlehem (1.2). *Perez*: see Gen.38.6-30. Tamar (Gen. ch. 38) was also involved in a levirate marriage. *Perez* is mentioned here as part of the tracing of the ancestry of David in the next verses.

**4.13-17: Naomi's new line.** The climax of 4.11-17 is in the words *Jesse the father of David*.

who loves you, who has proved better  
 to you than seven sons, has borne him.' THIS IS THE GENEALOGY OF PEREZ: 18  
 16 Naomi took the child and laid him in Perez was the father of Hezron,  
 Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, 19  
 17 her lap and became his nurse. Her Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of 20  
 neighbours gave him a name: 'Naomi Salmon, Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of 21  
 has a son,' they said; 'we will call him Obed, Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of 22  
 Obed.' He was the father of Jesse, the David.  
 father of David.

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**4.18-22: The genealogy from Perez.** Some commentators regard this *genealogy* as a later addition to the Book of Ruth. Earlier concern was that Elimelech and Mahlon have an heir; here attention is directed to the line into which Boaz and David fitted. A genealogy, with similar names spelled differently, is found in 1 Chr.2.5,9-15. The genealogy here is not needed; its inclusion suggests a reflection of a view of its high importance. These genealogies are used in Mt.1.2-6; Lk.3.31-33. **18: Perez:** see 4.12; Gen.38.29.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

In the ancient Greek Bible, the books of Samuel and Kings formed a single work (in four books) entitled "Concerning the Kingdoms," an arrangement and title appropriate for several reasons. First, Samuel appears only in parts of 1 Samuel; David is much more the hero of the total narrative. Second, the division in the Hebrew Bible between 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, ascribable only to the length, unduly separates the account of David's reign in 2 Samuel from the important narrative of the succession of his throne in 1 Kings 1.1–2.12. Third, the materials of Samuel and Kings are organized around the topic of kingship: how it came to be established in Israel (1 Sam. chs. 1–14); how the Davidic dynasty received divine sanction (1 Sam. ch. 15–2 Sam. ch. 7); and how the destiny of Israel in the land was shaped by the conduct of the subsequent kings, especially in relation to the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kgs. 1.1–2 Kgs. 25.30).

The establishment of David's dynasty (2 Sam. ch. 7) and the consecration of the Solomonic Temple (1 Kgs. 8.1–9.9) are the two subjects that give a unique content to the entire so-called "Deuteronomic history." This history begins in Deuteronomy, there as if stating a theme, and continues, in fidelity to the theme, through Joshua, Judges, and Samuel-Kings. A special viewpoint, appearing in Deuteronomy, expresses concern more with prophetic exhortation and judgment than with precision respecting laws (the latter marks the Priestly Code). The Deuteronomists stress fidelity to God, contending that to worship other gods, such as the Canaanite Baal, is to forsake him. At many junctures in Samuel-Kings, both named and anonymous prophets arise to pass judgment on the people, and especially on the rulers, in the light of the covenant obligations. In the Book of Deuteronomy, the view recurs that only one sanctuary was to be valid in the future; the Deuteronomic historians credit Solomon with building the valid sanctuary, and hence the welfare of Solomon's Temple is treated as of paramount importance after Solomon's time. Furthermore, since Israel is God's people by covenant, recurring attention is given to the covenant and, because of it, to Israel as God's unique people.

A variety of older sources were incorporated into the Deuteronomic history, sometimes untouched but sometimes retouched or rewritten by the Deuteronomic historians. Such older sources are particularly clear in Samuel: the Ark narrative in 1 Samuel chs. 4–6 and 2 Samuel ch. 6; the two conflicting strands concerning the origin of kingship in 1 Samuel chs. 8–14; the collection of stories about David's rise to kingship in 1 Samuel ch. 16–2 Samuel ch. 5; and the magnificent history of the succession to David's throne in 2 Samuel chs. 9–20; 1 Kings chs. 1–2. In addition to such longer sources, individual narratives (e.g. 1 Sam. 2.1–10) and early Deuteronomic speeches (e.g. 1 Sam. 12.6–15) were included. The events of 1 Samuel cover approximately the period 1050–1010 B.C. See also Introduction to 1 Kings.

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## *The birth and call of Samuel*

1 **T**HERE WAS A MAN FROM RAMATH-aim, a Zuphite from the hill-country of Ephraim, named Elkanah son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of  
2 Tohu, son of Zuph an Ephraimite; and he had two wives named Hannah and

Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. This man used  
3 to go up from his own town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts in Shiloh. There Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas,  
4 were priests of the LORD. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he gave several

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**1.1–4.1a: Samuel at Shiloh.** This section establishes Samuel's legitimacy in Israel's history. Two themes are interwoven: the positive role of Samuel, and, negatively, the condemnation of the priestly family of Eli. Two narratives (Samuel's birth, ch. 1, and his first prophetic word, ch. 3), form the core of the section. Other materials are present to supplement the section which foreshadows Samuel's later activity as king maker.

**1.1–28: Samuel's birth story.** Birth stories are a response to curiosity about important historical figures, as may be seen in the cases of Moses (Exod.2.1–10), Samson (Judg.13.2–25), and Jesus (Mt.1.18–2.23; Lk. chs. 1–2). The barrenness of a favored wife is a repeated motif of such stories (Gen.18.1–15; 29.29–32; Judg.13.2–5; Lk.1.5–17). The birth story here is regarded by some as originally being about Saul rather than about Samuel; in v. 28 the Heb. word for *lent* is the same word as Saul, whose name is derived from the same Heb. roots in *asked* (1.20) and *lend* (1.28). 1: *Ramathaim* is a variant of the Ramah mentioned as Samuel's home village at 1.19. 3: *Lord of Hosts* occurs here for the first time in the OT; the "hosts"

shares of the meat to his wife Peninnah  
 5 with all her sons and daughters; but,  
 although he loved Hannah, he gave her  
 only one share, because the LORD had  
 6 not granted her children. Further,  
 Hannah's rival used to torment her and  
 humiliate her because she had no  
 7 children. Year after year this hap-  
 pened when they went up to the house  
 of the LORD; her rival used to torment  
 her. Once when she was in tears and  
 8 would not eat, her husband Elkanah  
 said to her, 'Hannah, why are you  
 crying and eating nothing? Why are  
 you so miserable? Am I not more to  
 9-10 you than ten sons?' After they had  
 finished eating and drinking at the  
 sacrifice at Shiloh, Hannah rose in deep  
 distress, and stood before the LORD  
 and prayed to him, weeping bitterly.  
 Meanwhile Eli the priest was sitting on  
 his seat beside the door of the temple  
 11 of the LORD. Hannah made a vow in  
 these words: 'O LORD of Hosts, if  
 thou wilt deign to take notice of my  
 trouble and remember me, if thou wilt  
 not forget me but grant me offspring,  
 then I will give the child to the LORD  
 for his whole life, and no razor shall  
 12 ever touch his head.' For a long time  
 she went on praying before the LORD,  
 13 while Eli watched her lips. Hannah was  
 praying silently; but, although her  
 voice could not be heard, her lips were  
 moving and Eli took her for a drunken  
 14 woman. He said to her, 'Enough of this  
 drunken behaviour! Go away till the  
 15 wine has worn off.' 'No, sir,' she  
 answered, 'I am a sober person, I have  
 drunk no wine or strong drink, and I  
 have been pouring out my heart before  
 16 the LORD. Do not think me so de-  
 graded sir; all this time I have been  
 speaking out of the fullness of my grief  
 17 and misery.' 'Go in peace,' said Eli,  
 'and may the God of Israel answer the  
 18 prayer you have made to him.' Hannah  
 said, 'May I be worthy of your kind-

ness.' And she went away and took  
 something to eat, no longer down-  
 cast. Next morning they were up early  
 19 and, after prostrating themselves  
 before the LORD, returned to their own  
 home at Ramah. Elkanah had inter-  
 course with his wife Hannah, and the  
 LORD remembered her. She con-  
 20 ceived, and in due time bore a son,  
 whom she named Samuel, 'because',  
 she said, 'I asked the LORD for him.'

Elkanah, with his whole house-  
 hold, went up to make the annual  
 sacrifice to the LORD and to redeem  
 his vow. Hannah did not go with  
 22 them, but said to her husband, 'When  
 the child is weaned I will come up  
 with him to enter the presence of the  
 LORD, and he shall<sup>a</sup> stay there always.'  
 Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Do  
 23 what you think best; stay at home until  
 you have weaned him. Only, may the  
 LORD indeed see your vow fulfilled.'  
 So the woman stayed and nursed her  
 son until she had weaned him; and  
 24 when she had weaned him, she took  
 him up with her. She took also a bull  
 three years old, an ephah of meal, and a  
 flagon of wine, and she brought him,  
 child as he was, into the house of the  
 LORD at Shiloh. They slaughtered the  
 25 bull, and brought the boy to Eli.  
 Hannah said to him, 'Sir, as sure as  
 26 you live, I am the woman who stood  
 near you here praying to the LORD.  
 It was this boy that I prayed for and the  
 27 LORD has given me what I asked.  
 What I asked I have received; and now  
 28 I lend him to the LORD; for his whole  
 life he is lent to the LORD.' And they  
 prostrated themselves there before the  
 LORD.

Then Hannah offered this prayer: 2

My heart rejoices in the LORD,  
 in the LORD I now hold my head high;

<sup>a</sup> come up . . . he shall: or bring him up, and he shall come into the presence of the LORD and . . .

may be either heavenly powers or the forces of the Israelites (see 17.45). This phrase apparently arose in *Shiloh*, an important center before the monarchic period, but little is known about Shiloh from the monarchy on (see Josh.18.1; Judg.21.19; 1 Kgs.11.29; 14.2; Jer.7.12; Ps.78.60). *Phinehas*, a name of Egyptian origin, was probably a descendant of the zealous priest of Num.25.6-15. 9-10: *Before the LORD* is a ritual position in front of the Temple. 11: Not cutting the hair is a mark of consecration to the LORD, combined in Nazirite vows with abstinence from wine (see Num.6.1-21 and Judg.13.3-5). 20: *Samuel* means "name of God"; curiously, the verse explains the name "Saul"; see 1.1-28 n.

2.1-10: **The song of Hannah.** Hannah's *prayer* is quite different from the idyllic narrative

- my mouth is full of derision of my  
foes,  
exultant because thou hast saved me.
- 2 There is none except thee,  
none so holy as the LORD,  
no rock like our God.
- 3 Cease your proud boasting,  
let no word of arrogance pass your  
lips;  
for the LORD is a god of all  
knowledge:  
he governs all that men do.
- 4 Strong men stand in mute<sup>b</sup> dismay  
but those who faltered put on new  
strength.
- 5 Those who had plenty sell  
themselves for a crust,  
and the hungry grow strong again.  
The barren woman has seven  
children,  
and the mother of many sons is left  
to languish.
- 6 The LORD kills and he gives life,  
he sends down to Sheol, he can  
bring the dead up again.
- 7 The LORD makes a man poor, he  
makes him rich,  
he brings down and he raises up.
- 8 He lifts the weak out of the dust  
and raises the poor from the  
dunghill;  
to give them a place among the  
great,  
to set them in seats of honour.
- For the foundations of the earth  
are the LORD's,  
he has built the world upon them.
- 9 He will guard the footsteps of his  
saints,  
while the wicked sink into silence  
and gloom;
- not by mere strength shall a man  
prevail.
- Those that stand against the LORD 10  
will be terrified  
when the High God<sup>c</sup> thunders out  
of heaven.  
The LORD is judge even to the ends  
of the earth,  
he will give strength to his king  
and raise high the head of his  
anointed prince.
- Then Elkanah went to Ramah with 11  
his household, but the boy remained  
behind in the service of the LORD under  
Eli the priest.
- Now Eli's sons were scoundrels and 12  
had no regard for the LORD. The 13  
custom of the priests in their dealings  
with the people was this: when a man  
offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant  
would come while the flesh was stew-  
ing and would thrust a three-pronged 14  
fork into the cauldron or pan or kettle  
or pot; and the priest would take what-  
ever the fork brought out. This should  
have been their practice whenever  
Israelites came to sacrifice at Shiloh;  
but now under Eli's sons, even before 15  
the fat was burnt, the priest's servant  
came and said to the man who was  
sacrificing, 'Give me meat to roast for  
the priest; he will not accept what has  
been already stewed, only raw meat.'  
And if the man answered 'Let them 16  
burn the fat first, and then take what  
you want', he said, 'No, give it to me  
now, or I will take it by force.' The 17  
young men's sin was very great in the  
LORD's sight; for they brought the  
LORD's sacrifice into general contempt.

*b* in mute: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*c* the High God: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. upon him.*

of ch. 1. The motifs of reversal of fortune (vv. 4-8) and the *barren woman* (v. 5) relate it to Hannah's story. A relatively old composition, it was incorporated into the Samuel story late in literary growth; see Introduction. 1: The *I* is originally a king, recently victorious; the language, however, is quite stereotyped. 2: *Rock* is a forceful metaphor common in poetic texts; see Deut.32.30. 6: *Sheol* is the underworld, abode of the dead; compare Isa.14.9-11. 10: The verse uses frequently found motifs to express the divine sanction of the king; see, in fuller form, 2 Sam.22.5-18. *High God*: a divine epithet, or name. It appears as "Most High" in 2 Sam.22.14 and, in a longer form, in Gen.14.18-19 and elsewhere. It derived from pre-Israelite traditions and eventually applied to Yahweh, the God of Israel. *Anointed*: see 10.1 n.

2.11-36: **Samuel and Eli's sons contrasted.** A series of connective units precedes the second narrative of chs. 1-3. The positive theme of Samuel's future rise and the negative theme of the condemnation of Eli's sons alternate and culminate in the call of Samuel (ch. 3). 11,18-21: The barren woman theme (1.1-28 n.) has its conclusion here, in the birth of other children. 12-17: The sins of Eli's sons consist both in greed (v. 14) and in cultic violations (v. 16, although



- 18 Samuel continued in the service of the LORD, a mere boy with a linen ephod fastened round him. Every year his mother made him a little cloak and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would give his blessing to Elkanah and his wife and say, 'The LORD grant you children by this woman in place of the one for which you asked him.'<sup>d</sup> Then they went home again.
- 21 The LORD showed his care for Hannah, and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters; meanwhile the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.
- 22 Eli, now a very old man, had heard how his sons were treating all the Israelites, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the Tent of the Presence. So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people how wickedly you behave. Have done with it, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people. If a man sins against another man, God will intervene; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?' For all this, they did not listen to their father's rebuke, for the LORD meant that they should die. But the young Samuel, as he grew up, commended himself to the LORD and to men.
- 27 Now a man of God came to Eli and said, 'This is the word of the LORD: You know that I revealed myself to your forefather when he and his family were in Egypt in slavery in the house of Pharaoh. You know that I chose him from all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to mount the steps of my altar, to burn sacrifices and to carry<sup>e</sup> the ephod before me; and that I assigned all the food-offerings of the Israelites to your family. Why then do you show disrespect for my sacrifices and the offerings which I have ordained? What makes you resent them? Why do you honour your sons more than me by letting them batten on the choicest offerings of my people Israel? The LORD's word was, "I promise that your house and your father's house shall serve before me for all time"; but now his word is, "I will have no such thing: I will honour those who honour me, and those who despise me shall meet with contempt. The time is coming when I will lop off every limb of your own and of your father's family, so that no man in your house shall come to old age. You will even resent<sup>f</sup> the prosperity I give to Israel; never again shall there be an old man in your house. If I allow any to survive to serve my altar, his eyes will grow dim and his appetite fail, his issue will be weaklings and die off. The fate of your two sons shall be a sign to you: Hophni and Phinehas shall both die on the same day. I will appoint for myself a priest who will be faithful, who will do what I have in my mind and in my heart. I will establish his family to serve in perpetual succession before my anointed king. Any of your family that still live will come and bow humbly before him to beg a fee, a piece of silver and a loaf, and will ask for a turn of priestly duty to earn a crust of bread.'"
- 30 So the child Samuel was in the LORD's service under his master Eli.

<sup>d</sup> for which . . . him: or which you lent him.

<sup>e</sup> Or wear.

<sup>f</sup> You . . . resent: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

the details here are obscure). 18: *Ephod*: see Exod.25.7 n. 22–26: Eli here reproves his sons, in contrast to 3.13 where he is charged with laxity. 22: *Serving*: the nature of the service of the women is not known, but probably reflects a sexual and perhaps fertility cult aspect of Canaanite and early Israelite religion. Such women may also be referred to in Exod.28.8. *Tent* is a traditional term, not taken literally, since it is clear that Shiloh had a temple as its sanctuary (ch. 3). 27–36: An anonymous *man of God*, rather than Samuel, prophesies against Eli; this preserves 3.11–14 as the climax of the section. 27–28: The *forefather* is presumably Aaron, to whose grandson Phinehas the promise was given; Num.25.13. 34–36: This passage appears to have been written in the light of these subsequent events: (1) The deaths of Hophni and Phinehas in ch. 4; and (2) the Solomonic priestly establishment (see 1 Kgs.2.27).

3.1–4.1a: **Samuel becomes a prophet.** Ch. 1 explains Samuel's priestly role. This narrative explains his prophetic role. The account of the wonder child (vv. 4–9) is lighthearted compared

Now in those days the word of the LORD was seldom heard, and no vision was granted. But one night Eli, whose eyes were dim and his sight failing, was lying down in his usual place, while Samuel slept in the temple of the LORD where the Ark of God was. Before the lamp of God had gone out, the LORD called him, and Samuel answered, 'Here I am', and ran to Eli saying, 'You called me; here I am.' 'No, I did not call you,' said Eli; 'lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The LORD called Samuel again, and he got up and went to Eli. 'Here I am,' he said; 'surely you called me.' 'I did not call, my son,' he answered; 'lie down again.' Now Samuel had not yet come to know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not been disclosed to him. When the LORD called him for the third time, he again went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you did call me.' Then Eli understood that it was the LORD calling the child; he told Samuel to go and lie down and said, 'If he calls again, say, "Speak, LORD; thy servant hears thee."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, and called, 'Samuel, Samuel', as before. Samuel answered, 'Speak; thy servant hears thee.' The LORD said, 'Soon I shall do something in Israel which will ring in the ears of all who hear it. When that day comes I will make good every word I have spoken against Eli and his family from beginning to end. You are to<sup>g</sup> tell him that my judgement on his house shall stand

for ever because<sup>h</sup> he knew of his sons' blasphemies against God<sup>i</sup> and did not rebuke them. Therefore I have sworn to the family of Eli that their abuse of sacrifices and offerings shall never be expiated.'

Samuel lay down till morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD, but he was afraid to tell Eli about the vision. Eli called Samuel: 'Samuel, my son', he said; and he answered, 'Here I am.' Eli asked, 'What did the LORD say to you? Do not hide it from me. God forgive you if you hide one word of all that he said to you.' Then Samuel told him everything and hid nothing. Eli said, 'The LORD must do what is good in his eyes.'

As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him, and none of his words went unfulfilled. From Dan to Beersheba, all Israel recognized that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. So the LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because he had revealed himself there to Samuel.<sup>j</sup>

#### The struggle with the Philistines

SO SAMUEL'S WORD HAD AUTHORITY throughout Israel. And the time came when the Philistines mustered for battle against Israel, and the Israelites went out to meet them. The Israelites encamped at Eben-ezer and the Philis-

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. I will.

<sup>h</sup> because: prob. rdg.; Heb. in guilt.

<sup>i</sup> against God: prob. original reading, altered in Heb. to to them.

<sup>j</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds according to the word of the LORD.

with the somber seriousness of the divine message (vv. 11-14). 3: How and when the *Ark of God* came to be based at Shiloh is not known (but see Josh.18.1). 4: *The lamp of God* was a regular feature of sanctuaries; see Exod.27.21; Lev.24.1-4; 1 Kgs.7.48-49. 4-9: The artfulness of the story should not lead to regarding this as a primitive stage of the religion of Israel. 13: This prophecy, not entirely compatible with 2.27-36, exhibits a view of Eli earlier than that in 2.22-25. 15-18: Eli is here a tragic figure, in contrast to vv. 11-14.

4.1b-7.1: *The Ark of the Lord and its movements*. Chs. 1-3 prepare for ch. 4; however, Samuel does not appear in chs. 4-6, where the focus is on the Ark, that box-throne object upon which the Lord of Israel manifested his presence; see Exod.25.22; Num.7.89; 10.33-36; and Josh. chs. 3-4. The narrative of chs. 4-6 has a conclusion in 2 Sam. ch. 6, with the Ark finally brought to David's Jerusalem. The primary point of the total Ark story is that the LORD himself moved from Shiloh to Jerusalem; the narrative here is as mythical (that is, a story of the activities of a god) as is any section in the historical books of the OT.

4.1b-22: *The Philistine defeat of Israel*. This chapter could be called "the departure of the Ark," since the LORD here permits the defeat of Israel and himself withdraws. This is the sequel toward which chs. 2-3 look.

4.1b-11: *The battles*. 1b: *The Philistines* were based in five main cities on the southwestern coastal plain of Palestine. The events reflected here occurred around 1050 B.C. and were part of a Philistine move to rule all of Palestine. The battle occurs at the base of a pass leading up

2 tines at Aphek. The Philistines drew up their lines facing the Israelites, and when they joined battle the Israelites were routed by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the 3 field. When the army got back to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, 'Why did the LORD let us be routed today by the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to go with us and deliver us from 4 the power of our enemies.' So the people sent to Shiloh and fetched the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of Hosts, who is enthroned upon the cherubim; Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the 5 Ark. When the Ark came into the camp all the Israelites greeted it with a great shout, and the earth rang with 6 the shouting. The Philistines heard the noise and asked, 'What is this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews?' When they knew that the Ark of the 7 LORD had come into the camp, they were afraid and cried, 'A god has come into the camp. We are lost! No such 8 thing has ever happened before. We are utterly lost! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the very gods who broke the Egyptians and crushed them in the wilderness. Courage, Philistines, and 9 act like men, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews as they were 10 yours. Be men, and fight!' The Philistines then gave battle, and the Israelites were defeated and fled to their homes. It was a great defeat, and thirty thousand Israelite foot-soldiers perished. The Ark of God was taken, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed.

12 A Benjamite ran from the battle-

field and reached Shiloh on the same day, his clothes rent and dust on his head. When he arrived Eli was sitting 13 on a seat by the road to Mizpah, for he was deeply troubled about the Ark of God. The man entered the city with his news, and all the people cried out in horror. When Eli heard it, he asked, 14 'What does this uproar mean?' The man hurried to Eli and told him. Eli was 15 ninety-eight years old and sat staring with sightless eyes; so the man said 16 to him, 'I am the man who has just arrived from the battle; this very day I have escaped from the field.' Eli asked, 'What is the news, my son?' The 17 runner answered, 'The Israelites have fled from the Philistines; utter panic has struck the army; your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are killed, and the Ark of God is taken.' At the mention 18 of the Ark of God, Eli fell backwards from his seat by the gate and broke his neck, for he was old and heavy. So he died; he had been judge over 19 Israel for forty years. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was with child and near her time, and when she heard of the capture of the Ark and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband, her labour suddenly began and she crouched down and was delivered. As she lay dying, the women 20 who attended her said, 'Do not be afraid; you have a son.' But she did not answer or heed what they said. Then 21 they named the boy Ichabod,<sup>k</sup> saying, 'Glory has departed from Israel' (in allusion to the capture of the Ark of God and the death of her father-in-law and her husband); 'Glory has departed 22 from Israel,' they said, 'because the Ark of God is taken.'

<sup>k</sup> That is No-glory.

to the hill country around Shiloh. 3: Compare Josh.7.2-9. 4: The throne character of the Ark is clear here. The LORD was understood to be seated invisibly between two winged creatures, the *cherubim*; compare Exod.25.10-22. 5-9: This second Israelite effort, with the sacred object now with them, should have succeeded; instead the Ark's presence increases the dramatic tension. 6: *Hebrews*: this term originally designated a social status rather than an ethnic group; (see 14.21 and Gen.14.13; 39.14; Exod.1.15-22). 8: The Philistines are portrayed as garbling the Israelite sacred history.

4.12-22: **The fall of Eli's house.** The prophecies in chs. 2.27-54 and 3.11-14 are here fulfilled. 12: *Clothes rent and dust on his head* indicates mourning. 13: *Seat* can also be translated "throne," which, if an elevated seat, could explain why Eli's fall breaks his neck in v. 18. 18: *Judge over Israel* is a comment by a later writer bringing Eli into the system of judges presented by Deuteronomic historians; see 7.15; Judg.2.6-23. 21: A popular etymology for the name *Ichabod* is based on the loss of the Ark. Though the Philistines captured and destroyed Shiloh at this time, some members of Eli's house escaped.

- 5 After the Philistines had captured the Ark of God, they brought it from  
2 Eben-ezer to Ashdod; and there they carried it into the temple of Dagon  
3 and set it beside Dagon himself. When the people of Ashdod rose next morning,  
there was Dagon fallen face downwards before the Ark of the LORD;  
4 so they took him and put him back in his place. Next morning when they  
rose, Dagon had again fallen face downwards before the Ark of the LORD,  
with his head and his two hands lying broken off beside his platform;  
5 only Dagon's body remained on it. This is why from that day to this  
the priests of Dagon and all who enter the temple of Dagon at Ashdod  
do not set foot upon Dagon's platform.
- 6 Then the LORD laid a heavy hand upon the people of Ashdod; he threw  
them into distress and plagued them with tumours, and their territory  
swarmed with rats.<sup>1</sup> There was death and destruction all through the city.  
7 When the men of Ashdod saw this, they said, 'The Ark of the God of  
Israel shall not stay here, for he has laid a heavy hand upon us and upon  
8 Dagon our god.' So they sent and called all the Philistine princes together  
to ask what should be done with the Ark. They said, 'Let the Ark of the  
God of Israel be taken across to Gath.'  
9 They took it there, and after its arrival the hand of the LORD caused  
great havoc in the city; he plagued everybody, high and low alike, with the  
10 tumours which broke out. Then they sent the Ark of God on to Ekron.  
When the Ark reached Ekron, the people cried, 'They have brought the  
Ark of the God of Israel over to us, to kill us and our families.'  
11 So they summoned all the Philistine princes and said, 'Send the Ark of God of Israel away;  
let it go back to its own place, or it will be the death of us all.'  
There was death and destruction all through the city; for the hand of God lay heavy upon  
it. Even those who did not die were plagued with tumours; the cry of the  
city went up to heaven.
- When the Ark of the LORD had been in their territory for seven months,  
the Philistines summoned the priests and soothsayers and asked, 'What  
shall we do with the Ark of the LORD? Tell us how we ought to send it  
back to its own place.' They answered, 'If you send the Ark of the God of  
Israel back, do not let it go without a gift, but send it back with a gift for  
him by way of indemnity; then you will be healed and restored to favour;  
there is no reason why his hand should not be lifted from you.'  
When they were asked, 'What gift shall we send back to him?', they  
answered, 'Send five tumours modelled in gold and five gold rats, one for  
each of the Philistine princes, for the same plague afflicted all of you  
and your princes. Make models of your tumours and of the rats which are  
ravaging the land, and give honour to the God of Israel; perhaps he will  
relax the pressure of his hand on you, on your god, and on your land.  
Why should you be stubborn like Pharaoh and the Egyptians? Remember  
how this god made sport of them until they let Israel go. Now make a  
new wagon ready with two milch-cows which have never been yoked;  
harness the cows to the wagon, and take their calves from them and  
drive them back to their stalls. Then take the Ark of the LORD and put it

<sup>1</sup> Or mice.

**5.1-5: The LORD defeats Dagon.** The action is presented realistically in terms of what the Philistines did and found, not in terms of what the gods did; it is nevertheless mythical (see 4.1b-7.1n.). 1: *Ashdod* was one of the five Philistine cities; see 6.17. The others were Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. 2: *Dagon* was a god of grain worshiped in Palestine before the Philistines arrived (about 1200 B.C.) and adopted the worship of him.

**5.6-12: The LORD plagues the Philistines.** An epidemic of bubonic plague may lie behind this artistic presentation of the power of the God of Israel.

**6.1-7.1: The Ark proceeds to Judah.** 1-5: The golden *tumours* and *rats* represent sympathetic magic, i.e. ritual imitations of what is to be removed. 6: The entire Ark story seems to reflect the influence of the account of the plagues on Egypt (Exod. chs. 7-11). 7-12: This action shows that the LORD determined his own movements. Possibly old rituals for moving the Ark are reflected here. 7: A new wagon was needed to avoid any contamination from previous use.

on the wagon, place in a casket, beside it, the gold offerings that you are sending to him as an indemnity, and let it go where it will. Watch it: if it goes up towards its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then it is the LORD who has done us this great injury; but if not, then we shall know that his hand has not touched us, but we have been the victims of chance.'

10 The men did this. They took two milch-cows and harnessed them to a wagon, shutting up their calves in the stall, and they placed the Ark of the LORD on the wagon together with the casket, the gold rats, and the models of their haemorrhoids. Then the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they kept to the same road, lowing as they went and turning neither right nor left, while the Philistine princes followed them as far as the territory of Beth-shemesh. Now the people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the Vale, and when they looked up and saw the Ark they rejoiced at the sight of it. The wagon came to the farm of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and halted there. Close by stood a great stone; so they chopped up the wood of the wagon and offered the cows as a whole-offering to the LORD. Then the Levites lifted down the Ark of the LORD and the casket containing the gold offerings, and laid them on the great stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered whole-offerings and shared-offerings that day to the LORD. The five princes of the Philistines watched all this, and returned to Ekron the same day.

17 These golden haemorrhoids which the Philistines sent back as a gift of indemnity to the LORD were for Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, one for each city. The gold rats

were for all the towns of the Philistines governed by the five princes, both fortified towns and open settlements. The great stone where they deposited the Ark of the LORD stands witness on the farm of Joshua of Beth-shemesh to this very day.

But the sons of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the rest of the men of Beth-shemesh when they welcomed the Ark of the LORD, and he struck down seventy of them. The people mourned because the LORD had struck them so heavy a blow, and the men of Beth-shemesh said, 'No one is safe in the presence of the LORD, this holy God. To whom can we send it, to be rid of him?' So they sent this message to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim: 'The Philistines have returned the Ark of the LORD; come down and take charge of it.' Then the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the Ark of the LORD away; they brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill and consecrated his son Eleazar as its custodian.

#### Samuel judge over Israel

SO FOR A LONG WHILE THE ARK WAS housed in Kiriath-jearim; and after some time, twenty years later, there was a movement throughout Israel to follow the LORD. So Samuel addressed these words to the whole nation: 'If your return to the LORD is whole-hearted, banish the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from your shrines; turn to the LORD with heart and mind, and worship him alone, and he will deliver you from the Philistines.' The Israelites then banished the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and worshipped the LORD alone.

Samuel summoned all Israel to an

9: *Beth-shemesh*, much further south than Shiloh and Eben-ezer, was situated in a pass leading up from Ekron toward Jerusalem. 13-18: A local sanctuary at Beth-shemesh is here reflected. The cows go directly to the *great stone*, and sacrifices are first offered to the LORD there. 15: This verse is a later correction to introduce *the Levites* as functionaries in accordance with subsequent practice. 17-18: *Golden haemorrhoids* . . . *rats*: the passage is old, as if the writer witnessed the events and saw these things. 6.19-7.1: This passage provides a transition from the end of the Philistine story (6.18) to the later movement of the Ark from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem (2 Sam. ch. 6).

7.2-17: *Samuel judges at Mizpah*. This passage portrays Samuel as a "judge," conforming to the schematic formula of the Deuteronomic authors; see 4.18n. 4: *Baalim* and *Ashtaroth* were cult objects representing the Canaanite fertility deities Baal and Astarte. 5: *Mizpah*, in the vicinity

assembly at Mizpah, so that he might intercede with the LORD for them. 14  
 6 When they had assembled there, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted all day, confessing that they had sinned against the LORD. It was at Mizpah that Samuel acted as judge over Israel. 15  
 7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had assembled at Mizpah, their princes marched against them. The Israelites heard that the Philistines were advancing, and they were afraid. 16  
 8 They said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to pray for us to the LORD our God to save us from the power of the Philistines.' Thereupon Samuel took a sucking lamb, offered it up complete as a whole-offering and prayed aloud to the LORD on behalf of Israel; and the LORD answered his prayer. As Samuel was offering the sacrifice and the Philistines were advancing to battle with the Israelites, the LORD thundered loud and long over the Philistines and threw them into confusion. 17  
 9 They fled in panic before the Israelites, who set out from Mizpah in pursuit and kept up the slaughter of the Philistines till they reached a point below Beth-car. There Samuel took a stone and set it up as a monument between Mizpah and Jeshanah,<sup>m</sup> naming it Eben-ezer,<sup>n</sup> 'for to this point', he said, 'the LORD has helped us.' Thus the Philistines were subdued and no longer encroached on the territory of Israel; and the hand of the LORD was

against them as long as Samuel lived. The cities they had captured were restored to Israel, and from Ekron to Gath the borderland was freed from their control. Between Israel and the Amorites peace was maintained. Samuel acted as judge in Israel as long as he lived, and every year went on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah; he dispensed justice at all these places, returning always to Ramah. That was his home and the place from which he governed Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

### Saul anointed king

10 WHEN SAMUEL GREW OLD, HE APPOINTED his sons to be judges in Israel. The eldest son was named Joel and the second Abiah; they acted as judges in Beersheba. His sons did not follow in their father's footsteps but were intent on their own profit, taking bribes and perverting the course of justice. So all the elders of Israel met, and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, 'You are now old and your sons do not follow in your footsteps; appoint us a king to govern us, like other nations.' But their request for a king to govern them displeased Samuel, and he prayed to the LORD. The LORD answered Samuel, 'Listen to the people and all that they are saying; they have not

<sup>m</sup> *Prob. rdg. (cp. 2 Chr. 13. 19); Heb. the tooth.*  
<sup>n</sup> *That is Stone of Help.*

of Bethel, Gilgal, and Ramah (vv. 15–16), was in Benjaminite territory, considerably further south than Shiloh; this reflects the continued encroachment of the Philistines. 6: Pouring out water (rather than wine) is not a common ritual in the OT. 7–10: The notion that battles were won by divine intervention alone was a late view; see, e.g. 2 Chr.20.1–30. 13–14: This period of peace conforms to the view of the Deuteronomic historians regarding the achievements of the judges; see Judg.2.18. 15–17: This more modest view of Samuel is probably an accurate glimpse of him. Here he is based at Ramah, a local sanctuary, as is seen in ch. 9.

8.1–15.35: **Israel becomes a kingdom.** In chs. 1–7, Samuel was established as prophet, as judge, and as successor to the Shiloh priestly establishment, these achievements qualifying him to be king maker. Moreover, the LORD himself moved south from Shiloh to Judah. The scene is now set for kingship. Kingship is a topic with two parts: the question of the legitimacy of kingship itself (chs. 8–14); and the establishment of the house of David in place of the house of Saul (ch. 15–2 Sam. ch. 7).

8.1–22: **The negative view of kingship.** One strand of material (ch. 8; 10.17–27; ch. 12) regards human kingship as the rejection of the kingship of the LORD; this strand may be read as a single account without a gap. The positive strand begins in ch. 9. The negative, with some affinities with the Deuteronomic historians' views, is the later of the two strands, even though the basic attitude may go back to opposition to monarchy in principle in early Israel. 1: **Judges** are not the military heroes of the Book of Judges, but only the men responsible for administering justice (see Exod.18.13–27 and 2 Chr.19.4–11). 2: **Beersheba**, in southern Judah, was an important sanctuary; see Amos 5.5 and 8.14. 3: **Taking bribes** was a recurrent problem; see Exod.23.6–8; Isa.5.22–23; Deut.16.19. 4: **Ramah** is probably the city of Samuel's parents (see

rejected you, it is I whom they have rejected, I whom they will not have to be their king. They are now doing to you just what they have done to me since I brought them up from Egypt: they have forsaken me and worshipped other gods. Hear what they have to say now, but give them a solemn warning and tell them what sort of king will govern them.' Samuel told the people who were asking him for a king all that the LORD had said to him. 'This will be the sort of king who will govern you', he said. 'He will take your sons and make them serve in his chariots and with his cavalry, and will make them run before his chariot. Some he will appoint officers over units of a thousand and units of fifty. Others will plough his fields and reap his harvest; others again will make weapons of war and equipment for mounted troops. He will take your daughters for perfumers, cooks, and confectioners, and will seize the best of your cornfields, vineyards, and oliveyards, and give them to his lackeys. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage to give to his eunuchs and lackeys. Your slaves, both men and women, and the best of your cattle and your asses he will seize and put to his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out against the king whom you have chosen; but it will be too late, the LORD will not answer you.' The people refused to listen to Samuel; 'No,' they said, 'we will have a king over us; then we shall be like other nations, with a king to govern us, to lead us out to war and fight our battles.' So Samuel, when he had heard what the people said, told the LORD; and he answered, 'Take them at their word and appoint them a king.' Samuel then dismissed all the men of Israel to their homes.

There was a man from the district of Benjamin, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Bechorath, son of Aphiah a Benjamite. He was a man of substance, and had a son named Saul, a young man in his prime; there was no better man among the Israelites than he. He was a head taller than any of his fellows.

One day some asses belonging to Saul's father Kish had strayed, so he said to his son Saul, 'Take one of the servants with you, and go and look for the asses.' They crossed the hill-country of Ephraim and went through the district of Shalisha but did not find them; they passed through the district of Shaalim but they were not there; they passed through the district of Benjamin but again did not find them. When they had entered the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant with him, 'Come, we ought to turn back, or my father will stop thinking about the asses and begin to worry about us.' The servant answered, 'There is a man of God in the city here, who has a great reputation, because everything he says comes true. Suppose we go there; he may tell us something about this errand of ours.' Saul said, 'If we do go, what shall we offer him? There is no food left in our packs and we have no present for the man of God, nothing at all.' The servant answered him again, 'Wait! I have here a quarter-shekel of silver. I can give that to the man, to tell us what we should do.' Saul said, 'Good! let us go to him.' So they went to the city where the man of God was. (In days gone by in Israel, when a man wished to consult God, he would say, 'Let us go to the seer.' For what is nowadays called a prophet used to be called a seer.) As they were going up the hill to the city they met some girls coming

*o Verses 9 and 10 transposed.*

1.1 n.) and is Samuel's base from here on, especially in the strand favorable to kingship. 11-18: This is mostly a portrayal of typical Ancient Near Eastern monarchy. The portrayal may be based on practices of Solomon which generated resentment as in 1 Kgs.12.4.

9.1-10.16: The anointing of Saul. 2: The words *a young man* are suited to this hero story, but see 13.1 n. 4: The *district(s)* mentioned here have not been identified in biblical geography. 5: *Zuph*: see 1.1. 6: *Everything he says comes true*: this repeats the substance of 3.19-21. 9: The term *seer* was no longer used in the time of the writer, then a seer was called a *prophet*.

out to draw water and asked, 'Shall  
 12 we find the seer there?' 'Yes,' they said,  
 'the seer is ahead of you now; he has  
 just<sup>p</sup> arrived in the city because there  
 13 is a feast at the hill-shrine today. As  
 you enter the city you will meet him  
 before he goes up to the shrine to eat;  
 the people will not start until he  
 comes, for he has to bless the sacrifice  
 before the company can eat. Go up  
 now, and you will find him at once.'  
 14 So they went up to the city, and just  
 as they were going in, there was  
 Samuel coming towards them on his  
 way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the  
 LORD had disclosed his intention to  
 16 Samuel in these words: 'At this same  
 time tomorrow I will send you a man  
 from the land of Benjamin. Anoint  
 him prince over my people Israel, and  
 then he shall deliver my people from the  
 Philistines. I have seen the sufferings  
 of my people and their cry has reached  
 17 my ears.' The moment Saul appeared  
 the LORD said to Samuel, 'Here is the  
 man of whom I spoke to you. This man  
 18 shall rule my people.' Saul came up to  
 Samuel in the gateway and said,  
 'Would you tell me where the seer  
 19 lives?' Samuel replied, 'I am the seer.  
 Go on ahead of me to the hill-shrine  
 and you shall eat with me today; in the  
 morning I will set you on your way,  
 after telling you what you have on your  
 20 mind. Trouble yourself no more about  
 the asses lost three days ago, for they  
 have been found. But what is it that  
 all Israel is wanting? It is you and your  
 21 ancestral house.' 'But I am a Benjam-  
 ite,' said Saul, 'from the smallest of the  
 tribes of Israel, and my family is the  
 least important of all the families of  
 the tribe of Benjamin. Why do you say  
 22 this to me?' Samuel then brought Saul  
 and his servant into the dining-hall  
 and gave them a place at the head of  
 the company, which numbered about  
 23 thirty. Then he said to the cook, 'Bring

the portion that I gave you and told  
 you to put on one side.' So the cook 24  
 took up the whole haunch and leg and  
 put it before Saul; and Samuel said,  
 'Here is the portion of meat<sup>q</sup> kept for  
 you. Eat it: it has been reserved for  
 you at this feast to which I have in-  
 vited the people.' So Saul dined with  
 Samuel that day, and when they came 25  
 down from the hill-shrine to the city a  
 bed was spread on the roof for Saul,  
 and he stayed there that night. At 26  
 dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof,  
 'Get up, and I will set you on your  
 way.' When Saul rose, he and Samuel  
 went out together into the street. As 27  
 they came to the end of the town,  
 Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the boy to go  
 on.' He did so, and then Samuel said,  
 'Stay here a moment, and I will tell  
 you the word of God.'

Samuel took a flask of oil and poured 10  
 it over Saul's head, and he kissed him  
 and said, 'The LORD anoints you prince  
 over his people Israel; you shall rule  
 the people of the LORD and deliver  
 them from the enemies round about  
 them. You shall have a sign that the  
 LORD has anointed you prince to  
 govern his inheritance: when you leave 2  
 me today, you will meet two men by  
 the tomb of Rachel at Zelzah in the  
 territory of Benjamin. They will tell  
 you that the asses you are looking for  
 have been found and that your father  
 is concerned for them no longer; he is  
 anxious about you and says again  
 and again, "What shall I do about  
 my son?" From there go across 3  
 country as far as the terebinth of  
 Tabor, where three men going up to  
 Bethel to worship God will meet you.  
 One of them will be carrying three kids,  
 the second three loaves, and the third a  
 flagon of wine. They will greet you and 4  
 will offer you two loaves, which you  
 will accept from them. Then when 5  
 p the seer . . . just; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* he is ahead of you,  
 hurry now, for he has today . . .  
 q the portion of meat: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* what is left over.

12: *Hill-shrine*: high place. In early Israel no stigma applied to the local sanctuaries, but later Israelite tradition condemned them without qualification; see 1 Kgs.3.2; 2 Kgs.12.3; 14.4. 15-16: Kingship here is a gracious benefit bestowed by the LORD. In the strand (see 8.1-22 n.) favorable to kingship, *prince* is used rather than "king"; king is used in the negative strand (10.1 and 13.14). ("King" in 10.16 translates the Heb. for "kingship.") 10.1: *Anointing*: the rite which raised a commoner to kingship in Israel. Saul and David were anointed in secret; compare 16.1-13. Later it was a more formal and public act; see 1 Kgs.1.32-40. 2: *The tomb of*



you reach the Hill of God, where the Philistine governor<sup>r</sup> resides, you will meet a company of prophets coming down from the hill-shrine, led by lute, harp, fife, and drum, and filled with prophetic rapture. Then the spirit of the LORD will suddenly take possession of you, and you too will be rapt like a prophet and become another man. When these signs happen, do whatever the occasion demands; God will be with you. You shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me, and I will come to you to sacrifice whole-offerings and shared-offerings. Wait seven days until I join you; then I will tell you what to do.<sup>s</sup> As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God gave him a new heart. On that same day all these signs happened. When they reached the Hill there was a company of prophets coming to meet him, and the spirit of God suddenly took possession of him, so that he too was filled with prophetic rapture. When people who had known him previously saw that he was rapt like the prophets, they said to one another, 'What can have happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?' One of the men of that place said, 'And whose sons are they?' Hence the proverb, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' When the prophetic rapture had passed, he went home.<sup>s</sup> Saul's uncle said to him and the boy, 'Where have you been?' Saul answered, 'To look for the asses, and when we could not find them, we went to Samuel.' His uncle said, 'Tell me what Samuel said.' 'He told us that the asses had been found', said Saul; but he did not repeat what Samuel had said about his being king.

17 Meanwhile Samuel summoned the

Israelites to the LORD at Mizpah and said to the people, 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I brought Israel up from Egypt; I delivered you from the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms that oppressed you; but today you have rejected your God who saved you from all your misery and distress; you have said, "No, set up a king over us." Now therefore take up your positions before the LORD tribe by tribe and clan by clan.' Samuel then presented all the tribes of Israel, and Benjamin was picked by lot. Then he presented the tribe of Benjamin, family by family, and the family of Matri was picked. Then he presented the family of Matri, man by man, and Saul son of Kish was picked; but when they looked for him he could not be found. They went on to ask the LORD, 'Will the man be coming back?' The LORD answered, 'There he is, hiding among the baggage.' So someone ran and fetched him out, and as he took his stand among the people, he was a head taller than anyone else. Samuel said to the people, 'Look at the man whom the LORD has chosen; there is no one like him in this whole nation.' They all acclaimed him, shouting, 'Long live the king!' Samuel then explained to the people the nature of a king, and made a written record of it on a scroll which he deposited before the LORD; he then dismissed them to their homes. Saul too went home to Gibeah, and with him went some fighting men whose hearts God had moved. But there were scoundrels who said, 'How can this fellow deliver us?' They thought nothing of him and brought him no gifts.

<sup>r</sup> Or garrison.

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. to the hill-shrine.

*Rachel* was especially associated with Benjamin; see Gen.35.16-20. 6-8: Prophecy in early times was marked by a frantic dance which turned the prophet from what he ordinarily was into *another man*. Compare 19.23-24. 8: This verse is an addition, preparing for the rupture between Samuel and Saul in 13.8-14. *Gilgal* seems to have had special importance for kingship (11.14-15; 13.7-14; 15.10-33; 2 Sam.19.15, 39-40), but why is not clear. 11-12: In 19.19-24 the origin of the proverb about Saul is explained differently. 13: *Saul's uncle* was probably Ner; see 14.50.

10.17-27: **Saul is acclaimed as king.** Continuing the negative strand on kingship (see 8.1-22 n.) from ch. 8, the LORD here grudgingly provides the best man for kingship. 17: *Mizpah* is the place of assembly in the negative strand, *Gilgal* in the positive. 20-21: This method of divine selection is seen also in the Achan story in Josh. ch. 7. 22: The verse is puzzling. Perhaps it is meant to stress Saul's passivity or modesty. 23-24: Samuel's positive view here is surprising. 25: This *scroll* apparently did more than repeat the substance of 8.11-18, but probably proceeded to put some limitations on the king's prerogatives.

- 11 About a month later Nahash the Ammonite attacked and besieged Jabesh-gilead. The men of Jabesh said to Nahash, 'Come to terms with us and we will be your subjects.' Nahash answered them, 'On one condition only will I come to terms with you: that I gouge out your right eyes and bring disgrace on Israel.' The elders of Jabesh-gilead then said, 'Give us seven days' respite to send messengers throughout Israel and then, if no one relieves us, we will surrender to you.'
- 4 When the messengers came to Gibeah, where Saul lived, and delivered their message, all the people broke into lamentation. Saul was just coming from the field driving in the oxen, and asked why the people were lamenting; and they repeated what the men of Jabesh had said. When Saul heard this, the spirit of God suddenly seized him.
- 7 In his anger he took a pair of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent messengers with the pieces all through Israel to proclaim that the same would be done to the oxen of any man who did not follow Saul and Samuel into battle. The fear of the LORD fell upon the people and they came out, to a man.
- 8 Saul mustered them in Bezek; there were three hundred thousand men from Israel and thirty thousand from Judah. He said to the men who brought the message, 'Tell the men of Jabesh-gilead, "Victory will be yours tomorrow by the time the sun is hot."' The men of Jabesh heard what the messengers reported and took heart; and they said to Nahash, 'Tomorrow we will surrender to you, and then you may deal with us as you think fit.' Next day Saul drew up his men in three columns; they forced their way right into the enemy camp during the morning watch and massacred the Ammonites while the day grew hot, after which the survivors scattered until no two men were left together.
- Then the people said to Samuel, 'Who said that Saul should not reign over us? Hand the men over to us to be put to death.' But Saul said, 'No man shall be put to death on a day when the LORD has won such a victory in Israel.' Samuel said to the people, 'Let us now go to Gilgal and there renew our allegiance to the kingdom.' So they all went to Gilgal and invested Saul there as king in the presence of the LORD, sacrificing shared-offerings before the LORD; and Saul and all the Israelites celebrated the occasion with great joy.
- THEN SAMUEL THUS ADDRESSED THE assembled Israelites: 'I have listened to your request and installed a king to rule over you. And the king is now your leader, while I am old and white-haired and my sons are with you; but I have been your leader ever since I was a child. Here I am. Lay your complaints against me in the presence of the LORD and of his anointed king. Whose ox have I taken, whose ass have I taken? Whom have I wronged, whom have I oppressed? From whom have I taken a bribe, to turn a blind eye? Tell me, and I will make restitution.' They answered, 'You have not wronged us, you have not oppressed us; you have not taken anything from

**11.1-15: Saul's victory over the Ammonites.** In the positive strand (see 8.1-22 n.) on kingship, this spectacular victory was the occasion for Saul's public establishment as king; see 10.7. **1:** Ammon, east of the Jordan, was the territory of the upper Jabbok River. *Jabesh-gilead* was a city on the lower Jabbok near the Jordan. The Ammonites were probably seeking to control the entirety of the Jabbok basin. **6:** *The spirit of God:* here it is not the ecstasy and frenzy as in 10.10-12; rather, it was the power to act with determination and effectiveness. **7:** The phrase *and Samuel* is probably a later addition to harmonize the different strands; Samuel is not a war leader elsewhere in the positive strand. **8: Bezek:** north of Shechem and west of the Jordan. **11: The morning watch:** the last third of the night. **14-16:** The people of Jabesh-gilead later show their gratitude to Saul (1 Sam.31.11-13). **14: Renew:** in the sense of a public proclamation.

**12.1-25: Samuel's farewell address.** The speech reviews past deeds of God for Israel and turns to the present situation, with the initiation of kingship. Views of late Deuteronomic writers are present, especially in the contention that the people have rejected the kingship of God by asking for a human king. See 8.1-22 n. **1:** Here it is the people who are held culpable for turning away from the LORD; by contrast, 1 and 2 Kgs. hold the kings responsible for infidelity

5 any man.' Samuel then said to them, 'This day the LORD is witness among you, his anointed king is witness, that you have found my hands empty.' They  
 6 said, 'He is witness.' Samuel said to the people, 'Yes, the LORD is witness, the LORD who gave you Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers out of Egypt.  
 7 Now stand up, and here in the presence of the LORD I will put the case against you and recite all the victories which he has won for you and for your fathers.  
 8 After Jacob and his sons had come down to Egypt and the Egyptians had made them suffer, your fathers cried to the LORD for help, and he sent Moses and Aaron, who brought them out of Egypt and settled them in this place.  
 9 But they forgot the LORD their God, and he abandoned them to Sisera, commander-in-chief of Jabin king of Hazor, to the Philistines, and to the king of Moab, and they had to fight against  
 10 them. Then your fathers cried to the LORD for help: "We have sinned, we have forsaken the LORD and we have worshipped the Baalim and the Ashtaroth. But now, if thou wilt deliver us from our enemies, we will worship  
 11 thee." So the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak, Jephthah and Samson, and delivered you from your enemies on every side; and you lived in peace and quiet.  
 12 "Then, when you saw Nahash king of the Ammonites coming against you, although the LORD your God was your king, you said to me, "No, let us have a king to rule over us." Now, here is the king you asked for; you chose him, and the LORD has set a king over you.  
 14 If you will revere the LORD and give true and loyal service, if you do not rebel against his commands, and if you and the king who reigns over you are faithful to the LORD your God, well

and good; but if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, then he will set his face against you and against your king.

"Stand still, and see the great wonder which the LORD will do before your eyes. It is now wheat harvest; when I call upon the LORD and he sends thunder and rain, you will see and know how wicked it was in the LORD's eyes for you to ask for a king." So Samuel called upon the LORD and he sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people were in great fear of the LORD and of Samuel. They said to Samuel, "Pray for us your servants to the LORD your God, to save us from death; for we have added to all our other sins the great wickedness of asking for a king." Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; although you have been so wicked, do not give up the worship of the LORD, but serve him with all your heart. Give up the worship of false gods which can neither help nor save, because they are false. For his name's sake the LORD will not cast you off, because he has resolved to make you his own people. As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD and cease to pray for you. I will show you what is right and good: to revere the LORD and worship him faithfully with all your heart. Consider what great things he has done for you; but if you persist in wickedness, you shall be swept away, you and your king."

Saul was fifty years<sup>1</sup> old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for twenty-two<sup>u</sup> years. He picked three thousand men from Israel, two thousand to be with him in Michmash and the hill-country of Bethel and a thousand

<sup>1</sup> fifty years: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a year.  
<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* two.

against the LORD. 7: A recitation of the saving deeds of God for Israel is a part of other farewell addresses, e.g. Josh.24.2-13. 9-11: *Sisera*: Judg. chs. 4-5. *Philistines*: Judg. chs. 13-16. *King of Moab*: Judg.3.12-30. *Jerubbaal*: Gideon, Judg. chs. 6-8. *Barak*: Judg. 4.6-5.11. *Samson*: Judg. chs. 13-16. 17-18: *Wheat harvest* was in early summer when it never rained. 19-25: The passage strikes a delicate balance between reproving the people and admitting a divine sanction for kingship in Israel. 22: *For his name's sake*: a major motif in Israelite reflections; see Ezek. ch. 20; also Ps.23.3. 23: Samuel is viewed as a renowned intercessor in Jer.15.1 and Ps.99.6-9.

13.1-14.46: *Saul's victory over the Philistines*. The action is now in the central hill country where the Philistines have virtually secured control. 1: See Tfn. *t,u*. The Heb. text lacks numbers, due to faulty copying. Saul has grown children (14.1.49-50); it is reasonable to suppose he was between forty and fifty. 2: *Michmash* was in central Benjaminite territory, as were most

to be with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; and he sent the rest of the people home.

3 Jonathan killed the Philistine governor<sup>v</sup> in Geba, and the news spread among the Philistines that the Hebrews were in revolt.<sup>w</sup> Saul sounded the trumpet all through the land; and when the Israelites all heard that Saul had killed a Philistine governor and that the name of Israel stank among the Philistines, they answered the call to arms and came to join Saul at Gilgal.<sup>x</sup> The Philistines mustered to attack Israel; they had thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horse, with infantry as countless as sand on the sea-shore. They went up and camped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. The Israelites found themselves in sore straits, for the army was hard pressed, so they hid themselves in caves and holes and among the rocks, in pits and cisterns. Some of them crossed the Jordan into the district of Gad and Gilead, but Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the people at his back were in alarm.<sup>y</sup> He waited seven days for his meeting with Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; so the people began to drift away from Saul. He said therefore, 'Bring me the whole-offering and the shared-offerings', and he offered up the whole-offering. Saul had just finished the sacrifice, when Samuel arrived, and he went out to greet him. Samuel said, 'What have you done?', and Saul answered, 'I saw that the people were drifting away from me, and you yourself had not come as you had promised, and the Philistines were assembling at Michmash; and I thought, "The Philistines will now move against me at Gilgal, and I have not placated the LORD"; so I felt compelled to make the whole-offering myself.' Samuel said to Saul, 'You have behaved foolishly. You have not kept the command laid on you by the LORD your God; if you

had, he would have established your dynasty over Israel for all time. But now your line will not endure; the LORD will seek a man after his own heart, and will appoint him prince over his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.'

Samuel left Gilgal without more ado and went on his way. The rest of the people followed Saul, as he moved from Gilgal towards the enemy. At Gibeah of Benjamin he mustered the people who were with him; they were about six hundred men. Saul and his son Jonathan and the men they had with them took up their quarters in Gibeah of Benjamin, while the Philistines were encamped in Michmash. Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three directions. One party turned towards Ophrah in the district of Shual, another towards Beth-horon, and the third towards the range of hills overlooking the valley of Zeboim and the wilderness beyond.

No blacksmith was to be found in the whole of Israel, for the Philistines were determined to prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears. The Israelites had to go down to the Philistines for their ploughshares, mattocks, axes, and sickles to be sharpened. The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for ploughshares and mattocks, and one-third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and setting the goads.<sup>z</sup> So when war broke out none of the followers of Saul and Jonathan had either sword or spear; only Saul and Jonathan carried arms.

Now the Philistines had posted a force to hold the pass of Michmash; and one day Saul's son Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Come, let us go

<sup>v</sup> Or garrison.

<sup>w</sup> that . . . revolt: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* has saying, Let the Hebrews hear *after* through the land.

<sup>x</sup> they answered . . . Gilgal: *or* they were summoned to follow Saul to Gilgal.

<sup>y</sup> but Saul . . . in alarm: *or* but Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the army joined him there.

<sup>z</sup> one-third . . . the goads: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscur.*

of the places named in this account. *Jonathan* was Saul's warrior son and later (18.1-4) David's bosom friend. *Gibeah* and *Geba* (v. 3) are at times interchanged in this passage. 3: *Hebrews*: see 4.6 n. and 14.21. 4: *Gilgal*: see 10.17 n. 5: The numbers here, as often in OT narratives, are intended to give an impression of vastness rather than an exact count. *Chariots* would have been quite impractical in this terrain (14.4). 7b-15: This section is a later addition; it is pro-David apologetic, and anti-Saul. Its condemnation of Saul (recurrent in such additions) is rather arbitrary. See 10.8. 19-22: This period was the beginning of the iron age. The Philistines had a monopoly on the new metal. 14.1: *The armour-bearer* accompanied the heavily armored,

over to the Philistine post beyond that ridge'; but he did not tell his father.

2 Saul, at the time, had his tent under the pomegranate-tree at Migron on the outskirts of Gibeah; and he had about

3 six hundred men with him. The ephod was carried by Ahijah son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas son of Eli, the priest of the LORD at Shiloh. Nobody knew that Jonathan had gone.

4 On either side of the pass through which Jonathan tried to make his way over to the Philistine post stood two sharp columns of rock, called Bozez<sup>a</sup>

5 and Seneh;<sup>b</sup> one of them was on the north towards Michmash, and the other

6 on the south towards Geba. Jonathan said to his armour-bearer, 'Now we will visit the post of those uncircumcised rascals. Perhaps the LORD will take a hand in it, and if he will, nothing can stop him. He can bring us safe through, whether we are few or many.'

7 The young man answered, 'Do what you will, go forward; I am with you

8 whatever you do.' 'Good!' said Jonathan, 'we will cross over and let them

9 see us. If they say, "Stay where you are till we come to you", then we will stay where we are and not go up to them.

10 But if they say, "Come up to us", we will go up; this will be the sign that the LORD has put them into our power.'

11 So they showed themselves to the Philistines, and the Philistines said, 'Look! Hebrews coming out of the holes where they have been hiding!'

12 And they called across to Jonathan and the young man, 'Come up to us; we have something to show you.' Jonathan said to the young man, 'Come on, the LORD has put them into the power of

13 Israel.' Jonathan climbed up on hands and feet, and the young man followed him. The Philistines fell in front of

Jonathan, and the young man, coming behind him, dispatched them. In that

14 first attack Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed about twenty of them, like men cutting a furrow across a half-acre field. Terror spread through the

15 army in the field and through the whole people; the men at the post and the raiding parties were terrified; the very earth quaked, and there was panic.

Saul's men on the watch in Gibeah

16 of Benjamin saw the mob of Philistines surging to and fro in confusion; so he

17 ordered the people to call the roll and find out who was missing; and they called the roll and found that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were absent. Saul said to Ahijah, 'Bring forward the

18 ephod', for it was he who carried the ephod at that time before Israel. But

19 while Saul was still speaking, the confusion in the Philistine camp was increasing more and more, and he said to the priest, 'Hold your hand.' Then Saul

20 and all his men with shouting made for the battlefield, where they found the enemy fighting one another in complete disorder. The Hebrews who up to now

21 had been under the Philistines, and had been with them in camp, changed sides and joined the Israelites under Saul and Jonathan. All the Israelites in hiding in

22 the hill-country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were in flight, and they also joined in and set off in hot pursuit. The LORD delivered Israel that day, and

23 the fighting passed on beyond Beth-aven.

Now the Israelites on that day had

24 been driven to exhaustion. Saul had adjured the people in these words: 'A curse be on the man who eats any food before nightfall until I have taken vengeance on my enemies.' So no one ate

*a* That is Shining.    *b* That is Bramble-bush.

elite warrior, as in the Homeric epics; see also ch. 17. 3: This *ephod* is a box (see v. 41) containing lots, and not the linen garment, "cloak," in 2.18. *Ahijah's* lineage is given (probably by a later editor) so as to make his priestly descent clear. 6: *Uncircumcised* was a term of reproach. Like their Semitic neighbors, the Israelites practiced circumcision, while the Philistines, deriving from Asia Minor and the Aegean, did not; compare Jer.9.25-26. 9-12: Jonathan tests divine support for his enterprise; compare Gen.24.12-14; Judg.6.36-40. 14-15: The panic that produces victory is not here ascribed simply to divine intervention, but to heroic and surprising action; contrast 7.10-11; see 7.7-10 n. 16-23: Haste was required to take advantage of Jonathan's stroke. Consulting the oracle involved careful and time-consuming steps by the priest, and Saul (v. 19) sees that he cannot wait. 21: In Scripture *Hebrews* has various meanings, ranging from merchants through an ethnic group related to, but separate from, the Israelites, and also the Israelites themselves. This verse suggests that not all Hebrews were Israelites. 24-30: Abstentions

25 any food. Now there was honeycomb<sup>c</sup>  
 26 in the country-side; but when his men  
 came upon it, dripping with honey  
 though it was, not one of them put his  
 hand to his mouth for fear of the oath.  
 27 But Jonathan had not heard his father  
 lay this solemn prohibition on the  
 people, and he stretched out the stick  
 that was in his hand, dipped the end of  
 it in the honeycomb, put it to his mouth  
 28 and was refreshed. One of the people  
 said to him, 'Your father solemnly  
 forbade this; he said, "A curse on the  
 man who eats food today!"' Now the  
 29 men were faint with hunger. Jonathan  
 said, 'My father has done the people  
 nothing but harm; see how I am re-  
 freshed by this mere taste of honey.  
 30 How much better if the people had  
 eaten today whatever they took from  
 their enemies by way of spoil! Then  
 there would indeed have been a great  
 slaughter of Philistines.'

31 They defeated the Philistines that  
 day, and pursued them from Michmash  
 to Ajalon. But the people were so faint  
 32 with hunger that they turned to plun-  
 der and seized sheep, cattle, and bul-  
 locks; they slaughtered them on the  
 bare ground, and ate the meat with  
 33 the blood in it. Someone told Saul  
 that the people were sinning against  
 the LORD by eating their meat with  
 the blood in it. 'This is treason!' cried Saul.  
 34 'Roll a great stone here at once.' He  
 then said, 'Go about among the people  
 and tell them to bring their oxen and  
 sheep, and let each man slaughter his  
 here and eat it; and so they will not  
 sin against the LORD by eating meat  
 with the blood in it.' So as night fell  
 each man came, driving his own ox,  
 35 and slaughtered it there. Thus Saul  
 came to build an altar to the LORD,  
 and this was the first altar to the LORD  
 that Saul built.

36 Saul said, 'Let us go down and make  
 a night attack on the Philistines and  
 harry them till daylight; we will not

spare a man of them.' The people  
 answered, 'Do what you think best',  
 but the priest said, 'Let us first consult  
 God.' So Saul inquired of God, 'Shall  
 37 I pursue the Philistines? Wilt thou put  
 them into Israel's power?'; but this  
 38 time he received no answer. So he said,  
 'Let all the leaders of the people come  
 forward and let us find out where the  
 sin lies this day. As the LORD lives, the  
 39 deliverer of Israel, even if it lies in my  
 son Jonathan, he shall die.' Not a soul  
 answered him. Then he said to the  
 40 Israelites, 'All of you stand on one side,  
 and I and my son Jonathan will stand  
 on the other.' The people answered,  
 'Do what you think best.' Saul said to  
 41 the LORD the God of Israel, 'Why hast  
 thou not answered thy servant today?  
 If this guilt lie in me or in my son  
 Jonathan, O LORD God of Israel, let  
 the lot be Urim; if it lie in thy people  
 Israel, let it be Thummim.' Jonathan  
 and Saul were taken, and the people  
 were cleared. Then Saul said, 'Cast  
 42 lots between me and my son Jonathan';  
 and Jonathan was taken. Saul said to  
 43 Jonathan, 'Tell me what you have  
 done.' Jonathan told him, 'True, I did  
 taste a little honey on the tip of my  
 stick. Here I am; I am ready to die.'  
 Then Saul swore a great oath that  
 44 Jonathan should die. But the people  
 45 said to Saul, 'Shall Jonathan die,  
 Jonathan who has won this great vic-  
 tory in Israel? God forbid! As the LORD  
 lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to  
 the ground, for he has been at work  
 with God today.' So the people ran-  
 somed Jonathan and he did not die.  
 Saul broke off the pursuit of the Philis-  
 46 tines because they had made their way  
 home.

When Saul had made his throne  
 47 secure in Israel, he fought against his  
 enemies on every side, the Moabites,  
 the Ammonites, the Edomites, the king

<sup>c</sup> Now . . . honeycomb: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* All the land went into the forest, and there was honey.

of various kinds were thought to enhance the sacred force of the soldiers; see 21.4-5. 31-35: Indulging in their plunder, the people ignore cult requirements, which Saul is very solicitous to observe. 33: On the *blood in the meat*, see Lev.19.26. 35: It is assumed here, in contrast to 13.8-15, that *Saul* could exercise priestly functions. 36-46: Night having come, Saul wished to press the advantage against the Philistines. The inadvertent violation of the curse by Jonathan prevented the proper divine approval. 45: *Ransomed*: probably with an animal sacrifice.

14.47-52: *Summaries from Saul's reign.* These lists indicate that Saul's reign was of some length and had positive effect. There is no hint (as elsewhere) of condemnation of him.

of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned he was successful.<sup>d</sup>

48 He displayed his strength by defeating the Amalekites and freeing Israel from hostile raids.

49 Saul's sons were: Jonathan, Ishyo and Malchishua. These were the names of his two daughters: Merab the elder and Michal the younger. His wife was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz, and his commander-in-chief was Abner son of his uncle Ner; Kish, Saul's father, and Ner, Abner's father, were sons<sup>e</sup> of Abiel.

52 There was bitter warfare with the Philistines throughout Saul's lifetime; any strong man and any brave man that he found he took into his own service.

15 Samuel said to Saul, 'The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now listen to the voice of the

2 LORD. This is the very word of the LORD of Hosts: "I am resolved to punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel, how they attacked them

3 on their way up from Egypt." Go now and fall upon the Amalekites and destroy them, and put their property under ban. Spare no one; put them all to death, men and women, children and babes in arms, herds and flocks, camels

4 and asses.' Thereupon Saul called out the levy and mustered them in Telaim. There were two hundred thousand foot-soldiers and another ten thousand from

5 Judah.<sup>f</sup> He came to the Amalekite city and halted for a time in the gorge.

6 Meanwhile he sent word to the Kenites to leave the Amalekites and come down, 'or', he said, 'I shall destroy you as well as them; but you were friendly to Israel when they came up from Egypt.' So the Kenites left the Amalekites.

7 Then Saul cut the Amalekites to pieces, all the way from Havilah to

8 Shur on the borders of Egypt. Agag the

king of the Amalekites he took alive, but he destroyed all the people, putting them to the sword. Saul and his army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat beasts and the lambs and everything worth keeping; they were unwilling to destroy them, but anything that was useless and of no value they destroyed.

Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: 'I repent of having made Saul king, for he has turned his back on me and has not obeyed my commands.' Samuel was angry; all night he cried aloud to the LORD. Early next morning he went to meet Saul, but was told that he had gone to Carmel; Saul had set up a monument for himself there, and had then turned and gone down to Gilgal. There Samuel found him, and Saul greeted him with the words, 'The LORD's blessing upon you! I have obeyed the LORD's commands.' But Samuel said, 'What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? Why do I hear the lowing of cattle?' Saul answered, 'The people have taken them from the Amalekites. These are what they spared, the best of the sheep and cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God. The rest we completely destroyed.' Samuel said to Saul, 'Let be, and I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night.' 'Tell me', said Saul. So Samuel went on, 'Time was when you thought little of yourself, but now you are head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD has anointed you king over Israel. The LORD sent you with strict instructions to destroy that wicked nation, the Amalekites; you were to fight against them until you had wiped them out. Why then did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce upon the spoil and do what was wrong in the eyes of

<sup>d</sup> Or he found ample provision.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. son.

<sup>f</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. ten thousand with the men of Judah.

15.1-35: Saul's final condemnation. This narrative is in some continuity with the negative strand in chs. 8, 10, and 12 (see 8.1-22 n.). Here, however, it is only Saul that is condemned, not kingship. As in the positive strand, however, Gilgal is the scene of the great decisions about kingship. 1-9: Saul conducts a successful campaign against the Amalekites. 2: *Amalekites*: see Exod.17.8-16. Saul's campaign did not end the old enmity; compare 2 Sam. ch. 30. 3: *The ban*, making a battle an absolute, relentless struggle, was a powerful psychological force in holy war; see Josh. chs. 6-7. 4: The numbers are impressionistic; see 13.5 n. *Judah* was a group of clans south of, and separated from, the central Israelite tribes. 5: *The Amalekite city*, otherwise unknown, was far south of Judah. 6: *Kenites*: see Judg.1.16. 11: The OT does not view the LORD as governed by immutable plans; therefore, he could repent of a decision.

20 the LORD?' Saul answered Samuel, 'But I did obey the LORD; I went where the LORD sent me, and I have brought back Agag king of the Amalekites. The rest of them I destroyed. Out of the spoil the people took sheep and oxen, the choicest of the animals laid under ban, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.' Samuel then said:

Does the LORD desire offerings and sacrifices

as he desires obedience?

Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to listen to him than the fat of rams.

23 Defiance of him is sinful as witchcraft, yielding to men<sup>g</sup> as evil as<sup>h</sup> idolatry.<sup>i</sup>

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, the LORD has rejected you as king.

24 Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I have ignored the LORD's command and your orders: I was afraid of the people and deferred to them. But now forgive my sin, I implore you, and come back with me, and I will make my submission before the LORD.' Samuel answered, 'I will not come back with you; you have rejected the word of the LORD and therefore the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel.' He turned to go, but Saul caught the edge of his cloak and it tore. And Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from your hand today and will give it to another, a better man than you. God who is the Splendour of Israel does not deceive or change his mind; he is not a man that he should change his mind.' Saul said, 'I have sinned; but honour me this once before the elders of my people and before

Israel and come back with me, and I will make my submission to the LORD your God.' So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul made his submission to the LORD. Then Samuel said, 'Bring Agag king of the Amalekites.' So Agag came to him with faltering step and said, 'Surely the bitterness of death has passed.' Samuel said, 'Your sword has made women childless, and your mother of all women shall be childless too.' Then Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

Saul went to his own home at Gibeah, and Samuel went to Ramah; and he never saw Saul again to his dying day, but he mourned for him, because the LORD had repented of having made him king over Israel.

### Saul and David

THE LORD SAID TO SAMUEL, 'HOW LONG will you mourn for Saul because I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and take it with you; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem; for I have chosen myself a king among his sons.' Samuel answered, 'How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me.' 'Take a heifer with you,' said the LORD; 'say you have come to offer a sacrifice to the LORD, and invite Jesse to the sacrifice; then I will let you know what you must do. You shall anoint for me the man whom I show you.' Samuel did as the LORD had told him, and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came in haste to meet him, saying, 'Why have you come? Is all well?' 'All is well,' said Samuel; 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Hallow yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' He him-

<sup>g</sup> yielding to men: or arrogance or obstinacy.

<sup>h</sup> as evil as: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* evil and ...

<sup>i</sup> Or household gods; *Heb.* teraphim.

*Angry*; compare Jer.20.7-9. 22: This is a classic statement of the prophetic motif as opposed to the priestly. 29: That God does not *change his mind* is not entirely right (see v. 11); here it means that the decision about Saul was final. 31: Samuel keeps up appearances; this is consistent with the secrecy of the anointing of David, 16.1-13. 32-33: The ban (v. 3 n.) demanded unrelieved violence.

16.1-2 Sam. 5.25: David becomes king of Israel. In chs. 8-15 kingship was established as legitimate in Israel, but the house of Saul was rejected for that office. The rejection, however, was as yet only a divine decision and still to be worked out in events, as portrayed in 1 Sam. chs. 16-31; afterward David's rise is inevitable (2 Sam. chs. 1-5).

16.1-17.58: The introduction of David. After the secret anointing of David, varying ways in which he was introduced to Saul's court are reported.



self hallowed Jesse and his sons and  
 6 invited them to the sacrifice also. They  
 came, and when Samuel saw Eliab he  
 thought, 'Here, before the LORD, is his  
 7 anointed king.' But the LORD said to  
 him, 'Take no account of it if he is  
 handsome and tall; I reject him. The  
 LORD does not see as man sees; men  
 judge by appearances but the LORD  
 8 judges by the heart.' Then Jesse called  
 Abinadab and made him pass before  
 Samuel, but he said, 'No, the LORD has  
 9 not chosen this one.' Then he presented  
 Shammah, and Samuel said, 'Nor has  
 10 the LORD chosen him.' Seven of his sons  
 Jesse presented to Samuel, but he said,  
 'The LORD has not chosen any of  
 11 these.' Then Samuel asked, 'Are these  
 all?' Jesse answered, 'There is still the  
 youngest, but he is looking after the  
 sheep.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and  
 12 fetch him; we will not sit down until he  
 comes.' So he sent and fetched him. He  
 was handsome, with ruddy cheeks and  
 bright eyes.' The LORD said, 'Rise and  
 13 anoint him: this is the man.' Samuel  
 took the horn of oil and anointed him  
 in the presence of his brothers. Then  
 the spirit of the LORD came upon David  
 and was with him from that day on-  
 wards. And Samuel set out on his way  
 back to Ramah.

14 The spirit of the LORD had forsaken  
 Saul, and at times an evil spirit from  
 the LORD would seize him suddenly.  
 15 His servants said to him, 'You see, sir,  
 how an evil spirit from God seizes you;  
 16 why do you not command your serv-  
 ants here to go and find some man  
 who can play the harp?—then, when  
 an evil spirit from God comes on you,  
 17 he can play and you will recover.' Saul  
 said to his servants, 'Find me a man  
 who can play well and bring him to  
 18 me.' One of his attendants said, 'I have

seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who  
 can play; he is a brave man and a good  
 fighter, wise in speech and handsome,  
 and the LORD is with him.' Saul there-  
 19 fore sent messengers to Jesse and asked  
 him to send him his son David, who  
 was with the sheep. Jesse took a homer  
 of bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and  
 sent them to Saul by his son David.  
 David came to Saul and entered his  
 21 service; and Saul loved him dearly,  
 and he became his armour-bearer. So  
 22 Saul sent word to Jesse: 'Let David  
 stay in my service, for I am pleased  
 with him.' And whenever a spirit from  
 23 God came upon Saul, David would  
 take his harp and play on it, so that  
 Saul found relief; he recovered and the  
 evil spirit left him alone.

The Philistines collected their forces  
 17 for war and massed at Socoh in Judah;  
 they camped between Socoh and Aze-  
 kah at Ephes-dammim. Saul and the  
 2 Israelites also massed, and camped in  
 the Vale of Elah. They drew up their  
 lines facing the Philistines, the Philis-  
 3 tines occupying a position on one hill  
 and the Israelites on another, with a  
 valley between them. A champion came  
 4 out from the Philistine camp, a man  
 named Goliath, from Gath; he was over  
 nine feet in height. He had a bronze  
 5 helmet on his head, and he wore plate-  
 armour of bronze, weighing five thous-  
 and shekels. On his legs were bronze  
 6 greaves, and one of his weapons was  
 a dagger of bronze. The shaft of his spear  
 7 was like a weaver's beam, and its head,  
 which was of iron, weighed six hundred  
 shekels; and his shield-bearer marched  
 ahead of him. The champion stood and  
 8 shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why do  
 you come out to do battle, you slaves  
 of Saul? I am the Philistine champion;

*j and bright eyes: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

16.1-13: The anointing of David. 8: *Jesse's* action indicates that those present for the sacrifice understood the significance of the occasion. 11: The selection of the least probable is a motif also in the anointing of Saul in 9.21.

16.14-23: David as harpist and warrior. Saul's ecstatic powers now take an *evil* turn, causing periods of deep depression. 21: A well-rounded courtier could be an accomplished musician and also conduct himself expertly in battle. This narrative is inconsistent with parts of ch. 17 but stands here because of the close connection of the spirit of the LORD passing to David (16.13) from Saul (16.14).

17.1-58: David slays Goliath. This story assumes an entry by David into Saul's court quite different from the preceding narrative, and it is not entirely consistent within itself. The story is legendary, in the sense that it is intended to enhance the reputation of a famous figure; in 2 Sam. 21.19, the slaying of Goliath, ascribed by legend to David, was the deed of his warriors. 1-2: *Socoh, Azekah*, and the *Vale of Elah* were further south than any previous Philistine

9 choose your man to meet me. If he can  
kill me in fair fight, we will become  
your slaves; but if I prove too strong  
for him and kill him, you shall be our  
10 slaves and serve us. Here and now I  
defy the ranks of Israel. Give me a  
man,' said the Philistine, 'and we will  
11 fight it out.' When Saul and the Israel-  
ites heard what the Philistine said, they  
were shaken and dismayed.

12 David was the son of an Ephrathite<sup>k</sup>  
called Jesse, who had eight sons. By  
Saul's time he had become a feeble old  
13 man, and his three eldest sons had fol-  
lowed Saul to the war. The eldest was  
called Eliab, the next Abinadab, and  
14 the third Shammah; David was the  
youngest. The three eldest followed  
15 Saul, while David used to go to Saul's  
camp and back to Bethlehem to mind  
his father's flocks.

16 Morning and evening for forty days  
the Philistine came forward and took  
17 up his position. Then one day Jesse said  
to his son David, 'Take your brothers  
an ephah of this parched grain and  
18 these ten loaves of bread, and run with  
them to the camp. These ten cream-  
cheeses are for you to take to the com-  
manding officer. See if your brothers  
are well and bring back some token  
19 from them.' Saul and the brothers and  
all the Israelites were in the Vale of  
20 Elah, fighting the Philistines. Early  
next morning David left someone in  
charge of the sheep, set out on his er-  
rand and went as Jesse had told him.  
He reached the lines just as the army  
21 was going out to take up position and  
was raising the war-cry. The Israelites  
and the Philistines drew up their ranks  
22 opposite each other. David left his  
things in charge of the quartermaster,  
ran to the line and went up to his  
23 brothers to greet them. While he was  
talking to them the Philistine cham-  
pion, Goliath, came out from the  
Philistine ranks and issued his chal-  
lenge in the same words as before; and  
24 David heard him. When the Israelites  
saw the man they ran from him in fear.  
25 'Look at this man who comes out day  
after day to defy Israel', they said. 'The

king is to give a rich reward to the man  
who kills him; he will give him his  
daughter in marriage too and will  
exempt his family from service due in  
Israel.' Then David turned to his  
26 neighbours and said, 'What is to be  
done for the man who kills this Philis-  
tine and wipes out our disgrace? And  
who is he, an uncircumcised Philistine,  
to defy the army of the living God?'  
The people told him how the matter  
27 stood and what was to be done for the  
man who killed him. His elder brother  
28 Eliab overheard David talking with the  
men and grew angry. 'What are you do-  
ing here?' he asked. 'And who have you  
left to look after those few sheep in the  
wilderness? I know you, you impudent  
young rascal; you have only come to  
see the fighting.' David answered,  
29 'What have I done now? I only asked a  
question.' And he turned away from  
30 him to someone else and repeated his  
question, but everybody gave him the  
same answer.

What David had said was overheard  
31 and reported to Saul, who sent for him.  
David said to him, 'Do not lose heart,  
32 sir. I will go and fight this Philistine.'  
Saul answered, 'You cannot go and  
33 fight with this Philistine; you are only  
a lad, and he has been a fighting man  
all his life.' David said to Saul, 'Sir, I  
34 am my father's shepherd; when a lion  
or bear comes and carries off a sheep  
from the flock, I go after it and attack  
35 it and rescue the victim from its jaws.  
Then if it turns on me, I seize it by the  
beard and batter it to death. Lions I  
36 have killed and bears, and this un-  
circumcised Philistine will fare no bet-  
ter than they; he has defied the army of  
the living God. The LORD who saved  
37 me from the lion and the bear will save  
me from this Philistine.' 'Go then,'  
said Saul; 'and the LORD will be with  
you.' He put his own tunic on David,  
38 placed a bronze helmet on his head and  
gave him a coat of mail to wear; he  
39 then fastened his sword on David over  
his tunic. But David hesitated, because

<sup>k</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* Is this the man from Bethlehem in Judah?

action. This perhaps represents a different strategy by the Philistines, after their defeat in the region of Benjamin, ch. 14. 12-31: This section seems to be a later insertion. Without it, the

he had not tried them, and said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, because I have not tried them.' So he took them off. Then he picked up his stick, chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in a shepherd's bag which served as his pouch. He walked out to meet the Philistine with his sling in his hand.

The Philistine came on towards David, with his shield-bearer marching ahead; and he looked David up and down and had nothing but contempt for this handsome lad with his ruddy cheeks and bright eyes.<sup>1</sup> He said to David, 'Am I a dog that you come out against me with sticks?' And he swore at him in the name of his god. 'Come on,' he said, 'and I will give your flesh to the birds and the beasts.' David answered, 'You have come against me with sword and spear and dagger, but I have come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the army of Israel which you have defied. The LORD will put you into my power this day; I will kill you and cut your head off and leave your carcass and the carcasses of the Philistines to the birds and the wild beasts; all the world shall know that there is a God in Israel. All those who are gathered here shall see that the LORD saves neither by sword nor spear; the battle is the LORD's, and he will put you all into our power.'

When the Philistine began moving towards him again, David ran quickly to engage him. He put his hand into his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell flat on his face on the ground. So David proved the victor with his sling and stone; he struck Goliath down and gave him a mortal wound, though

he had no sword. Then he ran to the Philistine and stood over him, and grasping his sword, he drew it out of the scabbard, dispatched him and cut off his head. The Philistines, when they saw that their hero was dead, turned and ran. The men of Israel and Judah at once raised the war-cry and hotly pursued them all the way to Gath and even to the gates of Ekron. The road that runs to Shaaraim, Gath, and Ekron was strewn with their dead. On their return from the pursuit of the Philistines, the Israelites plundered their camp. David took Goliath's head and carried it to Jerusalem, leaving his weapons in his tent.

Saul had said to Abner his commander-in-chief, when he saw David going out against the Philistine, 'That boy there, Abner, whose son is he?' 'By your life, your majesty,' said Abner, 'I do not know.' The king said to Abner, 'Go and find out whose son the lad is.' When David came back after killing the Philistine, Abner took him and presented him to Saul with the Philistine's head still in his hand. Saul asked him, 'Whose son are you, young man?', and David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.'

That same day, when Saul had finished talking with David, he kept him and would not let him return any more to his father's house, for he saw that Jonathan had given his heart to David and had grown to love him as himself. So Jonathan and David made a solemn compact because each loved the other as dearly as himself. And Jonathan stripped off the cloak he was wearing and his tunic, and gave them to David, together with his sword, his bow, and his belt. David succeeded so well in every venture on which Saul sent him

<sup>1</sup> handsome . . . bright eyes: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

narrative would otherwise be largely compatible with 16.14-23. **54:** *Jerusalem* was then still an independent city-state; David, a Bethlehemite, had grown up in the shadow of its walls and may have had an intimate relation to it. **55-58:** As in vv. 12-31, David is hitherto unknown to Saul.

**18.1-20.42: David's vicissitudes at Saul's court.** The sequence of episodes here is rapid and complex. Each chapter begins with an episode involving Jonathan and David (18.1-4; 19.1-7; 20.1-42) followed in chs. 18 and 19 by notices of David's successes against the Philistines (18.5,14-16,30; 19.8), and Saul's jealous attacks upon David with his spear (18.10-13; 19.9-10). The three passages concerning Jonathan and David show a gradual disillusionment on Jonathan's part. Chs. 18 and 19 also relate David's marriage to Saul's daughter Michal (18.17-29) and her aid in his escape from Saul (19.11-17). **4:** The exchange of garments and weapons

that he was given a command in the army, and his promotion pleased the ordinary people, and even pleased Saul's officers.

6 At the home-coming of the army when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out from all the cities of Israel to look on, and the dancers came out to meet King Saul with tambourines, singing, 7 and dancing. The women as they made merry sang to one another:

Saul made havoc among thousands  
but David among tens of thousands.

8 Saul was furious, and the words rankled. He said, 'They have given David tens of thousands and me only thousands; what more can they 9 do but make him king?' From that day forward Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

10 Next day an evil spirit from God seized upon Saul; he fell into a frenzy<sup>m</sup> in the house, and David played the harp to him as he had before. 11 Saul had his spear in his hand, and he hurled it at David, meaning to pin him to the wall; but twice David 12 swerved aside. After this Saul was afraid of David, because he saw that the LORD had forsaken him and was 13 with David. He therefore removed David from his household and appointed him to the command of a thousand men. David led his men into action, 14 and succeeded in everything that he undertook, because the LORD was with 15 him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was more afraid of him 16 then ever; all Israel and Judah loved him because he took the field at their head.

17 Saul said to David, 'Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you in marriage, but in return you must serve me valiantly and fight the LORD's battles.' For Saul meant David to meet his end at the hands of the 18 Philistines and not himself. David answered Saul, 'Who am I and what

are my father's people, my kinsfolk, in Israel, that I should become the king's son-in-law?' However, when 19 the time came for Saul's daughter Merab to be married to David, she had already been given to Adriel of Meholah. But Michal, Saul's other 20 daughter, fell in love with David, and when Saul was told of this, he saw that it suited his plans. He said to himself, 21 'I will give her to him; let her be the bait that lures him to his death at the hands of the Philistines.' So Saul proposed a second time to make David his son-in-law, and ordered his courtiers 22 to say to David privately, 'The king is well disposed to you and you are dear to us all; now is the time for you to marry into the king's family.' When 23 Saul's people spoke in this way to David, he said to them, 'Do you think that marrying the king's daughter is a matter of so little consequence that a poor man of no consequence, like myself, can do it?' Saul's courtiers re- 24 ported what David had said, and he replied, 'Tell David this: all the king 25 wants as the bride-price is the foreskins of a hundred Philistines, by way of vengeance on his enemies.' Saul was counting on David's death at the hands of the Philistines. The courtiers told 26 David what Saul had said, and marriage with the king's daughter on these terms pleased him well. Before the appointed time, David went out with 27 his men and slew two hundred Philistines; he brought their foreskins and counted them out to the king in order to be accepted as his son-in-law. So Saul married his daughter Michal to David. He saw clearly that the LORD 28 was with David, and knew that Michal his daughter had fallen in love with him; and so he grew more and more 29 afraid of David and was his enemy for the rest of his life.

The Philistine officers used to come 30 out to offer single combat; and whenever they did, David had more success

*m Or fell into prophetic rapture.*

effected a bond of souls. 7: This old poetic refrain may have originally had no suggestion of invidious comparison between Saul and David, the second line being simply a poetic parallel to the first. In later times, this song was used to account for the jealousy on Saul's part. The saying was well known; see 21.11; 29.5. 25: Since the Philistines were uncircumcised, fore-

against them than all the rest of Saul's men, and he won a great name for himself.

19 SAUL SPOKE TO JONATHAN HIS SON AND all his household about killing David. But Jonathan was devoted to David and told him that his father Saul was looking for an opportunity to kill him. 'Be on your guard tomorrow morning,' he said; 'conceal yourself, and remain in hiding. Then I will come out and join my father in the open country where you are and speak to him about you, and if I discover anything I will tell you.' Jonathan spoke up for David to his father Saul and said to him, 'Sir, do not wrong your servant David; he has not wronged you; his conduct towards you has been beyond reproach.

5 Did he not take his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine, and the LORD won a great victory for Israel? You saw it, you shared in the rejoicing; why should you wrong an innocent man and put David to death without cause?' Saul listened to Jonathan and swore solemnly by the LORD that David should not be put to death. So Jonathan called David and told him all this; then he brought him to Saul, and he was in attendance on the king as before.

8 War broke out again, and David attacked the Philistines and dealt them such a blow that they ran before him.

9 An evil spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he was sitting in the house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing the harp. Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he avoided the king's thrust so that Saul drove the spear into the wall. David escaped and got safely away.

11 That night Saul sent servants to keep watch on David's house, intending to kill him in the morning, but David's wife Michal warned him to get away that night, 'or tomorrow', she said, 'you will be a dead man.' She let David

down through a window and he slipped away and escaped. Michal took their household gods and put them on the bed; at its head she laid a goat's-hair rug and covered it all with a cloak. When the men arrived to arrest David she told them he was ill. Saul sent them back to see David for themselves. 'Bring him to me, bed and all,' he said, 'and I will kill him.' When they came, there were the household gods on the bed and the goat's-hair rug at its head. Then Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you played this trick on me and let my enemy get safe away?' And Michal answered, 'He said to me, "Help me to escape or I will kill you."'

Meanwhile David made good his escape and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him how Saul had treated him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. Saul was told that David was there, and he sent a party of men to seize him. When they saw the company of prophets in rapture, with Samuel standing at their head, the spirit of God came upon them and they fell into prophetic rapture. When this was reported to Saul he sent another party. These also fell into a rapture, and when he sent more men a third time, they did the same. Saul himself then set out for Ramah and came to the great cistern in Secu. He asked where Samuel and David were and was told that they were at Naioth in Ramah. On his way there the spirit of God came upon him too and he went on, in a rapture as he went, till he came to Naioth in Ramah. There he too stripped off his clothes and like the rest fell into a rapture before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. That is why men say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' Then David made his escape from Naioth in Ramah and came to Jonathan. 'What have I done?' he asked.

*skins* made a grisly trophy of battle. 19.1-7: Jonathan's intercession delays Saul's open hostility to David. 3: The meeting in the *open country* is notably similar to the narrative of ch. 20. 9-10: The king's jealousy breaks out again. 17: Saul is defeated in his attempts on David by both his son and his daughter, an indirect effect of divine favor toward David. 18-24: This legend of the great force of Samuel's charismatic power is peripheral to the main narrative but supplies another explanation for the popular proverb about Saul among the prophets; compare 10.11-12. 20.1-42: This is the fullest elaboration of Saul's deviousness and of Jona-

1 'What is my offence? What does your father think I have done wrong, that he seeks my life?' Jonathan answered him, 'God forbid! There is no thought of putting you to death. I am sure my father will not do anything what-  
 2 ever without telling me. Why should my father hide such a thing from me? I cannot believe it!' David said, 'I am ready to swear to it: your father has said to himself, "Jonathan must not know this or he will resent it", because he knows that you have a high regard for me. As the LORD lives, your life upon it, there is only a step between  
 3 me and death.' Jonathan said to David, 'What do you want me to do for you?' David answered, 'It is new moon tomorrow, and I ought to dine with the king. Let me go and lie hidden in the fields until the third evening. If your father happens to miss me, then say, "David asked me for leave to pay a rapid visit to his home in Bethlehem, for it is the annual sacrifice there for the whole family." If he says, "Well and good", that will be a good sign for me; but if he flies into a rage, you will know that he is set on doing me wrong. My lord, keep faith with me; for you and I have entered into a solemn compact before the LORD. Kill me yourself if I am guilty. Why let me fall into your father's hands?'  
 4 'God forbid!' cried Jonathan. 'If I find my father set on doing you wrong I will tell you.' David answered Jonathan, 'How will you let me know if he answers harshly?' Jonathan said, 'Come with me into the fields.' So they  
 5 went together into the fields, and Jonathan said to David, 'I promise you, David, in the sight of the LORD the God of Israel, this time tomorrow I will sound my father for the third time and, if he is well disposed to you, I will send and let you know. If my father means mischief, the LORD do the same to me and more, if I do not let you know and get you safely away. The LORD be with you as he has been with my father! I know that as  
 6 long as I live you will show me faithful

friendship, as the LORD requires; and if I should die, you will continue loyal to my family for ever. When the LORD rids the earth of all David's enemies, may the LORD call him to account if he and his house are no longer my friends.' Jonathan pledged himself afresh to David because of his love for him, for he loved him as himself. Then he said to him, 'Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed when your place is empty. So go down at nightfall for the third time to the place where you hid on the evening of the feast and stay by the mound there. Then I will shoot three arrows towards it, as though I were aiming at a mark. Then I will send my boy to find the arrows. If I say to him, "Look, the arrows are on this side of you, pick them up", then you can come out of hiding. You will be quite safe, I swear it; for there will be nothing amiss. But if I say to the lad, "Look, the arrows are on the other side of you, further on", then the LORD has said that you must go; the LORD stand witness between us for ever to the pledges we have exchanged.'

So David hid in the fields. The new moon came, the dinner was prepared, and the king sat down to eat. Saul took his customary seat by the wall, and Abner sat beside him; Jonathan too was present, but David's place was empty. That day Saul said nothing, for he thought that David was absent by some chance, perhaps because he was ritually unclean. But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was still empty, and Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'Why has not the son of Jesse come to the feast, either yesterday or today?' Jonathan answered Saul, 'David asked permission to go to Bethlehem. He asked my leave and said, "Our family is holding a sacrifice in the town and my brother himself has ordered me to be there. Now, if you have any regard for me, let me slip away to see my brothers." That is why he has not come to dine

than's loyalty to David. 18-23: These plans assume that someone will be with Jonathan, so that he must use signals. That fits 19.2-3, but not what follows here in vv. 40-42, where Jonathan and David can talk openly.

30 with the king.' Saul was angry with Jonathan, 'You son of a crooked and unfaithful mother! You have made friends with the son of Jesse only to bring shame on yourself and dishonour on your mother; I see how it will be.

31 As long as Jesse's son remains alive on earth, neither you nor your crown will be safe. Send at once and fetch him; he deserves to die.' Jonathan answered his father, 'Deserves to die! Why? What has he done?' At that, Saul picked up his spear and threatened to kill him; and he knew that his father was bent on David's death. Jonathan left the table in a rage and ate nothing on the second day of the festival; for he was indignant on David's behalf because his father had humiliated him.

35 Next morning, Jonathan went out into the fields to meet David at the appointed time, taking a young boy with him. He said to the boy, 'Run and find the arrows; I am going to shoot.' The boy ran on, and he shot the arrows over his head. When the boy reached the place where Jonathan's arrows had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you. Hurry! No time to lose! Make haste!' The boy gathered up the arrows and brought them to his master; but only Jonathan and David knew what this meant; the boy knew nothing. Jonathan handed his weapons to the boy and told him to take them back to the city. When the boy had gone, David got up from behind the mound and bowed humbly three times. Then they kissed one another and shed tears together, until David's grief was even greater than Jonathan's. Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety; we have pledged each other in the name of the LORD who is witness for ever between you and me and between your descendants and mine.'

David went off at once, while Jonathan returned to the city. David

made his way to the priest Ahimelech at Nob, who hurried out to meet him and said, 'Why have you come alone and no one with you?' David answered Ahimelech, 'I am under orders from the king: I was to let no one know about the mission on which he was sending me or what these orders were. When I took leave of my men I told them to meet me in such and such a place. Now, what have you got by you? Let me have five loaves, or as many as you can find.' The priest answered David, 'I have no ordinary bread available. There is only the sacred bread; but have the young men kept themselves from women?' David answered the priest, 'Women have been denied us hitherto, when I have been on campaign, even an ordinary campaign, and the young men's bodies have remained holy; and how much more will they be holy today?' So, as there was no other bread there, the priest gave him the sacred bread, the Bread of the Presence, which had just been taken from the presence of the LORD to be replaced by freshly baked bread on the day that the old was removed. One of Saul's servants happened to be there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was the strongest of all Saul's herdsmen. David said to Ahimelech, 'Have you a spear or sword here at hand? I have no sword or other weapon with me, because the king's business was urgent.' The priest answered, 'There is the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you slew in the Vale of Elah; it is wrapped up in a cloak behind the ephod. If you wish to take that, take it; there is no other weapon here.' David said, 'There is no sword like it; give it to me.'

That day, David went on his way, eluding Saul, and came to Achish king of Gath. The servants of Achish said to him, 'Surely this is David, the

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**21.1-23.13: David becomes a fugitive.** Several episodes here form a transition from David at Saul's court to David as leader of an outlaw band in the Judean wilderness. 1-9: David gets assistance from Ahimelech, a descendant of the priestly line of Shiloh (22.9; 14.3 n.). 2: Ahimelech does not knowingly assist a fugitive. 6: *The Bread of the Presence* was set before God in the sanctuary and periodically replaced. Only priests could eat it; compare Lev.24.5-9. 7: *Doeg the Edomite* was to prove an informer and executioner; 22.9-23. 10-15: David's fugitive period is opened and closed by stays with Achish of Gath; see 27.1-6. 11: On the song see

king of his country, the man of whom they sang as they danced:

Saul made havoc among thousands but David among tens of thousands.'

12 These words were not lost on David, and he became very much afraid of 13 Achish king of Gath. So he altered his behaviour in public and acted like a lunatic in front of them all, scrabbling on the double doors of the city gate and dribbling down his beard. Achish 14 said to his servants, 'The man is mad! 15 Why bring him to me? Am I short of madmen that you bring this one to plague me? Must I have this fellow in my house?'

22 DAVID MADE HIS ESCAPE AND WENT from there to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his family heard that he was there, they joined 2 him. Men in any kind of distress or in debt or with a grievance gathered round him, about four hundred in number, and he became their chief. 3 From there David went to Mizpeh in Moab and said to the king of Moab, 'Let my father and mother come and take shelter with you until 4 I know what God will do for me.' So he left them at the court of the king of Moab, and they stayed there as long as David was in his stronghold. 5 The prophet Gad said to David, 'You must not stay in your stronghold; go at once into Judah.' So David went 6 as far as the forest of Hareth. News that David and his men had been seen reached Saul while he was in Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk-tree on the hill-top with his spear in his hand and all his retainers standing about 7 him. He said to them, 'Listen to me, you Benjamites: do you expect the son of Jesse to give you all fields and vineyards, or make you all officers over units 8 of a thousand and a hundred? Is that why you have all conspired against me? Not one of you told me when my son made a compact with the son of Jesse; none of you spared a thought

for me or told me that my son had set my own servant against me, who is lying in wait for me now.'

Then Doeg the Edomite, who was 9 standing with the servants of Saul, spoke: 'I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub. Ahimelech consulted the LORD on 10 his behalf, then gave him food and handed over to him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.' The king sent 11 for Ahimelech the priest and his family, who were priests at Nob, and they all came into his presence. Saul said, 12 'Now listen, you son of Ahitub', and the man answered, 'Yes, my lord?' Then 13 Saul said to him, 'Why have you and the son of Jesse plotted against me? You gave him food and the sword too, and consulted God on his behalf; and now he has risen against me and is at this moment lying in wait for me.' 'And who among all your ser- 14 vants', answered Ahimelech, 'is like David, a man to be trusted, the king's son-in-law, appointed to your staff and holding an honourable place in your household? Have I on this 15 occasion done something profane in consulting God on his behalf? God forbid! I trust that my lord the king will not accuse me or my family; for I know nothing whatever about it.' But 16 the king said, 'Ahimelech, you must die, you and all your family.' He then 17 turned to the bodyguard attending him and said, 'Go and kill the priests of the LORD; for they are in league with David, and, though they knew that he was a fugitive, they did not tell me.' The king's men, however, were unwilling to raise a hand against the priests of the LORD. The king therefore said to 18 Doeg the Edomite, 'You, Doeg, go and fall upon the priests'; so Doeg went and fell upon the priests, killing that day with his own hand eighty-five men who could carry the ephod. He put to 19 the sword every living thing in Nob, the city of priests: men and women, children and babes in arms, oxen, asses, and sheep. One son of Ahimelech 20 named Abiathar made his escape and

18.7 n. 22.1-5: David accepts his situation as fugitive, organizes a band of outlaws, and secures his family against Saul. 5: *The prophet Gad* appears also in 2 Sam.24.11-14, rather suddenly in both cases. 6-23: Saul avenges himself on Ahimelech, brother of his own priest Ahijah



- 21 joined David. He told David how Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.
- 22 Then David said to him, 'When Doeg the Edomite was there that day, I knew that he would inform Saul. I have gambled with the lives of all your father's family. Stay here with me, have no fear; he who seeks your life seeks mine, and you will be safe with me.'
- 23 The Philistines were fighting against Keilah and plundering the threshing-floors; and when David heard this, he consulted the LORD and asked whether he should go and attack the Philistines. The LORD answered, 'Go, attack them, and relieve Keilah.' But David's men said to him, 'As we are now, we have enough to fear from Judah. How much worse if we challenge the Philistine forces at Keilah!' David consulted the LORD once again and the LORD answered him, 'Go to Keilah; I will give the Philistines into your hands.' So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines; they carried off their cattle, inflicted a heavy defeat on them and relieved the inhabitants.
- 6 Abiathar son of Ahimelech made good his escape and joined David at Keilah, bringing the ephod with him. Saul was told that David had entered Keilah, and he said, 'God has put him into my hands; for he has walked into a trap by entering a walled town with gates and bars.' He called out the levy to march on Keilah and besiege David and his men. When David learnt how Saul planned his undoing, he told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod, and then he prayed, 'O LORD God of Israel, I thy servant have heard news that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the city because of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come as I have heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray thee, tell thy servant.' The LORD answered, 'He will come.' Then David asked,
- 'Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?', and the LORD answered, 'They will.' Then David left Keilah at once with his men, who numbered about six hundred, and moved about from place to place. When the news reached Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he made no further move.
- While David was living in the fastnesses of the wilderness of Ziph, in the hill-country, Saul searched for him day after day, but God did not put him into his power. David well knew that Saul had come out to seek his life; and while he was at Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, Saul's son Jonathan came to him there and gave him fresh courage in God's name: 'Do not be afraid,' he said; 'my father's hand shall not touch you. You will become king of Israel and I shall hold rank after you; and my father knows it.' The two of them made a solemn compact before the LORD; then David remained in Horesh and Jonathan went home. While Saul was at Gibeah the Ziphites brought him this news: 'David, we hear, is in hiding among us in the fastnesses of Horesh on the hill of Hachilah, south of Jeshimon. Come down, your majesty, come whenever you will, and we are able to surrender him to you.' Saul said, 'The LORD has indeed blessed you; you have saved me a world of trouble. Go now and make further inquiry, and find out exactly where he is and who saw him there. They tell me that he by himself is crafty enough to outwit me. Find out which of his hiding-places he is using; then come back to me at such and such a place, and I will go along with you. So long as he stays in this country, I will hunt him down, if I have to go through all the clans of Judah one by one.' They set out for Ziph without delay, ahead of Saul; David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon

(14.3). 23.1-13: David's band begins to be a force in the south. He carefully consults the LORD concerning all his movements. 1: *Keilah* was an independent town southwest of Judah. 11-12: The oracle answered one question at a time, yes or no.

23.14-24.22: *The chase in the Wilderness.* David's Wilderness period was a popular narrative topic. 14: *Ziph* was a rough region a few miles south and east of Hebron. 16-18: *Jonathan*, now fully aware of his father's intent, here predicts and consents to David's future establishment as king. Several other speeches in these chapters view David's kingship as the inevitable out-

in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. 25 Saul set off with his men to look for him; but David got wind of it and went down to a refuge in the rocks, and there he stayed in the wilderness of Maon. Hearing of this, Saul went into the wilderness after him; he was on one side of the hill, David and his men on the other. While David and his men were trying desperately to get away and Saul and his followers were closing in for the capture, a runner brought a message to Saul: 'Come at once! the 26 Philistines are harrying the land.' So Saul called off the pursuit and turned back to face the Philistines. This is why that place is called the Dividing Rock. 27 David went up from there and lived in the fastnesses of En-gedi. 24 When Saul returned from the pursuit of the Philistines, he learnt that David 2 was in the wilderness of En-gedi. So he took three thousand men picked from the whole of Israel and went in search of David and his men to the east of the 3 Rocks of the Wild Goats. There beside the road were some sheepfolds, and near by was a cave, at the far end of which David and his men were sitting concealed. Saul came to the cave and 4-7<sup>n</sup> went in to relieve himself. His men said to David, 'The day has come: the LORD has put your enemy into your hands, as he promised he would, and you may do what you please with him.' David said to his men, 'God forbid that I should harm my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift a finger against him; he is the LORD's anointed.' So David reproved his men severely and would not let them attack Saul. He himself got up stealthily and cut off a piece of Saul's cloak; but when he had cut it off, his conscience smote him. Saul rose, left the cave and went on his 8 way; whereupon David also came out of the cave and called after Saul, 'My lord the king!' When Saul looked round, David prostrated himself in

obedience and said to him, 'Why do you 9 listen when they say that David is out to do you harm? Today you can see 10 for yourself that the LORD put you into my power in the cave; I had a mind to kill you, but no, I spared your life and said, "I cannot lift a finger against my master, for he is the LORD's anointed." Look, my dear lord, look at this 11 piece of your cloak in my hand. I cut it off, but I did not kill you; this will show you that I have no thought of violence or treachery against you, and that I have done you no wrong; yet you are resolved to take my life. May the 12 LORD judge between us! but though he may take vengeance on you for my sake, I will never lift my hand against you; "One wrong begets another", as 13 the old saying goes, yet I will never lift my hand against you. Who has the king of Israel come out against? What are you pursuing? A dead dog, a mere flea. The LORD will be judge and decide 15 between us; let him look into my cause, he will plead for me and will acquit me.'

When David had finished speaking, 16 Saul said, 'Is that you, David my son?', and he wept. Then he said, 'The right is on your side, not mine; you have treated me so well, I have treated you so badly. Your goodness to me this day has passed 18 all bounds: the LORD put me at your mercy but you did not kill me. Not 19 often does a man find his enemy and let him go safely on his way; so may the LORD reward you well for what you have done for me today! I know now 20 for certain that you will become king, and that the kingdom of Israel will flourish under your rule. Swear to me 21 by the LORD then that you will not exterminate my descendants and blot out my name from my father's house.' David swore an oath to Saul; and Saul 22 went back to his home, while David and his men went up to their fastness.

*n Verses 4-7 are re-arranged thus: 4a, 6, 7a, 4b, 5, 7b.*

come of these events. 26-28: The pressure of the *Philistines* continued, interrupting Saul in the nick of time. *The Dividing Rock* was later said to be named for this escape. 29: *En-gedi* was in the most barren part of Judah, just west of the Dead Sea. 24.1: The *Philistines* are treated here as no more than a brief interlude in Saul's real enterprise. 3: The narrative which begins here verges on the burlesque. 4-7: David's speech moves from irony into a serious statement of *the LORD's anointed*. The sanctity of that office was not to be violated under any circumstances, according to the view of the writers toward the kingship in Jerusalem. 8-22: The tone changes from the humor of the opening in v. 3. 20: See 23.16-18 n.

25 SAMUEL DIED, AND ALL ISRAEL CAME TOGETHER to mourn for him, and he was buried in his house in Ramah. Afterwards David went down to the wilderness of Paran.

2 There was a man at Carmel in Maon, who had great influence and owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats; and he was shearing his flocks in Carmel. His name was Nabal and his wife's name Abigail; she was a beautiful and intelligent woman, but her husband, a Calebite, was surly and mean. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his flocks, and sent ten of his men, saying to them, 'Go up to Carmel, find Nabal and give him my greetings. You are to say, "All good wishes for the year ahead! Prosperity to yourself, your household, and all that is yours! I hear that you are shearing. Your shepherds have been with us lately and we did not molest them; nothing of theirs was missing all the time they were in Carmel. Ask your own people and they will tell you. Receive my men kindly, for this is an auspicious day with us, and give what you can to David your son and your servant."' David's servants came and delivered this message to Nabal in David's name. When they paused, Nabal answered, 'Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse? In these days every slave who breaks away from his master sets himself up as a chief.<sup>o</sup> Am I to take my food and my wine and the meat I have provided for my shearers and give it to men who come from I know not where?' David's men turned and made their way back to him and told him all this. 13 He said to his men, 'Buckle on your swords, all of you.' So they buckled on their swords and followed David, four hundred of them, while two hundred stayed behind with the baggage.

One of the young men said to 14 Abigail, Nabal's wife, 'David sent messengers from the wilderness to ask our master politely for a present, and he flew out<sup>p</sup> at them. The men have 15 been very good to us and have not molested us, nor did we miss anything all the time we were going about with them in the open country. They were 16 as good as a wall round us, night and day, while we were minding the flocks. Think carefully what you had better 17 do, for it is certain ruin for our master and his whole family; he is such a good-for-nothing that it is no good talking to him.' So Abigail hastily 18 collected two hundred loaves and two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, a hundred bunches of raisins, and two hundred cakes of dried figs, and loaded them on asses, but told her husband 19 nothing about it. Then she said to her servants, 'Go on ahead, I will follow you.' As she made her way on her 20 ass, hidden by the hill, there were David and his men coming down towards her, and she met them. David 21 had said, 'It was a waste of time to protect this fellow's property in the wilderness so well that nothing of his was missing. He has repaid me evil for good.' David swore a great oath: 22 'God do the same to me and more if I leave him a single mother's son alive by morning!'

When Abigail saw David she dis- 23 mounted in haste and prostrated herself before him, bowing low to the 24 ground at his feet, and said, 'Let me take the blame, my lord, but allow me, your humble servant, to speak out and let my lord give me a hearing. How 25 can you take any notice of this good-for-nothing? He is just what his name

<sup>o</sup> Or In these days there are many slaves who break away from their master.  
<sup>p</sup> flew out: or screamed.

25.1-44: David and Abigail. This delightful narrative stands in the midst of the Wilderness period to convey the flavor of David's life there. 1: Samuel's king-making work has been done since ch. 16, but he will appear yet once more (ch. 28). 2: Maon was a few miles south of Ziph. It was a region where grazing lands bordered on agricultural lands. 3: Nabal is the noun "fool" used as a name; see v. 25. 6-8: David's speech is very courteous, but the request for a "protection" payment is clear. 10: David was apparently renowned as a rebel against Saul. 16: David is depicted as a kind of Robin Hood whose band constituted an informal peace keeping force. On those terms, there would be some justice in his request of gifts from Nabal. 19: Abigail understands both her husband's character and the crisis of the moment. 24-35: Abigail argues (v. 26) that if David kills Nabal, the *bloodshed* can imperil the sanctity of his future kingship

Nabal means: "Churl" is his name, and churlish his behaviour. I did not myself, sir, see the men you sent. And now, sir, the LORD has restrained you from bloodshed and from giving vent to your anger. As the LORD lives, your life upon it, your enemies and all who want to see you ruined will be like Nabal. Here is the present which I, your humble servant, have brought; give it to the young men under your command. Forgive me, my lord, if I am presuming; for the LORD will establish your family for ever, because you have fought his wars. No calamity shall overtake you as long as you live. If any man sets out to pursue you and take your life, the LORD your God will wrap your life up and put it with his own treasure, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away like stones from a sling. When the LORD has made good all his promises to you, and has made you ruler of Israel, there will be no reason why you should stumble or your courage falter because you have shed innocent blood or given way to your anger. Then when the LORD makes all you do prosper, you will remember me, your servant.' David said to Abigail, 'Blessed is the LORD the God of Israel who has sent you today to meet me. A blessing on your good sense, a blessing on you because you have saved me today from the guilt of bloodshed and from giving way to my anger. For I swear by the life of the LORD the God of Israel who has kept me from doing you wrong: if you had not come at once to meet me, not a man of Nabal's household, not a single mother's son, would have been left alive by morning.' Then David took from her what she had brought him and said, 'Go home in peace, I have listened to you and I grant your request.'

On her return she found Nabal holding a banquet in his house, a banquet fit for a king. He grew merry and became very drunk, so drunk that his wife said nothing to him, trivial or

serious, till daybreak. In the morning, when the wine had worn off, she told him everything, and he had a seizure and lay there like a stone. Ten days later the LORD struck him again and he died. When David heard that Nabal was dead he said, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has himself punished Nabal for his insult, and has kept me his servant from doing wrong. The LORD has made Nabal's wrongdoing recoil on his own head.' David then sent to make proposals that Abigail should become his wife. And his servants came to Abigail at Carmel and said to her, 'David has sent us to fetch you to be his wife.' She rose and prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said, 'I am his slave to command, I would wash the feet of my lord's servants.' So Abigail made her preparations with all speed and, with her five maids in attendance, accompanied by David's messengers, rode away on an ass; and she became David's wife. David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both these women became his wives. Saul meanwhile had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish from Gallim.

THE ZIPHITES CAME TO SAUL AT GIBEAH to report that David was in hiding on the hill at Hachilah overlooking Jeshimon. Saul went down at once to the wilderness of Ziph, taking with him three thousand picked men, to search for David there. He encamped beside the road on the hill of Hachilah overlooking Jeshimon, while David was still in the wilderness. As soon as David knew that Saul had come to the wilderness in pursuit of him, he sent out scouts and found that Saul had reached such and such a place. Without delay, he went to the place where Saul had pitched his camp and observed where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander-in-chief, were lying. Saul lay within the lines with his troops encamped in a circle round him.

(on such speeches see 23.16–18 n.) David agrees and is grateful to Abigail for restraining him from the *guilt of bloodshed* (v. 33). 39: In these stories God is understood to be working out the destiny leading to David's kingship, including his royal family (see 2 Sam.3.3). 44: *Michal*, first supportive of David (19.11–17), later changed (2 Sam.3.14–16; 6.20–23).

26.1–25: David again spares Saul's life. This narrative was originally an alternative version

- 6 David turned to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and said, 'Who will venture with me into the camp, to go to Saul?'
- 7 Abishai answered, 'I will.' David and Abishai entered the camp at night and found Saul lying asleep within the lines with his spear thrust into the ground by his head. Abner and the army were
- 8 lying all round him. Abishai said to David, 'God has put your enemy into your power today; let me strike him and pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I shall not have to
- 9 strike twice.' David said to him, 'Do him no harm; who has ever lifted a finger against the LORD's anointed and gone unpunished? As the LORD lives,' went on David, 'the LORD will strike him down; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go
- 10 down to battle and meet his end. God forbid that I should lift a finger against the LORD's anointed! But now let us take the spear which is by his
- 11 head, and the water-jar, and go.' So David took the spear and the water-jar from beside Saul's head and they went. The whole camp was asleep; no one saw him, no one knew anything, no one even woke up. A heavy sleep
- 12 sent by the LORD had fallen on them.
- 13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on the top of a hill a long way off; there was no little
- 14 distance between them. David shouted across to the army and hailed Abner, 'Answer me, Abner!' He answered, 'Who are you to shout to the king?'
- 15 David said to Abner, 'Do you call yourself a man? Is there anyone like you in Israel? Why, then, did you not keep watch over your lord the king, when someone came to harm your
- 16 lord the king? This was not well done. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, all of you, because you have not kept watch over your master the LORD's anointed. Look! Where are the king's spear and the water-jar that were by his head?'
- 17 Saul recognized David's voice and
- said, 'Is that you, David my son?' 'Yes, sir, it is', said David. 'Why must your majesty pursue me? What have I done? What mischief am I plotting? Listen, my lord, to what I have to say. If it is the LORD who has set you against me, may an offering be acceptable to him; but if it is men, a curse on them in the LORD's name; for they have ousted me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have banished me to serve other gods! Do not let my blood be shed on foreign soil, far from the presence of the LORD, just because the king of Israel came out to look for a flea, as one might hunt a partridge over the hills.'
- Saul answered, 'I have done wrong; come back, David my son. You have held my life precious this day, and I will never harm you again. I have been a fool, I have been sadly in the wrong.'
- David answered, 'Here is the king's spear; let one of your men come across and fetch it. The LORD who rewards uprightness and loyalty will reward the man into whose power he put you today, when I refused to lift a finger against the LORD's anointed. As I held your life precious today, so may the LORD hold mine precious and deliver me from every distress.'
- Then Saul said to David, 'A blessing is on you, David my son. You will do great things and be victorious.' So David went on his way and Saul returned home.
- David thought, 'One of these days I shall be killed by Saul. The best thing for me to do will be to escape into Philistine territory; then Saul will lose all further hope of finding me anywhere in Israel, search as he may, and I shall escape his clutches.'
- So David and his six hundred men crossed the frontier forthwith to Achish son of Maoch king of Gath. David settled in Gath with Achish, taking with him his men and their families and his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. Saul was told that David had escaped to Gath,

of 23.14-24.22. 9-11: On David's speech, see 24.4-7 n. Saul's *spear* is recurrently prominent; see 18.10-11; 19.9-10; 22.6. 12: The *heavy sleep* introduces a miraculous element not really required by the story.

27.1-28.2: David becomes a vassal of Achish of Gath. The narrow escapes in the Wilderness

5 and he gave up the search. David said to Achish, 'If I stand well in your opinion, grant me a place in one of your country towns where I may settle. Why should I remain in the royal city with your majesty?' Achish granted him Ziklag on that day: that is why Ziklag still belongs to the kings of Judah.

7 David spent a year and four months in Philistine country. He and his men would sally out and raid the Geshurites, the Gizrites, and the Amalekites, for it was they who inhabited the country from Telaim<sup>q</sup> all the way to Shur and Egypt. When David raided the country he left no one alive, man or woman; he took flocks and herds, asses and camels, and clothes too, and then came back again to Achish. When Achish asked, 'Where was your raid today?', David would answer, 'The Negeb of Judah' or 'The Negeb of the Jerahmeelites' or 'The Negeb of the Kenites'. Neither man nor woman did David bring back alive to Gath, for fear that they should denounce him and his men for what they had done. This was his practice as long as he remained with the Philistines.

12 Achish trusted David, thinking that he had won such a bad name among his own people the Israelites that he would remain his subject all his life.

#### *Saul and his sons killed*

28 IN THOSE DAYS THE PHILISTINES MUSTERED their army for an attack on Israel. Achish said to David, 'You know that you and your men must take the field with me.' David answered Achish, 'Good, you will learn what your servant can do.' And Achish said to David, 'I will make you my bodyguard for life.'

By this time Samuel was dead, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city; and Saul had banished from the land all who trafficked with ghosts and spirits. The Philistines mustered and encamped at Shunem, and Saul gathered all the Israelites and encamped on Gilboa; and when Saul saw the Philistine force, fear struck him to the heart. He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him, whether by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. So he said to his servants, 'Find me a woman who has a familiar spirit, and I will go and inquire through her.' His servants told him that there was such a woman at En-dor. Saul put on different clothes and went in disguise with two of his men. He came to the woman by night and said, 'Tell me my fortunes by consulting the dead, and call up the man I name to you.' But the woman answered, 'Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has made away with those who call up ghosts and spirits; why do you press me to do what will lead to my death?' Saul swore her an oath: 'As the LORD lives, no harm shall come to you for this.' The woman asked whom she should call up, and Saul answered, 'Samuel.' When the woman saw Samuel appear, she shrieked and said to Saul, 'Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!' The king said to her, 'Do not be afraid. What do you see?' The woman answered, 'I see a ghostly form coming up from the earth.' 'What is it like?' he asked; she answered, 'Like an old man coming up, wrapped in a cloak.' Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed low with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself. Samuel said to Saul, 'Why have you disturbed me

*q* from Telaim: *prob. rdg.*: Heb. from of old.

finally drive David (again) to the protection of the Philistines; see 21.10-15. 5-6: David had a feudal relation to Achish; he owed certain military duties (28.1) in return for the benefits of the territory of Ziklag. 7-8: David's raids were in regions south of Judah. 10: Jerahmeelites and Kenites were clans eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah; see 1 Chr.2.25, 55. Negeb means "dry country"; here it is applied to a small local region.

28.3-25: Saul and the ghost of Samuel. The collapse of Saul's personality and character reaches its climax. 3: Consultation of *ghosts* and *spirits* of the dead was consistently opposed in Israelite religious practice; see Lev.19.31; 20.6,27; Deut.18.10-11; 2 Kgs.23.24. 4: The movement of the Philistines anticipates ch. 29. 6: To be auspicious, important decisions needed divine sanction; compare 14.18,36-37; 23.1-13. 13: *Coming up from the earth* means up from

and brought me up?' Saul answered, 'I am in great trouble; the Philistines are pressing me and God has turned away; he no longer answers me through prophets or through dreams, and I have summoned you to tell me what I should do.' Samuel said, 'Why do you ask me, now that the LORD has turned from you and become your adversary? He has done what he foretold through me. He has torn the kingdom from your hand and given it to another man, to David. You have not obeyed the LORD, or executed the judgement of his fury against the Amalekites; that is why he has done this to you today. For the same reason the LORD will let your people Israel fall into the hands of the Philistines and, what is more, tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. Yes, indeed, the LORD will give the Israelite army into the hands of the Philistines.'

20 Saul was overcome and fell his full length to the ground, terrified by Samuel's words. He had no strength left, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.

21 The woman went to Saul and saw that he was much disturbed, and she said to him, 'I listened to what you said and I risked my life to obey you.

22 Now listen to me: let me set before you a little food to give you strength for your journey.' But he refused to eat anything. When his servants joined the woman in pressing him, he yielded, rose from the ground and sat on the couch. The woman had a fatted calf at home, which she quickly slaughtered. She took some meal, kneaded it and baked unleavened cakes, which she set before Saul and his servants. They ate the food and departed that same night.

29 The Philistines mustered all their troops at Aphek, while the Israelites encamped at En-harod<sup>r</sup> in Jezreel. The Philistine princes were advancing with their troops in units of a hundred and

a thousand; David and his men were in the rear of the column with Achish. The Philistine commanders asked, 'Why are those Hebrews there?' Achish answered, 'This is David, the servant of Saul king of Israel who has been with me now for a year or more. I have had no fault to find in him ever since he came over to me.' The Philistine commanders were indignant and said to Achish, 'Send the man back to the town which you allotted to him. He shall not fight side by side with us, or he may turn traitor in the battle. What better way to buy his master's favour, than at the price of our lives? This is that David of whom they sang, as they danced:

Saul made havoc among thousands  
but David among tens of thousands.'

Achish summoned David and said to him, 'As the LORD lives, you are an upright man and your service with my troops has well satisfied me. I have had no fault to find with you ever since you joined me, but the other princes are not willing to accept you. Now go home in peace, and you will then be doing nothing that they can regard as wrong.' David protested, 'What have I done, or what fault have you found in me from the day I first entered your service till now, that I should not come and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?' Achish answered David, 'I agree that you have been as true to me as an angel of God, but the Philistine commanders insist that you shall not fight alongside them. Now rise early in the morning with those of your lord's subjects who have followed you, and go to the town which I allotted to you; harbour no evil thoughts, for I am well satisfied with you. Rise early and start as soon as it is light.' So David and his men rose early to start

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. at the spring.*

Sheol, the underground abode of the dead; see 2.6 n. 17-18: This may be a later writer's harmonization with ch. 15. There (15.28) the *man* was anonymous; here he is named as *David*. 29.1-11: **David's exclusion by the Philistines from the war against Saul. 1:** The Philistines aimed at occupying the valley of Jezreel that cuts across from the Mediterranean to the Jordan Valley. Saul seeks to stop them at the narrowest part of that valley. 3-6: The Philistines mistrust David. On *Hebrews*, see 14.21 n. 5: See 18.7 n.

that morning on their way back to the land of the Philistines, while the Philistines went on to Jezreel.

- 30 On the third day David and his men reached Ziklag. Now the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negeb, attacked Ziklag and set fire to it; they had carried off all the women, high and low, without putting one of them to death. These they drove with them and continued their march. When David and his men approached the town, they found it destroyed by fire, and their wives, their sons, and their daughters carried off. David and the people with him wept aloud until they could weep no more. David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel, were among the captives. David was in a desperate position because the people, embittered by the loss of their sons and daughters, threatened to stone him. So David sought strength in the LORD his God. He told Abiathar the priest, son of Ahimelech, to bring the ephod. When Abiathar had brought the ephod, David inquired of the LORD, 'Shall I pursue these raiders? and shall I overtake them?' The answer came, 'Pursue them: you will overtake them and rescue everyone.' So David and his six hundred men set out and reached the ravine of Besor.<sup>s</sup> Two hundred of them who were too weary to cross the ravine stayed behind, and David with four hundred pressed on in pursuit. In the open country they came across an Egyptian and took him to David. They gave him food to eat and water to drink, also a lump of dried figs and two bunches of raisins. When he had eaten these he revived; for he had had nothing to eat or drink for three days and nights. David asked him, 'Whose slave are you? and where have you come from?' 'I am an Egyptian boy,' he answered, 'the slave of an Amalekite, but my master left me behind because I fell ill three days ago. We had raided the Negeb of the Kerethites, part of Judah, and the

Negeb of Caleb; we also set fire to Ziklag.' David asked, 'Can you guide me to this band?' 'Swear to me by God', he answered, 'that you will not put me to death or hand me back to my master, and I will guide you to them.' So he led him down, and there they were scattered everywhere, eating and drinking and celebrating the capture of the great mass of spoil taken from Philistine and Judean territory.

David attacked from dawn till dusk and continued till next day; only four hundred young men mounted on camels made good their escape. David rescued all those whom the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. No one was missing, high or low, sons or daughters, and none of the spoil, nor anything they had taken for themselves: David recovered everything. They took all the flocks and herds, drove the cattle before him<sup>t</sup> and said, 'This is David's spoil.' When David returned to the two hundred men who had been too weak to follow him and whom he had left behind at the ravine of Besor, they came forward to meet him and his men. David greeted them all, inquiring how things were with them. But some of those who had gone with David, worthless men and scoundrels, broke in and said, 'These men did not go with us; we will not allot them any of the spoil that we have retrieved, except that each of them may take his own wife and children and then go.' 'That you shall never do,' said David, 'considering what the LORD has given us, and how he has kept us safe and given the raiding party into our hands. Who could agree with what you propose? Those who stayed with the stores shall have the same share as those who went into battle. They shall share and share alike.' From that time onwards, this has been the established custom in Israel down to this day.

<sup>s</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds those who were left over remained.*

<sup>t</sup> They took . . . before him: *prob. rdg.; Heb. David took all the flocks and herds; they drove before that cattle.*

30.1-31: David's reprisal against the Amalekites. Saul's campaign (15.1-9) did not prevent the Amalekites from harassing the southern Judean clans. 6: Compare David's situation here with that of Moses in Exod.17.4. 7-8: David is again scrupulous in consulting the LORD; see 23.1-13. 14: The *Kerethites* were Cretans, closely related to the Philistines; see Zeph.2.5 and



26 When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah and to his friends, with this message: 'This is a present for you out of the spoil taken from the LORD's enemies.' He sent to those in Bethuel, 27 in Ramoth-negeb, in Jattir, in Ararah,<sup>u</sup> 28 in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, in Rachal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, in Hormah, 30 in Borashan, in Athak, in Hebron, and in all the places over which he and his men had ranged.

31<sup>v</sup> The Philistines fought a battle against Israel, and the men of Israel were routed, leaving their dead on Mount 2 Gilboa. The Philistines hotly pursued Saul and his sons and killed the three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua. The battle went hard for Saul, for some archers came upon him and he was wounded in the belly 4 by the archers. So he said to his armour-bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through, so that these uncircumcised brutes may not come and taunt me and make sport of me.' But the armour-bearer refused, he dared not; whereupon Saul took his own 5 sword and fell on it. When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. 6 Thus they all died together on that

day, Saul, his three sons, and his armour-bearer, as well as his men. And all the 7 Israelites in the district of the Vale and of the Jordan, when they saw that the other Israelites had fled and that Saul and his sons had perished, fled likewise, abandoning their cities, and the Philistines went in and occupied them.

Next day, when the Philistines came 8 to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. They cut off his head and 9 stripped him of his weapons; then they sent messengers through the length and breadth of their land to take the good news to idols and people alike. They deposited his armour in 10 the temple of Ashtoreth and nailed his body on the wall of Beth-shan. When the inhabitants of Jabesh- 11 gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, the bravest of them 12 journeyed together all night long and recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan; they brought them back to Jabesh and anointed them there with spices. Then 13 they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk-tree in Jabesh, and fasted for seven days.

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. Aroer.  
<sup>v</sup> Verses 1-13: cp. 1 Chr. 10. 1-12.

Ezek.25.16. The *Negeb of Caleb* was in the vicinity of Hebron; see Josh.15.13-19. 26-31: David is currying favor preparatory to becoming king. On the *Jerahmeelites* and *Kenites*; see 27.10 n.

31.1-13: **The death of Saul.** Saul had made some headway against the Philistines and here sought to prevent their occupation of the central valley; see 29.1 n. The result, however, was disastrous. 10: *Ashtoreth*; see 7.4 n. *Beth-shan*: probably the Canaanite city in the eastern part of the valley, near Mount Gilboa (v. 8). 11-13: The inhabitants of *Jabesh-gilead* were grateful to Saul for his rescue of them; see ch. 11.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

Without a break, the story begun in 1 Samuel continues in 2 Samuel (see Introduction to 1 Samuel). The focus of the narrative is on David the king, first (chs. 1-8) on the establishment of his rule in Judah and in Israel, then (chs. 9-20) on events largely related to the issue of succession to the throne. Chapters 21-24 appear to be an intrusive appendix concerning David's reign (see 21.1-24.25 n.), but the throne succession narrative is concluded in 1 Kings chs. 1-2.

Beginning with 8.1-18, the relationship of the report in 2 Samuel to that in the books of Chronicles is such that the annotations which cross-reference to the latter work deserve special attention.

## *David's rule at Hebron*

1 **W**HEN DAVID RETURNED FROM his victory over the Amalekites, he spent two days in Ziklag. And on the third day after Saul's death a man came from the army with his clothes rent and dust on his head. When he came into David's presence 3 he fell to the ground in obeisance, and David asked him where he had come from. He answered, 'I have escaped 4 from the army of Israel.' And David said to him, 'What news? Tell me.' 'The army has been driven from the field,' he answered, 'and many have 5 fallen in battle. Saul and Jonathan his son are dead.' David said to the young man who brought the news, 'How do 6 you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?' The man answered, 'It so happened that I was on Mount Gilboa and saw Saul leaning on his spear with the chariots and horsemen closing in 7 upon him. He turned round and, seeing me, called to me. I said, "What is it, sir?" He asked who I was, and I 8 said, "An Amalekite." Then he said to me, "Come and stand over me and 9 dispatch me. I still live, but the throes of death have seized me." So I stood 10 over him and gave him the death-blow; for I knew that, broken as he

was, he could not live. Then I took the crown from his head and the armband from his arm, and I have brought them here to you, sir.' At that David 11 caught at his clothes and rent them, and so did all the men with him. They 12 beat their breasts and wept, because Saul and Jonathan his son and the people of the LORD, the house of 13 Israel, had fallen in battle; and they fasted till evening. David said to the young man who brought the news, 14 'Where do you come from?', and he answered, 'I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite.' 'How is it', said David, 15 'that you were not afraid to raise your hand to slay the LORD's anointed?' And he summoned one of his own 16 young men and ordered him to fall upon the man. So the young man struck him down and killed him; and David 17 said, 'Your blood be on your own head; for out of your own mouth you condemned yourself when you said, 18 "I killed the LORD's anointed."'

David made this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son; and he ordered that this dirge over them should be taught to the people of Judah. It was written down and may be found in the Book of Jashar:<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Or the Book of the Upright.

**1.1-5.25: David acquires the kingship.** This is the concluding section of the history of the rise of David (see 1 Sam.16.1-2 Sam.5.25 n.). Though strongly favorable toward David, it is a fine piece of balanced historical writing.

**1.1-27: David learns of Saul's death.** Throughout the account of his rise David is viewed as maintaining scrupulous loyalty toward Saul. That emphasis here reaches its strongest expression. **1:** The narrative resumes from the end of 1 Sam. ch. 30. **2:** Compare the messenger in 1 Sam.4.12. **6:** On Saul's spear, see 1 Sam.26.9-11 n. **8:** The Amalekite was a mercenary in the Israelite army. **14:** On the LORD's anointed, see 1 Sam.14.4-7 n. **17-27:** Since David was a harpist (1 Sam.16.14-23) this dirge may indeed go back to him. It is lyric poetry without any particular religious aspect. **18:** Jashar: "Upright." On the Book of Jashar see Josh.10.13 n.

- 19 O prince of Israel, laid low in death!  
How are the men of war fallen!
- 20 Tell it not in Gath,  
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,  
lest the Philistine women rejoice,  
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.
- 21 Hills of Gilboa, let no dew or rain fall on you,  
no showers on the uplands<sup>b</sup>!  
For there the shields of the warriors lie tarnished,  
and the shield of Saul, no longer bright with oil.
- 22 The bow of Jonathan never held back from the breast of the foe, from the blood of the slain;  
the sword of Saul never returned empty to the scabbard.
- 23 Delightful and dearly loved were Saul and Jonathan;  
in life, in death, they were not parted.  
They were swifter than eagles,  
stronger than lions.
- 24 Weep for Saul, O daughters of Israel!  
who clothed you in scarlet and rich embroideries,  
who spangled your dress with jewels of gold.
- 25 How are the men of war fallen,  
fallen on the field!  
O Jonathan, laid low in death!
- 26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother;
- dear and delightful you were to me;  
your love for me was wonderful,  
surpassing the love of women.
- 27 Fallen, fallen are the men of war;  
and their armour left on the field.
- 28 After this David inquired of the LORD, 'Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?' The LORD answered, 'Go.' David asked, 'To which city?'; and the answer came, 'To Hebron.' So David went to Hebron with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also brought the men who had joined him, with their families, and they settled in the city<sup>c</sup> of Hebron. The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.
- 29 Word came to David that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul, and he sent them this message: 'The LORD bless you because you kept faith with Saul your lord and buried him. For this may the LORD keep faith and truth with you, and I for my part will show you favour too, because you have done this. Be strong, be valiant, now that Saul your lord is dead, and the people of Judah have anointed me to be king over them.'
- 30 Meanwhile Saul's commander-in-chief, Abner son of Ner, had taken Saul's son Ishbosheth, brought him across the Jordan to Mahanaim, and made him king over Gilead, the Asherites, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin,

<sup>b</sup> showers on the uplands: *prob. rdg.; Heb. fields of offerings.*  
<sup>c</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. cities.*

Its contents may have been taught to the people, probably by recitation at assemblies and festivals. 20: *Uncircumcised*: see 1 Sam.14.6 n. 21: The place of Saul's death should be afflicted with drought. The leather shields were kept in good condition with oil.

2.1-7: David becomes king of Judah. 1-3: David again carefully consults the LORD about his movements; see 1 Sam.23.1-13; 30.7-8. With Saul gone, the men of Judah take their own steps against the Philistines. 4b-7: David's message to the men of Jabesh-gilead had its political motivations, for it was in the territory of the remnant kingdom of Saul's son.

2.8-5.5: All Israel comes to David. There is a twofold concern throughout this narrative: to show how events worked inevitably toward David's becoming king of all Israel, but also that he himself remained blameless of bloodshed and other offenses in the process. 8: The name literally means "man (*ish*) of shame (*bosheth*)"; the *bosheth* was originally "baal," and then the name meant "man of Baal." Late editors eliminated here the abhorred name of the Canaanite deity; the change was not made in Chr. ("Eshbaal," 1 Chr.8.33; 9.39). Mahanaim was a prominent city in Gilead. It also served as a refuge for David when he had to flee to the east (17.24). 9: That Ishbosheth actually ruled over all Israel is an exaggeration, an instance of court etiquette.

10 and all Israel. Ishbosheth was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The tribe of Judah, however, followed  
11 David. David's rule over Judah in Hebron lasted seven years and a half.

12 Abner son of Ner, with the troops of Saul's son Ishbosheth, marched out from Mahanaim to Gibeon, and Joab son of Zeruiah marched out with David's troops from Hebron. They met at the pool of Gibeon and took up their positions one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side.  
14 Abner said to Joab, 'Let the young men come forward and join in single combat before us.' Joab answered,  
15 'Yes, let them.' So they came up, one by one, and took their places, twelve for Benjamin and for Ishbosheth and twelve  
16 from David's men. Each man seized his opponent by the head and thrust his sword into his side; and thus they fell together. That is why that place, which lies in Gibeon, was called the Field of Blades.

17 There ensued a fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were  
18 defeated by David's troops. All three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Asahel, who was  
19 swift as a gazelle on the plains, ran straight after Abner, swerving neither  
20 to right nor left in his pursuit. Abner turned and asked, 'Is it you, Asahel?'  
21 Asahel answered, 'It is.' Abner said, 'Turn aside to right or left, tackle one of the young men and win his belt for yourself.' But Asahel would not  
22 abandon the pursuit. Abner again urged him to give it up. 'Why should I kill you?' he said. 'How could I look  
23 Joab your brother in the face?' When he still refused to turn aside, Abner struck him in the belly with a back-thrust of his spear<sup>d</sup> so that the spear came out behind him, and he fell dead in his tracks. All who came to the place where Asahel lay dead stopped  
24 there. But Joab and Abishai kept up

the pursuit of Abner, until, at sunset, they reached the hill of Ammah, opposite Giah on the road leading to the pastures of Gibeon.

The Benjamites rallied to Abner and,  
25 forming themselves into a single company, took up their stand on the top of the hill of Ammah.<sup>e</sup> Abner called  
26 to Joab, 'Must the slaughter go on for ever? Can you not see that it will be all the more bitter in the end? Will you never recall the people from the pursuit of their kinsmen?' Joab answered,  
27 'As God lives, if you had not spoken, the people would not have given up the pursuit till morning.' Then Joab  
28 sounded the trumpet, and all the people abandoned the pursuit of the men of Israel and the fighting ceased. Abner and his men moved along the  
29 Arabah all that night, crossed the Jordan and went on all the morning till they reached Mahanaim. When  
30 Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner, he assembled his troops and found that, besides Asahel, nineteen of David's men were missing. David's  
31 forces had routed the Benjamites and the followers of Abner, killing three hundred and sixty of them. They took  
32 up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb at Bethlehem. Joab and his men marched all night, and as day broke they reached Hebron.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE HOUSES OF SAUL 3  
and David was long drawn out, David growing steadily stronger while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.

Sons were born to David at Hebron.<sup>f</sup>  
His eldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second  
3 Chileab, whose mother was Abigail widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third Absalom, whose mother was Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth Adonijah, whose mother 4

<sup>d</sup> a back-thrust of his spear: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>e</sup> the hill of Ammah: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. verse 24*; *Heb.* a single hill.  
<sup>f</sup> Verses 2-5: *cp. 1 Chr. 3. 1-4.*

10-11: The chronology here is difficult. But if Ishbosheth reigned only two years, and then David became king of all Israel, David's wars with the Philistines (5.17-25) probably preceded his conquest of Jerusalem (5.6-10); thereby we can possibly understand the *seven years and a half* of his reign at Hebron. 16: The exact nature of this combat is obscure. 22: Abner wishes to avoid a blood feud with his respected opponent. 29: Arabah, "dry place," is the southern Jordan Valley. 3.2-5: This is an editorial addition to the main narrative. 7: To take a king's

was Haggith; the fifth Shephathiah,  
5 whose mother was Abital; and the  
sixth Ithream, whose mother was  
David's wife Eglah. These were all  
born to David at Hebron.

6 As the war between the houses of  
Saul and David went on, Abner made  
his position gradually stronger in the  
7 house of Saul. Now Saul had had a  
concubine named Rizpah daughter of  
Aiah. Ishbosheth asked Abner, 'Why  
8 have you slept with my father's con-  
cubine?' Abner was very angry at this  
and exclaimed, 'Am I a baboon in the  
pay of Judah? Up to now I have been  
loyal to the house of your father Saul,  
to his brothers and friends, and I have  
not betrayed you into David's hands;  
yet you choose this moment to charge  
me with disloyalty over this woman.  
9 But now, so help me God, I will do all  
I can to bring about what the LORD  
10 swore to do for David: I will set to  
work to bring down the house of Saul  
and to put David on the throne over  
Israel and Judah from Dan to Beer-  
11 sheba.' Ishbosheth could not say  
another word; he was too much afraid  
12 of Abner. Then Abner, seeking to  
make friends where he could, instead of  
going to David himself sent envoys with  
this message: 'Let us come to terms, and  
I will do all I can to bring the whole  
13 of Israel over to you.' David sent  
answer: 'Good, I will come to terms  
with you, but on this one condition,  
that you do not come into my presence  
without bringing Saul's daughter Mi-  
14 chal to me.' David also sent messengers  
to Saul's son Ishbosheth with the  
demand: 'Hand over to me my wife  
Michal to whom I was betrothed at  
the price of a hundred Philistine fore-  
15 skins.' Thereupon Ishbosheth sent and  
took her away from her husband,  
16 Paltiel son of Laish. Paltiel followed  
her as far as Bahurim, weeping all the  
way, until Abner ordered him to go back  
home, and he went.

Abner now approached the elders 17  
of Israel and said, 'For some time  
past you have wanted David for your  
king; now is the time to act, for this 18  
is the word of the LORD about David:  
"By the hand of my servant David I  
will deliver my people Israel from the  
Philistines and from all their ene- 19  
mies."' Abner spoke also to the Ben-  
jamites and then went on to report to  
David at Hebron all that the Israelites  
and the Benjamites had agreed. When 20  
Abner was admitted to David's pres-  
ence, there were twenty men with him  
and David gave a feast for them all.  
Then Abner said to David, 'I shall now 21  
go and bring the whole of Israel over  
to your majesty, and they shall make a  
covenant with you. Then you will be  
king over a realm after your own heart.'  
David dismissed Abner, granting him  
safe conduct.

David's men and Joab returned 22  
from a raid bringing a great deal of  
plunder with them, and by this time  
Abner, after his dismissal, was no  
longer with David in Hebron. So when 23  
Joab and his raiding party arrived,  
they were greeted with the news that  
Abner son of Ner had been with the  
king and had departed under safe  
conduct. Joab went in to the king 24  
and said, 'What have you done?  
Here you have had Abner with you.  
How could you let him go? He has got  
clean away! You know Abner son of 25  
Ner: he came meaning to deceive you,  
to learn all about your movements and  
to find out what you are doing.' When 26  
he left David's presence, Joab sent  
messengers after Abner and they  
brought him back from the Pool of  
Sirah; but David knew nothing of all  
this. On Abner's return to Hebron, 27  
Joab drew him aside in the gateway,  
as though to speak privately with him,  
and there, in revenge for his brother  
Asahel, he stabbed him in the belly,  
and he died. When David heard the 28

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concubine was an act of treason; compare 16.20-22; 1 Kgs.2.13-24. 14: David's interest in *Michal* was for a claim, as son-in-law, of continuity with Saul. 19: In this entire narrative the *Benjamites* are depicted as remarkably independent, probably because they were Saul's tribe. 22-27: Joab's killing of Abner threatened to undo David's plans to become king of all Israel; hence David's great anger. 28-39: The violent outbreak and conspicuous mourning over *Abner* reflect David's need to persuade the Israelites of his own innocence. David may curse *Joab* (v. 29), but Joab is far too valuable to execute, as had been done to the Amalekite

news he said, 'I and my realm are for ever innocent in the sight of the LORD  
 29 of the blood of Abner son of Ner. May it recoil upon the head of Joab and upon all his family! May the house of Joab never be free from running sore or foul disease, nor lack a son fit only to ply the distaff or doomed to die by  
 30 the sword or beg his bread!' So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner because he had killed their brother  
 31 Asahel in battle at Gibeon. Then David ordered Joab and all the people with him to rend their clothes, put on sackcloth and beat their breasts for Abner, and the king himself walked  
 32 behind the bier. They buried Abner in Hebron and the king wept aloud at the tomb, while all the people wept  
 33 with him. The king made this lament for Abner:

Must Abner die so base a death?  
 34 Your hands were not bound,  
 your feet not thrust into fetters;  
 you fell as one who falls at a  
 ruffian's hands.

And the people wept for him again.  
 35 They came to persuade David to eat something; but it was still day and he swore, 'So help me God! I will not touch food of any kind before sunset.'  
 36 The people took note of this and approved; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. Everyone throughout Israel knew on that day that the king  
 37 had had no hand in the murder of Abner son of Ner. The king said to his servants, 'Do you not know that a warrior, a great man, has fallen this  
 38 day in Israel? King though I am, I feel weak and powerless in face of these ruthless sons of Zeruiah; they are too  
 39 much for me; the LORD will requite the wrongdoer as he deserves.'  
 4 When Saul's son Ishbosheth heard that Abner had been killed in Hebron, his courage failed him and all Israel  
 2 was dismayed. Now Ishbosheth had<sup>g</sup>

two officers, who were captains of raiding parties, and whose names were Baanah and Rechab; they were Benjamites, sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, Beeroth being reckoned part of Benjamin; but the Beerothites had fled to  
 3 Gittaim, where they have lived ever since.

(Saul's son Jonathan had a son lame  
 4 in both feet. He was five years old when word of the death of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse had picked him up and fled, but in her hurry to get away he fell and was crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.)

Rechab and Baanah, the sons of  
 5 Rimmon of Beeroth, came to the house of Ishbosheth in the heat of the day and went in, while he was taking his  
 6 midday rest. Now the door-keeper had been sifting wheat, but she had grown  
 7 drowsy and fallen asleep, so Rechab and his brother Baanah crept in, found  
 8 their way to the room where he was asleep on the bed, and struck him dead. They cut off his head and took  
 9 it with them, and, making their way along the Arabah all night, came  
 10 to Hebron. They brought Ishbosheth's head to David at Hebron and said to the king, 'Here is the head of Ishbosheth son of Saul, your enemy, who  
 11 sought your life. The LORD has avenged your majesty today on Saul and on his family.' David answered Rechab  
 and his brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon of Beeroth, with an oath: 'As the LORD lives, who has rescued  
 me from all my troubles! I seized the  
 10 man who brought me word that Saul was dead and thought it good news; I killed him in Ziklag, and that was  
 how I rewarded him for his news. How much more when ruffians have  
 11 killed an innocent man on his bed in his own house? Am I not to take vengeance on you now for the blood you have shed, and rid the earth of

<sup>g</sup> had: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

(1.15) and was to be done to the assassins of Ishbosheth (4.12). 29: A *distaff* was an instrument used in spinning thread from wool, a womanly task. 4.2: *Beeroth* was a village of the old city-state of Gibeon (Josh.9.17), with which Saul had some kind of feud (21.1), and which may have led to *Beeroth being reckoned part of Benjamin*. 4: Another editorial addition; it prepares for ch. 9. *Mephibosheth* is a distortion of the original Meribbaal; see 2.8 n. 11. David does not speak of Ishbosheth as the Lord's anointed, as he did of Saul (1 Sam.24.4-7 n.), but only as an

12 you?' David gave the word, and the young men killed them; they cut off their hands and feet and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron, but the head of Ishbosheth they took and buried in Abner's tomb at Hebron.

*David king in Jerusalem*

51<sup>a</sup> NOW ALL THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL CAME to David at Hebron and said to him, 'We are your own flesh and blood. 2 In the past, while Saul was still king over us, you led the forces of Israel to war and you brought them home again. And the LORD said to you, "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel; 3 you shall be their prince.'" All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; there David made a covenant with them before the LORD, and they 4 anointed David king over Israel. David came to the throne at the age of thirty 5 and reigned for forty years. In Hebron he had ruled over Judah for seven years and a half, and for thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem over Israel and Judah together. 6 The king and his men went to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, whose land it was. The Jebusites said to David, 'Never shall you come in here; not till you have disposed of the blind and the lame', meaning that 7 David should never come in. None the less David did capture the stronghold of Zion, and it is now known as the 8 City of David. David said on that day, 'Everyone who would kill a Jebusite, let him use his grappling-iron to

reach the lame and the blind, David's bitter enemies.' That is why they say, 'No blind or lame man shall come into the LORD's house.'

David took up his residence in the 9 stronghold and called it the City of David. He built the city<sup>i</sup> round it, starting at the Millo and working inwards. So David steadily grew 10 stronger, for the LORD the God of Hosts was with him.

Hiram king of Tyre sent an embassy 11<sup>f</sup> to David; he sent cedar logs, and with them carpenters and stonemasons, who built David a house. David knew by 12 now that the LORD had confirmed him as king over Israel and had made his royal power stand higher for the sake of his people Israel.

After he had moved from Hebron 13 he took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem; and more sons and daughters were born to him. These 14<sup>g</sup> are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, I Bhar, Elishua, 15 Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and 16 Eliphelet.

When the Philistines learnt that 17 David had been anointed king over Israel, they came up in force to seek him out. David, hearing of this, took refuge in the stronghold. The Philistines 18 had come and overrun the Vale of Rephaim. So David inquired of the 19 LORD, 'If I attack the Philistines, wilt thou deliver them into my hands?'

*h* Verses 1-3, 6-10: cp. 1 Chr. 11, 1-9.

*i* the city: prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 11, 8; Heb. om.

*j* Verses 11-25: cp. 1 Chr. 14, 1-16.

*k* Verses 14-16: cp. 1 Chr. 3, 5-8; 14, 4-7.

*innocent man!* 5.2: On *prince*, see 1 Sam.9.15-16 n. 3: In contrast to David's rule of Jerusalem, this is a kingship by *covenant*, not by conquest. The *covenant* was subject to renewal by each new king; see 1 Kgs.12.1. 4-5: The *forty years* of David's reign may be a round number, but it is approximately correct. His conquest of Jerusalem occurred very near the year 1000 B.C.

5.6-10: *Jerusalem becomes the City of David.* *Jerusalem* was a very ancient settlement or city as much as a thousand years earlier than the age of David. Biblical traditions about it vary. In Judg.19.10 its name is Jebus, and it is there a Jebusite city; in Josh.10.1-10 its forces are defeated; it is captured in Judg.1.8 and then burned. The account here seems unaware of the capture of Jerusalem in Judg.1.8. David was seeking a base that had no previous alliance with either Israel to the north or Judah to the south. By capturing the city in the way he did it became his private property, the *City of David*. He did not destroy the city or kill its population (for contrast, see 1 Kgs.9.16). 7: *Zion*: a hill crest in Jerusalem, it is a poetic term for the city, frequent in the Psalms and prophetic writings but rare in prose texts. The name *Zion* became attached to the area where Solomon's Temple was built.

5.11-25: *David secures his kingdom.* 11: That *Hiram king of Tyre* took these measures indicates that David, after defeating the Philistines, became a power to be reckoned with. 17-25: These two notices of defeats of *the Philistines* are regrettably laconic, interested primarily in

And the LORD answered, 'Go, I will deliver the Philistines into your hands.'  
 20 So he went up and attacked them at Baal-perazim and defeated them there. 'The LORD has broken through my enemies' lines,' David said, 'as a river breaks its banks.' That is why the place  
 21 was named Baal-perazim.<sup>1</sup> The Philistines left their idols behind them there, and David and his men carried them off.  
 22 The Philistines made another attack and overran the Vale of Rephaim.  
 23 David inquired of the LORD, who said, 'Do not attack now but wheel round and take them in the rear opposite the  
 24 aspens. As soon as you hear a rustling sound in the tree-tops, then act at once; for the LORD will have gone out before you to defeat the Philistine  
 25 army.' David did as the LORD had commanded, and drove the Philistines in flight all the way from Geba to Gezer.  
 6 After that David again summoned the picked men of Israel, thirty thousand  
 27<sup>m</sup> in all, and went with the whole army to Baalath-judah<sup>n</sup> to fetch the Ark of God which bears the name of the LORD of Hosts, who is enthroned  
 3 upon the cherubim. They mounted the Ark of God on a new cart and conveyed it from the house of Abinadab on the hill, with Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, guiding the cart.  
 4 They took it with the Ark of God upon it from Abinadab's house on the hill,  
 5 with Ahio walking in front. David and all Israel danced for joy before the LORD without restraint to the sound of singing,<sup>o</sup> of harps and lutes, of tambourines and castanets and cymbals.  
 6 But when they came to a certain threshing-floor, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out to the Ark of  
 7 God and took hold of it. The LORD was angry with Uzzah and struck him down there for his rash act. So he

died there beside the Ark of God. David was vexed because the LORD's  
 8 anger had broken out upon Uzzah, and he called the place Perez-uzzah,<sup>p</sup> the name it still bears. David was afraid  
 9 of the LORD that day and said, 'How can I harbour the Ark of the LORD after this?' He felt he could not take  
 10 the Ark of the LORD with him to the City of David, but turned aside and carried it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Thus the Ark of the LORD  
 11 remained at Obed-edom's house for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his family.

When they told David that the LORD  
 12<sup>q</sup> had blessed Obed-edom's family and all that was his because of the Ark of God, he went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David with much rejoicing. When the bearers of the Ark  
 13 of the LORD had gone six steps he sacrificed an ox and a buffalo. David, wearing a linen ephod, danced without  
 14 restraint before the LORD. He and all the Israelites brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouting and blowing  
 15 of trumpets. But as the Ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul's daughter Michal looked down  
 16 through a window and saw King David leaping and capering before the LORD, and she despised him in her  
 17 heart. When they had brought in the Ark of the LORD, they put it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched  
 18 for it, and David offered whole-offerings and shared-offerings before the LORD. After David had completed  
 19 these sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Hosts and

<sup>1</sup> That is Baal of Break-through.

<sup>m</sup> Verses 2-11: cp. 1 Chr. 13. 6-14.

<sup>n</sup> to Baalath-judah: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 13. 6; Heb. from the lords of Judah.

<sup>o</sup> without . . . singing: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 13. 8; Heb. to the beating of batons.

<sup>p</sup> That is Outbreak on Uzzah.

<sup>q</sup> Verses 12-19: cp. 1 Chr. 15. 25-16. 3.

David's guidance by the LORD. No writer pursued this topic in the way that was done with another of David's wars, that against the Ammonites and the Arameans (ch. 10 and 12.26-31).

6.1-23: David brings the Ark to Jerusalem. The account of the Ark was suspended at 1 Sam. 7.1, giving way to the topic of kingship; see 1 Sam. 4.1b-7.1 n. and 8.1-15.35 n. The Ark here moves from the outskirts of Judah to the great sacred city of the future, Jerusalem. 1: *Thirty thousand* is another number that gives an impression rather than a report; see 1 Sam. 13.5 n. 2: *Ark . . . enthroned*: see 1 Sam. 4.4 n. 3: The *new cart* was a ritual requirement; see 1 Sam. 6.7 n. 7: The uncontrollable and dangerous aspect of the deity is prominent in the Ark story; see 1 Sam. 6.19-20. 10: *Obed-edom* was a *Gittite*, that is, a man of Gath, the Philistine city. 12-19: The occasion was one of great festivity. In addition to the procession, dancing, and



- gave food to all the people, a flat loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins, to every man and woman in the whole gathering of the Israelites.
- 20 Then all the people went home. When David returned to greet his household, Michal, Saul's daughter, came out to meet him and said, 'What a glorious day for the king of Israel, when he exposed his person in the sight of his servants' slave-girls like any empty-headed fool!' David answered Michal, 'But it was done in the presence of the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and his family and appointed me prince over Israel, the people of the LORD. Before the LORD I will dance
- 22 for joy, yes, and I will earn yet more disgrace and lower myself still more in your eyes. But those girls of whom you speak, they will honour me for it.'
- 23 Michal, Saul's daughter, had no child to her dying day.
- 7<sup>1r</sup> As soon as the king was established in his house and the LORD had given him security from his enemies on all sides, he said to Nathan the prophet, 'Here I live in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God is housed in curtains.'
- 3 Nathan answered the king, 'Very well, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you.' But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan:
- 5 'Go and say to David my servant, "This is the word of the LORD: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? Down to this day I have never dwelt in a house since I brought Israel up from Egypt; I made my journey in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I journeyed with Israel, did I ever ask any of the judges<sup>s</sup> whom I appointed shepherds of my people Israel why
- they had not built me a house of cedar?" Then say this to my servant David: 8 "This is the word of the LORD of Hosts: I took you from the pastures, and from following the sheep, to be prince over my people Israel. I have 9 been with you wherever you have gone, and have destroyed all the enemies in your path. I will make you a great name among the great ones of the earth. I will assign a place for my 10 people Israel; there I will plant them, and they shall dwell in their own land. They shall be disturbed no more, never again shall wicked men oppress them as they did in the past, ever since 11 the time when I appointed judges over Israel my people; and I will give you peace from all your enemies. The LORD has told you that he would build up your royal house. When your life ends 12 and you rest with your forefathers, I will set up one of your family, one of your own children, to succeed you and I will establish his kingdom. It is he 13 shall build a house in honour of my name, and I will establish his royal throne for ever. I will be his father, 14 and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him as any father might, and not spare the rod. My love 15 will never be withdrawn from him as I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from your path. Your family 16 shall be established and your kingdom shall stand for all time in my sight, and your throne shall be established for ever."'
- Nathan recounted to David all that had been said to him and all that had been revealed. Then King David went 18

<sup>r</sup> Verses 1-29: cp. 1 Chr. 17, 1-27.

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 17, 6; Heb. tribes.

shouting, the many sacrifices supplied meat for banquets, and David concluded the event with gifts to all the people. 20: David was apparently dressed only in the linen ephod (v. 14), a kind of priestly apron.

7.1-29: **The establishment of the house of David.** This is the climax to all that precedes in the books of Samuel. After the legitimacy of kingship was established through Samuel and Saul (1 Sam. chs. 8-14), what remained to establish was the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty. 1-7: David proposes to build a temple. An old tradition about the LORD not dwelling in a permanent house is drawn upon to oppose that plan. That the Ark dwelt in a temple at Shiloh (1 Sam.3.3) is ignored. 2: *Nathan the prophet* first appears here. Since he always appears in Jerusalem and was a close associate of the priest Zadok (1 Kgs.1.32), he may have been a native of Jerusalem. 8-16: There is a deliberate wordplay on *house*: David will not build the LORD a house (the Temple), but the LORD will build David a house (dynasty). 12-15: These verses, concerned with the conduct of later kings, are probably a late expansion of the passage. 17-29: The prayer is often regarded as reflecting a time later than that of David, for it deals with David's *house*, that is, the dynasty of his descendants.

into the presence of the LORD and took his place there and said, 'What am I, Lord GOD, and what is my family, that thou hast brought me thus far? 19 It was a small thing in thy sight to have planned for thy servant's house in days long past. But such, O Lord GOD, is the lot of a man embarked on a high career.<sup>t</sup> And now what more can I say? for well thou knowest thy servant 20 David, O Lord GOD. Thou hast made good thy word; it was thy purpose to spread thy servant's fame, and so thou 21 hast raised me to this greatness. Great indeed art thou, O Lord GOD; we have never heard of one like thee; there is no 22 god but thee. And thy people Israel, to whom can they be compared? Is there any other nation on earth whom thou, O God, hast set out to redeem from slavery to be thy people? Any other for whom thou hast done great and terrible things to win fame for thyself? Any other whom thou hast redeemed for thyself from Egypt by driving out other nations and their 23 gods to make way for them? Thou hast established thy people Israel as thy own for ever, and thou, O LORD, hast become their God. But now, LORD God, perform what thou hast promised for thy servant and his house, and for all time; make good what thou hast 24 said. May thy fame be great for evermore and let men say, "The LORD of Hosts is God over Israel." So shall the house of thy servant David be established before thee. O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, thou hast shown me thy purpose, in saying to thy servant, "I will build up your house"; and therefore I have made bold to offer this 25 prayer to thee. Thou, O Lord GOD, art God; thou hast made these noble promises to thy servant, and thy promises come true; be pleased now to bless thy servant's house that it may continue always before thee; thou, O Lord GOD,

hast promised, and thy blessing shall rest upon thy servant's house for evermore.'

After this David defeated the Philistines and conquered them, and took from them Metheg-ha-ammah. He 2 defeated the Moabites, and he made them lie along the ground and measured them off with a length of cord; for every two lengths that were to be put to death one full length was spared. The Moabites became subject to him and paid him tribute. David also 3 defeated Hadadezer the Rehobite, king of Zobah, who was on his way to re-erect his monument of victory by<sup>v</sup> the river Euphrates. From him David 4 captured seventeen hundred horse and twenty thousand foot; he hamstringed all the chariot-horses, except a hundred which he retained. When the Aramaeans of Damascus came to the help of Hadadezer king of Zobah, David destroyed twenty-two thousand of them, and established garrisons among 5 these Aramaeans; they became subject to him and paid him tribute. Thus the LORD gave David victory wherever he went. David took the gold quivers 7 borne by Hadadezer's servants and brought them to Jerusalem; and he 8 also took a great quantity of bronze<sup>w</sup> from Hadadezer's cities, Betah and Berothai.

When Toi king of Hamath heard 9 that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, he sent his son 10 Joram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on defeating Hadadezer in battle (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and he brought with him vessels of silver, gold, and copper, which King David dedicated 11 to the LORD. He dedicated also

<sup>t</sup> embarked on a high career: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 17. 17; Heb. om.*

<sup>u</sup> Verses 1-14: *cp. 1 Chr. 18. 1-13.*

<sup>v</sup> re-erect . . . victory by: *or recover control of the crossings of . . .*

<sup>w</sup> Or copper.

**8.1-18: David's wars and administration.** This list of notices stands between the long narrative of David's rise to power (1 Sam. ch. 16-2 Sam. ch. 5) and the dramatic narrative of David's sons and the succession to the throne (chs. 9-20, concluded in 1 Kgs. chs. 1-2). (From this point on, cross-references to the books of Chronicles should be noted.) 1: *Metheg-ha-ammah* is probably not a proper name. 1 Chr. 18.1 reads "Gath with its villages," a reading appropriate here, too. 2: No reason for the severity here toward the *Moabites* is given; it is surprising in view of 1 Sam. 22.3-4. 3-10: These conquests were all to the north and east, subduing the *Aramaean*s, who were, however, to remain a thorn in Israel's side until the Assyrian conquest in the eighth century. 4: Unlike his son Solomon (1 Kgs. 10.26-29), David did not exploit

the silver and gold taken from all the nations he had subdued, from Edom and Moab, from the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek, as well as part of the spoil taken from Hadadezer the Rehobite, king of Zobah.

David made a great name for himself by the slaughter of eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and on returning he stationed garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites were subject to him. Thus the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

David ruled over the whole of Israel and maintained law and justice among all his people. Joab son of Zeruiah was in command of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was secretary of state; Zadok and Abiathar son of Ahimelech, son of Ahitub,<sup>y</sup> were priests; Seraiah was adjutant-general; Benaiah son of Jehoiada commanded the Kerethite and Pelethite guards. David's sons were priests.

David asked, 'Is any member of Saul's family left, to whom I can show true kindness for Jonathan's sake?'

There was a servant of Saul's family named Ziba; and he was summoned to David. The king asked, 'Are you Ziba?', and he answered, 'Your servant, sir.' So the king said, 'Is no member of Saul's family still alive to whom I may show the kindness that God requires?' 'Yes,' said Ziba, 'there is a son of Jonathan still alive; he is a cripple, lame in both feet.'

'Where is he?' said the king, and Ziba answered, 'He is staying with Machir son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.'

So the king sent and fetched him from Lo-debar, from the house of Machir son of Ammiel, and when

Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan and Saul's grandson, entered David's presence, he prostrated himself and did obeisance. David said to him, 'Mephibosheth', and he answered, 'Your servant, sir.' Then David said, 'Do not be afraid; I mean to show you kindness for your father Jonathan's sake, and I will give you back the whole estate of your grandfather Saul; you shall have a place for yourself at my table.' So Mephibosheth prostrated himself again and said, 'Who am I that you should spare a thought for a dead dog like me?' Then David summoned Saul's servant Ziba to his presence and said to him, 'I assign to your master's grandson all the property that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your slaves must cultivate the land and bring in the harvest to provide for your master's household, but Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall have a place at my table.' This man Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty slaves. Then Ziba answered the king, 'I will do all that your majesty commands.' So Mephibosheth took his place in the royal household like one of the king's sons. He had a young son, named Mica; and the members of Ziba's household were all Mephibosheth's servants, while Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem and had his regular place at the king's table, crippled as he was in both feet.

Some time afterwards the king of the Ammonites died and was succeeded by his son Hanun. David said, 'I must

<sup>x</sup> Verses 15-18: cp. 20. 23-26; 1 Kgs. 4. 2-6; 1 Chr. 18. 14-17.

<sup>y</sup> and Abiathar . . . Ahitub: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Sam. 22. 11. 20; 2 Sam. 20. 25; Heb. son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar.

<sup>z</sup> Verses 1-19: cp. 1 Chr. 19. 1-19.

chariot warfare. 17: *Zadok and Abiathar* represented two priestly traditions, Abiathar the old line of Eli at Shiloh (1 Sam. 23.6; 22.9; 14.3), Zadok the priestly line of Jerusalem. 18: *The Kerethite and Pelethite guards* were mercenaries, sometimes more loyal to the king than his own countrymen; compare 15.17-22. Kerethites and Pelethites were, in origin, from Mediterranean islands.

9.1-20.22: *David's children and the succession to the throne.* This narrative of court intrigue and rebellion, which has its conclusion in 1 Kgs. chs. 1-2, is commonly regarded as the finest piece of purely historical writing in the OT.

9.1-13: *David cares for Jonathan's son.* The king's kindness probably was motivated by political wisdom as well as friendship. By keeping Saul's heir under control, David was assured that no rebellion could form around Mephibosheth. 1: *For Jonathan's sake*: see 1 Sam. 20.42. 3: *Cripple*: see 4.4. 4: *Lo-debar* was east of the Jordan: see 17.27. 6: *For Mephibosheth*, see 4.4 n.

10.1-11.1: *The Ammonite war.* Though this seems to be a digression, it provides the setting and the occasion for David's relation to Bathsheba in ch. 11. 2: *Nahash* was the Ammonite

keep up the same loyal friendship with Hanun son of Nahash as his father showed me<sup>a</sup>, and he sent a mission to condole with him on the death of his father. But when David's envoys entered the country of the Ammonites, the Ammonite princes said to Hanun their lord, 'Do you suppose David means to do honour to your father when he sends you his condolences? These men of his are spies whom he has sent to find out how to overthrow the city.' So Hanun took David's servants, and he shaved off half their beards, cut off half their garments up to the buttocks, and dismissed them. When David heard how they had been treated, he sent to meet them, for they were deeply humiliated, and ordered them to wait in Jericho and not to return until their beards had grown again. The Ammonites knew that they had fallen into bad odour with David, so they hired the Aramaeans of Beth-rehob and of Zobah to come to their help with twenty thousand infantry; they also hired the king of Maacah with a thousand men, and twelve thousand men from Tob. When David heard of it, he sent out Joab and all the fighting men. The Ammonites came and took up their position at the entrance to the city, while the Aramaeans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah took up theirs in the open country. When Joab saw that he was threatened both front and rear, he detailed some picked Israelite troops and drew them up facing the Aramaeans. The rest of his forces he put under his brother Abishai, who took up a position facing the Ammonites. 'If the Aramaeans prove too strong for me,' he said, 'you must come to my relief; and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I will come to yours.

Courage! Let us fight bravely for our people and for the cities<sup>a</sup> of our God. And the LORD's will be done.' But when Joab and his men came to close quarters with the Aramaeans, they put them to flight; and when the Ammonites saw them in flight, they too fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from the battle against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem. The Aramaeans saw that they had been worsted by Israel; but they rallied their forces, and Hadadezer sent to summon other Aramaeans from the Great Bend of the Euphrates, and they advanced to Helam under Shobach, commander of Hadadezer's army. Their movement was reported to David, who immediately mustered all the forces of Israel, crossed the Jordan and advanced to meet them at Helam. There the Aramaeans took up positions facing David and engaged him, but were put to flight by Israel. David slew seven hundred Aramaeans in chariots and forty thousand horsemen, mortally wounding Shobach, who died on the field. When all the vassal kings of Hadadezer saw that they had been worsted by Israel, they sued for peace and submitted to the Israelites. The Aramaeans never dared help the Ammonites again.

AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR, WHEN KINGS take the field, David sent Joab out with his other officers and all the Israelite forces, and they ravaged Ammon and laid siege to Rabbah, while David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his couch and, as he walked about on the roof of the palace, he saw from there a woman bathing, and she was very beautiful. He sent to inquire who she

<sup>a</sup> Or altars.

king defeated by Saul (1 Sam. ch. 11). Perhaps David's earlier friendship was based on their mutual enmity toward Saul. 6: *Arameans*: see 8.3-10. They wished to prevent David from gaining control of the north-south trade routes east of the Jordan, a source of considerable wealth. 7: *The fighting men*: the professional army. In v. 17 David drafts additional forces. 19: The *vassal kings* were often little more than chiefs of tribes; see 1 Kgs.20.1. 11.1: Having won the battles in the field, David now seeks to capture *Rabbah* itself, the capital city of the Ammonites.

11.2-27: *David, Bathsheba, and Uriah*. The story of intrigue and violence in David's family now begins in earnest. His ensuing setbacks are interpreted as the fruit of his sin here. 2-5: The relation to *Bathsheba* is passed over briefly; it is the relation to *Uriah*, her husband, that

was, and the answer came, 'It must be Bathsheba daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite.' So he sent messengers to fetch her, and when she came to him, he had intercourse with her, though she was still being purified after her period, and then she went home. She conceived, and sent word to David that she was pregnant. David ordered Joab to send Uriah the Hittite to him. So Joab sent him to David, and when he arrived, David asked him for news of Joab and the troops and how the campaign was going; and then said to him, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet after your journey.' As he left the palace, a present from the king followed him. But Uriah did not return to his house; he lay down by the palace gate with the king's slaves. David heard that Uriah had not gone home, and said to him, 'You have had a long journey, why did you not go home?' Uriah answered David, 'Israel and Judah are under canvas,<sup>b</sup> and so is the Ark, and my lord Joab and your majesty's officers are camping in the open; how can I go home to eat and drink and to sleep with my wife? By your life, I cannot do this!' David then said to Uriah, 'Stay here another day, and tomorrow I will let you go.' So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. The next day David invited him to eat and drink with him and made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to lie down in his blanket<sup>c</sup> among the king's slaves and did not go home. The following morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent Uriah with it. He wrote in the letter, 'Put Uriah opposite the enemy where the fighting is fiercest and then fall back, and leave him to meet his death.' Joab had been watching the city, and he stationed Uriah at a point where he knew they would put up a stout fight. The men

of the city sallied out and engaged Joab, and some of David's guards fell; Uriah the Hittite was also killed. Joab sent David a dispatch with all the news of the battle and gave the messenger these instructions: 'When you have finished your report to the king, if he is angry and asks, "Why did you go so near the city during the fight? You must have known there would be shooting from the wall. Remember who killed Abimelech son of Jerubesheth. It was a woman who threw down an upper millstone on to him from the wall of Thebez and killed him! Why did you go so near the wall?"—if he asks this, then tell him, "Your servant Uriah the Hittite also is dead."' "

So the messenger set out and, when he came to David, he made his report as Joab had instructed. David was angry with Joab and said to the messenger, 'Why did you go so near the city during the fight? You must have known you would be struck down from the wall. Remember who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbesheth. Was it not a woman who threw down an upper millstone on to him from the wall of Thebez and killed him? Why did you go near the wall?' He answered, 'The enemy massed against us and sallied out into the open; we pressed them back as far as the gateway. There the archers shot down at us from the wall and some of your majesty's men fell; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.' David said to the man, 'Give Joab this message: "Do not let this distress you—there is no knowing where the sword will strike; press home your attack on the city, and you will take it and raze it to the ground"; and tell him to take heart.'

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for

<sup>b</sup> under canvas: *or* at Succoth.  
<sup>c</sup> in his blanket: *or* on his pallet.

forms the real drama. 4: On menstrual purification, see Lev. 15.19–24. 6–13: David tries to get Uriah to spend a night at home with his wife, to cover up his deed. There is both sardonic humor and pathos in Uriah's stubborn loyalty to duty. 9: Uriah avoids his wife in order to remain qualified for battle, for which sexual abstinence was required; see 1 Sam. 21.5. 14–25: David's general, Joab, was ever ready to shed blood in David's behalf; see 3.26–30; 18.9–15. 21: *Abimelech*: The account is in Judg. ch.9. *Jerubbesheth* is a distorted form of *Jerubbaal*; see 2.8 n. and Judg. 9.1. Apparently Joab took unwise risks in order to carry out David's plot. 26: The period of mourning was short enough that Bathsheba's pregnancy could be

27 him; and when the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her into his house. She became his wife and bore him a son. But what David had done was wrong in the eyes of the LORD.

12 The LORD sent Nathan the prophet to David, and when he entered his presence, he said to him, 'There were once two men in the same city, one 2 rich and the other poor. The rich man 3 had large flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing of his own except one little ewe lamb. He reared it himself, and it grew up in his home with his own sons. It ate from his dish, drank from his cup and nestled in his arms; it was like a daughter to him. 4 One day a traveller came to the rich man's house, and he, too mean to take something from his own flocks and herds to serve to his guest, took the poor man's lamb and served up 5 that.' David was very angry, and burst out, 'As the LORD lives, the man who 6 did this deserves to die! He shall pay for the lamb four times over, because he has done this and shown no pity.' 7 Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man. This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel to you: "I anointed you king over Israel, I rescued 8 you from the power of Saul, I gave you your master's daughter<sup>d</sup> and his wives to be your own, I gave you the daughters of Israel and Judah; and, had this not been enough, I would have 9 added other favours as great. Why then have you flouted the word of the LORD by doing what is wrong in my eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; the man himself 10 you murdered by the sword of the Ammonites, and you have stolen his wife. Now, therefore, since you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife, your family shall never again have rest 11 from the sword.'" This is the word of

the LORD: "I will bring trouble upon you from within your own family; I will take your wives and give them to another man before your eyes, and he will lie with them in broad daylight. What you did was done in 12 secret; but I will do this in the light of day for all Israel to see." David said to 13 Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan answered him, 'The LORD has laid on another the consequences of your sin: you shall not die, but, because in this you have 14 shown your contempt for the LORD,<sup>e</sup> the boy that will be born to you shall die.'

When Nathan had gone home, the 15 LORD struck the boy whom Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he was very ill. David prayed to God for the 16 child; he fasted and went in and spent the night fasting, lying on the ground. The older men of his household tried 17 to get him to rise from the ground, but he refused and would eat no food with them. On the seventh day the boy 18 died, and David's servants were afraid to tell him. 'While the boy was alive,' they said, 'we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us; how can we now tell him that the boy is dead? He may do something desperate.' But David 19 saw his servants whispering among themselves and guessed that the boy was dead. He asked, 'Is the boy dead?', and they answered, 'He is dead.' Then David rose from the 20 ground, washed and anointed himself, and put on fresh clothes; he entered the house of the LORD and prostrated himself there. Then he went home, asked for food to be brought, and when it was ready, he ate it. His servants 21 asked him, 'What is this? While the boy lived you fasted and wept for him, but now that he is dead you rise up and eat.' He answered, 'While the boy 22

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. house.*

<sup>e</sup> *the LORD; prob. rdg.; Heb. the enemies of the LORD.*

attributed to her new marriage. 27: The narrator's observation is most laconic and thereby the more forceful.

12.1-14: **Nathan's rebuke and prophecy.** An effective courtier had to know how to lead a king into judging himself; compare 14.1-23. Nathan's parable achieves this exceedingly well. 7-12: This prophecy is the narrator's statement of the theme of his work. Vv. 11-12 may be a later addition.

12.15-25: **Death of the first son and birth of Solomon.** 16: *Lying on the ground:* probably at an

was still alive I fasted and wept, thinking, "It may be that the LORD will be gracious to me, and the boy may live." But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him; he will not come back to me.' David consoled Bathsheba his wife; he went to her and had intercourse with her, and she gave birth to a son and called him Solomon. And because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet that for the LORD's sake he should be given the name Jedidiah.<sup>f</sup>

Joab attacked the Ammonite city of Rabbah and took the King's Pool. He sent messengers to David with this report: 'I have attacked Rabbah and have taken the pool. You had better muster the rest of the army yourself, besiege the city and take it; otherwise I shall take the city and the name to be proclaimed over it will be mine.' David accordingly mustered his whole forces, marched to Rabbah, attacked it and took it. He took the crown from the head of Milcom, which weighed a talent of gold and was set with a precious stone, and this he placed on his own head. He also removed a great quantity of booty from the city; he took its inhabitants and set them to work with saws and other iron tools, sharp and toothed, and made them work in the brick-kilns. David did this to all the cities of the Ammonites; then he and all his people returned to Jerusalem.

#### *Absalom's rebellion and other conflicts*

**13** NOW DAVID'S SON ABSALOM HAD A BEAUTIFUL SISTER NAMED TAMAR, AND AMNON,

another of David's sons, fell in love with her. Amnon was so distressed that he fell sick with love for his half-sister; for he thought it an impossible thing to approach her since she was a virgin. But he had a friend named Jonadab, son of David's brother Shimeah, who was a very shrewd man. He said to Amnon, "Why are you so low-spirited morning after morning, my lord? Will you not tell me?" So Amnon told him that he was in love with Tamar, his brother Absalom's sister. Jonadab said to him, "Take to your bed and pretend to be ill. When your father comes to visit you, say to him, "Please let my sister Tamar come and give me my food. Let her prepare it in front of me, so that I may watch her and then take it from her own hands.'" So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to visit him, he said, "Sir, let my sister Tamar come and make a few cakes in front of me, and serve them to me with her own hands." So David sent a message to Tamar in the palace: "Go to your brother Amnon's quarters and prepare a meal for him." Tamar came to her brother and found him lying down; she took some dough and kneaded it, made the cakes in front of him and baked them. Then she took the pan and turned them out before him. But Amnon refused to eat and ordered everyone out of the room. When they had all left, he said to Tamar, "Bring the food over to the recess so that I may eat from your own hands." Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them to Amnon in the recess. But when she offered them to

<sup>f</sup> That is Beloved of the LORD.  
<sup>g</sup> Verses 26-31: cp. 1 Chr. 20. 1-3.

altar. **23:** The child would go down to Sheol (1 Sam. 2.6 n.) from which he would not return (Job 7.9-10). **24-25:** The second son lived and was *loved* by the LORD. Solomon's second name reflects the practice of assuming a throne name at the accession; see 2 Kgs. 23.34; 24.17; Jer. 22.11.

**12.26-31: The conclusion of the Ammonite war.** **26:** *The King's Pool* was probably the city's water supply. After its capture, the city would shortly have to capitulate. **28:** Joab was constantly more solicitous of David's interests than his own. **30:** *Milcom* was the god of the Ammonites. A *talent* was over sixty pounds; this makes it hard to imagine on David's head.

**13.1-22: The rape of Tamar.** The drama now turns to David's oldest sons, those from among whom the next king would presumably come. *Amnon* was the eldest son, *Absalom* the third, but the second son *Chileab* seems to have dropped from the scene, probably by an early death; compare 3.2-3. V. 13 indicates that marriage to a half-sister was not yet generally prohibited, as it was later; see Lev. 18.9,11; Deut. 27.22. **6:** The Heb. word for *cakes* is related to the noun "heart." Some special healing powers may have been attributed to them. **9:** *Amnon* might claim that the conditions for the healing ritual were not right until *everyone was out of the room.*

him, he caught hold of her and said,  
 12 'Come to bed with me, sister.' But she  
 answered, 'No, brother, do not dishonour  
 me, we do not do such things in Israel;  
 13 do not behave like a beast. Where could I  
 go and hide my disgrace?—and you would sink  
 as low as any beast in Israel. Why not speak  
 to the king for me? He will not refuse  
 14 you leave to marry me.' He would not listen,  
 but overpowered her, dishonoured her and  
 raped her.

15 Then Amnon was filled with utter hatred  
 for her; his hatred was stronger than the love  
 he had felt, and he said to her, 'Get up and  
 16 go.' She answered, 'No. It is wicked to send  
 me away. This is harder to bear than all you  
 17 have done to me.' He would not listen to her,  
 but summoned the boy who attended him and  
 said, 'Get rid of this woman, put her out and  
 18 bolt the door after her.' She had on a long,  
 sleeved robe, the usual dress of unmarried  
 princesses; and the boy turned her out and  
 19 bolted the door. Tamar threw ashes over her  
 head, rent the long, sleeved robe that she was  
 wearing, put her hands on her head and went  
 20 away, sobbing as she went. Her brother  
 Absalom asked her, 'Has your brother Amnon  
 been with you? Keep this to yourself, he is  
 your brother; do not take it to heart.' So  
 Tamar remained in her brother Absalom's  
 21 house, desolate. When King David heard the  
 whole story he was very angry; but he would  
 not hurt Amnon because he was his eldest  
 22 son and he loved him. Absalom did not speak  
 a single word to Amnon, friendly or unfriendly;  
 he hated him for having dishonoured his sister  
 Tamar.

23 Two years later Absalom invited all the king's  
 sons to his sheep-shearing at Baal-hazor,  
 24 near Ephron.<sup>h</sup> He approached the king and  
 said, 'Sir, I am shearing; will your majesty  
 25 and your servants come?' The king answered,  
 'No, my son, we must not all

come and be a burden to you.' Absalom pressed  
 him, but David was still unwilling to go and  
 dismissed him with his blessing. But Absalom  
 said, 'If you cannot, may my brother Amnon  
 26 come with us?' 'Why should he go with you?'  
 the king asked; but Absalom pressed him again,  
 so he let Amnon and all the other princes go  
 with him.

27 Then Absalom prepared a feast fit for a king.  
 He gave his servants these orders: 'Bide your  
 time, and when Amnon is merry with wine I  
 shall say to you, "Strike." Then kill Amnon.  
 You have nothing to fear, these are my orders;  
 28 be bold and resolute.' Absalom's servants  
 did as he had told them, whereupon all the  
 king's sons mounted their mules in haste and  
 set off for home.

29 While they were on their way, a rumour  
 30 reached David that Absalom had murdered all  
 the royal princes and that not one was left  
 alive. The king stood up and rent his clothes  
 and then threw himself on the ground; all his  
 servants were standing round him with their  
 clothes rent. Then Jonadab, son of David's  
 31 brother Shimeah, said, 'Your majesty must  
 not think that they have killed all the young  
 princes; only Amnon is dead; Absalom has  
 looked black ever since Amnon ravished his  
 32 sister Tamar. Your majesty must not pay  
 attention to a mere rumour that all the  
 princes are dead; only Amnon is dead.'

33 Absalom made good his escape. Meanwhile  
 the sentry looked up and saw a crowd of  
 people coming down the hill from the direction  
 of Horonaim.<sup>i</sup> He came and reported to the  
 king, 'I see men coming down the hill from  
 Horonaim.' Then Jonadab said to the king,  
 34 'Here come the royal princes, just as I said  
 they would.' As he finished speaking, the  
 35 princes came in and broke into loud lamenta-

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Ephraim.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. from a road behind him.

13.23–39: Absalom's revenge. 23: Absalom waits two years to allay suspicion, though David may still suspect something; see v. 26. The princes, who are clearly adult men here, would have received possessions in the realm from their father. Thus, Absalom has a farm at Baal-hazor. The sheep-shearing was a time of festivity and potential violence; see Gen.31.19–54; 38.12–26; 1 Sam.25.4–13,36–38. 32: Jonadab, having had a hand in the original deed of Amnon, vv. 3–5, understands the situation and is not misled by rumors. 34: Horonaim means "the two horons,"



tions; the king and all his servants also wept bitterly.

37 But Absalom went to take refuge with Talmai son of Ammihur king of Geshur; and for a long while the  
38 king mourned for Amnon. Absalom, having escaped to Geshur, stayed there  
39 for three years; and David's heart went out to him with longing, for he became reconciled to the death of Amnon.

14 Joab son of Zeruiah saw that the  
2 king's heart was set on Absalom, so he sent to Tekoah and fetched a wise woman. He said to her, 'Pretend to be a mourner; put on mourning, go without anointing yourself, and behave like a bereaved woman who has been  
3 long in mourning. Then go to the king and repeat what I tell you.' He then told her exactly what she was to say.

4 When the woman from Tekoah came into the king's presence, she threw herself, face downwards, on the ground and did obeisance, and cried,  
5 'Help, your majesty!' The king asked, 'What is it?' She answered, 'O sir, I  
6 am a widow; my husband is dead. I had two sons; they came to blows out in the country where there was no one to part them, and one of them struck  
7 the other and killed him. Now, sir, the kinsmen have risen against me and they all cry, "Hand over the man who has killed his brother, so that we can put him to death for taking his brother's life, and so cut off the succession." If they do this, they will stamp out my last live ember and leave my husband no name and no descendant upon  
8 earth.' 'Go home,' said the king to the woman, 'and I will settle your case.'  
9 But the woman continued, 'The guilt be on me, your majesty, and on my father's house; let the king and his throne be blameless.' The king said,  
10 'If anyone says anything more to you,

bring him to me and he shall never molest you again.' Then the woman  
11 went on, 'Let your majesty call upon the LORD your God, to prevent his kinsmen bound to vengeance from doing their worst and destroying my son.' The king swore, 'As the LORD lives, not a hair of your son's head shall fall to the ground.'

The woman then said, 'May I add  
12 one word more, your majesty?' 'Say on', said the king. So she continued,  
13 'How then could it enter your head to do this same wrong to God's people? Out of your own mouth, your majesty, you condemn yourself: you have refused to bring back the man you have banished. We shall all  
14 die; we shall be like water that is spilt on the ground and lost; but God will spare the man who does not set himself to keep the outlaw in banishment. I came to say this to your majesty  
15 because the people have threatened me. I thought, "If I can only speak to the king, perhaps he will attend to my case; for he will listen, and he will save  
16 me from the man who is seeking to cut off me and my son together from Israel, God's own possession." I  
17 thought too that the words of my lord the king would be a comfort to me; for your majesty is like the angel of God and can decide between right and wrong. The LORD your God be with you!' Then the king said to the  
18 woman, 'Tell me no lies: I shall now ask you a question.' 'Speak on, your majesty', she said. So he asked, 'Is the  
19 hand of Joab behind you in all this?' 'Your life upon it, sir!' she answered; 'when your majesty asks a question, there is no way round it, right or left. Yes, your servant Joab did prompt  
20 me; it was he who put the whole story into my mouth. He did it to give a new

Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. 37: *Talmai* was Absalom's maternal grandfather; see 3.3. 39: David's favor shifted to whichever son was in line for the throne.

14.1-24: *Joab secures Absalom's return*. The king is induced to give in to his true feelings toward Absalom and recall the prince to Jerusalem. 1: *A wise woman* was skilled in speech, especially in decision making; see the important position of the wise woman in 20.14-22 and Solomon's wisdom in 1 Kgs.3.16-28. 8: David is reluctant to use his royal authority to override tribal customs concerning bloodshed. The woman persists in vv. 9-11, and the king finally swears to protect the son. 12-17: In a series of hints and flattery, the *woman* reveals to David that her case was a parable of Absalom and Amnon; see v. 20; 12.1-14 n.; 19.27.

turn to this affair. Your majesty is as wise as the angel of God and knows all that goes on in the land.'

21 The king said to Joab, 'You have my consent; go and fetch back the young man Absalom.' Then Joab humbly prostrated himself, took leave of the king with a blessing and said, 'Now I know that I have found favour with your majesty, because you have granted my humble petition.' Joab went at once to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem, but the king said, 'Let him go to his own quarters; he shall not come into my presence.' So Absalom went to his own quarters and did not enter the king's presence.

25 No one in all Israel was so greatly admired for his beauty as Absalom; he was without flaw from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. His hair, when he cut his hair (as he had to do every year, for he found it heavy), weighed two hundred shekels by the royal standard. Three sons were born to Absalom, and a daughter named Tamar, who was a very beautiful woman.

28 Absalom remained in Jerusalem for two whole years without entering the king's presence. He summoned Joab to send a message by him to the king, but Joab refused to come; he sent for him a second time, but he still refused. 30 Then Absalom said to his servants, 'You know that Joab has a field next to mine with barley growing in it; go and set fire to it.' So Absalom's servants set fire to the field. Joab promptly came to Absalom in his own quarters and said to him, 'Why have your servants set fire to my field?' Absalom answered Joab, 'I had sent for you to come here, so that I could ask you to give the king this message from me: "Why did I leave Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there. Let me

now come into your majesty's presence and, if I have done any wrong, put me to death.'" When Joab went to the king and told him, he summoned Absalom, who came and prostrated himself humbly before the king; and he greeted Absalom with a kiss.

AFTER THIS, ABSALOM PROVIDED HIMSELF with a chariot and horses and an escort of fifty men. He made it a practice to rise early and stand beside the road which runs through the city gate. He would hail every man who had a case to bring before the king for judgement and would ask him what city he came from. When he answered, 'I come, sir, from such and such a tribe of Israel', Absalom would say to him, 'I can see that you have a very good case, but you will get no hearing from the king.' And he would add, 'If only I were appointed judge in the land, it would be my business to see that everyone who brought a suit or a claim got justice from me.' Whenever a man approached to prostrate himself, Absalom would stretch out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. By behaving like this to every Israelite who sought the king's justice, Absalom stole the affections of the Israelites.

At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, 'May I have leave now to go to Hebron to fulfil a vow there that I made to the LORD? For when I lived in Geshur, in Aram, I made this vow: "If the LORD brings me back to Jerusalem, I will become a worshipper of the LORD in Hebron."' The king answered, 'Certainly you may go'; so he set off for Hebron at once. Absalom sent runners through all the tribes of Israel with this message: 'As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, "Absalom is king in Hebron."' Two hundred men

14.25-33: Absalom's restoration. Absalom finds a way to regain full standing in David's court. 26: *Two hundred shekels* would be just over four pounds. 28-33: Absalom is, if anything, even more strongheaded than Amnon was. The now aged king gives in.

15.1-12: Absalom's rebellion. Absalom would have become king on David's death. He either became too impatient or was embittered by the circumstances of the preceding years. 1: Absalom's *chariot, horses, and escort* give him the airs of a king-to-be. 7-12: These *four years* extend the Absalom story over eleven years; see 13.23,39; 14.28. By moving from Hebron, the former capital of Judah, Absalom made sure David would not have his old territory to retreat to. 10: *The trumpet* was normally sounded at the coronation of a new king; see 1 Kgs. 1.39. 12: *Giloh* was a village near Hebron.

accompanied Absalom from Jerusalem; they were invited and went in all innocence, knowing nothing of the affair. Absalom also sent to summon Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from Giloh his city, where he was offering the customary sacrifices. The conspiracy gathered strength, and Absalom's supporters increased in number.

13 When news reached David that the men of Israel had transferred their allegiance to Absalom, he said to those who were with him in Jerusalem, 'We must get away at once; or there will be no escape from Absalom for any of us. Make haste, or else he will soon be upon us and bring disaster on us, showing no mercy to anyone in the city.' The king's servants said to him, 'As your majesty thinks best; we are ready.'

16 When the king departed, all his household followed him except ten concubines, whom he left in charge of the palace. At the Far House the king and all the people who were with him halted. His own servants then stood beside him, while the Kerethite and Pelethite guards and Ittai<sup>k</sup> with the six hundred Gittites under him marched past the king. The king said to Ittai the Gittite, 'Are you here too? Why are you coming with us? Go back and stay with the new king, for you are a foreigner and, what is more, an exile from your own country. You came only yesterday, and today must you be compelled to share my wanderings? I do not know where I am going. Go back home and take your countrymen with you; and may the LORD ever be your steadfast friend.' Ittai swore to the king, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, wherever you may be, in life or in death, I, your servant, will be there.' David said to Ittai, 'It is well, march on!' So Ittai the Gittite marched on with his whole company and all the dependants who were with him. The

whole country-side re-echoed with their weeping. And the king remained standing<sup>l</sup> while all the people crossed the gorge of the Kidron before him, by way of the olive-tree in the wilderness.<sup>m</sup>

Zadok also was there with all the Levites; they were carrying the Ark of the Covenant of God, which they set down beside Abiathar<sup>n</sup> until all the people had passed out of the city. But the king said to Zadok, 'Take the Ark of God back to the city. If I find favour with the LORD, he will bring me back and will let me see the Ark and its dwelling-place again. But if he says he does not want me, then here I am; let him do what he pleases with me.' The king went on to say to Zadok the priest, 'Can you make good use of your eyes? You may safely go back to the city, you and Abiathar,<sup>o</sup> and take with you the two young men, Ahimaaz your son and Abiathar's son Jonathan. Do not forget: I will linger at the Fords of the Wilderness until you can send word to me.' Then Zadok and Abiathar took the Ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.

David wept as he went up the slope of the Mount of Olives; he was bare-headed and went bare-foot. The people with him all had their heads uncovered and wept as they went. David had been told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, and he prayed, 'Frustrate, O LORD, the counsel of Ahithophel.'

As David was approaching the top of the ridge where it was the custom to prostrate oneself to God, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him with his tunic rent and earth on his head. David said to him, 'If you come with

<sup>j</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. passed.

<sup>k</sup> and Ittai: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. passing.

<sup>m</sup> by way . . . wilderness: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>n</sup> beside Abiathar: prob. rdg.; Heb. and Abiathar went up.

<sup>o</sup> you and Abiathar: prob. rdg., cp. verse 29; Heb. om.

15.13-16.14: David's flight from Jerusalem. The narrative dwells at some length on this action. The question of loyalty to David is developed through a series of scenes. 16: On the *ten concubines*, see 16.21-23. 17: *The Far House* was a boundary point of the city. 18: The international makeup of the royal court is conspicuous here. *Kerethite*: Cretan; *Pelethite*: Philistine; *Ittai*: a Philistine banished from his own city, as was David in the period of Saul's reign. 24: *All the Levites* is a later addition to the theory that only Levites carried the Ark; see 1 Chr.15.12-15. 30: David leads a mourning procession up *the Mount of Olives*. 32: This sanctuary on the south side of the Mount of Olives was later regarded as idolatrous;

34 me you will only be a hindrance; but you can help me to frustrate Ahithophel's plans if you go back to the city and say to Absalom, "I will be your majesty's servant; up to now I have been your father's servant, and now I will be yours." You will have with you, as you know, the priests Zadok and Abiathar; tell them everything that you hear in the king's household. They have with them Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan, and through them you may pass on to me everything you hear.' So Hushai, David's friend, came to the city as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

16 When David had moved on a little from the top of the ridge, he was met by Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who had with him a pair of asses saddled and loaded with two hundred loaves, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred bunches of summer fruit, and a flagon of wine. The king said to him, 'What are you doing with these?' Ziba answered, 'The asses are for the king's family to ride on, the bread and the summer fruit are for the servants to eat, and the wine for anyone who becomes exhausted in the wilderness.' The king asked, 'Where is your master's grandson?' 'He is staying in Jerusalem,' said Ziba, 'for he thought that the Israelites might now restore to him his grandfather's throne.' The king said to Ziba, 'You shall have everything that belongs to Mephibosheth.' Ziba said, 'I am your humble servant, sir; may I continue to stand well with you.'

5 As King David approached Bahurim, a man of Saul's family, whose name was Shimei son of Gera, came out, cursing as he came. He showered stones right and left on David and on all the king's servants and on everyone, soldiers and people alike. This is what Shimei said as he cursed him: 'Get out, get out, you scoundrel! you

man of blood! The LORD has taken vengeance on you for the blood of the house of Saul whose throne you stole, and he has given the kingdom to your son Absalom. You murderer, see how your crimes have overtaken you!'

Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why let this dead dog curse your majesty? I will go across and knock off his head.' But the king said, 'What has this to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he curses and if the LORD has told him to curse David, who can question it?' David said to Abishai and to all his servants, 'If my son, my own son, is out to kill me, who can wonder at this Benjamite? Let him be, let him curse; for the LORD has told him to do it. But perhaps the LORD will mark my sufferings and bestow a blessing on me in place of the curse laid on me this day.' David and his men continued on their way, and Shimei moved along the ridge of the hill parallel to David's path, cursing as he went and hurling stones across the valley at him and kicking up the dust. When the king and all the people with him reached the Jordan, they were worn out; and they refreshed themselves there.

By now Absalom and all his Israelites had reached Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. When Hushai the Archite, David's friend, met Absalom he said to him, 'Long live the king! Long live the king!' But Absalom retorted, 'Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with him?' Hushai answered Absalom, 'Because I mean to attach myself to the man chosen by the LORD, by this people, and by all the men of Israel, and with him I will remain. After all, whom ought I to serve? Should I not serve the son? I will serve you as I have served your father.' Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, 'Give us your advice: how shall we act?' Ahithophel

compare 1 Kgs.11.7; 2 Kgs.23.13-14. **16.1:** *Ziba*: see ch. 9. **3-4:** This conflicts with *Mephibosheth's* own story in 19.24-30, where David allows him the benefit of the doubt. **8:** The *blood* Shimei refers to may be that of 21.1-14. **10-12:** See David's attitude in 15.25-26.

**16.15-17.23:** *Absalom forms a strategy.* The king judged between alternative courses of action proposed by wise counselors. *Hushai*, actually still loyal to David (15.32-34), and *Ahithophel* compete as counselors. **16-19:** Such deceit was assumed and not particularly condemned in court intrigues of this kind. **20-22:** On the importance of royal concubines, see

answered, 'Have intercourse with your father's concubines whom he left in charge of the palace. Then all Israel will come to hear that you have given great cause of offence to your father, and this will confirm the resolution of your followers.' So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he lay with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. In those days a man would seek counsel of Ahithophel as readily as he might make an inquiry of the word of God; that was how Ahithophel's counsel was esteemed by David and Absalom.

17 Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Let me pick twelve thousand men, and I will pursue David tonight. I shall overtake him when he is tired and dispirited; I will cut him off from his people and they will all scatter; and I shall kill no one but the king. I will bring all the people over to you as a bride is brought to her husband. It is only one man's life that you are seeking; the rest of the people will be unharmed.' Absalom and all the elders of Israel approved of Ahithophel's advice; but Absalom said, 'Summon Hushai the Archite and let us hear what he too has to say.' Hushai came, and Absalom told him all that Ahithophel had said and asked him, 'Shall we do what he says? If not, say what you think.'

7 Hushai said to Absalom, 'For once the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good. You know', he went on, 'that your father and the men with him are hardened warriors and savage as a bear in the wilds robbed of her cubs. Your father is an old campaigner and will not spend the night with the main body; even now he will be lying hidden in a pit or in some such place. Then if any of your men are killed at the outset, anyone who hears the news will say, "Disaster has overtaken the followers of Absalom." The courage of the most resolute and lion-hearted will melt away, for all Israel knows that your father is a man of war and has determined men with him. My advice is this. Wait until the

whole of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, is gathered about you, countless as grains of sand on the sea-shore, and then you shall march with them in person. Then we shall come upon him somewhere, wherever he may be, and descend on him like dew falling on the ground, and not a man of his family or of his followers will be left alive. If he retreats into a city, all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into a ravine until not a stone can be found on the site.' Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'Hushai the Archite gives us better advice than Ahithophel.' It was the LORD's purpose to frustrate Ahithophel's good advice and so bring disaster upon Absalom.

Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar the priests all the advice that Ahithophel had given to Absalom and also his own. 'Now send quickly to David,' he said, 'and warn him not to spend the night at the Fords of the Wilderness but to cross the river at once, before a blow can be struck at the king and his followers.' Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel, and a servant girl would go and tell them what happened and they would pass it on to King David; for they could not risk being seen entering the city. But this time a lad saw them and told Absalom; so the two of them hurried to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a pit in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. The man's wife took a covering, spread it over the mouth of the pit and strewed grain over it, and no one was any the wiser. Absalom's servants came to the house and asked the woman, 'Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?' She answered, 'They went beyond the pool.' The men searched but could not find them; so they went back to Jerusalem. When they had gone the two climbed out of the pit and went off to report to King David and said, 'Over the water at once, make haste!', and they told him Ahithophel's plan against him. So

3.7 n. 17.1-14: Ahithophel's advice was best, but Hushai's prevailed, since it was *the LORD's purpose* (v. 14) to defeat Absalom. 15-22: David's escape is made good by those still loyal to

David and all his company began at once to cross the Jordan; by daybreak there was not one who had not reached the other bank.

23 When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been taken he saddled his ass, went straight home to his own city, gave his last instructions to his household, and hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's grave.

24 By the time that Absalom had crossed the Jordan with the Israelites, David was already at Mahanaim. Absalom had appointed Amasa as commander-in-chief instead of Joab; he was the son of a man named Ithra, an Ishmaelite, by Abigail daughter of Nahash and sister to Joab's mother Zeruiah.

26 The Israelites and Absalom camped in the district of Gilead. When David came to Mahanaim, he was met by Shobi son of Nahash from the Ammonite town Rabbah, Machir son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, bringing mattresses and blankets, bowls and jugs.<sup>p</sup> They brought also wheat and barley, meal and parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds, sheep and fat cattle, and offered them to David and his people to eat, knowing that the people must be hungry and thirsty and weary in the wilderness.

18 David mustered the people who were with him, and appointed officers over units of a thousand and a hundred. Then he divided the army in three, one division under the command of Joab, one under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and the third under Ittai the Gittite. The king announced to the army that he was coming out himself with them to battle. But they said, 'No, you must not come out; if we turn and run, no one will take any notice, nor will they, even if half of us are killed; but you are worth ten thousand of us, and it would be better now for you to remain

in the city in support.' 'I will do what you think best', answered the king; and he then stood beside the gate, and the army marched past in their units of a thousand and a hundred. The king gave orders to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: 'Deal gently with the young man Absalom for my sake.' The whole army heard the king giving all his officers this order to spare Absalom.

The army took the field against the Israelites and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephron.<sup>q</sup> There the Israelites were routed before the onslaught of David's men; so great was the rout that twenty thousand men fell that day. The fighting spread over the whole country-side, and the forest took toll of more people that day than the sword.

Now some of David's men caught sight of Absalom. He was riding a mule and, as it passed beneath a great oak,<sup>r</sup> his head was caught in its boughs; he found himself in mid air and the mule went on from under him. One of the men who saw it went and told Joab, 'I saw Absalom hanging from an oak.' While the man was telling him, Joab broke in, 'You saw him? Why did you not strike him to the ground then and there? I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt.' The man answered, 'If you were to put in my hands a thousand pieces of silver, I would not lift a finger against the king's son; for we all heard the king giving orders to you and Abishai and Ittai that whoever finds himself near the young man Absalom must take great care of him. If I had dealt him a treacherous blow, the king would soon have known, and you would have kept well out of it.' 'That is a lie!' said Joab. 'I will make a start and show you.'<sup>s</sup> So he picked up three stout sticks and drove them against Absalom's chest

<sup>p</sup> bringing . . . jugs: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a couch, bowls and a potter's vessel.

<sup>q</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Ephraim. <sup>r</sup> Or terebinth.

<sup>s</sup> I will . . . show you: or I can waste no more time on you like this.

him at Jerusalem. 23: *Ahithophel's* suicide is mentioned immediately after David has made good his escape, since that was the final frustration of his counsel.

17.24-19.8: The battle in Gilead and Absalom's death. 27: Many of David's supporters were non-Israelites. On *Nahash*, see 10.2 n.; on *Machir*, see 9.4; on *Barzillai*, see 19.31-39. 18.1-4: The king's safety was decisive; compare 21.15-17. 5: David's excessive attachment to successive favorite sons was one of his weaknesses; see 13.21,39. 6: *Forest*: in ancient times there were forests on the Gilead highlands. 9: Absalom's great head of hair (14.26) may have helped get him caught in the tree. 14: *Against Absalom's chest*, more literally rendered, is "in Absalom's

15 while he was held fast in the tree and still alive. Then ten young men who were Joab's armour-bearers closed in on Absalom, struck at him, and killed him. Joab sounded the trumpet, and the army came back from the pursuit of Israel because he had called it off.

17 They took Absalom's body and flung it into a great pit in the forest, and raised over it a huge pile of stones. The Israelites all fled to their homes.

18 The pillar in the King's Vale had been set up by Absalom in his lifetime, for he said, 'I have no son to carry on my name.' He had named the pillar after himself; and to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

19 Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, 'Let me run and take the news to the king that the LORD has avenged him and delivered him from his enemies.' But Joab replied, 'This is no day for you to be the bearer of news. Another day you may have news to carry, but not today, because the king's son is dead.' Joab told a Cushite to go and report to the king what he had seen. The Cushite bowed low before Joab and set off running. Ahimaaz pleaded again with Joab, 'Come what may,' he said, 'let me run after the Cushite.' 'Why should you, my son?' asked Joab. 'You will get no reward for your news.' 'Come what may,' he said, 'I will run.' 'Go, then,' said Joab. So Ahimaaz ran by the road through the Plain of the Jordan and outstripped the Cushite.

24 David was sitting between the two gates when the watchman went up to the roof of the gatehouse by the wall and, looking out, saw a man running alone. The watchman called to the king and told him. 'If he is alone,' said the king, 'then he has news.' The man came nearer and nearer. Then the watchman saw another man running. He called down to the gate-keeper and said, 'Look, there is another man running alone.' The king said, 'He too

brings news.' The watchman said, 'I see by the way he runs that the first runner is Ahimaaz son of Zadok.' The king said, 'He is a good fellow and shall earn the reward for good news.' Ahimaaz called out to the king, 'All is well!' He bowed low before him and said, 'Blessed be the LORD your God who has given into your hands the men who rebelled against your majesty.' The king asked, 'Is all well with the young man Absalom?' Ahimaaz answered, 'Sir, your servant Joab sent me, I saw a great commotion, but I did not know what had happened.' The king told him to stand on one side; so he turned aside and stood there. Then the Cushite came in and said, 'Good news, your majesty! The LORD has avenged you this day on all those who rebelled against you.' The king said to the Cushite, 'Is all well with the young man Absalom?' The Cushite answered, 'May all the king's enemies and all rebels who would do you harm be as that young man is.' The king was deeply moved and went up to the roof-chamber over the gate and wept, crying out as he went, 'O, my son! Absalom my son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son.'

Joab was told that the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom; and that day victory was turned to mourning for the whole army, because they heard how the king grieved for his son; they stole into the city like men ashamed to show their faces after a defeat in battle. The king hid his face and cried aloud, 'My son Absalom; O Absalom, my son, my son.' But Joab came into the king's quarters and said to him, 'You have put to shame this day all your servants, who have saved you and your sons and daughters, your wives and your concubines. You love

<sup>†</sup> Sir . . . sent me: *prob. rdg.: Heb.* At the sending of Joab the king's servant and your servant.

heart.' Joab, knowing that David sometimes let his sentiment override his best judgment, dispatched Absalom without hesitation. **18:** This verse reflects popular tradition about a *pillar in the King's Vale*, the Kidron Valley just east of Jerusalem (contrast 14.27). **19:** Ahimaaz: see 15.27; 17.17-21. **21:** That a *Cushite*, from upper Egypt, was in David's army is further evidence of its international character. **29:** Ahimaaz: was more discreet about Absalom's death than the Cushite (v. 32). **19.1-8:** Joab persuaded David to take a realistic attitude. David did not reward Joab very graciously; see v. 13.

those that hate you and hate those that love you; you have made us feel, officers and men alike, that we are nothing to you; for it is plain that if Absalom were still alive and all of us dead, you would be content. Now go at once and give your servants some encouragement; if you refuse, I swear by the LORD that not a man will stay with you tonight, and that would be a worse disaster than any you have suffered since your earliest days.' Then the king rose and took his seat in the gate; and when the army was told that the king was sitting in the gate, they all appeared before him.

### *Various events of David's reign*

MEANWHILE THE ISRAELITES HAD ALL scattered to their homes. Throughout all the tribes of Israel people were discussing it among themselves and saying, 'The king has saved us from our enemies and freed us from the power of the Philistines, and now he has fled the country because of Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed king, has fallen in battle; so now why have we no plans for bringing the king back? What all Israel was saying came to the king's ears.<sup>u</sup> So he sent word to Zadok and Abiathar the priests: 'Ask the elders of Judah why they should be the last to bring the king back to his palace. Tell them, "You are my brothers, my flesh and my blood; why are you last to bring me back?" And tell Amasa, "You are my own flesh and blood. You shall be my commander-in-chief, so help me God, for the rest of your life in place of Joab."' David's message won all hearts in Judah, and they sent to the king, urging him to return with all his men. So the king came back to the Jordan; and the men of Judah came to Gilgal

to meet him and escort him across the river. Shimei son of Gera the Benjaminite from Bahurim hastened down among the men of Judah to meet King David with a thousand men from Benjamin; Ziba was there too, the servant of Saul's family, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed into the Jordan under the king's eyes and crossed to and fro conveying his household in order to win his favour. Shimei son of Gera, when he had crossed the river, fell down before the king and said to him, 'I beg your majesty not to remember how disgracefully your servant behaved when your majesty left Jerusalem; do not hold it against me or take it to heart. For I humbly acknowledge that I did wrong, and today I am the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet your majesty.' But Abishai son of Zeruiah objected, 'Ought not Shimei to be put to death because he cursed the LORD's anointed prince?' David answered, 'What right have you, you sons of Zeruiah, to oppose me today? Why should any man be put to death this day in Israel? I know now that I am king of Israel.' Then the king said to Shimei, 'You shall not die', and confirmed it with an oath.

Saul's grandson Mephibosheth also went down to meet the king. He had not dressed his feet, combed his beard or washed his clothes, from the day the king went out until he returned victorious. When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, David said to him, 'Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?' He answered, 'Sir, my servant deceived me; I did intend to harness my ass and ride with the king (for I am lame), but his stories set your majesty against me. Your majesty is like the angel of God; you must do

<sup>u</sup> What . . . ears: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. has these words after back to his palace and adds to his palace.*

19.9-43: **Bringing David back.** Once it was clear that Absalom's rebellion had failed, the issue became the reconciliation of the warring factions. Israel and Judah—here treated as two distinct groups—and also individual petitioners had to make their peace with the king who was clearly going to regain his throne. 11-15: David takes the side of Judah against Israel. 13: David bribes *Amasa*, Absalom's commander-in-chief; see 17.25. 16-39: David makes very lenient settlements with those whose loyalty during the rebellion was questionable: *Shimei son of Gera*, who had cursed David at his departure (16.5-13), vv. 16-23; *Mephibosheth*, son of Jonathan, whose loyalty had been challenged by his servant *Ziba* (16.1-4), vv. 24-36; for his old friend *Barzillai*, the only question was how to reward his loyalty (17.27), vv. 31-39.



28 what you think right. My father's whole family, one and all, deserved to die at your majesty's hands, but you gave me, your servant, my place at your table. What further favour can I expect of the king?' The king answered, 'You have said enough. My decision is that you and Ziba are to share the estate.'

29 Mephibosheth said, 'Let him have it all, now that your majesty has come home victorious.'

31 Barzillai the Gileadite too had come down from Rogelim, and he went as far as the Jordan with the king to send him on his way. Now Barzillai was very old, eighty years of age; it was he who had provided for the king while he was at Mahanaim, for he was a man of high standing. The king said to Barzillai, 'Cross over with me and I will provide for your old age in my household in Jerusalem.' Barzillai answered, 'Your servant is far too old to go up with your majesty to Jerusalem. I am already eighty; and I cannot tell good from bad. I cannot taste what I eat or drink; I cannot hear the voices of men and women singing. Why should I be a burden any longer on your majesty?'

32 Your servant will attend the king for a short way across the Jordan; and why should the king reward me so handsomely? Let me go back and end my days in my own city near the grave of my father and mother. Here is my son Kimham; let him cross over with your majesty, and do for him what you think best.'

33 The king answered, 'Kimham shall cross with me and I will do for him whatever you think best; and I will do for you whatever you ask.'

34 All the people crossed the Jordan while the king waited. The king then kissed Barzillai and gave him his blessing. Barzillai went back to his own home; the king crossed over to Gilgal, Kimham with him. All the people of Judah escorted the king over the river, and so did half the people of Israel.

41 The men of Israel came to the king in a body and said, 'Why should our brothers of Judah have got possession of the king's person by joining King

David's own men and then escorting him and his household across the Jordan?' The men of Judah replied, 'Because his majesty is our near kinsman. Why should you resent it? Have we eaten at the king's expense? Have we received any gifts?' The men of Israel answered, 'We have ten times your interest in the king and, what is more, we are senior to you; why do you disparage us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing the king back?' The men of Judah used language even fiercer than the men of Israel.

There happened to be a man there, a scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a man of Benjamin. He blew the trumpet and cried out:

What share have we in David?

We have no lot in the son of Jesse. Away to your homes, O Israel.

The men of Israel all left David, to follow Sheba son of Bichri, but the men of Judah stood by their king and followed him from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

When David came home to Jerusalem he took the ten concubines whom he had left in charge of the palace and put them under guard; he maintained them but did not have intercourse with them. They were kept in confinement to the day of their death, widowed in the prime of life.

The king said to Amasa, 'Call up the men of Judah and appear before me again in three days' time.' So Amasa went to call up the men of Judah, but it took longer than the time fixed by the king. David said to Abishai, 'Sheba son of Bichri will give us more trouble than Absalom; take the royal bodyguard and follow him closely. If he may escape us.' Abishai was followed by Joab<sup>v</sup> with the Kerethite and Pelethite guards and all the fighting men; they left Jerusalem in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. When they reached the

<sup>v</sup> Abishai . . . Joab: *prob. rllg.*; *Heb.* Some men of Joab followed him.

20.1-22: Another rebellion of Israel. A rebellion of the Israelite tribes, called for by the Benjaminite *Sheba*, is portrayed as a sequel to the disagreements over the return of David. 1: This call to rebellion is used again in 1 Kgs.12.16. 8-13: Joab again resorts to bloodshed,

great stone in Gibeon, Amasa came towards them. Joab was wearing his tunic and over it a belt supporting a sword in its scabbard. He came forward, concealing his treachery, and said to Amasa, 'I hope you are well, my brother', and with his right hand he grasped Amasa's beard to kiss him. Amasa was not on his guard against the sword in Joab's hand. Joab struck him with it in the belly and his entrails poured out to the ground; he did not strike a second blow, for Amasa was dead. Joab and his brother Abishai went on in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri. One of Joab's young men stood over Amasa and called out, 'Follow Joab, all who are for Joab and for David!' Amasa's body lay soaked in blood in the middle of the road, and when the man saw how all the people stopped, he rolled him off the road into the field and threw a cloak over him; for everyone who came by saw the body and stopped. When he had been dragged from the road, they all went on after Joab in pursuit of Sheba son of Bichri.

Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel until he came to Abel-beth-maacah,<sup>w</sup> and all the clan of Bichri<sup>x</sup> rallied to him and followed him into the city. Joab's forces came up and besieged him in Abel-beth-maacah, raised a siege-ramp against it and began undermining the wall to bring it down. Then a wise woman stood on the rampart<sup>y</sup> and called from the city, 'Listen, listen! Tell Joab to step forward and let me speak with him.' So he came forward and the woman said, 'Are you Joab?' He answered, 'I am.' 'Listen to what I have to say, sir', she went on, to which he replied, 'I am listening.'

'In the old days', she said, 'there was a saying, "Go to Abel for the answer", and that settled the matter. My city is known to be one of the most peaceable and loyal<sup>z</sup> in Israel; she is like a watchful mother in Israel, and you are seeking to kill her. Would you destroy the LORD's own possession?' Joab answered, 'God forbid, far be it from me to ruin or destroy! That is not our aim; but a man from the hill-country of Ephraim named Sheba son of Bichri has raised a revolt against King David; surrender this one man, and I will retire from the city.' The woman said to Joab, 'His head shall be thrown to you over the wall.' Then the woman withdrew, and her wisdom won over the assembled people; they cut off Sheba's head and threw it to Joab. Then he sounded the trumpet and the whole army left the city and dispersed to their homes, while Joab went back to the king of Jerusalem.

Joab was in command of the army,<sup>a</sup> and Benaiah son of Jehoiada commanded the Kerethite and Pelethite guards. Adoram was in charge of the forced levy, and Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was secretary of state. Sheva was adjutant-general, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; Ira the Jairite was David's priest.

IN DAVID'S REIGN THERE WAS A FAMINE that lasted year after year for three years. So David consulted the LORD, and he answered, 'Blood-guilt rests on

<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. verse 15; Heb.* Abel and Beth-maacah.

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* Beri.

<sup>y</sup> stood . . . rampart: *transposed from verse 15.*

<sup>z</sup> My city . . . loyal: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* I am the required

ones of the loyal ones.

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. 8. 16; Heb.* adds Israel.

<sup>b</sup> *Verses 23-26: cp. 8. 16-18; 1 Kgs. 4. 2-6; 1 Chr. 18.*

15-17.

this time to regain his position as head of the army. 14: *Sheba* either lacked the time to gather sufficient forces for an engagement, or else Israelites, other than the clan of Bichri, failed to respond. *Abel-beth-maacah* was in the far north, near Dan. 19: Cities were often spoken of as *mothers* and their dependent villages as "daughters." The term "metropolis" (mother city), still reflects this idiom. 22: The people of the city had consented to give Sheba refuge. Faced with Joab's ultimatum, they recanted.

20.23-26: *David's officers.* This is a parallel to 8.16-18.

21.1-24.25: *A miscellany of David's reign.* This is a group of items pertaining to David's reign that collectors did not want to lose. They are arranged in an "envelope form"; (1) a cultic narrative (21.1-14), (2) heroic anecdotes (21.15-22), (3) a royal song (22.1-51), (3') a royal song (23.1-7), (2') more heroic anecdotes (23.8-39), and (1') another cultic narrative. The whole miscellany forms an appendix to the throne succession narrative of chs. 9-20.

21.1-14: *Expiation of Saul's blood-guilt.* The ancient notion that *famine*, drought, or other disasters indicated some divine wrath to be assuaged long persisted. 1: Nothing is otherwise

Saul and on his family because he put  
 2 the Gibeonites to death.' (The Gibeon-  
 ites were not of Israelite descent; they  
 were a remnant of Amorite stock whom  
 the Israelites had sworn that they  
 would spare. Saul, however, had sought  
 to exterminate them in his zeal for  
 3 Israel and Judah.) King David sum-  
 moned the Gibeonites, therefore, and  
 said to them, 'What can be done for  
 you? How can I make expiation, so  
 4 that you may have cause to bless the  
 LORD's own people?' The Gibeonites  
 answered, 'Our feud with Saul and his  
 family cannot be settled in silver and  
 gold, and there is no one man in  
 Israel whose death would content us.'  
 'Then what do you want me to do for  
 5 you?' asked David. They answered,  
 'Let us make an end of the man who  
 caused our undoing and ruined us, so  
 that he shall never again have his place  
 6 within the borders of Israel. Hand over  
 to us seven of that man's sons, and we  
 will hurl them down to their death  
 before<sup>c</sup> the LORD in Gibeah of Saul,  
 the LORD's chosen king.' The king  
 7 agreed to hand them over, but he  
 spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan,  
 son of Saul, because of the oath that  
 had been taken in the LORD's name  
 by David and Saul's son Jonathan.  
 8 The king then took the two sons whom  
 Rizpah daughter of Aiah had borne  
 to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth,  
 and the five sons whom Merab, Saul's  
 daughter, had borne to Adriel son of  
 9 Barzillai of Meholah. He handed them  
 over to the Gibeonites, and they flung  
 them down from the mountain before  
 the LORD; the seven of them fell  
 together. They were put to death in  
 the first days of harvest at the begin-  
 10 ning of the barley harvest. Rizpah  
 daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and  
 spread it out as a bed for herself on the

rock, from the beginning of harvest  
 until the rains came and fell from  
 heaven upon the bodies. She allowed  
 no bird to set upon them by day nor  
 any wild beast by night. When David  
 11 was told what Rizpah daughter of Aiah  
 the concubine of Saul had done, he  
 went and took the bones of Saul and his  
 son Jonathan from the citizens of  
 Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them  
 from the public square at Beth-shan,  
 where the Philistines had hung them  
 on the day they defeated Saul at Gilboa.  
 He removed the bones of Saul and Jona-  
 13 than from there and gathered up the  
 bones of the men who had been hurled  
 to death. They buried the bones of  
 14 Saul and his son Jonathan in the  
 territory of Benjamin at Zela, in the  
 grave of his father Kish. Everything  
 was done as the king ordered, and  
 thereafter the LORD was willing to  
 accept prayers offered for the country.

Once again war broke out between  
 15 the Philistines and Israel. David and  
 his men went down to the battle, but as  
 he fought with the Philistines he fell  
 exhausted. Then Benob, one of the race  
 16 of the Rephaim, whose bronze spear  
 weighed three hundred shekels<sup>d</sup> and  
 who wore a belt of honour, took  
 David prisoner and was about to kill  
 him. But Abishai son of Zeruiah came  
 17 to David's help, struck the Philistine  
 down and killed him. Then David's  
 officers took an oath that he should  
 never again go out with them to war,  
 for fear that the lamp of Israel might  
 be extinguished.

Some time later war with the Philis-  
 18<sup>e</sup> tines broke out again in Gob: it was  
 then that Sibbechai of Hushah killed  
 Saph, a descendant of the Rephaim.

<sup>c</sup> Or for.

<sup>d</sup> shekels: prob. rdg.; Heb. weight.

<sup>e</sup> Verses 18-22: cp. 1 Chr. 20. 4-7.

known of Saul's action against *the Gibeonites*, but see 4.2 n. 2: See Josh. ch. 9. 4-6: Since the offense to be expiated was sacral, it was the priests of Gibeon who laid down these terms. The sanctuary of Gibeon was highly venerated by Jerusalemites; see 1 Kgs.3.4. 8: On *Rizpah*, see 3.7. *Merab* appears in 1 Sam.18.17-19; her children are not otherwise mentioned. 9: This was a ritual execution carried out *before the LORD*. *The first days of harvest* were around April. 10: *Rizpah* had to keep her vigil for some months, until the autumn rains. The coming of the rains showed that the expiation was complete. 11-14: David's action suggests some ambivalence on his part about consenting to the Gibeonite demand.

21.15-22: *Anecdotes from the Philistine wars*. These events were earlier than those of the throne succession narrative (chs. 9-20). 16: *The Rephaim*, legendary inhabitants of southern and eastern Canaan, were remarkable for their unusual stature. 17: See 18.2-4. This seems to

- 19 In another war with the Philistines in Gob, Elhanan son of Jair<sup>f</sup> of Bethlehem killed Goliath of Gath, whose spear had a shaft like a weaver's beam. In yet another war in Gath there appeared a giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all. He too was descended from the Rephaim; and, when he defied Israel, Jonathan son of David's brother Shimeai killed him.
- 22 These four giants were the descendants of the Rephaim in Gath, and they all fell at the hands of David and his men.
- 22 THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE SONG** David sang to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the power of all his enemies and from the power of Saul:
- 2<sup>g</sup> The LORD is my stronghold, my fortress and my champion,  
3 my God, my rock where I find safety; my shield, my mountain fastness, my strong tower,  
my refuge, my deliverer, who saves me from violence.
- 4 I will call on the LORD to whom all praise is due,  
and I shall be delivered from my enemies.
- 5 When the waves of death swept round me,  
and torrents of destruction overtook me,  
6 the bonds of Sheol tightened about me,  
the snares of death were set to catch me;  
7 then in anguish of heart I cried to the LORD,  
I called for help to my God;  
he heard me from his temple,  
and my cry rang in his ears.
- 8 The earth heaved and quaked,  
heaven's foundations shook;  
they heaved, because he was angry.
- 9 Smoke rose from his nostrils,  
devouring fire came out of his mouth,  
glowing coals and searing heat. He swept the skies aside as he descended,  
thick darkness lay under his feet. He rode on a cherub, he flew through the air;  
he swooped<sup>h</sup> on the wings of the wind. He curtained himself in darkness and made dense vapour his canopy. Thick clouds came out of the radiance before him;  
glowing coals burned brightly. The LORD thundered from the heavens  
and the voice of the Most High spoke out. He loosed his arrows, he sped them far and wide,  
his lightning shafts, and sent them echoing.
- The channels of the sea-bed were revealed,  
the foundations of earth laid bare at the LORD's rebuke,  
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. He reached down from the height and took me,  
he drew me out of mighty waters, he rescued me from my enemies,  
strong as they were,  
from my foes when they grew too powerful for me. They confronted me in the hour of my peril,  
but the LORD was my buttress. He brought me out into an open place,  
he rescued me because he delighted in me.
- The LORD rewarded me as my righteousness deserved;  
my hands were clean, and he required me.

<sup>f</sup> *Jair: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 20. 5; Heb. Jaare-oregim.*  
<sup>g</sup> *Verses 2-51: cp. Ps. 18. 2-50.*  
<sup>h</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. Ps. 18. 10; Heb. was seen.*

have been an earlier occasion. 19: The slaying of *Goliath* was romanticized in later times as a deed of David himself; see 1 Sam.17.1-58 n.

22.1-51: The song of David. See 1.17-27 n. This song also appears as Ps.18; see the annotations there. The speaker is a king who was first delivered from cosmic powers by a theophany of the LORD (vv. 1-20), who then celebrates the character of the LORD and his own righteousness (vv. 21-31), and who finally achieves spectacular victory because the LORD is his support (vv. 32-51).

- 22 For I have followed the ways of the LORD  
and have not turned wickedly from my God;
- 23 all his laws are before my eyes,  
I have not failed to follow his decrees.
- 24 In his sight I was blameless  
and kept myself from wilful sin;
- 25 the LORD requited me as my righteousness deserved  
and my purity in his eyes.
- 26 With the loyal thou showest thyself loyal  
and with the blameless man blameless.
- 27 With the savage man thou showest thyself savage,  
and<sup>i</sup> tortuous with the perverse.
- 28 Thou deliverest humble folk,  
thou lookest with contempt upon the proud.
- 29 Thou, LORD, art my lamp,  
and the LORD will lighten my darkness.
- 30 With thy help I leap over a bank,  
by God's aid I spring over a wall.
- 31 The way of God is perfect,  
the LORD's word has stood the test;  
he is the shield of all who take refuge in him.
- 32 What god is there but the LORD?  
What rock but our God?—
- 33 the God who girds me<sup>j</sup> with strength  
and makes my way blameless,<sup>k</sup>
- 34 who makes me swift as a hind  
and sets me secure on the mountains;
- 35 who trains my hands for battle,  
and my arms aim an arrow tipped with bronze.
- 36 Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation,  
in thy providence thou makest me great.
- 37 Thou givest me room for my steps,  
my feet have not faltered.
- 38 I pursue my enemies and destroy them,  
I do not return until I have made an end of them.
- 39 I make an end of them, I strike them down;
- they rise no more, they fall beneath my feet.
- Thou dost arm me with strength for the battle 40  
and dost subdue my foes before me.  
Thou settest<sup>l</sup> my foot on my enemies' necks, 41  
and I bring to nothing those that hate me.
- They cry out<sup>m</sup> and there is no one to help them, 42  
they cry to the LORD and he does not answer.
- I will pound them fine as dust on the ground, 43  
like mud in the streets will I trample them.<sup>n</sup>
- Thou dost deliver me from the clamour of the people, 44  
and makest me master of the nations.
- A people I never knew shall be my subjects.  
Foreigners shall come cringing to me; 45  
as soon as they hear tell of me, they shall obey me.
- Foreigners shall be brought captive to me, 46  
and come limping from their strongholds.
- The LORD lives, blessed is my rock, 47  
high above all is God my rock and safe refuge.
- O God, who grantest me vengeance, 48  
who dost subdue peoples under me,  
who dost snatch me from my foes 49  
and set me over my enemies,  
thou dost deliver me from violent men.
- Therefore, LORD, I will praise thee 50  
among the nations  
and sing psalms to thy name,  
to one who gives his king great 51  
victories  
and in all his acts keeps faith with his anointed king,  
with David and his descendants for ever.

<sup>i</sup> With the savage . . . savage, and; *or* With the pure thou showest thyself pure, but . . .

<sup>j</sup> who girds me: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ps. 18. 32*; *Heb. my refuge or my strength.*

<sup>k</sup> and makes . . . blameless: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ps. 18. 32*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>l</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ps. 18. 40*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>m</sup> cry out: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ps. 18. 41*; *Heb. look.*

<sup>n</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ps. 18. 42*; *Heb. adds will I stamp them down.*

## 23 These are the last words of David:

The very word of David son of Jesse,  
the very word of the man whom the

High God raised up,  
the anointed prince of the God of  
Jacob,

and the singer of Israel's psalms:

2 the spirit of the LORD has spoken  
through me,

and his word is on my lips.

3 The God of Israel spoke,  
the Rock of Israel spoke of me:

'He who rules men in justice,  
who rules in the fear of God,

4 is like the light of morning at  
sunrise,

a morning that is cloudless after  
rain

and makes the grass sparkle from  
the earth.'

5 Surely, surely my house is true to  
God;

for he has made a pact with me for  
all time,

its terms spelled out and faithfully  
kept,

my whole salvation, all my<sup>o</sup> delight.

6 But the ungodly put forth no shoots,  
they are all like briars tossed aside;

none dare put out his hand to pick  
them up,

7 none touch them but<sup>p</sup> with tool of  
iron or of wood;

they are fit only for burning in the  
fire.<sup>q</sup>

8<sup>r</sup> THESE ARE THE NAMES OF DAVID'S  
heroes. First came Ishbosheth the

Hachmonite,<sup>s</sup> chief of the three; it was  
he who brandished his spear<sup>t</sup> over

eight hundred dead, all slain at one

9 time. Next to him was Eleazar son of  
Dodo the Ahohite,<sup>u</sup> one of the heroic

three. He was with David at Pas-  
dammim where the Philistines<sup>v</sup> had

10 gathered for battle. When the Israel-  
ites fell back, he stood his ground and

rained blows on the Philistines until,  
from sheer weariness, his hand stuck  
fast to his sword; and so the LORD  
brought about a great victory that  
day. Afterwards the people rallied  
behind him, but it was only to strip  
the dead. Next to him was Shammah 11  
son of Agee a Hararite. The Philistines  
had gathered at Lehi, where there was  
a field with a fine crop of lentils; and,  
when the Philistines put the people to  
flight, he stood his ground in the field, 12  
saved it<sup>w</sup> and defeated them. So the  
LORD again brought about a great  
victory.

Three of the thirty went down 13  
towards the beginning of harvest to  
join David at the cave of Adullam,  
while a band of Philistines was en-  
camped in the Vale of Rephaim. At 14  
that time David was in the stronghold  
and a Philistine garrison held Beth-  
lehem. One day a longing came over 15  
David, and he exclaimed, 'If only I  
could have a drink of water from the  
well<sup>x</sup> by the gate of Bethlehem!' At this 16  
the heroic three made their way  
through the Philistine lines and drew  
water from the well by the gate of  
Bethlehem and brought it to David.  
But David refused to drink it; he  
poured it out to the LORD and said, 17  
'God forbid that I should do such a  
thing! Can I drink<sup>y</sup> the blood of these  
men who risked their lives for it?' So  
he would not drink it. Such were the  
exploits of the heroic three.

Abishai the brother of Joab son of 18  
Zeruiah was chief of the thirty. He once  
brandished his spear over three

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>p</sup> but: prob. rdg.; Heb. he shall be filled.

<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds in sitting.

<sup>r</sup> Verses 8-39: cp. 1 Chr. 11. 10-41.

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite.

<sup>t</sup> who . . . spear: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 11. 11; Heb.

unintelligible.

<sup>u</sup> the Ahohite: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 11. 12; Heb. son

of Ahohi.

<sup>v</sup> He was . . . Philistines: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 11. 13;

Heb. With David when they taunted them among the

Philistines.

<sup>w</sup> saved it: or cleared it of the Philistines.

<sup>x</sup> Or cistern.

<sup>y</sup> I drink: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 11. 19; Heb. om.

23.1-7: **The last words of David.** The text of this song is rather uncertain; it has a good claim to be from David himself. 1: *High God*: see 1 Sam.2.10 n. 3: *On Rock*, see 1 Sam.2.2 n. 5: This may be the earliest reference to the *pact* ("perpetual covenant") between the LORD and David; compare ch. 7.

23.8-39: **David's warriors.** The heroic deeds are probably touched up, but David commanded the loyalty of a powerful following. The organization in *the three* and *the thirty* reflects a ten-to-one ratio that often appears in military, labor force, and cultic groups; see 1 Kgs.5.16;

hundred dead, and he was famous  
 19 among the thirty. Some think he even  
 surpassed the rest of the thirty<sup>z</sup> in  
 reputation, and he became their  
 captain, but he did not rival the three.  
 20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada, from Kab-  
 zeel, was a hero of many exploits. It  
 was he who smote the two champions  
 of Moab, and who went down into a  
 pit and killed a lion on a snowy day.  
 21 It was he who also killed the Egyptian,  
 a man of striking appearance armed  
 with a spear: he went to meet him with  
 a club, snatched the spear out of the  
 Egyptian's hand and killed him with his  
 22 own weapon. Such were the exploits of  
 Benaiah son of Jehoiada, famous  
 23 among the heroic thirty.<sup>z</sup> He was more  
 famous than the rest of the thirty, but  
 he did not rival the three. David  
 appointed him to his household.  
 24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one  
 of the thirty, and Elhanan son of  
 25 Dodo from Bethlehem; Shammah from  
 26 Harod, and Elika from Harod; Helez  
 from Beth-pelet,<sup>a</sup> and Ira son of  
 27 Ikkesh from Tekoa; Abiezer from  
 Anathoth, and Mebunnai from Hu-  
 28 shah; Zalmon the Ahohite, and  
 29 Maharai from Netophah; Heled son of  
 Baanah from Netophah, and Ittai son  
 of Ribai from Gibeah of Benjamin;  
 30 Benaiah from Pirathon, and Hiddai  
 31 from the ravines of Gaash; Abi-albon  
 from Beth-arabah,<sup>b</sup> and Azmoth from  
 32 Bahurim;<sup>c</sup> Eliahba from Shaalbon,  
 and Hashem the Gizonite; Jonathan  
 33 son of<sup>d</sup> Shammah the Hararite, and  
 Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite;<sup>e</sup>  
 34 Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the  
 Maacathite, and Eliam son of Ahitho-  
 35 phel the Gilonite; Hezrai from Carmel,  
 36 and Paarai the Arbite; Igal son of  
 Nathan from Zobah, and Bani the  
 37 Gadite; Zelek the Ammonite, and  
 Naharai from Beeroth, armour-bearer  
 38 to Joab son of Zeruah; Ira the Ithrite,  
 39 Gareb the Ithrite, and Uriah the  
 Hittite: there were thirty-seven in all.

ONCE AGAIN THE ISRAELITES FELT THE LORD'S  
 241/ LORD's anger, when he incited David  
 against them and gave him orders that  
 Israel and Judah should be counted.  
 So he instructed Joab and the officers  
 2 of the army<sup>f</sup> with him to go round all  
 the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-  
 sheba, and make a record of the  
 people and report the number to him.  
 Joab answered, 'Even if the LORD  
 3 your God should increase the people a  
 hundredfold and your majesty should  
 live to see it, what pleasure would that  
 give your majesty?' But Joab and the  
 4 officers were overruled by the king  
 and they left his presence in order to  
 count the people. They crossed the  
 5 Jordan and began at Aroer and the  
 level land of the gorge, proceeding  
 towards Gad<sup>h</sup> and Jazer. They came  
 6 to Gilead and to the land of the  
 Hittites, to Kadesh, and then to Dan  
 and Iyyon<sup>i</sup> and so round towards  
 Sidon. They went as far as the walled  
 7 city of Tyre and all the towns of the  
 Hivites and Canaanites, and then  
 went on to the Negeb of Judah at  
 Beersheba. They covered the whole  
 8 country and arrived back at Jerusalem  
 after nine months and twenty days.  
 Joab reported to the king the total  
 9 number of people: the number of able-  
 bodied men, capable of bearing arms,  
 was eight hundred thousand in Israel  
 and five hundred thousand in Judah.

After he had counted the people  
 10 David's conscience smote him, and he  
 said to the LORD, 'I have done a very  
 wicked thing: I pray thee, LORD, re-  
 move thy servant's guilt, for I have

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. three.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. Josh. 15. 27; Heb. from Pelet.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. Josh. 18. 22; Heb. from Arabah.

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 11. 33; Heb. from Barhum.

<sup>d</sup> Hashem . . . son of: prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 11. 34; Heb. the sons of Jashen, Jonathan.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 11. 35; Heb. Ararite.

<sup>f</sup> Verses 1-25: cp. 1 Chr. 21. 1-27.

<sup>g</sup> Joab . . . army: prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Chr. 21. 2; Heb. Joab the officer of the army.

<sup>h</sup> began at . . . Gad: prob. rdg.; Heb. encamped in Aroer on the right of the level land of the gorge Gad.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 1 Kgs. 15. 20; Heb. Yaan.

9.23 and the ratio of sheep to bulls in 2 Chr. 35.7,9. 24-39: There are thirty-one names here, plus *Abishai* and *Benaiah* in vv. 18-23. The list may include names of men who belonged to the elite *thirty* at different times, some replacing others.

24.1-25: David's census and the Jerusalem altar. This "sacred story" sanctions the site of the altar of the Solomonic Temple. 1: The LORD's anger must be assuaged, as in 21.1-14. 4: David insists on the census; it was a step toward effective government of his realm, but intruded upon the independence of tribal groups. 9: The numbers are improbable, even for David's time. 10: The interest of the narrative is cultic; hence, consistency of conduct on David's part is sacrificed

- 11 been very foolish.' He rose next morning, and meanwhile the command of the LORD had come to the prophet Gad, David's seer, to go and speak to David: 'This is the word of the LORD: I have three things in store for you; choose one and I will bring it upon you.' So Gad came to David and repeated this to him and said, 'Is it to be three years of famine in your land, or three months of flight with the enemy at your heels, or three days of pestilence in your land? Consider carefully what answer I am to take back to him who sent me.' Thereupon David said to Gad, 'I am in a desperate plight; let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; and let me not fall into the hands of men.' So the LORD sent a pestilence throughout Israel from morning till the hour of dinner, and from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand of the people died.
- 16 Then the angel stretched out his arm towards Jerusalem to destroy it; but the LORD repented of the evil and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough! Stay your hand.' At that moment the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.
- 17 When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, 'It is I who have done wrong, the sin is mine; but these poor sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand fall upon me and upon my family.' That same day Gad came to David and said to him, 'Go and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.' David did what Gad told him to do, and went up as the LORD had commanded. When Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming over towards him, he went out, prostrated himself low before the king and said, 'Why has your majesty come to visit his servant?' David answered, 'To buy the threshing-floor from you to build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague which has attacked the people may be stopped.' Araunah answered David, 'I beg your majesty to take it and sacrifice what you think fit. I have here the oxen for a whole-offering, and their harness and the threshing-sledges for the fuel.' Araunah gave it all to the king for his own use and said to him, 'May the LORD your God accept you.' But the king said to Araunah, 'No, I will buy it from you; I will not offer to the LORD my God whole-offerings that have cost me nothing.' So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. He built an altar to the LORD there and offered whole-offerings and shared-offerings. Then the LORD yielded to his prayer for the land; and the plague in Israel stopped.
- j Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the king.*

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to that interest. **11:** *The prophet Gad:* see 1 Sam.22.5. **17:** David's piety is similar to that expressed in the throne succession narrative; compare 15.25-26; 16.10-12. **18:** That *the threshing-floor of Araunah* became the place of the altar of the Temple is only implicit here, but is made explicit in 1 Chr.21.28-22.1.



# THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

1 and 2 Kings are a single book in Hebrew, related to 1 and 2 Samuel and the whole "Deuteronomic history" (see Introduction to 1 Sam.). The establishment of David's dynasty and the building of Solomon's Temple bring to a completion the LORD's work of establishing Israel in Canaan (1 Kgs. chs. 1-10).

Israel's prosperity has a condition, however: that the LORD's commandments be carefully obeyed. Hence, the rest of Kings tells how disaster finally came upon the Israelite kingdoms through their failure to meet that condition. While individual kings were guilty of various offenses, two particular violations of the LORD's cultic requirements condemned the two kingdoms. In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the violation was the "sin" of Jeroboam I, namely, his establishment of the cult of the golden calves at Bethel; this constituted a worship of the LORD, but an improper one (see 1 Kgs.12.25-33; 2 Kgs.17.21-23). In Judah, the violation was permitting the local sanctuaries, called the hill-shrines, to continue after the Temple was built (see, e.g. 1 Kgs.3.2-3; 22.41-43).

Only two kings of the late period, Hezekiah and Josiah, are fully approved, this because they removed the hill-shrines (2 Kgs.18.3-4; 23.8).

1 Kings opens with the conclusion (chs. 1-2) of the narrative of the succession to David's throne; earlier parts of that same source are in 2 Sam. chs. 9-20. At different points some other literary sources are referred to: "the annals of Solomon" (1 Kgs.11.41), "the annals of the kings of Israel" (14.19), and "the annals of the kings of Judah" (14.29). Data from these annals are given in regular formulas for each king (see, e.g. 14.21-22; 15.25-26). Also drawn upon, without explicit reference, were one or more sources on the history of the Temple (e.g. 6.2-36; 2 Kgs.12.4-16; 16.10-18) and collections of prophetic legends (e.g. 1 Kgs. chs. 13; 17-19; 2 Kgs. chs. 2-8; 18.17-20.19). Also, the Deuteronomic historians contributed speeches and reflections in their distinctive style (e.g. 1 Kgs.8.14-61; 2 Kgs.17.7-23).

A "first edition" of these materials may have been composed during Josiah's reign, before his death (609 B.C.). The point of that edition would have been to show that the previous history of the kings justified Josiah's religious reform (see 2 Kgs.22.3-23.24). Later (about 550 B.C.), after the kingdom of Judah had fallen, a "second edition" of Kings, extending the account, was incorporated into the larger Deuteronomic history.

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## *The death of David and accession of Solomon*

1 **K**ING DAVID WAS NOW A VERY OLD man and, though they wrapped clothes round him, he could not  
2 keep warm. So his household said to him, 'Let us find a young virgin for your majesty, to attend you and take care of you; and let her lie in your  
3 bosom, sir, and make you warm.' So they searched all over Israel for a beautiful maiden and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the  
4 king. She was a very beautiful girl, and she took care of the king and waited

on him, but he had no intercourse with her.

Now Adonijah, whose mother was 5 Haggith, was boasting that he was to be king; and he had already provided himself with chariots and horsemen<sup>a</sup> and fifty outrunners. Never in his life 6 had his father corrected him or asked why he behaved as he did. He was a very handsome man, too, and was next in age to Absalom. He talked with 7 Joab son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their strong support; but Zadok the priest, 8 Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the

<sup>a</sup> Or a chariot and horses.

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**1.1-2.46: Solomon's succession to the throne.** This is the conclusion of the throne succession narrative in 2 Sam. chs. 9-20.

**1.1-53: Two parties struggle for the kingship.** 1: *Very old*: about seventy at this time. 5-6: *Adonijah, as next in age to Absalom* (now dead), had good reason to suppose he would succeed David; compare 2 Sam.15.1. 7-10: Adonijah was born during David's Hebron period and was therefore supported by David's leading men of that time, *Joab*, commander of the army (2 Sam.2.13 is his first appearance), and *Abiathar*, the priest who escaped Saul's wrath and dwelt with David during the fugitive years in the Wilderness (1 Sam.22.20; 23.6). Solomon's support,

prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's bodyguard of heroes, did not take his side. Adonijah then held a sacrifice of sheep, oxen, and buffaloes at the stone Zoheleth beside En-rogel, and he invited all his royal brothers and all those officers of the household who were of the tribe of Judah. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah and the bodyguard, or Solomon his brother.

Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, 'Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king, all unknown to our lord David? Now come, let me advise you what to do for your own safety and for the safety of your son Solomon. Go in and see King David and say to him, "Did not your majesty swear to me, your servant, that my son Solomon should succeed you as king; that it was he who should sit on your throne? Why then has Adonijah become king?" Then while you are still speaking there with the king, I will follow you in and tell the whole story.'

So Bathsheba went to the king in his private chamber; he was now very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was waiting on him. Bathsheba bowed before the king and prostrated herself. 'What do you want?' said the king. She answered, 'My lord, you swore to me your servant, by the LORD your God, that my son Solomon should succeed you as king, and that he should sit on your throne. But now, here is Adonijah become king, all unknown to your majesty. He has sacrificed great numbers of oxen, buffaloes, and sheep, and has invited to the feast all the king's sons, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander-in-chief, but he has not invited your servant Solomon. And now, your majesty, all Israel is looking to you to announce who is to succeed you on the throne. Otherwise, when

you, sir, rest with your forefathers, my son Solomon and I shall be treated as criminals.' She was still speaking to the king when Nathan the prophet arrived. The king was told that Nathan was there; he came into the presence and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. 'My lord,' he said, 'your majesty must, I suppose, have declared that Adonijah should succeed you and that he should sit on your throne. He has today gone down and sacrificed great numbers of oxen, buffaloes, and sheep, and has invited to the feast all the king's sons, Joab the commander-in-chief, and Abiathar the priest; and at this very moment they are eating and drinking in his presence and shouting, "Long live King Adonijah!" But he has not invited me your servant, Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, or your servant Solomon. Has this been done by your majesty's authority, while we<sup>b</sup> your servants have not been told who should succeed you on the throne?' Thereupon King David said, 'Call Bathsheba', and she came into the king's presence and stood before him. Then the king swore an oath to her: 'As the LORD lives, who has delivered me from all my troubles: I swore by the LORD the God of Israel that Solomon your son should succeed me and that he should sit on my throne, and this day I give effect to my oath.' Bathsheba bowed low to the king and prostrated herself; and she said, 'May my lord King David live for ever!'

Then King David said, 'Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.' They came into the king's presence and he gave them these orders: 'Take the officers of the household with you; mount my son Solomon on the king's mule and escort him down to Gihon. There

<sup>b</sup> Has this . . . while we: or If this has been done by your majesty's authority, then we . . .

on the other hand, came from leaders who only appeared after David's settlement in Jerusalem: *Zadok*, the other leader of the priests (2 Sam.8.17 n.), *Nathan* the prophet (see 2 Sam.7.2 n.; 12.1-14 n.), and *Benaiah*, commander of David's Philistine palace guard (2 Sam.8.18; 20.23). *Solomon* was, of course, born in David's Jerusalem period to a Jerusalemite mother (2 Sam.12.24-25). The two parties represented a tension that would persist through the centuries (see 2 Kgs.21.23-24) between the old city-state of Jerusalem and the new kingdom of Judah. 9: *En-rogel*: a spring southeast of the city (2 Sam.17.17). 11-31: *Nathan* sees the crisis and knows that through *Bathsheba* a counter-stroke can be affected. 33: *Gihon* was a sacred spring to the

Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet shall anoint him king over Israel. Sound the trumpet and shout, "Long live King Solomon!" Then escort him home again, and he shall come and sit on my throne and reign in my place; for he is the man that I have appointed prince over Israel and Judah.' Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, 'It shall be done. And may the LORD, the God of my lord the king, confirm it! As the LORD has been with your majesty, so may he be with Solomon; may he make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David.' So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, together with the Kerethite and Pelethite guards, went down and mounted Solomon on King David's mule and escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the Tent of the LORD and anointed Solomon; they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, 'Long live King Solomon!' Then all the people escorted him home in procession, with great rejoicing and playing of pipes, so that the very earth split with the noise.

Adonijah and his guests had finished their banquet when the noise reached their ears. Joab, hearing the sound of the trumpet, exclaimed, 'What is all this uproar in the city? What has happened?' While he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. 'Come in', said Adonijah. 'You are an honourable man and bring good news.' 'Far otherwise,' Jonathan replied; 'our lord King David has made Solomon king and has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, together with the Kerethite and Peleth-

ite guards; they have mounted him on the king's mule, and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon, and they have now escorted him home rejoicing, and the city is in an uproar. That was the noise you heard. More than that, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne. Yes, and the officers of the household have been to greet our lord King David with these words: "May your God make the name of Solomon your son more famous than your own and his throne even greater than yours", and the king bowed upon his couch. What is more, he said this: "Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel who has set a successor on my throne this day while I am still alive to see it." Then Adonijah's guests all rose in panic and scattered. Adonijah himself, in fear of Solomon, sprang up and went to the altar and caught hold of its horns. Then a message was sent to Solomon: 'Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; he has taken hold of the horns of the altar and has said, "Let King Solomon first swear to me that he will not put his servant to the sword."' Solomon said, 'If he proves himself a man of worth, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground; but if he is found to be troublesome, he shall die.' Then King Solomon sent and had him brought down from the altar; he came in and prostrated himself before the king, and Solomon ordered him home.

When the time of David's death drew near, he gave this last charge to his son Solomon: 'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man. Fulfil your duty to the LORD your God; conform to his ways, observe his statutes and his command-

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east of the city, in the Kidron Valley. 36-37: *Benaiah*, as commander of the guard, occupied the key position here. 38: *The Kerethite and Pelethite guards* were Cretan and Philistine mercenaries. The king's *mule* had special significance in the royal rituals of the city; compare Zech.9.9. 39: The city *priest* anoints the new king with *oil* preserved in the sanctuary for ritual purposes. On anointing *oil*, see Exod.30.22-33. For the *Tent of the LORD*, see 2 Sam.6.17; 7.1-7. 40: The *procession* went to the royal palace where Solomon was seated on the throne, the decisive conclusion to the coronation; see v. 46. 41-53: When it was clear that Solomon's supporters had carried out their coup and that the king fully concurred (v. 48), Adonijah and his followers fled in *panic* (v. 50). 52-53: Solomon wished to avoid an open confrontation between the two parties. He would subsequently find ways to secure his own party.

2.1-46: *David's death and the securing of Solomon's throne*. 1-9: Old scores and debts, which for various reasons David had not settled, were bequeathed to Solomon. 3-4: This reflects

ments, his judgements and his solemn precepts, as they are written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in whatever you do and whichever way you turn, and that the LORD may fulfil this promise that he made about me: "If your descendants take care to walk faithfully in my sight with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall never lack a successor on the throne of Israel." You know how Joab son of Zeruiah treated me and what he did to two commanders-in-chief in Israel, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them both, breaking the peace by bloody acts of war; and with that blood he stained the belt about my waist and the sandals on my feet. Do as your wisdom prompts you, and do not let his grey hairs go down to the grave in peace. Show constant friendship to the family of Barzillai of Gilead; let them have their place at your table; they befriended me when I was a fugitive from your brother Absalom. Do not forget Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me bitterly the day I went to Mahanaim. True, he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore by the LORD that I would not put him to death. But you do not need to let him go unpunished now; you are a wise man and will know how to deal with him; bring down his grey hairs in blood to the grave.

So David rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David, having reigned over Israel for forty years, seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem; and Solomon succeeded his father David as king and was firmly established on the throne.

### The reign of Solomon

13 THEN ADONIJAH SON OF HAGGITH CAME to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon.

'Do you come as a friend?' she asked. 'As a friend,' he answered; 'I have something to say to you.' 'Tell me', she said. 'You know', he went on, 'that the throne was mine and that all Israel was looking to me to be king; but I was passed over and the throne has gone to my brother; it was his by the LORD's will. And now I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me.' 'What is it?' she said. He answered, 'Will you ask King Solomon (he will never refuse you) to give me Abishag the Shunammite in marriage?' 'Very well,' said Bathsheba, 'I will speak for you to the king.' So Bathsheba went in to King Solomon to speak for Adonijah. The king rose to meet her and kissed her, and seated himself on his throne. A throne was set for the king's mother and she sat at his right hand. Then she said, 'I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.' 'What is it, mother?' he replied; 'I will not refuse you.' 'It is this, that Abishag the Shunammite should be given to your brother Adonijah in marriage.' At that Solomon answered his mother, 'Why do you ask for Abishag the Shunammite as wife for Adonijah? you might as well ask for the throne, for he is my elder brother and has both Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruiah on his side.' Then King Solomon swore by the LORD: 'So help me God, Adonijah shall pay for this with his life. As the LORD lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father and has founded a house for me as he promised, this very day Adonijah shall be put to death!' Thereupon King Solomon gave Benaiah son of Jehoiada his orders, and he struck him down and he died.

Abiathar the priest was told by the king to go off to Anathoth to his own estate. 'You deserve to die,' he said,

the piety of the Deuteronomic historians. 5-6: Joab had slain Abner (2 Sam.3.22-27) and Amasa (2 Sam.20.8-10), both of whom were commanders who had previously opposed David (2 Sam.2.8-10,12-13; 17.25; 19.13). It is striking, however, that David does not here blame Joab for killing Absalom (2 Sam.18.9-17). That Joab always labored in behalf of David is beyond question, even when bloodshed was required. A Solomonic viewpoint, however, has condemned him. 7: On Barzillai, see 2 Sam.17.27 and 19.31-39. 8: On Shimei, see 2 Sam.16.5-14 and 19.15-23. 17: As v. 22 shows, Adonijah's request for David's concubine Abishag would have serious political implication; see 2 Sam.3.7 n. 19: The queen mother occupied a very important position in Jerusalem and thus had a throne at her son's right hand. 24: Adonijah's

‘but in spite of this day’s work I shall not put you to death, for you carried the Ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and you shared in all the hardships that he endured.’ So  
 27 Solomon dismissed Abiathar from his office as priest of the LORD, and so fulfilled the sentence that the LORD had pronounced against the house of Eli in Shiloh.  
 28 News of all this reached Joab, and he fled to the Tent of the LORD and caught hold of the horns of the altar; for he had sided with Adonijah, though not  
 29 with Absalom. When King Solomon learnt that Joab had fled to the Tent of the LORD and that he was by the altar, he sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada with orders to strike him down.  
 30 Benaiah came to the Tent of the LORD and ordered Joab in the king’s name to come away; but he said, ‘No; I will die here.’ Benaiah reported Joab’s  
 31 answer to the king, and the king said, ‘Let him have his way; strike him down and bury him, and so rid me and my father’s house of the guilt for the  
 32 blood that he wantonly shed. The LORD will hold him responsible for his own death, because he struck down two innocent men who were better  
 33 men than he, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah, and ran them through with the sword, without my  
 34 father David’s knowledge. The guilt of their blood shall recoil on Joab and his descendants for all time; but David and his descendants, his house and his throne, will enjoy perpetual  
 35 prosperity from the LORD.’ So Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up to the altar and struck Joab down and killed him, and he was buried in his house on the

edge of the wilderness. Thereafter the  
 35 king appointed Benaiah son of Jehoiada to command the army in his place, and installed Zadok the priest in place of Abiathar.

Next the king sent for Shimei and  
 36 said to him, ‘Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and stay there; you are not to leave the city for any other place. If ever you leave it and cross the gorge  
 37 of the Kidron, you shall die; make no mistake about that. Your blood will be on your own head.’ And Shimei  
 38 said to the king, ‘I accept your sentence; I will do as your majesty commands.’ So for a long time Shimei  
 39 remained in Jerusalem; but three years later two of his slaves ran away to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath.  
 40 When Shimei heard that his slaves were in Gath, he immediately saddled his ass and went there to Achish in search of his slaves; he came to Gath and returned with them. When King  
 41 Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and back, he sent for him and said, ‘Did I not  
 42 require you to swear by the LORD? Did I not give you this solemn warning: “If ever you leave this city for any other place, you shall die; make no  
 43 mistake about it”? And you said, “I accept your sentence; I obey.” Why then have you not kept the oath which you swore by the LORD, and the order which I gave you? Shimei, you  
 44 know in your own heart all the mischief you did to my father David; the LORD is now making that mischief recoil on your own head. But King  
 45 Solomon is blessed and the throne of David will be secure before the LORD for all time.’ The king then gave  
 46 orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck Shimei down;

assassination was the first in a series of executions intended to remove dangerous antagonists from the scene. 26–27: *Abiathar the priest* was next to be removed. The prophet Jeremiah was descended from these priests at *Anathoth* (Jer.1.1). *The sentence that the LORD had pronounced concerning Eli* appears in 1 Sam.2.35–36. 28–35: No new high-handed action by *Joab* is reported, but he too had to die; see vv. 5–6 n. 35: *The edge of the wilderness* was near Bethlehem, where Joab’s father and brother were buried (2 Sam.2.32). 36–46: *Three years* passed before *Shimei*, the last opponent, slipped; with his death Solomon’s *royal power* was . . . established.

3.1–11.43: **The reign of Solomon.** This complex section, which has little affinity with the two preceding chs., is based on three kinds of material: popular narratives of Solomon’s character, annalistic materials concerning his administration and works, and statistics and speeches concerning the establishment of the Temple. The whole is arranged in an “envelope” (1,2,3,2,1) structure: (1) narratives of Solomon’s divine favor, ch. 3; (2) details of his administration and wisdom, ch. 4; (3) the Temple, 5.1–9.9; (2’) details of administration, wisdom,

and he died. Thus Solomon's royal power was securely established.

3 Solomon allied himself to Pharaoh king of Egypt by marrying his daughter. He brought her to the City of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall round Jerusalem. The people however continued to sacrifice at the hill-shrines, for till then no house had been built in honour of the name of the LORD. Solomon himself loved the LORD, conforming to the precepts laid down by his father David; but he too slaughtered and burnt sacrifices at the hill-shrines.

4 Now King Solomon went to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice, for that was the chief hill-shrine, and he used to offer a thousand whole-offerings on its altar.

5 There that night the LORD God appeared to him in a dream and said,

6 'What shall I give you? Tell me.' And Solomon answered, 'Thou didst show great and constant love to thy servant David my father, because he walked before thee in loyalty, righteousness, and integrity of heart; and thou hast maintained this great and constant love towards him and hast now given him a son to succeed him on the throne. Now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king in place of my father David, though I am a mere child, unskilled in leadership. And I am here in the midst of thy people, the people of thy choice, too many to be numbered or counted. Give thy servant, therefore, a heart with skill to listen,

so that he may govern thy people justly and distinguish good from evil. For who is equal to the task of governing this great people of thine?' The Lord was well pleased that Solomon had asked for this, and he said to him, 'Because you have asked for this, and not for long life for yourself, or for wealth, or for the lives of your enemies, but have asked for discernment in administering justice, I grant your request; I give you a heart so wise and so understanding that there has been none like you before your time nor will be after you. I give you furthermore those things for which you did not ask, such wealth and honour<sup>d</sup> as no king of your time can match. And if you conform to my ways and observe my ordinances and commandments, as your father David did, I will give you long life.' Then he awoke, and knew it was a dream.

Solomon came to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; there he sacrificed whole-offerings and brought shared-offerings, and gave a feast to all his household.

Then there came into the king's presence two women who were prostitutes and stood before him. The first said, 'My lord, this woman and I share the same house, and I gave birth to a child when she was there with me. On the third day after my baby was born she too gave birth to a child. We were quite alone; no one

*c* Verses 5-14: cp. 2 Chr. 1. 7-12.  
*d* Or riches.

and wealth, 9.10-10.29; and (1') Solomon's divine disfavor, ch. 11. The resulting impression—that the building of the Temple was the great and central work of the reign and that it was only late in the reign that Solomon took foreign wives and supported foreign religious establishments—is the viewpoint of later interpreters primarily interested in the exclusive claims of the Jerusalem Temple.

3.1-28: **Solomon chooses wisdom and uses it.** After brief introductory comments, two popular narratives of Solomon's surpassing wisdom introduce his reign. 1: The *Pharaoh whose daughter was Solomon's wife* must have belonged to the weak twenty-first dynasty, since Shishak (about 935-914 B.C.), the first king of the twenty-second dynasty, was hostile to Judah (14.25). The *City of David* was the old city. Solomon, through his building campaigns, was to double its size. 2-3: From the late compilers' viewpoint, *hill-shrines* (including local city sanctuaries) were legitimate sanctuaries of the LORD before the Jerusalem Temple was built, but not afterward. Failure to eliminate these shrines is to be the basis for condemning most of the kings of Judah. 4-15: *Gibeon*: once one of a group of allied Canaanite cities related to Jerusalem (Josh. 10.3-5). Cultic relations between such cities persisted into Israelite times; compare 2 Sam.21.1-14 n. Gibeon and Gibeah were two different places, at times confused with each other by ancient copyists of the Heb. text (e.g. 2 Sam.21.64). *A thousand whole-offerings* is either a great exaggeration or covers a considerable period of time. 6-9: Solomon as imagined in seventh-century piety speaks here. 15: This late comment is designed to reassert the religious importance of *Jerusalem* after the reference to Gibeon as "the chief hill-shrine" (v. 4). 16-28: The wisdom

else was with us in the house; only the  
 19 two of us were there. During the  
 night this woman's child died because  
 20 she overlaid it, and she got up in the  
 middle of the night, took my baby  
 from my side while I, your servant,  
 was asleep, and laid it in her bosom,  
 21 putting her dead child in mine. When  
 I got up in the morning to feed my  
 baby, I found him dead; but when I  
 looked at him closely, I found that  
 it was not the child that I had borne.'  
 22 The other woman broke in, 'No; the  
 living child is mine; yours is the dead  
 one', while the first retorted, 'No; the  
 dead child is yours; mine is the living  
 one.' So they went on arguing in the  
 23 king's presence. The king thought to  
 himself, 'One of them says, "This is  
 my child, the living one; yours is the  
 dead one." The other says, "No; it is  
 your child that is dead and mine that  
 24 is alive."' Then he said, 'Fetch me a  
 sword.' They brought in a sword and  
 the king gave the order: 'Cut the living  
 child in two and give half to one  
 26 and half to the other.' At this the  
 woman who was the mother of the  
 living child, moved with love for her  
 child, said to the king, 'Oh! sir, let her  
 have the baby; whatever you do, do  
 not kill it.' The other said, 'Let neither  
 27 of us have it; cut it in two.' There-  
 upon the king gave judgement: 'Give  
 the living baby to the first woman;  
 28 do not kill it. She is its mother.' When  
 Israel heard the judgement which the  
 king had given, they all stood in awe  
 of him; for they saw that he had the  
 wisdom of God within him to adminis-  
 ter justice.

**4 KING SOLOMON REIGNED OVER ISRAEL.**

2<sup>e</sup> His officers were as followers:

In charge of the calendar:<sup>f</sup> Azariah  
 son of Zadok the priest.

3 Adjutant-general:<sup>g</sup> Ahijah son<sup>h</sup> of  
 Shisha.

Secretary of state: Jehoshaphat son  
 of Ahilud.

Commander of the army: Benaiah 4  
 son of Jehoiada.

Priests: Zadok and Abiathar.

Superintendent of the regional gov- 5  
 vernors: Azariah son of Nathan.

King's Friend: Zabud son of Nathan.

Comptroller of the household: Ahi- 6  
 shar.

Superintendent of the forced levy:  
 Adoniram son of Abda.

Solomon had twelve regional gover- 7  
 nors over Israel and they supplied the  
 food for the king and the royal  
 household, each being responsible for  
 one month's provision in the year.  
 These were their names: 8

Ben-hur in the hill-country of Eph-  
 raim.

Ben-dekar in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth- 9  
 shemesh, Elon, and Beth-hanan.

Ben-hesed in Aruboth; he had 10  
 charge also of Socoh and all the  
 land of Hephher.

Ben-abinadab, who had married Sol- 11  
 omon's daughter Taphath, in all  
 the district of Dor.

Baana son of Ahilud in Taanach and 12  
 Megiddo, all Beth-shean as far as  
 Abel-meholah beside Zartanah,  
 and from Beth-shean below Jez-  
 reel as far as Jokmeam.

Ben-geber in Ramoth-gilead, includ- 13  
 ing the tent-villages of Jair son of  
 Manasseh in Gilead and the re-  
 gion of Argob in Bashan, sixty  
 large walled cities with gate-bars of  
 bronze.

Ahinadab son of Iddo in Mahanaim. 14  
 Ahimaaz in Naphtali; he also had 15  
 married a daughter of Solomon,  
 Basmath.

Baanah son of Hushai in Asher and 16  
 Aloth.

Jehoshaphat son of Paruah in Issa- 17  
 char.

Shimeï son of Elah in Benjamin. 18

<sup>e</sup> Verses 2-6: cp. 2 Sam. 8. 16-18; 20. 23-26; 1 Chr. 18. 15-17.

<sup>f</sup> In . . . calendar: prob. rdg.; Heb. Elihoreph.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Chr. 18. 16; Heb. Adjutants-general.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. sons.

bestowed by the LORD results in judgments manifestly just; see Isa.11.2-5. 19: *Overlaid:* accidentally smothered in covering the baby.

**4.1-34: Solomon's administration and wisdom.** 1-6: Compare 2 Sam.8.16-18 and 20.23-26. 7-19: The division of the northern part of the kingdom (*Israel*) replaced local tribal leadership with more dependable *regional governors* and resulted in more efficient support of the large

19 Geber son of Uri in Gilead, the land of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan. In addition, one governor over all the governors<sup>i</sup> in the land.

20 The people of Judah and Israel were countless as the sands of the sea; they ate and they drank, and enjoyed life.

21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the river Euphrates to Philistia and as far as the frontier of Egypt; they paid tribute and were subject to him all his life.

22 Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kor of flour and sixty kor of meal, ten fat oxen and twenty oxen from the pastures and a hundred sheep, as well as stags, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. For he was paramount over all the land west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, ruling all the kings west of the river; and he enjoyed peace on all sides. All through his reign Judah and Israel continued at peace, every man under his own vine and fig-tree, from Dan to Beersheba.

26 Solomon had forty thousand chariot-horses in his stables and twelve thousand and cavalry horses.

27 The regional governors, each for a month in turn, supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to his table; they never fell short in their deliveries. They provided also barley and straw, each according to his duty, for the horses and chariot-horses where it was required.

29 And God gave Solomon depth of wisdom and insight, and understanding as wide as the sand on the sea-shore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed that of all the men of the east and of all Egypt. For he was wiser than any man, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite,

and Heman, Kalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; his fame spread among all the surrounding nations. He uttered three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He discoursed of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon down to the marjoram that grows out of the wall, of beasts and birds, of reptiles and fishes. Men of all races came to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom he received gifts.

WHEN HIRAM KING OF TYRE HEARD 5 that Solomon had been anointed king in his father's place, he sent envoys to him, because he had always been a friend of David. Solomon sent this answer to Hiram: 'You know that my father David could not build a house in honour of the name of the LORD his God, because he was surrounded by armed nations until the LORD made them subject to him. But now on every side the LORD my God has given me peace; there is no one to oppose me, I fear no attack. So I propose to build a house in honour of the name of the LORD my God, following the promise given by the LORD to my father David: "Your son whom I shall set on the throne in your place will build the house in honour of my name." If therefore you will now give orders that cedars be felled and brought from Lebanon, my men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever sum you fix; for, as you know, we have none so skilled at felling timber as your Sidonians.'

When Hiram received Solomon's

<sup>i</sup> over . . . governors; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
<sup>j</sup> Verses 2-11: *cp. 2 Chr. 2. 3-16.*

palace establishment (vv. 27-28). 20-28: The extent of his empire, the magnitude of his daily provisions, and the peace of his reign confer praise on Solomon and his wisdom. 22-23: *Kor*: five bushels. These supplies may have been for royal service in several cities (see 9:15-19). 26: Solomon maintained a large military force (compare 10:26) with which he preserved peace throughout his reign. Unlike David (compare 2 Sam.8:4), Solomon made extensive use of chariotry, as the Canaanite city-state kings had done before him (see Judg.4.12-16; Josh.11.1-9). 29-34: Solomon's reputation for wisdom made him the hero of Wisdom literature (Prov.1.1) as David was of the Psalms. 30: *The men of the east*: north Arabians; see Job 1.3.

5.1-9.9: **The building and dedication of the Temple.** This central part of the presentation of Solomon's reign is drawn from old court records (in "the annals of Solomon," 11.41) and Temple records, with inserted speeches expressing the viewpoint of the late monarchic period.

5.1-18: **Preparing the materials.** When *Hiram* ruled in Tyre (about 969-936 B.C.), Phoenicia



message, he was greatly pleased and said, 'Blessed be the LORD today who has given David a wise son to rule over  
 8 this great people.' And he sent this reply to Solomon: 'I have received your message. In this matter of timber, both cedar and pine, I will do all you  
 9 wish. My men shall bring down the logs from Lebanon to the sea and I will make them up into rafts to be floated to the place you appoint; I will have them broken up there and you can remove them. You, on your part, will meet my wishes if you provide the  
 10 food for my household.' So Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and pine that he wanted, and  
 11 Solomon supplied Hiram with twenty thousand kor of wheat as food for his household and twenty kor of oil of pounded olives; Solomon gave this  
 12 yearly to Hiram. (The LORD had given Solomon wisdom as he had promised him; there was peace between Hiram and Solomon and they concluded an  
 13 alliance.) King Solomon raised a forced levy from the whole of Israel amounting  
 14 to thirty thousand men. He sent them to Lebanon in monthly relays of ten thousand, so that the men spent one month in Lebanon and two at home; Adoniram was superintendent of the  
 15 whole levy. Solomon had also seventy thousand hauliers and eighty thousand  
 16 quarrymen, apart from the three thousand three hundred foremen in charge of the work who superintended  
 17 the labourers. By the king's orders they quarried huge, massive blocks for laying the foundation of the

LORD's house in hewn stone. Solomon's  
 and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites shaped the blocks and prepared both timber and stone for the building of the house.

It was in the four hundred and 61<sup>k</sup> eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the second month of that year, the month of Ziv, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

The house which King Solomon 2 built for the LORD was sixty cubits long by twenty cubits broad, and its height was thirty cubits. The vestibule in 3 front of the sanctuary was twenty cubits long, spanning the whole breadth of the house, while it projected ten cubits in front of the house; and he 4 furnished the house with embrasures. Then he built a terrace against its 5 wall round both the sanctuary and the inner shrine. He made arcades all round: the lowest arcade was five 6 cubits in depth, the middle six, and the highest seven; for he made rebates all round the outside of the main wall so that the bearer beams might not be set into the walls. In the building of the 7 house, only blocks of undressed stone direct from the quarry were used; no hammer or axe or any iron tool whatever was heard in the house while it was being built.

The entrance to the lowest arcade 8 was in the right-hand corner of the house; there was access by a spiral stairway from that to the middle

*k Verses 1-3: cp. 2 Chr. 3. 2-4.*

began its great commercial success in the Mediterranean. Alliances between Tyre and land powers that controlled trade routes with the east and with Arabia were necessary for its commercial policies. 2-6: This speech depends on 2 Sam. ch. 7. 13: On forced labor see 9.20-23. 16: Three thousand three hundred foremen: a foreman served over ten men, with a supervisor over ten foremen, and so on to higher officials. 18: Gebalites: from the old Phoenician city Gebal; Greeks called it Byblos, the Gr. term for papyrus. Byblos, altered in spelling, yields "bible" and the prefix "biblio-."

6.1-13: The external structure of the Temple. 1: The fourth year of Solomon's reign was 957 B.C. or shortly after. Four hundred and eightieth: this number is artificial, equaling twelve generations of forty years each. Ziv: the old Canaanite name for the second month (April-May). 2: Cubit: eighteen inches. 3: Vestibule: an enclosed porch. 4: Embrasures: openings in thick walls with sides slanting outward. 5: Terrace: a platform built around the sides and rear of the Temple upon which the arcades were built. The sanctuary: the large main room of the Temple (vv. 32-35). The inner shrine: the holiest place of the Temple, a small chamber at the rear where the Ark would rest (see vv. 19-22; 8.6-8). The arcades were three stories high, the chambers of the lower stories narrower because their thicker walls provided support for the upper ones. The chambers in the arcades were for storage (see Neh.13.4-5). 7: The use of an iron tool on the stones would have profaned them; see Exod.20.25. Iron was too new a

- 9-10 arcade, and from the middle arcade to the highest. So he built the house and finished it, having constructed the terrace five cubits high against the whole building, braced the house with struts of cedar and roofed it with beams and coffering of cedar.
- 11 Then the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, 'As for this house which you are building, if you are obedient to my ordinances and conform to my precepts and loyally observe all my commands, then I will fulfil my promise to you, the promise I gave to your father David, and I will dwell among the Israelites and never forsake my people Israel.'
- 12 So Solomon built the LORD's house and finished it. He lined the inner walls of the house with cedar boards, covering the interior from floor to rafters with wood; the floor he laid with boards of pine. In the innermost part of the house he partitioned off a space of twenty cubits with cedar boards from floor to rafters and made of it an inner shrine, to be the Most Holy Place. The sanctuary in front of this was forty cubits long. The cedar inside the house was carved with open flowers and gourds; all was cedar, no stone was left visible.
- 13 He prepared an inner shrine in the furthest recesses of the house to receive the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. This inner shrine was twenty cubits square and it stood twenty cubits high; he overlaid it with red gold and made an altar of cedar.
- 14 And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with red gold and drew a Veil<sup>l</sup> with golden chains across in front of the inner shrine.<sup>m</sup> The whole house he overlaid with gold until it was all covered; and the whole of the altar by the inner shrine he overlaid with gold.
- 15 In the inner shrine he made two cherubim of wild olive, each ten cubits high. Each wing of the cherubim was five cubits long, and from wing-tip to wing-tip was ten cubits. Similarly the second cherub measured ten cubits; the two cherubim were alike in size and shape, and each ten cubits high. He put the cherubim within the shrine at the furthest recesses and their wings were outspread, so that a wing of the one cherub touched the wall on one side and a wing of the other touched the wall on the other side, and their other wings met in the middle; and he overlaid the cherubim with gold.
- 16 Round all the walls of the house he carved figures of cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers, both in the inner chamber and in the outer. The floor of the house he overlaid with gold, both in the inner chamber and in the outer. At the entrance to the inner shrine he made a double door of wild olive; the pilasters and the<sup>n</sup> doorposts were pentagonal. The doors were of wild olive, and he carved cherubim, palms, and open flowers on them, overlaying them with gold and hammering the gold upon the cherubim and the palms. Similarly for the doorway of the sanctuary he made a square frame of wild olive and a double door of pine, each leaf having two swivel-pins. On them he carved cherubim, palms, and open flowers, overlaying them evenly with gold over the carving.
- 17 He built the inner court with three courses of dressed stone and one course of lengths of cedar.
- 18 In the fourth year of Solomon's reign the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv; and in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details according to the specification. It had taken seven years to build.

<sup>l</sup> a Veil: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
<sup>m</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds and overlaid it with gold.*  
<sup>n</sup> *Verses 23-28: cp. 2 Chr. 3. 10-13.*  
<sup>o</sup> and the: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

metal to have attained the sanctity of bronze in this Temple. 11-13: This brief oracle anticipates 9.1-9.

6.14-38: **The internal structure of the Temple.** The inside of the Temple was seen only by priests, some prophets, and royalty. The description here is idealized. That cedar covered all the stone is doubtful, and that all important parts were overlaid . . . with red gold is a later glorification. 23: *Cherubim*: compare Exod. 25.18-22. 38: *Bul*: another old Canaanite month name, the eighth month (October-November); see also v. 1.

7 Solomon had been engaged on his building for thirteen years by the time  
2 he had finished it. He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon, a hundred cubits long, fifty broad, and thirty high, constructed of four rows of cedar columns, over which were laid  
3 lengths of cedar. It had a cedar roof, extending over the beams, which rested on the columns, fifteen in each row; and the number of the beams was  
4 forty-five. There were three rows of window-frames, and the windows corresponded to each other at three levels. All the doorways and the windows had square frames, and window corresponded to window at three levels.

6 He made also the colonnade, fifty cubits long and thirty broad,<sup>p</sup> with a cornice above.

7 He built the Hall of Judgement, the hall containing the throne where he was to give judgement; this was panelled in cedar from floor to rafters.

8 His own house where he was to reside, in a court set back from the colonnade, and the house he made for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had married, were constructed like the hall.

9 All these were made of heavy blocks of stone, hewn to measure and trimmed with the saw on the inner and outer sides, from foundation to coping and from the court of the house<sup>q</sup> as far as the great court. At the base were heavy stones, massive blocks, some ten and  
10 some eight cubits in size, and above were heavy stones dressed to measure, and cedar. The great court had three courses of dressed stone all around and a course of lengths of cedar; so had the inner court of the house of the LORD, and so had the vestibule of the house.

13 King Solomon fetched from Tyre  
14 Hiram, the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. His father, a native of

Tyre, had been a worker in bronze, and he himself was a man of great skill and ingenuity, versed in every kind of craftsmanship in bronze. Hiram came to King Solomon and executed all his works.

He cast in a mould the two bronze  
15 pillars. One stood eighteen cubits high and it took a cord twelve cubits long to go round it; it was hollow, and the metal was four fingers thick.<sup>s</sup> The second pillar was the same. He made  
16 two capitals of solid copper to set on the tops of the pillars, each capital five cubits high. He made two bands of  
17 ornamental network, in festoons of chain-work, for the capitals on the tops of the pillars, a band of network for each capital. Then he made pomegranates in two rows all round on top of the ornamental network of the one pillar; he did the same with the other capital. (The capitals at the tops of the  
18 pillars in the vestibule were shaped like lilies and were four cubits high.) Upon the capitals at the tops of the two  
19 pillars, immediately above the cushion, which was beyond the network upwards, were two hundred pomegranates in rows all round on the two capitals.<sup>t</sup> Then he erected the pillars  
20 at the vestibule of the sanctuary. When he had erected the pillar on the right side, he named it Jachin;<sup>u</sup> and when he had erected the one on the left side, he named it Boaz.<sup>v</sup> On the  
21 tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was finished.

He then made the Sea of cast metal;  
22 it was round in shape, the diameter from rim to rim being ten cubits; it stood five cubits high, and it took a line thirty cubits long to go round it.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and a colonnade and pillars in front of them.

<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. verse 12; Heb. from outside.

<sup>r</sup> Verses 15-21; cp. 2 Chr. 3. 15-17.

<sup>s</sup> it was . . . thick; prob. rdg., cp. Jer. 52. 21; Heb. om.

<sup>t</sup> the two capitals; prob. rdg.; Heb. the second capital.

<sup>u</sup> Or Jachun, meaning It shall stand.

<sup>v</sup> Or Booz, meaning In strength.

<sup>w</sup> Verses 23-26; cp. 2 Chr. 4. 2-5.

7.1-12: The rest of the palace complex. The Temple was only one part of the entire palace. The great court of v. 9 enclosed the whole, within which "the inner court" of the Temple was only one area (6.36). 9: The stones of the rest of the palace could be trimmed with the saw, unlike the Temple itself (6.7).

7.13-51: The bronze fixtures of the Temple court. These are again parts of the Temple complex visible to the lay worshiper. The bronze trolleys (v. 27), basins (v. 38), pots, shovels, and tossing-bowls (v. 40) were used in the preparation of various sacrificial materials and in the daily work of maintaining the altar.

24 All round the Sea on the outside under  
its rim, completely surrounding the  
thirty<sup>x</sup> cubits of its circumference, were  
two rows of gourds, cast in one piece  
25 with the Sea itself. It was mounted on  
twelve oxen, three facing north, three  
west, three south, and three east, their  
hind quarters turned inwards; the  
26 Sea rested on top of them. Its thick-  
ness was a hand-breadth; its rim was  
made like that of a cup, shaped like  
the calyx of a lily; it held two thousand  
bath of water.

27 He also made the ten trolleys of  
bronze; each trolley was four cubits  
28 long, four wide, and three high. This  
was the construction of the trolleys.  
29 They had panels set in frames; on  
these panels were portrayed lions,  
oxen, and cherubim, and similarly on  
the frames. Above and below the lions,  
oxen, and cherubim<sup>y</sup> were fillets of  
30 hammered work of spiral design. Each  
trolley had four bronze wheels with  
axles of bronze; it also had four flanges  
and handles beneath the laver, and  
these handles were of cast metal with a  
31 spiral design on their sides. The  
opening for the basin was set within a  
crown which projected one cubit; the  
opening was round with a level edge,<sup>z</sup>  
and it had decorations in relief. (The  
panels of the trolleys were square, not  
32 round.) The four wheels were beneath  
the panels, and the wheel-forks were  
made in one piece with the trolleys; the  
height of each wheel was a cubit and a  
33 half. The wheels were constructed like  
those of a chariot, their axles, hubs,  
spokes, and felloes being all of cast  
34 metal. The four handles were at the  
four corners of each trolley, of one  
35 piece with the trolley. At the top of  
the trolley there was a circular band half  
a cubit high; the struts and panels on<sup>a</sup>  
the trolley were of one piece with it.  
36 On the plates, that is on the panels,<sup>b</sup>  
he carved cherubim, lions, and palm-  
trees, wherever there was a blank  
space, with spiral work all round it.  
37 This is how the ten trolleys were made;  
all of them were cast alike, having the  
same size and the same shape.

38 He then made ten bronze basins,  
each holding forty bath and measuring  
four cubits; there was a basin for

each of the ten trolleys. He put five 39  
trolleys on the right side of the house  
and five on the left side; and he put  
the Sea in the south-east corner of it.

Hiram made also the pots, the shovels, 40<sup>c</sup>  
and the tossing-bowls. So he finished  
all the work which he had under-  
taken for King Solomon on the house  
of the LORD: the two pillars; the two 41  
bowl-shaped capitals on the tops of  
the pillars; the two ornamental net-  
works to cover the two bowl-shaped  
capitals on the tops of the pillars; the 42  
four hundred pomegranates for the  
two networks, two rows of pomegran-  
ates for each network, to cover the  
bowl-shaped capitals on the two pillars;  
the ten trolleys and the ten basins 43  
on the trolleys; the one Sea and the 44  
twelve oxen which supported it; the 45  
pots, the shovels, and the tossing-  
bowls—all these objects in the house of  
the LORD which Hiram made for King  
Solomon being of bronze, burnished  
work. In the Plain of the Jordan the 46  
king cast them, in the foundry between  
Succoth and Zarethan.

Solomon put all these objects in 47  
their places; so great was the quantity  
of bronze used in their making that  
the weight of it was beyond all reckon-  
ing. He made also all the furnishings 48  
for the house of the LORD: the golden  
altar and the golden table upon which  
was set the Bread of the Presence; 49  
the lamp-stands of red gold, five on  
the right side and five on the left side  
of the inner shrine; the flowers, lamps,  
and tongs, of gold; the cups, snuffers, 50  
tossing-bowls, saucers, and firepans,  
of red gold; and the panels for the  
doors of the inner sanctuary, the Most  
Holy Place, and for the doors of the  
house,<sup>d</sup> of gold.

When all the work which King 51  
Solomon did for the house of the  
LORD was completed, he brought in the  
sacred treasures of his father David,  
the silver, the gold, and the vessels,  
and deposited them in the storehouses  
of the house of the LORD.

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. ten.*

<sup>y</sup> and cherubim: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

<sup>z</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds a cubit and a half (cp. verse 32).*

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the head of.*

<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds its struts.*

<sup>c</sup> *Verses 40-51; cp. 2 Chr. 4, 11-5, 1.*

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds for the temple.*

81<sup>e</sup> THEN SOLOMON SUMMONED THE ELDERS of Israel, all the heads of the tribes who were chiefs of families in Israel, to assemble in Jerusalem, in order to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from the City of David, which is called Zion. All the men of Israel assembled in King Solomon's presence at the pilgrim-feast in the month 2 Ethanim, the seventh month. When 3 the elders of Israel had all come, the 4 priests took the Ark of the LORD and carried it up with the Tent of the Presence and all the sacred furnishings of the Tent: it was the priests and the Levites together who carried them up. 5 King Solomon and the whole congregation of Israel, assembled with him before the Ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen in numbers past counting 6 and reckoning. Then the priests brought in the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD to its place, the inner shrine of the house, the Most Holy Place, beneath the wings of the cherubim. 7 The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the Ark; they formed a screen above the Ark and its poles. 8 The poles projected, and their ends could be seen from the Holy Place immediately in front of the inner shrine,

but from nowhere else outside; they are there to this day. There was 9 nothing inside the Ark but the two tablets of stone which Moses had deposited there at Horeb, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with the Israelites when they left Egypt.

Then the priests came out of the 10 Holy Place, since the cloud was filling the house of the LORD, and they could 11 not continue to minister because of it, for the glory of the LORD filled his house. And Solomon said: 12<sup>f</sup>

O LORD who hast set the sun in heaven,  
but hast chosen to dwell in thick darkness,  
here have I built thee a lofty house, 13  
a habitation for thee to occupy for ever.

And as they stood waiting, the 14 king turned round and blessed all the assembly of Israel in these words: 15 'Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel who spoke directly to my father David and has himself fulfilled his promise.

*e* Verses 1-9: cp. 2 Chr. 5. 2-10.  
*f* Verses 12-30: cp. 2 Chr. 6. 1-39.

**8.1-66: The dedication of the Temple.** This chapter (together with the LORD's response in 9.1-9) presents the second great development in the LORD's relation to Israel as the Deuteronomistic historians viewed it. The first was the emergence of kingship, approved by the LORD in the form of the Davidic dynasty; see 2 Sam.7.8-16. There was also a tradition in the older period that the LORD did not dwell in a house of cedar (2 Sam.7.5-7). The Deuteronomistic historians show as the second development how the LORD agreed to a change in his mode of dwelling; that change reaches its climax here with the dedication of the Temple of Solomon. This chapter consists of elements of an old report of Solomon's transfer of the Ark to the new Temple, of some Deuteronomistic and priestly glosses added to that report, and of extensive speeches from a Deuteronomistic viewpoint put into Solomon's mouth. 1-13: *The Ark of the Covenant* represented the presence of the LORD. Its movement from one sanctuary to another was an awesome, even hazardous, operation (compare 2 Sam. ch. 6). 1: The writer emphasizes that all the leaders of Israel participated in the ceremonies of the movement of the Ark. *The City of David* was the old city, greatly expanded on the north side by Solomon's building activities. 2: *A pilgrim-feast* was a time when Israelites were required to appear before the LORD with offerings (Exod.23.14-17; 34.18,22-24; Deut.16.1-17). This pilgrim-feast is identified with Tabernacles, set in the later Israelite calendars at full moon of the seventh month (Sept.-Oct.), the old Canaanite name of which was *Ethanim*. This feast is explained as derived from a Canaanite new year festival at which the kingship of God over the powers of chaos and drought was symbolically celebrated; some associate Pss.93, 97 with the festival. Eleven months elapsed between the completion (6.38) and the dedication. 4: This mention of *the Tent of the Presence* and *the Levites* is regarded as a late priestly gloss. 8: The formula *to this day* was often employed in popular explanations and here may reflect a time earlier than the writer of the Deuteronomistic history. 9: A relatively late tradition combined the much older separate traditions of the *tablets of stone* (Exod.24.12; 34.1,27-29) and of the *Ark* (Num.10.35-36; 1 Sam.4.3-5); see Deut.10.1-5. *Horeb* is the usual Deuteronomistic name for the mountain of God (Deut.1.6; 5.2, etc.), though it was also used in earlier traditions (Exod.3.1; 1 Kgs.19.8). 10-11: *The cloud of the glory of the LORD* here is modeled after the tradition in Exod.40.34-35; compare Ezek. chs. 9-11 and 43.1-5. 12-13: This is a piece from one of the very old Israelite collections of songs, perhaps the "Book of Jashar"; see Josh.10.13 n. and 2 Sam.1.18 n. 14-21: In this blessing Solomon speaks in the

16 For he said, "From the day when I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel where I should build a house for my Name to be there, but I chose David to be over my people Israel."  
 17 My father David had in mind to build a house in honour of the name of the  
 18 LORD the God of Israel, but the LORD said to him, "You purposed to build a house in honour of my name; and your purpose was good. Nevertheless,  
 19 you shall not build it; but the son who is to be born to you, he shall build the house in honour of my name." The  
 20 LORD has now fulfilled his promise: I have succeeded my father David and taken his place on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built the house in honour of the name of the  
 21 LORD the God of Israel. I have assigned therein a place for the Ark containing the Covenant of the LORD, which he made with our forefathers when he brought them out of Egypt."  
 22 Then Solomon, standing in front of the altar of the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands towards heaven and said,  
 23 'O LORD God of Israel, there is no god like thee in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant with thy servants and showing them constant love while they continue faithful to thee in heart and soul. Thou hast kept thy promise to thy servant David my father; by thy deeds this day thou hast fulfilled what thou didst say to him in words.  
 24 Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep this promise of thine to thy servant David my father: "You shall never want for a man appointed by me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons look to their ways and walk before me as  
 25 you have walked before me." And now, O God of Israel, let the words which thou didst speak to thy servant David my father be confirmed.  
 26 'But can God indeed dwell on earth? Heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain thee; how much less this  
 27 house that I have built! Yet attend to the prayer and the supplication of thy

servant, O LORD my God, listen to the cry and the prayer which thy servant utters this day, that thine eyes may  
 29 ever be upon this house night and day, this place of which thou didst say, "My Name shall be there"; so mayest thou hear thy servant when he prays towards this place. Hear the supplica-  
 30 tion of thy servant and of thy people Israel when they pray towards this place. Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling and, when thou hearest, forgive.

'When a man wrongs his neighbour  
 31 and he is adjured to take an oath, and the adjuration is made before thy altar in this house, then do thou hear  
 32 in heaven and act: be thou thy servants' judge, condemning the guilty man and bringing his deeds upon his own head, acquitting the innocent and rewarding him as his innocence may deserve.

'When thy people Israel are defeated  
 33 by an enemy because they have sinned against thee, and they turn back to thee, confessing thy name and making their prayer and supplication to thee in this house, do thou hear in heaven;  
 34 forgive the sin of thy people Israel and restore them to the land which thou gavest to their forefathers.

'When the heavens are shut up and  
 35 there is no rain because thy servant and thy people Israel have sinned against thee, and when they pray towards this place, confessing thy name and forsaking their sin when they feel thy punishment, do thou hear in  
 36 heaven and forgive their sin; so mayest thou teach them the good way which they should follow; and grant rain to thy land which thou hast given to thy people as their own possession.

'If there is famine in the land, or  
 37 pestilence, or black blight or red, or locusts new-sloughed or fully grown; or if their enemies besiege them in any of their cities; or if plague or sickness befall them, then hear the prayer or  
 38 supplication of every man among thy people Israel, as each one, prompted by the remorse of his own heart, spreads out his hands towards this house: hear  
 39

light of 2 Sam.7.1-16, 27-53: A Deuteronomic theology of the Temple. A finely wrought meditation on the spatial relation of the LORD to the Temple (vv. 27-30) is followed by petitions that the LORD will hearken when the faithful will pray *towards* it in times of typical human

it in heaven thy dwelling and forgive, and act. And, as thou knowest a man's heart, reward him according to his deeds, for thou alone knowest the hearts  
40 of all men; and so they will fear thee all their lives in the land thou gavest to our forefathers.

41 'The foreigner too, the man who does not belong to thy people Israel, but has come from a distant land because of thy fame (for men shall hear  
42 of thy great fame and thy strong hand and arm outstretched), when he comes  
43 and prays towards this house, hear in heaven thy dwelling and respond to the call which the foreigner makes to thee, so that like thy people Israel all peoples of the earth may know thy fame and fear thee, and learn that this house which I have built bears thy name.

44 'When thy people go to war with an enemy, wherever thou dost send them, when they pray to the LORD, turning  
45 towards this city which thou hast chosen and towards this house which I have built in honour of thy name, do thou in heaven hear their prayer and supplication, and grant them justice.

46 'Should they sin against thee (and what man is free from sin?) and shouldst thou in thy anger give them over to an enemy, who carries them captive to his  
47 own land, far or near; if in the land of their captivity they learn their lesson and make supplication again to thee in that land and say, "We have sinned and acted perversely and wickedly",  
48 if they turn back to thee with heart and soul in the land of their captors, and pray to thee, turning towards their land which thou gavest to their forefathers and towards this city which thou didst choose and this house  
49 which I have built in honour of thy name; then in heaven thy dwelling do thou hear their prayer and supplication,  
50 and grant them justice. Forgive thy

people their sins and transgressions against thee; put pity for them in their captors' hearts. For they are thy possession, thy people whom thou didst  
51 bring out of Egypt, from the smelting-furnace, and so thine eyes are ever open  
52 to the entreaty of thy servant and of thy people Israel, and thou dost hear whenever they call to thee. Thou thyself hast  
53 singled them out from all the peoples of the earth to be thy possessions; so thou didst promise through thy servant Moses when thou didst bring our forefathers from Egypt, O LORD GOD.'

When Solomon had finished this  
54 prayer and supplication to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out to heaven, stood  
55 up and in a loud voice blessed the whole assembly of Israel: 'Blessed be  
56 the LORD who has given his people Israel rest, as he promised: not one of the promises he made through his servant Moses has failed. The LORD our  
57 God be with us as he was with our forefathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts  
58 towards him, that we may conform to all his ways, observing his commandments, statutes, and judgements, as he commanded our forefathers. And  
59 may the words of my supplication to the LORD be with the LORD our God day and night, that, as the need arises day by day, he may grant justice to his servant and justice to his people Israel. So all the peoples of the earth  
60 will know that the LORD is God, he and no other, and you will be perfect in  
61 loyalty to the LORD our God as you are this day, conforming to his statutes and observing his commandments.'

When the king and all Israel came  
62 to offer sacrifices before the LORD, Solomon offered as shared-offerings to the  
63 LORD twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep;

crises. 46-53: This passage deals with Exile. It is commonly viewed as an addition from the time of the Exile to Babylonia after 587. Yet the possibility of exile (and the terms of return) were issues of importance from shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.). Hence, though the present form of vv. 46-53 may come after 587, its leading ideas are probably much older, possibly as old as Hezekiah, about 715-687 B.C.; see 2 Kgs. 18.3-8; 2 Chr. 30.1-31.1. For other passages anticipating exile, see Lev. 26.32-45; Deut. 4.25-31; 30.1-10. 54-61: A second benediction refers to the promises through . . . Moses rather than those to David; see vv. 14-21. 62-66: The numbers in v. 63 are exaggerated. *The bronze altar* (v. 64) is curiously lacking from

thus it was that the king and the Israelites dedicated the house of the LORD.

64<sup>o</sup> On that day also the king consecrated the centre of the court which lay in front<sup>h</sup> of the house of the LORD; there he offered the whole-offering, the grain-offering, and the fat portions of the shared-offerings, because the bronze altar which stood before the LORD was too small to take them all, the whole-offering, the grain-offering, and the fat portions of the shared-offerings.

65 So Solomon and all Israel with him, a great assembly from Lebo-hamath to the Torrent of Egypt, celebrated the pilgrim-feast at that time before the LORD our God for seven days. On the eighth day he dismissed the people; and they blessed the king, and went home happy and glad at heart for all the prosperity granted by the LORD to his servant David and to his people Israel.

9<sup>l</sup> WHEN SOLOMON HAD FINISHED THE house of the LORD and the royal palace and all the plans for building on which he had set his heart, the LORD appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. The LORD said to him, 'I have heard the prayer and supplication which you have offered me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, to receive my Name for all time, and my eyes and my heart shall be fixed on it for ever. And if you, on your part, live in my sight as your father David lived, in integrity and uprightness, doing all I command you and observing my statutes and my judgements, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised your father David when I said, "You shall never want for a man upon the throne

of Israel." But if you or your sons 6 turn back from following me and do not observe my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, and if you go and serve other gods and prostrate yourselves before them, then I will cut off Israel from the 7 land which I gave them; I will renounce this house which I have consecrated in honour of my name, and Israel shall become a byword and an object lesson among all peoples. And 8 this house will become a ruin; every passer-by will be appalled and gasp at the sight of it; and they will ask, "Why has the LORD so treated this land and this house?" The answer will 9 be, "Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their forefathers out of Egypt, and clung to other gods, prostrating themselves before them and serving them; that is why the LORD has brought this great evil on them."'

Solomon had taken twenty years to 10<sup>l</sup> build the two houses, the house of the LORD and the royal palace. Hiram king 11 of Tyre had supplied him with all the timber, both cedar and pine, and all the gold, that he desired, and King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. But when Hiram 12 went from Tyre to inspect the cities which Solomon had given him, they did not satisfy him, and he said, 13 "What kind of cities are these you have given me, my brother?" And so he called them the Land of Cabul,<sup>k</sup> the name they still bear. Hiram sent a 14 hundred and twenty talents of gold to the king.

g Verses 64-66: cp. 2 Chr. 7. 7-10.

h Or to the east.

i Verses 1-9: cp. 2 Chr. 7. 11-22.

j Verses 10-28: cp. 2 Chr. 8. 1-18.

k That is Sterile Land.

the description of the Temple court fixtures in 7.13-46. 65: *Lebo-hamath* was north of the Lebanon mountain range in Syria.

9.1-9: The LORD sanctions the Temple. Of all the kings treated in this history, it is only to Solomon that the LORD speaks directly; otherwise he speaks through prophets. The Deuteronomic historians portray the LORD's approval of the Jerusalem Temple, and the conditions on which that approval is given. They saw the meaning of the history of the kingdoms epitomized in the recurrent failures to meet those conditions. 2: *Gibeon*: see 3.4-15. 5: For the promise to *David*, see 2 Sam. 7.8-16.

9.10-10.29: Solomon's works, wisdom, and wealth. The materials of this section balance those of ch. 4; see 3.1-11.43 n. 10-14: The reasons for Solomon's sale of *cities* (actually only villages) are unknown, though overexpenditure in building programs is a likely explanation. A playful folk etymology explains the town name *Cabul* (v. 13) as meaning "like nothing."



15 This is the record of the forced labour which King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD, his own palace, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Gezer had been attacked and captured by Pharaoh king of Egypt, who had burnt it to the ground, put its Canaanite inhabitants to death, and given it as a marriage gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife; and Solomon rebuilt it. He also built Lower Beth-horon, Baalath, and Tamar in the wilderness, as well as all his store-cities, and the towns where he quartered his chariots and horses; and he carried out all his cherished plans for building in Jerusalem, in the Lebanon, and throughout his whole dominion. All the survivors of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who did not belong to Israel—that is their descendants who survived in the land, wherever the Israelites had been unable to annihilate them—were employed by Solomon on perpetual forced labour, as they still are. But Solomon put none of the Israelites to forced labour; they were his fighting men,<sup>l</sup> his captains and lieutenants, and the commanders of his chariots and of his cavalry. The number of officers in charge of the foremen over Solomon's work was five hundred and fifty; these superintended the people engaged on the work.

24 Then Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to her own house which he had built for her; later on he built the Millo.

25 Three times a year Solomon used to offer whole-offerings and shared-offerings on the altar which he had built to the LORD, making smoke-offerings before the LORD. So he completed the house.

26 King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, near Elath<sup>m</sup> on the shore of the Red Sea,<sup>n</sup> in Edom. Hiram sent men of his own to serve

with the fleet, experienced seamen, to work with Solomon's men; and they went to Ophir and brought back four hundred and twenty talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA HEARD OF Solomon's fame<sup>p</sup> and came to test him with hard questions. She arrived in Jerusalem with a very large retinue, camels laden with spices, gold in great quantity, and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she told him everything she had in her mind, and Solomon answered all her questions; not one of them was too abstruse for the king to answer. When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, the house which he had built, the food on his table, the courtiers sitting round him, and his attendants standing behind in their livery, his cupbearers, and the whole-offerings which he used to offer in the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit left in her. Then she said to the king, 'The report which I heard in my own country about you and your wisdom was true, but I did not believe it until I came and saw for myself. Indeed I was not told half of it; your wisdom and your prosperity go far beyond the report which I had of them. Happy are your wives, happy these courtiers of yours who wait on you every day and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God who has delighted in you and has set you on the throne of Israel; because he loves Israel for ever, he has made you their king to maintain law and justice.' Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great abundance, and precious stones. Never again came such a quantity of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and his servants.

<sup>m</sup> Or Elath. <sup>n</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

<sup>o</sup> Verses 1-25: cp. 2 Chr. 9, 1-24.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 2 Chr. 9, 1; Heb. adds to the name of the LORD.

15-23: The forced labour for Solomon's projects was probably drawn largely from non-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan, but some Israelites were apparently also drawn upon; see 5.13; 11.28; 12.4. From a later viewpoint, the continued presence of non-Israelites in the promised land required special explanation; see Josh.9.22-27; Judg.2.20-3.6. 24: See 3.1 n. 25: Three times a year: see 8.2 n. 26-28: Commerce rather than conquest was the key to Solomon's wealth. 10.1-13: This narrative is a popular magnification of Solomon's wisdom. Sheba was a region

11 Besides all this, Hiram's fleet of ships, which had brought gold from Ophir, brought in also from Ophir cargoes of  
12 almag wood and precious stones. The king used the wood to make stools for the house of the LORD and for the royal palace, as well as harps and lutes for the singers. No such almag wood has ever been imported or even seen since that time.

13 And King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, in addition to all that he gave her of his royal bounty. So she departed and returned with her retinue to her own land.

14 Now the weight of gold which Solomon received yearly was six  
15 hundred and sixty-six talents, in addition to the tolls levied by the customs officers and profits on foreign trade, and the tribute of<sup>q</sup> the kings of Arabia and the regional governors.

16 King Solomon made two hundred shields of beaten gold, and six hundred shekels of gold went to the making of  
17 each one; he also made three hundred bucklers of beaten gold, and three minas of gold went to the making of each buckler. The king put these into the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

18 The king also made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with fine gold.  
19 Six steps led up to the throne; at the back of the throne there was the head of a calf. There were arms on each side of the seat, with a lion standing beside each of them, and twelve lions stood  
20 on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever  
21 been made for any monarch. All Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the plate in the House of the Forest of Lebanon was of red gold; no silver was used, for it was reckoned

of no value in the days of Solomon. The king had a fleet of merchantmen  
22 at sea with Hiram's fleet; once every three years this fleet of merchantmen came home, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes and monkeys.

Thus King Solomon outdid all the  
23 kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom, and all the world courted him, to  
24 hear the wisdom which God had put in his heart. Each brought his gift with  
25 him, vessels of silver and gold, garments, perfumes and spices, horses and mules, so much year by year.

And Solomon got together many  
26' chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, and he stabled some in the chariot-towns and kept others at hand  
27 in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig in the Shephelah. Horses were imported  
28 from Egypt and Coa for Solomon; the royal merchants obtained them from Coa by purchase. Chariots were  
29 imported from Egypt for six hundred silver shekels each, and horses for a hundred and fifty; in the same way the merchants obtained them for export from all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

King Solomon was a lover of women,  
11 and besides Pharaoh's daughter he married many foreign women, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite, from the nations with whom  
2 the LORD had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry, 'because', he said, 'they will entice you to serve their gods.' But Solomon was devoted to them and loved them dearly. He had seven  
3 hundred wives, who were princesses,

<sup>q</sup> and the tribute of: *prob. rdg.; Heb. and all.*  
<sup>r</sup> Verses 26-29: cp. 2 Chr. 1. 14-17; 9. 25-28.

in Arabia, renowned for wisdom; see 4.30 n. 11: *Almag wood*: sandalwood, used for ornamental carving and incense. 13: The Ethiopian tradition of their king's descent from David is based on interpreting *all she desired* as including an heir. 14-29: These verses indicate the sources and the uses of Solomon's great wealth. 28: *Coa*: Cilicia, in southern Asia Minor.

11.1-43: *Solomon's divine disfavor*. This chapter is a special construction of the Deuteronomic historians. They balanced a positive view of Solomon as wise ruler and devout Temple builder with a negative view of him as taking foreign wives, sponsoring foreign cults, and beginning the process of apostasy that was eventually to undo Israel (compare Deut. 17.14-20; 7.1-4). The view here is that the apostasy resulting from his foreign wives arose only late in his reign. However, his son and successor Rehoboam was born of an Ammonite wife one year before Solomon came to the throne, for Rehoboam was forty-one (14.21) when he succeeded Solomon, who reigned forty years (11.42). Solomon married his Egyptian wife during the first twenty years of his reign (3.1; 6.1; 9.10). The Deuteronomic historians suggest that rebellions

and three hundred concubines, and they turned his heart from the truth.  
 4 When he grew old, his wives turned his heart to follow other gods, and he did not remain wholly loyal to the LORD his God as his father David had  
 5 been. He followed Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the loath-  
 6 some god of the Ammonites. Thus Solomon did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, and was not loyal  
 7 to the LORD like his father David. He built a hill-shrine for Kemosh, the loathsome god of Moab, on the height to the east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the loathsome god of the  
 8 Ammonites. Thus he did for the gods to which all his foreign wives burnt offerings and made sacrifices. The  
 9 LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD the God of Israel, who had  
 10 appeared to him twice and had strictly commanded him not to follow other gods; but he disobeyed the LORD's  
 11 command. The LORD therefore said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this and have not kept my covenant and my statutes as I commanded you, I will tear the kingdom from you and  
 12 give it to your servant. Nevertheless, for the sake of your father David I will not do this in your day; I will tear it  
 13 out of your son's hand. Even so not the whole kingdom; I will leave him one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city.'  
 14 Then the LORD raised up an adversary for Solomon, Hadad the Edomite, of  
 15 the royal house of Edom. At the time when David reduced Edom, his commander-in-chief Joab had destroyed every male in the country when he went  
 16 into it to bury the slain. He and the armies of Israel remained there for six months, until he had destroyed every  
 17 male in Edom. Then Hadad, who was still a boy, fled the country with

some of his father's Edomite servants, intending to enter Egypt. They set out  
 18 from Midian, made their way to Paran and, taking some men from there, came to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who assigned Hadad a house and main-  
 19 tenance and made him a grant of land. Hadad found great favour with Pharaoh, who gave him in marriage a  
 20 sister of Queen Tahpenes his wife. She bore him his son Genubath; Tahpenes weaned the child in Pharaoh's house, and he lived there along  
 21 with Pharaoh's children. When Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his forefathers and that his commander-in-chief Joab was also dead, he said to Pharaoh, 'Let me go so that I may  
 22 return to my own country.' 'What is it that you find wanting in my country', said Pharaoh, 'that you want to go back to your own?' 'Nothing,' said Hadad, 'but do, pray, let me go.' He  
 23 remained an adversary for Israel all through Solomon's reign. This is the harm that Hadad caused: he maintained a stranglehold on Israel and became king of Edom.

Then God raised up another ad-  
 23 versary against Solomon, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master Hadadezer king of Zobah. He gathered  
 24 men about him and became a captain of freebooters, who came to Damascus and occupied it; he became king there.

Jeroboam son of Nebat, one of  
 26<sup>8</sup> Solomon's courtiers, an Ephrathite from Zeredah, whose widowed mother was named Zeruah, rebelled against the king. And this is the story of his  
 27 rebellion. Solomon had built the Millo and closed the breach in the wall of the city of his father David. Now this  
 28 Jeroboam was a man of great energy; and Solomon, seeing how the young man worked, had put him in charge of all the labour-gangs in the tribal

*s Verse 25 transposed to follow verse 22.*

against Solomon reflected the LORD's abandoning him (vv. 14-40). 5-7: *Milcom* and *Molech* are variants of *melek*, "king," used as a name for the Ammonite god. These shrines remained for more than three hundred years; see 2 Kgs.23.13. 13: *David* and *Jerusalem* are the primary objects of interest in the Deuteronomistic history. 14-25: All that is known of *Hadad the Edomite* is related here. Though *Edom* was not a serious threat during Solomon's reign, a resistance group may have arisen there. 18: The change of dynasties in Egypt (see 3.1 n.) almost certainly affected Solomon's political relations; see also v. 40. 23: *Hadadezer*: see 2 Sam.10.15-19.

29 district of Joseph. On one occasion Jeroboam had left Jerusalem, and the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh met him on the road. The prophet was wrapped in a new cloak, and the two of them  
30 were alone in the open country. Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing, tore it into twelve pieces  
31 and said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces, for this is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: "I am going to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon  
32 and give you ten tribes. But one tribe will remain his, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city I have chosen out  
33 of all the tribes of Israel. I have done this because Solomon has forsaken me; he has prostrated himself before Ashtoreth goddess of the Sidonians, Kemosh god of Moab, and Milcom god of the Ammonites, and has not conformed to my ways. He has not done what is right in my eyes or observed my statutes and judgements as David his  
34 father did. Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom from him, but will maintain his rule as long as he lives, for the sake of my chosen servant David, who did observe my commandments  
35 and statutes. But I will take the kingdom, that is the ten tribes, from his son and give it to you. One tribe I will  
36 give to his son, that my servant David may always have a flame burning before me in Jerusalem, the city which  
37 I chose to receive my Name. But I will appoint you to rule over all that you can desire, and to be king over Israel.  
38 If you pay heed to all my commands, if you conform to my ways and do what is right in my eyes, observing my statutes and commandments as my servant David did, then I will be with you. I will establish your family for

ever as I did for David; I will give Israel to you, and punish David's  
39 descendants as they have deserved, but not for ever."

After this Solomon sought to kill  
40 Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak in Egypt and remained there till Solomon's death.

The other acts and events of Sol-  
41 omon's reign, and all his wisdom, are recorded in the annals of Solomon. The  
42 reign of King Solomon in Jerusalem over the whole of Israel lasted forty  
43 years. Then he rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David his father, and he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

### The divided kingdom

REHOBOAM WENT TO SHECHEM, FOR ALL  
12<sup>u</sup> Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat, who  
2 was still in Egypt, heard of it, he remained there, having taken refuge there to escape King Solomon. They now re-  
3 called him, and he and all the assembly of Israel came to Rehoboam and said,  
4 "Your father laid a cruel yoke upon us; but if you will now lighten the  
cruel slavery he imposed on us and the heavy yoke he laid on us, we will  
5 serve you." "Give me three days," he said, "and come back again." So the  
6 people went away. King Rehoboam then consulted the elders who had  
7 been in attendance on his father Solomon while he lived: "What answer do you advise me to give to this  
8 people?" And they said, "If today you are willing to serve this people, show  
9 yourself their servant now and speak

<sup>i</sup> Verses 41-43: cp. 2 Chr. 9. 29-31.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 1-19: cp. 2 Chr. 10. 1-19.

*Rezon* was probably only a rebellious vassal of Solomon. 29-39: Here appears the first instance of a pattern repeated throughout Kgs.: The LORD sends a prophet to announce in advance a change in dynasty, thus giving a divine sanction to the change and to the new dynasty. Thus, the northern dynasties of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Jehu had divine sanction; the dynasty of Omri did not, nor did any of the kings who ruled after the fall of the Jehu dynasty. This theory of legitimacy is presented in 14.7-11, 14; 15.25-29; 16.1-4, 9-12; 19.15-18; 21.17-22; 2 Kgs. 9.1-10; 10.30-31; 15.8-12. 30-32: *Twelve* was the traditional number of the tribes; but by this time Judah had absorbed Simeon and the two were spoken of as only *one tribe*.

12.1-16.34: *The first period of the two kingdoms*. Here the compilers of Kgs. begin their parallel account of the two kingdoms. The sources drawn upon are the royal annals of Judah and Israel (14.19, 29) and collections of prophetic legends.

12.1-24: *The division of the two kingdoms*. 1: David ruled over Israel by covenant (2 Sam. 5.3); apparently that kingship had to be renewed at the beginning of each reign. 3: More than one

kindly to them, and they will be your  
 8 servants ever after.' But he rejected  
 the advice which the elders gave him.  
 He next consulted those who had  
 grown up with him, the young men  
 9 in attendance, and asked them, 'What  
 answer do you advise me to give to  
 this people's request that I should  
 lighten the yoke which my father laid  
 10 on them?' The young men replied,  
 'Give this answer to the people who  
 say that your father made their yoke  
 heavy and ask you to lighten it; tell them:  
 11 "My little finger is thicker than my  
 father's loins. My father laid a heavy  
 yoke on you; I will make it heavier.  
 My father used the whip on you; but  
 12 I will use the lash.'" Jeroboam and the  
 people all came back to Rehoboam  
 on the third day, as the king had  
 13 ordered. And the king gave them a  
 harsh answer. He rejected the advice  
 14 which the elders had given him and  
 spoke to the people as the young men  
 had advised: 'My father made your  
 yoke heavy; I will make it heavier.  
 My father used the whip on you; but I  
 15 will use the lash.' So the king would not  
 listen to the people; for the LORD had  
 given this turn to the affair, in order  
 that the word he had spoken by Ahijah  
 of Shiloh to Jeroboam son of Nebat  
 might be fulfilled.  
 16 When all Israel saw that the king  
 would not listen to them, they answered:

What share have we in David?

We have no lot in the son of Jesse.

Away to your homes, O Israel;

now see to your own house, David.

17 So Israel went to their homes, and  
 Rehoboam ruled over those Israelites  
 who lived in the cities of Judah.  
 18 Then King Rehoboam sent out Ado-  
 ram, the commander of the forced

levies, but the Israelites stoned him to  
 death; thereupon King Rehoboam  
 mounted his chariot in haste and  
 fled to Jerusalem. From that day 19  
 to this, the whole of Israel has been  
 in rebellion against the house of  
 David.

When the men of Israel heard that 20  
 Jeroboam had returned, they sent and  
 called him to the assembly and made  
 him king over the whole of Israel. The  
 tribe of Judah alone followed the  
 house of David.

When Rehoboam reached Jerusalem, 21  
 he assembled all the house of Judah,  
 the tribe of Benjamin also, a hundred  
 and eighty thousand chosen warriors,  
 to fight against the house of Israel and  
 recover his kingdom. But the word 22  
 of God came to Shemaiah the man of  
 God: 'Say to Rehoboam son of 23  
 Solomon, king of Judah, and to the  
 house of Judah and to Benjamin and  
 the rest of the people, "This is the 24  
 word of the LORD: You shall not go  
 up to make war on your kinsmen the  
 Israelites. Return to your homes, for  
 this is my will.'" So they listened to  
 the word of the LORD and returned  
 home, as the LORD had told them.

Then Jeroboam rebuilt Shechem 25  
 the hill-country of Ephraim and took  
 up residence there; from there he went  
 out and built Penuel. 'As things now 26  
 stand,' he said to himself, 'the king-  
 dom will revert to the house of David.  
 If this people go up to sacrifice in the 27  
 house of the LORD in Jerusalem, it will  
 revive their allegiance to their lord  
 Rehoboam king of Judah, and they  
 will kill me and return to King Rehob-  
 oam.' After giving thought to the 28  
 matter he made two calves of gold and  
 said to the people, 'It is too much  
 trouble for you to go up to Jerusalem;

v Verses 21-24: cp. 2 Chr. 11. 1-4.

account of *Jeroboam* has been drawn upon; this verse conflicts with v. 20. 15: *Ahijah*: see 11.29-39. 16: See the similar summons in 2 Sam.20.1. 19: *From that day to this*: a formula not always used literally; see 8.8 n. 21-24: A prophetic oracle forces *Rehoboam* to accept the division of the kingdoms.

12.25-33: *Jeroboam's religious establishment*. Jeroboam, to secure his kingdom, fortified *Shechem*, making it his capital city west of the Jordan, and then securing a similar military base east of the Jordan, at *Penuel* in Gilead. Dan and Bethel (vv. 29-30) were at the northern and southern extremes of his kingdom. 28: Images of *calves* or bulls were associated with worship of the Canaanite deity Baal. Tradition also traced such an image to Aaron, however; see Exod.32.1-6. Speaking of *gods* in the plural is intended to express an alien viewpoint;

here are your gods, Israel, that brought  
 29 you up from Egypt.' One he set up at  
 Bethel and the other he put at Dan,  
 30 and this thing became a sin in Israel;  
 the people went to Bethel to worship  
 the one, and all the way to Dan to wor-  
 31 ship the other. He set up shrines on the  
 hill-tops also and appointed priests  
 from every class of the people, who  
 32 did not belong to the Levites. He in-  
 stituted a pilgrim-feast on the fifteenth  
 day of the eighth month like that in  
 Judah, and he offered sacrifices upon  
 the altar. This he did at Bethel, sacrific-  
 ing to the calves that he had made and  
 compelling the priests of the hill-shrines,  
 which he had set up, to serve at Bethel.  
 33 So he went up to the altar that he had  
 made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of  
 the eighth month; there, in a month  
 of his own choosing, he instituted for  
 the Israelites a pilgrim-feast and him-  
 self went up to the altar to burn the  
 sacrifice.

13 As Jeroboam stood by the altar to  
 burn the sacrifice, a man of God from  
 Judah, moved by the word of the  
 2 LORD, appeared at Bethel. He inveighed  
 against the altar in the LORD's name,  
 crying out, 'O altar, altar! This is the  
 word of the LORD: "Listen! A child  
 shall be born to the house of David,  
 named Josiah. He will sacrifice upon  
 you the priests of the hill-shrines who  
 make offerings upon you, and he will  
 3 burn human bones upon you.'" He  
 gave a sign the same day: 'This is  
 the sign which the LORD has ordained:  
 This altar will be rent in pieces and the  
 4 ashes upon it will be spilt.' When King  
 Jeroboam heard the sentence which  
 the man of God pronounced against  
 the altar at Bethel, he pointed to him  
 from the altar and said, 'Seize that  
 man!' Immediately the hand which he  
 had pointed at him became paralysed,  
 5 so that he could not draw it back. The  
 altar too was rent in pieces and the  
 ashes were spilt, in fulfilment of the  
 sign that the man of God had given

at the LORD's command. The king 6  
 appealed to the man of God to pacify  
 the LORD his God and pray for him  
 that his hand might be restored. The  
 man of God did as he asked; his hand  
 was restored and became as it had been  
 before. Then the king said to the man 7  
 of God, 'Come home and take re-  
 freshment at my table, and let me  
 give you a present.' But the man of 8  
 God answered, 'If you were to give me  
 half your house, I would not enter it  
 with you: I will eat and drink nothing  
 in this place, for the LORD's command 9  
 to me was to eat and drink nothing,  
 and not to go back by the way I came.'  
 So he went back another way; he did 10  
 not return by the road he had taken to  
 Bethel.

At that time there was an aged proph- 11  
 et living in Bethel. His sons came and  
 recounted to him all that the man of  
 God had done in Bethel that day;  
 they also told their father what he had  
 said to the king. Their father said to 12  
 them, 'Which road did he take?' They  
 pointed out the road taken by the  
 man of God who had come from Judah.  
 He said to his sons, 'Saddle an ass for 13  
 me.' They saddled the ass, and he  
 mounted it and went after the man of 14  
 God. He found him seated under a  
 terebinth and said to him, 'Are you the  
 man of God who came from Judah?'  
 And he said, 'Yes, I am.' 'Come 15  
 home and eat with me', said the  
 prophet. 'I cannot go back with you 16  
 or enter your house', said the other;  
 'I can neither eat nor drink with you  
 in this place, for it was told me by the 17  
 word of the LORD: "You shall eat  
 and drink nothing there, nor shall you  
 go back the way you came."' And the 18  
 old man said to him, 'I also am a  
 prophet, as you are; and an angel  
 commanded me by the word of the  
 LORD to bring you home with me to  
 eat and drink with me.' He was  
 lying; but the man of Judah went back 19  
 with him and ate and drank in his

compare 1 Sam.4.8. 31-33: Besides the cultic objects and sanctuaries, Jeroboam established his own priesthood, his own pilgrim-feast (one month later than in Jerusalem; see 8.2 n.), and he himself offered the sacrifices.

13.1-34: The man of God from Judah. A prophetic legend reflects divine condemnation of Jeroboam's altar and anticipates Josiah's destruction of it over three hundred years later. 2: See 2 Kgs.23.15. 4-6: On such prophetic miracles, compare 2 Kgs.2.19-25; 4.38-44.

20 house. While they were still seated at table the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back, and he cried out to the man of God from Judah, 'This is the word of the LORD: "You have defied the word of the LORD your God and have not obeyed his command; you have come back to eat and to drink in the place where he forbade it; therefore your body shall not be laid in the grave of your forefathers."'

23 After they had eaten and drunk, he saddled an ass for the prophet whom he had brought back. As he went on his way a lion met him and killed him, and his body was left lying in the road, with the ass and the lion both standing beside it. Some passers-by saw the body lying in the road and the lion standing beside it, and they brought the news to the city where the old prophet lived. When the prophet who had caused him to break his journey heard it, he said, 'It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him to the lion, and it has broken his neck and killed him in fulfilment of the word of the LORD.' He told his sons to saddle an ass and, when they had saddled it, he set out and found the body lying in the road with the ass and the lion standing beside it; the lion had neither devoured the body nor broken the back of the ass. Then the prophet lifted the body of the man of God, laid it on the ass and brought it back to his own city to mourn over it and bury it. He laid the body in his own grave and they mourned for him, saying, 'My brother, my brother!' After burying him, he said to his sons, 'When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God lies buried; lay my bones beside his; for the sentence which he pronounced at the LORD's command against the altar in Bethel and all the hill-shrines of Samaria shall be carried out.'

33 After this Jeroboam still did not abandon his evil ways but went on appointing priests for the hill-shrines

from all classes of the people; any man who offered himself he would consecrate to be priest of a hill-shrine. By doing this he brought guilt upon his own house and doomed it to utter destruction.

At that time Jeroboam's son Abijah fell ill, and Jeroboam said to his wife, 'Come now, disguise yourself so that people may not be able to recognize you as my wife, and go to Shiloh. Ahijah the prophet is there, the man who said I was to be king over this people. Take with you ten loaves, some raisins, and a flask of syrup, and go to him; he will tell you what will happen to the child.' Jeroboam's wife did so; she set off at once for Shiloh and came to Ahijah's house. Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were fixed in the blindness of old age, and the LORD had said to him, 'The wife of Jeroboam is on her way to consult you about her son, who is ill; you shall give her such and such an answer.' When she came in, concealing who she was, and Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he said, 'Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why conceal who you are? I have heavy news for you. Go and tell Jeroboam: "This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I raised you out of the people and appointed you prince over my people Israel; I tore away the kingdom from the house of David and gave it to you; but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with his whole heart, doing only what was right in my eyes. You have outdone all your predecessors in wickedness; you have provoked me to anger by making for yourself other gods and images of cast metal; and you have turned your back on me. For this I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam and I will destroy them all, every mother's son, whether still under the protection of the family or not, and I will sweep away the house of Jeroboam in Israel, as a man sweeps up dung until none is left. Those of

14.1-20: Prophetic condemnation of Jeroboam. This legend enhances the prophets (vv. 4-6, 12, 17); it is used here to convey a second stage of the Deuteronomic theory about northern kingship (vv. 7-11; compare 11.29-39 n.). 1: Jeroboam sends to the prophet who had originally sanctioned his kingship (11.29-39). 11: The stereotyped curse here means that no member of

that house who die in the city shall be food for the dogs, and those who die in the country shall be food for the birds. It is the word of the LORD."

12 'You must go home now; the moment you set foot in the city, the child will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him; he alone of all Jeroboam's family will have proper burial, because in him alone could the LORD the God of Israel find anything good. Then the LORD will set up a king over Israel who shall put an end to the house of Jeroboam. This first; and what next? The LORD will strike Israel, till it trembles like a reed in the water; he will uproot its people from this good land which he gave to their forefathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles and provoked the LORD's anger. And he will abandon Israel for the sins that Jeroboam has committed and has led Israel to commit.' Jeroboam's wife went home at once to Tirzah and, as she crossed the threshold of the house, the boy died. They buried him, and all Israel mourned over him; and thus the word of the LORD was fulfilled which he had spoken through his servant Ahijah the prophet.

19 The other events of Jeroboam's reign, in war and peace, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. He reigned twenty-two years; then he rested with his forefathers and was succeeded by his son Nadab.

21 IN JUDAH REHOBOAM SON OF SOLOMON had become king. He was forty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to receive his Name. Rehoboam's mother was a woman of Ammon called Naamah. Judah did what was

wrong in the eyes of the LORD, rousing his jealous indignation by the sins they committed, beyond anything that their forefathers had done. They erected hill-shrines, sacred pillars, and sacred poles, on every high hill and under every spreading tree. Worse still, all over the country there were male prostitutes attached to the shrines, and the people adopted all the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed in favour of Israel.

In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He removed the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace, and seized everything, including all the shields of gold that Solomon had made. King Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and entrusted them to the officers of the escort who guarded the entrance of the royal palace. Whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the escort carried them; afterwards they returned them to the guard-room.

The other acts and events of Rehoboam's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. There was continual fighting between him and Jeroboam. He rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David. (His mother was a woman of Ammon, whose name was Naamah.) He was succeeded by his son Abijam.

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijam became king of Judah. He reigned in Jerusalem for three years; his mother was Maacah granddaughter of Abishalom. All the sins that his father had committed before him he committed too, nor was he faithful to the LORD his God as his ancestor David had been.

w Verses 25-28: cp. 2 Chr. 12. 9-11.  
x Verses 29-31: cp. 2 Chr. 12. 13-16.

the family would have an honorable burial; compare v. 13. 14b-16: This Deuteronomic comment anticipates the exile of the leading citizens of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. 17: For an unknown reason Jeroboam had moved his capital to *Tirzah*, a few miles northeast of Shechem.

14.21-31: The reign of Rehoboam of Judah. The usual condemnation in Kgs. for cultic offenses is well illustrated here. 25-26: On *Shishak*, first king of the twenty-second Egyptian dynasty, see 3.1 n. and 11.40. Shishak also conquered several cities in Israel at this time.

15.1-24: The reigns of Abijam and Asa in Judah. 1-8: *Abijam* was a son of *Maacah*, granddaughter of *Abishalom*, the latter probably David's son Absalom (see, on *Maacah*, 2 Sam.5.3).



- 4 But for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a flame to burn in Jerusalem, by establishing his dynasty and making  
 5 Jerusalem secure, because David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not disobeyed any of his commandments all his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.<sup>y</sup>  
 7 The other acts and events of Abijam's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. There was fighting  
 8 between Abijam and Jeroboam. And Abijam rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Asa.  
 9 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of  
 10 Judah. He reigned in Jerusalem for forty-one years; his grandmother was Maacah granddaughter of Abishalom.  
 11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, like his ancestor David.  
 12 He expelled from the land the male prostitutes attached to the shrines and did away with all the idols which his  
 13<sup>z</sup> predecessors had made. He even deprived his own grandmother Maacah of her rank as queen mother because she had an obscene object made for the worship of Asherah; Asa cut it down and burnt it in the gorge of the Kidron.  
 14 Although the hill-shrines were allowed to remain, Asa himself remained faithful  
 15 to the LORD all his life. He brought into the house of the LORD all his father's votive offerings and his own, gold and silver and sacred vessels.  
 16 Asa was at war with Baasha king of  
 17<sup>a</sup> Israel all through their reigns. Baasha king of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah to cut off all access  
 18 to Asa king of Judah. So Asa took all the gold and silver that remained in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace, and sent his servants with them to Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Aram, whose capital was Damascus, with instructions to say,  
 19 'There is an alliance between us, as
- there was between our fathers. I now send you this present of silver and gold; break off your alliance with Baasha king of Israel, so that he may abandon his campaign against me.' Ben-hadad listened willingly to King  
 20 Asa; he ordered the commanders of his armies to move against the cities of Israel, and they attacked Iyyon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and that part of Kinnereth which marches with the land of Naphtali. When Baasha heard of it,  
 21 he stopped fortifying Ramah and fell back on Tirzah. Then King Asa issued  
 22 a proclamation requiring every man in Judah to join in removing the stones of Ramah and the timbers with which Baasha had fortified it; no one was exempted; and he used them to fortify Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah.  
 23<sup>b</sup> All the other events of Asa's reign, his exploits and his achievements, and the cities he built, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. But in his old age his feet were crippled by disease. He rested with his forefathers  
 24 and was buried with them in the city of his ancestor David; and he was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat.  
 25 Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned for  
 26 two years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and followed in his father's footsteps, repeating the sin which he had led Israel to commit. Baasha son of Ahijah, of the house of  
 27 Issachar, conspired against him and attacked him at Gibbethon, a Philistine city, which Nadab was besieging with  
 28 all his forces. And Baasha slew him and usurped the throne in the third  
 29 year of Asa king of Judah. As soon as he became king, he struck down all the family of Jeroboam, destroying every living soul and leaving not one survivor. Thus the word of the LORD was

<sup>y</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds (6) There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all his days (cp. 14. 30).*

<sup>z</sup> *Verses 13-15: cp. 2 Chr. 15. 16-18.*

<sup>a</sup> *Verses 17-22: cp. 2 Chr. 16. 1-6.*

<sup>b</sup> *Verses 23, 24: cp. 2 Chr. 16. 11-14.*

This Maacah was a woman of great influence; see vv. 11-13; 2 Chr. 13.2 n. 14: Asa is the first of several Judean kings who are approved of by the compilers, except that they did not remove the hill-shrines. 16-24: Once the two Hebrew kingdoms were at odds rather than coordinated under one king, Damascus became an independent and threatening power in the northeast.

15.25-16.7: Nadab and Baasha of Israel. These two kings are treated in stereotyped terms; see 11.29-39 n.

fulfilled which he spoke through his  
 30 servant Ahijah the Shilonite. This hap-  
 pened because of the sins of Jeroboam  
 and the sins which he led Israel  
 to commit, and because he had pro-  
 voked the anger of the LORD the  
 31 God of Israel. The other events of  
 Nadab's reign and all his acts are  
 recorded in the annals of the kings of  
 32 Israel. Asa was at war with Baasha  
 king of Israel all through their reigns.

33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah,  
 Baasha son of Ahijah became king of  
 all Israel in Tirzah and reigned  
 34 twenty-four years. He did what was  
 wrong in the eyes of the LORD and  
 followed in Jeroboam's footsteps, re-  
 peating the sin which he had led  
 16 Israel to commit. Then the word of the  
 LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani  
 2 concerning Baasha: 'I raised you from  
 the dust and made you a prince over  
 my people Israel, but you have  
 followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam  
 and have provoked me to anger  
 3 with their sins. Therefore I will sweep  
 away Baasha and his house and will  
 deal with it as I dealt with the house  
 4 of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Those of  
 Baasha's family who die in the city  
 shall be food for the dogs, and those  
 who die in the country shall be food  
 5 for the birds.' The other events of  
 Baasha's reign, his achievements and  
 his exploits, are recorded in the annals  
 6 of the kings of Israel. Baasha rested  
 with his forefathers and was buried in  
 Tirzah; and he was succeeded by his  
 7 son Elah. Moreover the word of the  
 LORD concerning Baasha and his family  
 came through the prophet Jehu son of  
 Hanani, because of all the wrong that  
 he had done in the eyes of the LORD,  
 thereby provoking his anger: because  
 he had not only sinned like the house  
 of Jeroboam, but had also brought  
 destruction upon it.

8 In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king  
 of Judah, Elah son of Baasha became  
 king of Israel and he reigned in Tirzah  
 9 two years. Zimri, who was in his  
 service commanding half the chariotry,

plotted against him. The king was in  
 Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the  
 house of Arza, comptroller of the  
 household there, when Zimri broke in  
 10 and attacked him, assassinated him  
 and made himself king. This took place  
 in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king  
 of Judah. As soon as he had become  
 11 king and was enthroned, he struck  
 down all the family of Baasha and left  
 not a single mother's son alive, kins-  
 man or friend. He destroyed the whole  
 12 family of Baasha, and thus fulfilled the  
 word of the LORD concerning Baasha,  
 spoken through the prophet Jehu.  
 This was what came of all the sins which  
 13 Baasha and his son Elah had com-  
 mitted and the sins into which they had  
 led Israel, provoking the anger of the  
 LORD the God of Israel with their  
 worthless idols. The other events and  
 14 acts of Elah's reign are recorded in the  
 annals of the kings of Israel.

In the twenty-seventh year of Asa  
 15 king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah  
 for seven days. At the time the army  
 was investing the Philistine city of  
 Gibbethon. When the Israelite troops  
 16 in the field heard of Zimri's con-  
 spiracy and the murder of the king,  
 there and then in the camp they made  
 their commander Omri king of Israel  
 by common consent. Then Omri  
 17 and his whole force withdrew from Gib-  
 bethon and laid siege to Tirzah. Zimri,  
 18 as soon as he saw that the city had  
 fallen, retreated to the keep of the royal  
 palace, set the whole of it on fire over  
 his head and so perished. This was  
 19 what came of the sin he had com-  
 mitted by doing what was wrong in the  
 eyes of the LORD and following in  
 the footsteps of Jeroboam, repeating  
 the sin into which he had led Israel. The  
 20 other events of Zimri's reign, and his  
 conspiracy, are recorded in the annals  
 of the kings of Israel.

Thereafter the people of Israel were  
 21 split into two factions: one supported  
 Tibni son of Ginath, determined to  
 make him king; the other supported  
 Omri. Omri's party proved the stronger;  
 22 Tibni lost his life and Omri became king.

16.8-34: The establishment of the dynasty of Omri. Though this was the greatest dynasty of the north, it is slighted by the Deuteronomic historians. 13: See 11.29-39 n. 15-20: The episode of Zimri was no more than a palace revolt. 21-22: The following six years witnessed

23 It was in the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah that Omri became king of Israel and he reigned twelve years, 31  
 24 six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on it which he named Samaria after Shemer  
 25 the owner of the hill. Omri did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he outdid all his predecessors in wickedness. 32  
 26 He followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam son of Nebat, repeating the sins which he had led Israel to commit, so that they provoked the anger of the LORD their God with their worthless 33  
 27 idols. The other events of Omri's reign, and his exploits, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Omri 34  
 28 rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria; and he was succeeded by his son Ahab. did more that was wrong in the eyes of the LORD than all his predecessors. As 31  
 if it were not enough for him to follow the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he contracted a marriage with Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidon, and went and worshipped Baal; he prostrated himself before him and 32  
 erected an altar to him in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria. He 33  
 also set up a sacred pole; indeed he did more to provoke the anger of the LORD the God of Israel than all the kings of Israel before him. In his days 34  
 Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho; laying its foundations cost him his eldest son Abiram, and the setting up of its gates cost him Segub his youngest son. Thus was fulfilled what the LORD had spoken through Joshua son of Nun.

### Ahab and Elijah

29 AHAB SON OF OMRI BECAME KING OF Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel 2  
 30 in Samaria for twenty-two years. He 3  
 Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in 17  
 Gilead, said to Ahab, 'I swear by the life of the LORD the God of Israel, whose servant I am, that there shall be neither dew nor rain these coming years unless I give the word.' Then the word of the 2  
 LORD came to him: 'Leave this place 3  
 and turn eastwards; and go into hiding in the ravine of Kerith east of

a genuine civil war, which the compilers of Kgs. pass over in a phrase. 23-34: Omri and his son Ahab devised a new policy for the Northern Kingdom. Whereas the two Hebrew kingdoms had been at war with each other for fifty years after Solomon's death (14.30; 15.32), the dynasty of Omri made peace with the kingdom of Judah and even established a marriage tie between the two royal houses (2 Kgs.8.26). The two kingdoms then collaborated in wars to dominate the kingdoms east of the Jordan (see 1 Kgs. ch. 22 and 2 Kgs. ch. 3), probably to control the inland trade routes. The policy of Omri and Ahab also included peaceful relations with the maritime power of Tyre, strengthened by the marriage of Jezebel to Ahab (16.31). This alliance introduced into Israel strong influences from the religious practices of Tyre, especially the worship of Baal. From the later historians' viewpoint, Baal worship was the worst kind of apostasy, and they judge the leading kings of the dynasty of Omri accordingly (16.26,30-33). 23-24: A new capital city Samaria was to symbolize the new policy. 32: The temple of Baal was certainly a part of Omri's original plan for the city (the city was less than six years old at the time of Omri's death). 34: A direct reference to Josh.6.26.

17.1-2 Kgs.10.36: The religious crisis of the ninth century. During the two generations of the prophets Elijah and Elisha a sharp conflict of greatest importance arose between partisans of the LORD (Yahweh), the God of old Israel, and of the Baal, the god of Canaan and Phoenicia. Elijah led the fight for the LORD; Jezebel, the Phoenician wife of Ahab, Omri's son, with her group of prophets, fought for the Baal. The conflict led finally to the overthrow of the Omri dynasty. The account in Kgs. draws on a cycle of Elijah stories (1 Kgs. chs. 17-19, 21; 2 Kgs. ch. 1), a cycle of Elisha stories (2 Kgs.2.1-8.15), more selections from royal annals (e.g. 1 Kgs.22.39-53; 2 Kgs.8.16-27), and historical narratives about Ahab's wars with Damascus (1 Kgs. chs. 20, 22) and Jehu's overthrow of the Omri dynasty (2 Kgs. chs. 9-10).

17.1-19.21: Elijah's work. A series of stories about Elijah relates the first stage of the overthrow of the dynasty of Omri. The parallels between Elijah and Moses, and between Elisha and Joshua, are deliberate. In chs. 17-19 three groups of materials have been combined: episodes concerning the drought that Elijah announced and ended (17.1-18.16,41-46); the contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (18.17-40); and the pilgrimage to Horeb, the mountain of God (ch. 19).

17.1-18.16: Elijah brings a severe drought. The issue was which of the two gods controls the rain. 1: The compilers used only parts of their older source; hence the abruptness of the appearance of Elijah here. 2-16: The drought soon leads to famine. Where the holy man goes,

- 4 the Jordan. You shall drink from the stream, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.' He did as the LORD had told him: he went and stayed in the ravine of Kerith east of the Jordan, and the ravens brought him bread and meat morning and evening, and he drank from the stream.
- 7 After a while the stream dried up, for there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: 'Go now to Zarephath, a village of Sidon, and stay there; I have commanded a widow there to feed you.'
- 10 So he went off to Zarephath. When he reached the entrance to the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a little water in a pitcher to drink.'
- 11 As she went to fetch it, he called after her, 'Bring me, please, a piece of bread as well.' But she said, 'As the LORD your God lives, I have no food to sustain me except a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a flask. Here I am, gathering two or three sticks to go and cook something for my son and myself before we die.' 'Never fear,' said Elijah; 'go and do as you say; but first make me a small cake from what you have and bring it out to me; and after that make something for your son and yourself. For this is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: "The jar of flour shall not give out nor the flask of oil fail, until the LORD sends rain on the land."' She went and did as Elijah had said, and there was food for him and for her and her family for a long time. The jar of flour did not give out nor did the flask of oil fail, as the word of the LORD foretold through Elijah.
- 17 Afterwards the son of this woman, the mistress of the house, fell ill and grew worse and worse, until at last his breathing ceased. Then she said to Elijah, 'What made you interfere, you man of God? You came here to bring my sins to light and kill my son!' 'Give me your son', he said. He took the boy from her arms and carried him up to the roof-chamber where his lodging was, and laid him on his own bed. Then he called out to the LORD, 'O LORD my God, is this thy care for the widow with whom I lodge, that thou hast been so cruel to her son?' Then he breathed deeply<sup>c</sup> upon the child three times and called on the LORD, 'O LORD my God, let the breath of life, I pray, return to the body of this child.' The LORD listened to Elijah's cry, and the breath of life returned to the child's body, and he revived; Elijah lifted him up and took him down from the roof into the house, gave him to his mother and said, 'Look, your son is alive.' Then she said to Elijah, 'Now I know for certain that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD on your lips is truth.'
- 18 Time went by, and in the third year the word of the LORD came to Elijah: 'Go and show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the land.' So he went to show himself to Ahab. At this time the famine in Samaria was at its height, and Ahab summoned Obadiah, the comptroller of his household, a devout worshipper of the LORD. When Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, he had taken a hundred of them and hidden them in caves, fifty by fifty, giving them food and drink to keep them alive. Ahab said to Obadiah, 'Let us go through the land, both of us, to every spring and gully; if we can find enough grass we may keep the horses and mules alive and lose none of our cattle.' They divided the land between them for their survey, Ahab going one way by himself and Obadiah another.
- As Obadiah was on his way, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him and fell prostrate before him and said, 'Can it be you, my lord Elijah?' 'Yes,' he said, 'it is I; go and tell your master

<sup>c</sup> Or stretched himself.

there is miraculous provision of food; compare 2 Kgs.4.1-7. 17-24: The woman thinks the holy man's presence causes punishment for her sins. Compare 2 Kgs.4.18-37. 24: The compilers were particularly interested in showing the power of the word of the LORD through the prophets. 18.3-4: The intensity of the religious conflict is shown by the slaughtering of prophets on both sides (v. 40). 7-16: Elijah had a reputation for elusiveness; Obadiah tactfully seeks assurance that he will remain.

9 that Elijah is here.' 'What wrong have I done?' said Obadiah. 'Why should you give me into Ahab's hands? He will put me to death. As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom to which my master has not sent in search of you. If they said, "He is not here", he made that kingdom or nation swear on oath that they could not find you. Yet now you say, "Go and tell your master that Elijah is here." What will happen? As soon as I leave you, the spirit of the LORD will carry you away, who knows where? I shall go and tell Ahab, and when he fails to find you, he will kill me. Yet I have been a worshipper of the LORD from boyhood. Have you not been told, my lord, what I did when Jezebel put the LORD's prophets to death, how I hid a hundred of them in caves, fifty by fifty, and kept them alive with food and drink? And now you say, "Go and tell your master that Elijah is here"! He will kill me.' Elijah answered, 'As the LORD of Hosts lives, whose servant I am, I swear that I will show myself to him this very day.' So Obadiah went to find Ahab and gave him the message, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 As soon as Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' 'It is not I who have troubled Israel,' he replied, 'but you and your father's family, by forsaking the commandments of the LORD and following Baal. But now, send and summon all Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal with them and the four hundred prophets of the goddess Asherah, who are Jezebel's pensioners.' So Ahab sent out to all the Israelites and assembled the

prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah stepped forward and said to the people, 'How long will you sit on the fence? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' Not a word did they answer. Then Elijah said to the people, 'I am the only prophet of the LORD still left, but there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Bring two bulls; let them choose one for themselves, cut it up and lay it on the wood without setting fire to it, and I will prepare the other and lay it on the wood without setting fire to it. You shall invoke your god by name and I will invoke the LORD by name; and the god who answers by fire, he is God.' And all the people shouted their approval.

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one of the bulls and offer it first, for there are more of you; invoke your god by name, but do not set fire to the wood.' So they took the bull provided for them and offered it, and they invoked Baal by name from morning until noon, crying, 'Baal, Baal, answer us'; but there was no sound, no answer. They danced wildly beside the altar they had set up. At midday Elijah mocked them: 'Call louder, for he is a god; it may be he is deep in thought, or engaged, or on a journey; or he may have gone to sleep and must be woken up.' They cried still louder and, as was their custom, gashed themselves with swords and spears until the blood ran. All afternoon they raved and ranted till the hour of the regular sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no answer, no sign of attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come here to me.' They all came,

18.17-46: The contest on Mount Carmel. 17-18: When Ahab introduced the worship of Baal into the Northern Kingdom he did not cease to worship the LORD; see 22.5-6. It was such religious tolerance or pluralism that *Elijah* was attacking. From Ahab's viewpoint, therefore, Elijah was a *troubler of Israel*. 19: *Prophets* throughout these narratives usually means followers or disciples, living at court or in separate communities; see, e.g. 2 Kgs.6.1-3. 21: Ahab's policy was to avoid this alternative. 22: *Elijah was not the only prophet of the LORD still left*, but he may have been the only one willing to come forward as such. 23-24: The contest is cast in terms of a tradition about the holy fire of the altar; see Lev.6.2-6; 9.24; 1 Chr.21.26; 2 Chr.7.1-3; 2 Macc.1.18-22. 26: The dancing was a ritual action consisting of limping motions. 27: This fierce satire may be even stronger if, as is likely, *engaged* is a euphemism for seeing to bodily needs. 28: *Gashed themselves*: a ritual action done in an ecstatic state (compare Hos.7.14), usually associated with mourning for the dead (Jer.16.6), a practice forbidden to Israelites (Deut.14.1). 29: *The hour of the regular sacrifice* was roughly 3:00 p.m. 30-35: Much symbolism is involved here; the *twelve stones* and *twelve jars of water*, and the complex of *altar* (land)

and he repaired the altar of the LORD  
 31 which had been torn down. He took  
 twelve stones, one for each tribe of the  
 sons of Jacob, the man named Israel  
 32 by the word of the LORD. With these  
 stones he built an altar in the name of  
 the LORD; he dug a trench round it  
 big enough to hold two measures of  
 33 seed; he arranged the wood, cut up  
 the bull and laid it on the wood. Then  
 34 he said, 'Fill four jars with water and  
 pour it on the whole-offering and on  
 the wood.' They did so, and he said,  
 'Do it again.' They did it again, and he  
 said, 'Do it a third time.' They did it a  
 35 third time, and the water ran all  
 round the altar and even filled the  
 36 trench. At the hour of the regular sacri-  
 fice the prophet Elijah came forward  
 and said, 'LORD God of Abraham, of  
 Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known  
 today that thou art God in Israel and  
 that I am thy servant and have done all  
 37 these things at thy command. Answer  
 me, O LORD, answer me and let this  
 people know that thou, LORD, art  
 God and that it is thou that hast  
 38 caused them to be backsliders.'<sup>d</sup> Then  
 the fire of the LORD fell. It consumed  
 the whole-offering, the wood, the  
 stones, and the earth, and licked up  
 39 the water in the trench. When all the  
 people saw it, they fell prostrate and  
 cried, 'The LORD is God, the LORD is  
 40 God.' Then Elijah said to them, 'Seize  
 the prophets of Baal; let not one of  
 them escape.' They seized them, and  
 Elijah took them down to the Kishon  
 and slaughtered them there in the  
 valley.

41 Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go back now,  
 eat and drink, for I hear the sound of  
 42 coming rain.' He did so, while Elijah  
 himself climbed to the crest of Carmel.  
 There he crouched on the ground with  
 43 his face between his knees. He said to  
 his servant, 'Go and look out to the  
 west.' He went and looked; 'There is  
 nothing to see', he said. Seven times  
 Elijah ordered him back, and seven

times he went. The seventh time he 44  
 said, 'I see a cloud no bigger than a  
 man's hand, coming up from the  
 west.' 'Now go', said Elijah, and tell  
 Ahab to harness his chariot and be off,  
 or the rain will stop him.' Meanwhile 45  
 the sky had grown black with clouds,  
 the wind rose, and heavy rain began to  
 fall. Ahab mounted his chariot and set  
 off for Jezreel; but the power of the 46  
 LORD had come upon Elijah: he tucked  
 up his robe and ran before Ahab all  
 the way to Jezreel.

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah 19  
 had done and how he had put all the  
 prophets to death with the sword. Jez- 2  
 ebel then sent a messenger to Elijah to  
 say, 'The gods do the same to me and  
 more, unless by this time tomorrow I  
 have taken your life as you took  
 theirs.' He was afraid and fled for his 3  
 life. When he reached Beersheba in  
 Judah, he left his servant there and 4  
 himself went a day's journey into the  
 wilderness. He came upon a broom-  
 bush, and sat down under it and  
 prayed for death: 'It is enough,' he  
 said; 'now, LORD, take my life, for I  
 am no better than my fathers before  
 me.' He lay down under the bush and, 5  
 while he slept, an angel touched him  
 and said, 'Rise and eat.' He looked, 6  
 and there at his head was a cake  
 baked on hot stones, and a pitcher of  
 water. He ate and drank and lay down  
 again. The angel of the LORD came 7  
 again and touched him a second time,  
 saying, 'Rise and eat; the journey is  
 too much for you.' He rose and ate 8  
 and drank and, sustained by this food,  
 he went on for forty days and forty  
 nights to Horeb, the mount of God. He 9  
 entered a cave and there he spent the  
 night.

Suddenly the word of the LORD  
 came to him: 'Why are you here,  
 Elijah?' 'Because of my great zeal for 10  
 the LORD the God of Hosts', he said.  
 'The people of Israel have forsaken  
 d Or thou that dost bring them back to their allegiance.

and the trench (water) probably symbolize the cosmic order. 38: *The fire of the LORD*: see vv. 23-24 n. 41-46: The narrative of the drought, dropped at v. 16, is concluded here. 46: The distance to Jezreel was over fifteen miles.

19.1-21: *Elijah at Mount Horeb*. 1-4: *Elijah's triumph* was only momentary; *Jezebel* still has the balance of power. Elijah flees, therefore, and then falls into a mood of depression. 5-8: *At his head . . . cake . . . and water*: on food and water in the Wilderness, see Exod. chs. 16-17.

thy covenant, torn down thy altars and put thy prophets to death with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.' The answer came: 'Go and stand on the mount before the LORD.' For the LORD was passing by: a great and strong wind came rending mountains and shattering rocks before him, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a low murmuring sound. When Elijah heard it, he muffled his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice: 'Why are you here, Elijah?' 'Because of my great zeal for the LORD the God of Hosts', he said. 'The people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, torn down thy altars and put thy prophets to death with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.'

The LORD said to him, 'Go back by way of the wilderness of Damascus, enter the city and anoint Hazael to be king of Aram; anoint Jehu son<sup>e</sup> of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be prophet in your place. Anyone who escapes the sword of Hazael Jehu will slay, and anyone who escapes the sword of Jehu Elisha will slay. But I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all who have not bent the knee to Baal, all whose lips have not kissed him.'

Elijah departed and found Elisha son of Shaphat ploughing; there were twelve pair of oxen ahead of him, and he himself was with the last of them. As Elijah passed, he threw his cloak over him, and Elisha, leaving his oxen, ran after Elijah and said, 'Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and then I will follow you.' 'Go back,' he replied; 'what have I done to prevent you?' He followed him no further but

went home, took his pair of oxen, slaughtered them and burnt the wooden gear to cook the flesh, which he gave to the people to eat. Then he followed Elijah and became his disciple.

**BEN-HADAD KING OF ARAM, HAVING** 20  
mustered all his forces, and taking with him thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, marched against Samaria to take it by siege or assault. He sent envoys into the city to Ahab king of Israel to say, 'Hear what Ben-hadad says: Your silver and gold are mine, your wives and your splendid sons are mine.'<sup>f</sup> The king of Israel answered, 'As you say, my lord king, I am yours and all that I have.' The envoys came again and said, 'Hear what Ben-hadad says: I demand that you hand over your silver and gold, your wives and your sons. This time tomorrow I will send my servants to search your house and your subjects' houses and to take possession of everything you prize, and remove it.' The king of Israel then summoned all the elders of the land and said, 'You see this? The man is plainly picking a quarrel; for I did not demur when he sent to claim my wives and my sons, my silver and gold.' All the elders and all the people answered, 'Do not listen to him; you must not consent.' So he gave this reply to Ben-hadad's envoys: 'Say to my lord the king: I accepted your majesty's demands on the first occasion; but what you now ask I cannot do.' The envoys went away and reported to their master, and Ben-hadad sent back word: 'The gods do the same to me and more, if there is enough dust in Samaria to provide a handful for each of my men.' The king of Israel made reply, 'Remind him of the saying: "The lame must not think himself a match for the nimble."' This

<sup>e</sup> Or grandson (cp. 2 Kgs. 9. 2).

<sup>f</sup> Or are your wives and your sons any good to me?

11-14: Compare with the natural phenomena of Exod. ch. 19. 12: The *low murmuring sound*: possibly the experience of prophetic inspiration. 15-18: A program and divine sanction are here provided for overthrowing the dynasty of Omri; see vv. 19-21; 2 Kgs. 8.7-15; 9.1-13.

20.1-43: Episodes of the Syrian wars. Vv. 1-34 present Ahab in quite a different light from the Elijah materials (see 17.1-2 Kgs.10.36 n.). Ahab is here a popular king supported by the prophets of the LORD. 1: Minor rulers of small cities or tribes could be called *kings*. 2-9: Ahab responds to *Ben-hadad's* demand with the formality proper to one king as vassal of another. Ben-hadad insists on more than formality, and Ahab is incited to serious resistance.

12 message reached Ben-hadad while he and the kings were drinking in their quarters.<sup>9</sup> At once he ordered his men to attack the city, and they did so.

13 Meanwhile a prophet had come to Ahab king of Israel and said to him, 'This is the word of the LORD: "You see this great rabble? Today I will give it into your hands and you shall know that I am the LORD."' "Whom will you use for that?" asked Ahab. 'The young men who serve the district officers', was the answer. 'Who will draw up the line of battle?' asked the king. 'You', said the prophet. Then Ahab called up these young men, two hundred and thirty-two all told, and behind them the people of Israel, seven thousand in all. They went out at midday, while Ben-hadad and his allies, those thirty-two kings, were drinking themselves drunk in their quarters.<sup>9</sup> The young men sallied out first, and word was sent to Ben-hadad that a party had come out of Samaria. 'If they have come out for peace,' he said, 'take them alive; if for battle, take them alive.'

19 So out of the city the young men went, and the army behind them; each struck down his man, and the Aramaeans fled. The Israelites pursued them, but Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on horseback with some of the cavalry. 21 Then the king of Israel advanced and captured the horses and chariots, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Aramaeans.

22 Then the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, 'Build up your forces; you know what you must do. At the turn of the year the king of Aram will renew the attack.' But the king of Aram's ministers gave him this advice: 'Their gods are gods of the hills; that is why they defeated us. Let us fight them in the plain; and then we shall have the upper hand. What you must do is to relieve the kings of their command and appoint other officers in their place. Raise another army like the one you have lost. Bring your

cavalry and chariots up to their former strength, and then let us fight them in the plain, and we shall have the upper hand.' He listened to their advice and acted on it.

At the turn of the year Ben-hadad mustered the Aramaeans and advanced to Aphek to attack Israel. The Israelites too were mustered and formed into companies, and then went out to meet them and encamped opposite them. They seemed no better than a pair of new-born kids, while the Aramaeans covered the country-side. The man of God came to the king of Israel and said, 'This is the word of the LORD: The Aramaeans may think that the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys; but I will give all this great rabble into your hands and you shall know that I am the LORD.'

They lay in camp opposite one another for seven days; on the seventh day battle was joined and the Israelites destroyed a hundred thousand of the Aramaean infantry in one day. The survivors fled to Aphek, into the citadel, and the city wall fell upon the twenty-seven thousand men who were left. Ben-hadad took refuge in the citadel, retreating into an inner room; and his attendants said to him, 'Listen: we have heard that the kings of Israel are men to be trusted. Let us therefore put sackcloth round our waists and wind rough cord round our heads and go out to the king of Israel. It may be that he will spare your life.' So they fastened on the sackcloth and the cord, and went to the king of Israel and said, 'Your servant Ben-hadad pleads for his life.' 'My royal cousin,' he said, 'is he still alive?' The men, taking the word for a favourable omen, caught it up at once and said, 'Your cousin, yes, Ben-hadad.' 'Go and fetch him', he said. Then Ben-hadad came out and Ahab invited him into his chariot. And Ben-hadad said to him, 'I will restore the cities which my father

<sup>g</sup> in their quarters: or at Succoth.

13-28: The prophets are portrayed as playing a large role in the struggle against Damascus. 24-25: The administration of the military force had to be made more professional; compare 4.7-19 n. 26: In the next year, the battle is around *Aphek*, east of the Sea of Galilee. 29-30: The numbers are exaggerated. 32: *My royal cousin*: not a family tie but their common royalty.



took from your father, and you may establish for yourself a trading quarter in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.' 'On these terms', said Ahab, 'I will let you go.' So he granted him a treaty and let him go.

35 One of a company of prophets, at the command of the LORD, ordered a certain man to strike him, but the man refused. 'Because you have not obeyed the LORD,' said the prophet, 'when you leave me, a lion will attack you.' When the man left, a lion did meet him and attacked him. The prophet fell in with another man and ordered him to strike him. He struck and wounded him. Then the prophet went off, with a bandage over his eyes, and thus disguised waited by the wayside for the king. As the king was passing, he called out to him, 'Sir, I went into the thick of the battle, and a soldier came over to me with a prisoner and said, "Take charge of this fellow. If by any chance he gets away, your life shall be forfeit, or you shall pay a talent of silver." As I was busy with one thing and another, sir, he disappeared.' The king of Israel said to him, 'You deserve to die.' And he said to the king of Israel,<sup>h</sup> 'You have passed sentence on yourself.' Then he tore the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel saw that he was one of the prophets. And he said to the king, 'This is the word of the LORD: "Because you let that man go when I had put him under a ban, your life shall be forfeit for his life, your people for his people."' The king of Israel went home sullen and angry and entered Samaria.

21 NABOTH OF JEZREEL HAD A VINEYARD near the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. One day Ahab made a proposal to Naboth: 'Your vineyard is close to my palace; let me have it for a garden; I will give you a better vineyard in exchange for it or, if you prefer, its value in silver.' But Naboth answered,

'The LORD forbid that I should let you have land which has always been in my family.' So Ahab went home sullen and angry because Naboth would not let him have his ancestral land. He lay down on his bed, covered his face and refused to eat. His wife Jezebel came in to him and said, 'What makes you so sullen and why do you refuse to eat?' He told her, 'I proposed to Naboth of Jezreel that he should let me have his vineyard at its value or, if he liked, in exchange for another; but he would not let me have the vineyard.' 'Are you or are you not king in Israel?' said Jezebel. 'Come, eat and take heart; I will make you a gift of the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel.' So she wrote a letter in Ahab's name, sealed it with his seal and sent it to the elders and notables of Naboth's city, who sat in council with him. She wrote: 'Proclaim a fast and give Naboth the seat of honour among the people. And see that two scoundrels are seated opposite him to charge him with cursing God and the king, then take him out and stone him to death.' So the elders and notables of Naboth's city, who sat with him in council, carried out the instructions Jezebel had sent them in her letter: they proclaimed a fast and gave Naboth the seat of honour, and these two scoundrels came in, sat opposite him and charged him publicly with cursing God and the king. Then they took him outside the city and stoned him, and sent word to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned to death.

As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, she said to Ahab, 'Get up and take possession of the vineyard which Naboth refused to sell you, for he is no longer alive; Naboth of Jezreel is dead.' When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went to the vineyard to

<sup>h</sup> You deserve . . . Israel: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

35-43: Some prophets took a more hostile view of Ahab. 40: The king must be induced to pass sentence on himself unwittingly; see 2 Sam.12.1-6. 41: *One of the prophets*: members of the prophetic groups had identifying marks on their foreheads.

21.1-29: *The crime of Naboth's vineyard*. This story of the abuse of royal authority is the occasion for Elijah's condemnation of Ahab's dynasty. 3: *Always been in my family*: by religious law Naboth could not permanently alienate his land; see Lev.25.10,13. 13: See Exod.22.28.

17 take possession. Then the word of the  
 18 LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Go  
 down at once to Ahab king of Israel,  
 who is in Samaria; you will find him  
 in Naboth's vineyard, where he has  
 19 gone to take possession. Say to him,  
 "This is the word of the LORD: Have  
 you killed your man, and taken his  
 land as well?" Say to him, "This is the  
 word of the LORD: Where dogs licked  
 the blood of Naboth, there dogs shall  
 20 lick your blood.'" Ahab said to Elijah,  
 'Have you found me, my enemy?' 'I  
 have found you', he said, 'because  
 you have sold yourself to do what is  
 21 wrong in the eyes of the LORD. I will  
 bring<sup>i</sup> disaster upon you; I will sweep  
 you away and destroy every mother's  
 son of the house of Ahab in Israel,  
 whether under protection of the family  
 22 or not. And I will deal with your house  
 as I did with the house of Jeroboam  
 son of Nebat and of Baasha son of  
 Ahijah, because you have provoked  
 23 my anger and led Israel into sin.' And  
 the LORD went on to say of Jezebel,  
 'Jezebel shall be eaten by dogs by the  
 24 rampart of Jezreel. Of the house of  
 Ahab, those who die in the city shall  
 be food for the dogs, and those who  
 die in the country shall be food for the  
 25 birds.' (Never was a man who sold  
 himself to do what is wrong in the  
 LORD's eyes as Ahab did, and all at the  
 26 prompting of Jezebel his wife. He  
 committed gross abominations in going  
 after false gods, doing everything that  
 the Amorites did, whom the LORD had  
 27 dispossessed in favour of Israel.) When  
 Ahab heard this, he rent his clothes,  
 put on sackcloth and fasted; he lay  
 down in his sackcloth and went about  
 28 muttering to himself. Then the word  
 of the LORD came to Elijah the Tish-  
 29 bite: 'Have you seen how Ahab has  
 humbled himself before me? Because  
 he has thus humbled himself, I will not  
 bring disaster upon his house in his own  
 lifetime, but in his son's.'

FOR THREE YEARS THERE WAS NO WAR 22  
 between the Aramaeans and the Israel-  
 ites, but in the third year Jehoshaphat 2'  
 king of Judah went down to visit the  
 king of Israel. The latter said to his 3  
 courtiers, 'You know that Ramoth-  
 gilead belongs to us, and yet we do  
 nothing to recover it from the king of  
 Aram.' He said to Jehoshaphat, 'Will 4  
 you join me in attacking Ramoth-  
 gilead?' Jehoshaphat said to the king of  
 Israel, 'What is mine is yours: myself,  
 my people, and my horses.' Then Jehosh- 5  
 aphat said to the king of Israel, 'First  
 let us seek counsel from the LORD.' The 6  
 king of Israel assembled the prophets,  
 some four hundred of them, and asked  
 them, 'Shall I attack Ramoth-gilead  
 or shall I refrain?' 'Attack,' they  
 answered; 'the Lord will deliver it into  
 your hands.' Jehoshaphat asked, 'Is 7  
 there no other prophet of the LORD  
 here through whom we may seek  
 guidance?' 'There is one more', the king 8  
 of Israel answered, 'through whom we  
 may seek guidance of the LORD, but I  
 hate the man, because he prophesies  
 no good for me; never anything but  
 evil. His name is Micaiah son of  
 Imlah.' Jehoshaphat exclaimed, 'My  
 lord king, let no such word pass your  
 lips!' So the king of Israel called one of 9  
 his eunuchs and told him to fetch  
 Micaiah son of Imlah with all speed.

The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat 10  
 king of Judah were seated on their  
 thrones, in shining armour, at the  
 entrance to the gate of Samaria, and all  
 the prophets were prophesying before  
 them. One of them, Zedekiah son of 11  
 Kenaanah, made himself horns of  
 iron and said, 'This is the word of the  
 LORD: "With horns like these you shall  
 gore the Aramaeans and make an end  
 of them."' In the same vein all the 12  
 prophets prophesied, 'Attack Ramoth-  
 gilead and win the day; the LORD will

<sup>i</sup> he said, . . . bring; or he said. 'Because you . . . LORD,  
 I am bringing . . .  
<sup>j</sup> Verses 2-35: cp. 2 Chr. 18, 2-34.

Two witnesses were required; see Deut.17.6-7. 27-29: The Deuteronomic historians offer Ahab's repentance as the reason the dynasty did not fall immediately.

22.1-40: Ahab's last campaign and Micaiah the prophet. The view of Ahab here, as in ch. 20, is laudatory. 1: Assyrian records establish that Ahab was in alliance with the Aramaeans against the Assyrians at the battle of Qarqar in 853 b.c.; later in 853 Israel and Damascus were again at war. 2: On Jehoshaphat, see v. 41-53 n. 3: Ramoth-gilead was the key to control of important trade routes in northern Transjordan. 6: The issue here is between true and false prophets of Yahweh (unlike 18.17-40, where it is between Yahweh and Baal). 11: Horns:

13 deliver it into your hands.' The messenger sent to fetch Micaiah told him that the prophets had with one voice given the king a favourable answer. 'And mind you agree with them', he added. 'As the LORD lives,' said Micaiah, 'I will say only what the LORD tells me to say.'

14 When Micaiah came into the king's presence, the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we attack Ramoth-gilead or shall we refrain?' 'Attack and win the day,' he said; 'the LORD will deliver it into your hands.' 'How often must I adjure you', said the king, 'to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' Then Micaiah said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd; and I heard the LORD say, "They have no master, let them go home in peace."'

15 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you that he never prophesies good for me, nothing but evil?' Micaiah went on, 'Listen now to the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD seated on his throne, with all the host of heaven in attendance on his right and on his left. The LORD said, "Who will entice Ahab to attack and fall on<sup>k</sup> Ramoth-gilead?" One said one thing and one said another; then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, "I will entice him." "How?" said the LORD. "I will go out", he said, "and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." "You shall entice him," said the LORD, "and you shall succeed; go and do it." You see, then, how the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, because he has decreed disaster for you.' Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah came up to Micaiah and struck him in the face: 'And how did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?' he said. Micaiah answered, 'That you will find out on the day when you run into an inner room to hide yourself.' Then the king of

Israel ordered Micaiah to be arrested and committed to the custody of Amon the governor of the city and Joash the king's son.<sup>l</sup> 'Lock this fellow up', he said, 'and give him prison diet of bread and water until I come home in safety.' Micaiah retorted, 'If you do return in safety, the LORD has not spoken by me.'

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah marched on Ramoth-gilead, and the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself to go into battle, but you shall wear your royal robes.' So he went into battle in disguise. Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots not to engage all and sundry but the king of Israel alone. When the captains saw Jehoshaphat, they thought he was the king of Israel and turned to attack him. But Jehoshaphat cried out and, when the captains saw that he was not the king of Israel, they broke off the attack on him. But one man drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel where the breast-plate joins the plates of the armour. So he said to his driver, 'Wheel round and take me out of the line; I am wounded.' When the day's fighting reached its height, the king was facing the Aramaeans propped up in his chariot, and the blood from his wound flowed down upon the floor of the chariot; and in the evening he died. At sunset the herald went through the ranks, crying, 'Every man to his city, every man to his country.' Thus died the king. He was brought to Samaria and they buried him there. The chariot was swilled out at the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up the blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, in fulfilment of the word the LORD had spoken.

Now the other acts and events of Ahab's reign, the ivory house and all the cities he built, are recorded in the

*k Or at. l son: or deputy.*

symbols of military power; see Deut.33.17; Zech.1.18-21. Compare Jeremiah's dramatic action in Jer. chs. 27-28. 17-23: Micaiah's speech is an effort to dissuade the king, not simply to prophesy his death. 19: Compare Isa. ch. 6. 20-23: This is one of several instances of the theme of divine enticement to sin or disaster; compare 2 Sam.24.1; 1 Chr.21.1. 38: If by the word of the LORD 21.21-24 is meant, the details are treated rather loosely. 39: As with Omri (16.8-34 n.), much of Ahab's activity is quickly passed over, in keeping with the compilers' bent.

40 annals of the kings of Israel. So Ahab rested with his forefathers and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah.

41<sup>m</sup> Jehoshaphat son of Asa had become king of Judah in the fourth year of 42 Ahab king of Israel. He was thirty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-five years; his mother was Azubah 43 daughter of Shilhi. He followed in the footsteps of Asa his father and did not swerve from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. But the hill-shrines were allowed to remain; the people continued to slaughter and 44 burn sacrifices there. Jehoshaphat remained at peace with the king of 45 Israel. The other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, his exploits and his wars, are recorded in the annals of the kings 46 of Judah. But he did away with such of the male prostitutes attached to the shrines as were still left over from the days of Asa his father.

47 There was no king in Edom, only<sup>n</sup>  
48 a viceroy of Jehoshaphat; he built

merchantmen to sail to Ophir for gold, but they never made the journey because they were wrecked at Ezion-geber. Ahaziah son of Ahab proposed 49 to Jehoshaphat that his own men should go to sea with his; but Jehoshaphat would not consent.

Jehoshaphat rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David his father, and was succeeded by his son Joram.

Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of 51 Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned over Israel for two years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of 52 the LORD, following in the footsteps of his father and mother and in those of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had led Israel into sin. He served Baal and 53 worshipped him, and provoked the anger of the LORD the God of Israel, as his father had done.

*m Verses 41-43: cp. 2 Chr. 20. 31-33.  
n only: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

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**22.41-53: Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel.** Jehoshaphat was the first new king of Judah after the dynasty of Omri came to power in Israel. He cooperated with Omri's and Ahab's master policy to control Syria-Palestine (see 16.23-34 n.), and accordingly married his son and heir to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2 Kgs. 8.16-18, 25-28) and cooperated with the military campaigns of Ahab (vv. 1-40) and his successors (2 Kgs. ch. 3). **43-46:** In the light of Jehoshaphat's open collaboration with wicked Ahab, it is surprising that he is approved. **50-53:** On *Ahaziah*, see 2 Kgs. ch. 1.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

2 Kings is not actually a second book but the continuation of 1 Kings. Here, the violations of the requirements of the LORD lead to the end which the Deuteronomic historian sees as inevitable: the fall of Israel (ch. 17) and of Judah (ch. 25). See the Introduction to 1 Kings.

## *Elisha and the end of the house of Ahab*

1 **A**FTER AHAB'S DEATH MOAB RE-  
belled against Israel.

2 Ahaziah fell through a latticed  
window in his roof-chamber in Samaria  
and injured himself; he sent messen-  
gers to inquire of Baal-zebul the god  
of Ekron whether he would recover  
3 from his illness. The angel of the LORD  
ordered Elijah the Tishbite to go  
and meet the messengers of the king  
of Samaria and say to them, 'Is there  
no god in Israel, that you go to in-  
quire of Baal-zebul the god of Ekron?  
4 This is the word of the LORD to your  
master: "You shall not rise from the  
bed where you are lying; you will  
die.'" Then Elijah departed. The mes-  
sengers went back to the king. When  
5 asked why they had returned, they  
6 answered that a man had come to  
meet them and had ordered them to  
return and say to the king who had  
sent them, 'This is the word of the  
LORD: "Is there no god in Israel, that  
you send to inquire of Baal-zebul  
the god of Ekron? In consequence,  
7 you shall not rise from the bed where  
you are lying; you will die.'" The king  
8 asked them what kind of man it was  
who had met them and said this. 'A  
hairy man', they answered, 'with a  
leather apron round his waist.' 'It is  
Elijah the Tishbite', said the king.

9 Then the king sent a captain to him  
with his company of fifty. He went up  
and found the prophet sitting on a

hill-top and said to him, 'Man of  
God, the king orders you to come  
down.' Elijah answered the captain, 10  
'If I am a man of God, may fire fall  
from heaven and consume you and  
your company!' Fire fell from heaven  
and consumed the officer and his fifty  
men. The king sent another captain 11  
of fifty with his company, and he went  
up and said to the prophet, 'Man  
of God, this is the king's command:  
'Come down at once.' Elijah answered, 12  
'If I am a man of God, may fire fall  
from heaven and consume you and  
your company!' God's fire fell from  
heaven and consumed the man and his  
company. The king sent the captain 13  
of a third company with his fifty men,  
and this third captain went up the  
hill to Elijah and knelt down before  
him and pleaded with him: 'Man of  
God, consider me and these fifty ser-  
vants of yours, and set some value  
on our lives. Fire fell from heaven 14  
and consumed the other two captains  
of fifty and their companies; but let  
my life have some value in your eyes.'  
The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, 15  
'Go down with him. Do not be afraid.'  
So he rose and went down with him  
to the king, and he said, 'This is the 16  
word of the LORD: "You have sent to  
inquire of Baal-zebul the god of  
Ekron, and therefore you shall not rise  
from the bed where you are lying;  
you will die.'" The word of the LORD 17  
which Elijah had spoken was fulfilled,  
and Ahaziah died; and because he had

1.1-10:36: The climax of the religious crisis. Further materials (chs. 1-2; 8-10) relevant to the religious crisis of the ninth century are arranged around a collection of miracle stories about Elisha (chs. 3-7). See 1 Kgs.17.1-2 Kgs.10.36 n.

1.1-18: Elijah condemns Ahaziah. Two prophetic legends (vv. 2-8,16-17 and vv. 9-15) are merged; compare vv. 9-15 with 1 Sam.19.18-24 and vv. 2-8, 16-17 with 2 Kgs.14.1-18. 1: This verse, here apparently misplaced by a copyist, is repeated in 3.5. 2: *Baal-zebul*, meaning "lord of flies," is a distorted, contemptuous alteration of Baal-zebul, "Baal the Prince." 9-14: *Elijah* has heavenly fire at his disposal; Samuel, in a similar situation, employed only prophetic ecstasy, 1 Sam.19.18-24. 17: The Deuteronomic emphasis on the fulfillment of the prophetic word continues; see also 1 Kgs.17.24. The chronological data of 1.17 and 3.1 are inconsistent.

no son, his brother Jehoram succeeded him in the second year of Joram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

18 The other events of Ahaziah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

2 The time came when the LORD would take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha left

2 Gilgal, and Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So they went down country to

3 Bethel. There a company of prophets came out to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD is going to take your lord and master from you today?' 'I do know,' he replied; 'say

4 no more.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here, Elisha; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he replied, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So they went to

5 Jericho. There a company of prophets came up to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD is going to take your lord and master from you today?' 'I do know,' he said; 'say no

6 more.' Then Elijah said to him, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' The other replied, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on.

7 Fifty of the prophets followed them, and stood watching from a distance as the two of them stopped by the Jordan.

8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to right and left, and they both crossed over on dry ground.

9 While they were crossing, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.' Elisha said, 'Let me inherit a double

10 share of your spirit.' 'You have asked a hard thing,' said Elijah. 'If you see me taken from you, may your wish be granted; if you do not, it shall not be

granted.' They went on, talking as they went, and suddenly there appeared chariots of fire and horses of fire, which separated them one from the other, and Elijah was carried up in the whirlwind to heaven. When Elisha saw it,

11 he cried, 'My father, my father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel!', and he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his mantle and rent it in two, and he picked up the cloak which had

12 fallen from Elijah, and came back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. There he too struck the water with Elijah's cloak and said, 'Where is the LORD the God of Elijah?' When he struck

13 the water, it was again divided to right and left, and he crossed over. The prophets from Jericho, who were watching, saw him and said, 'The spirit of Elijah has settled on Elisha.' So they came to meet him, and fell on their faces before him and said, 'Your ser-

14 vants have fifty stalwart men. Let them go and search for your master; perhaps the spirit of the LORD has lifted him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.' But he said, 'No, you must not send them.' They pressed him,

15 however, until he had not the heart to refuse. So they sent out the fifty men but, though they searched for three days, they did not find him. When they

16 came back to Elisha, who had remained at Jericho, he said to them, 'Did I not tell you not to go?'

The people of the city said to Elisha, 'You can see how pleasantly our city is situated, but the water is polluted and the country is troubled with mis-

17 carriages.' He said, 'Fetch me a new bowl and put some salt in it.' When they had fetched it, he went out to the spring and, throwing the salt into it, he said, 'This is the word of the LORD: "I purify this water. It shall cause no

18 more death or miscarriage.'" The water has remained pure till this day, in fulfilment of Elisha's word.

2.1-25: Elisha succeeds Elijah. Elijah is taken up by God in the same geographical locale in which Moses was buried (see Deut.34.5-6), and Elisha recrosses the Jordan in the same manner that Joshua led Israel across; compare vv. 13-15 with Josh.3.9-4.14. 2: This *Gilgal* was in Ephraim, different from the one near Jericho. 3: *A company of prophets*: see 1 Kgs. 18.19 n. 19-25: These two miracle stories are brief versions of the types that appear in chs. 4-7. These legends stress the power and holiness of the prophet, occasionally even (v. 24) at the cost of humaneness.

- 23 He went up from there to Bethel and, as he was on his way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, 'Get along with you, bald head, get along.' He turned round and looked at them and he cursed them in the name of the LORD; and two she-bears came out of a wood and mauled forty-two of them. From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and thence back to Samaria.
- 3 In the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Jehoram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned for twelve years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, though not as his father and his mother had done; he did remove the sacred pillar of the Baal which his father had made. Yet he persisted in the sins into which Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel, and did not give them up.
- 4 Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-breeder, and he used to supply the king of Israel regularly with the wool of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams. When Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. Then King Jehoram came from Samaria and mustered all Israel. He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: 'The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you join me in attacking Moab?' 'I will,' he replied; 'what is mine is yours: myself, my people, and my horses.' 'From which direction shall we attack?' Jehoram asked. 'Through the wilderness of Edom', replied the other. So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. When they had been seven days on the march, they had no water left for the army or the pack-animals. Then the king of Israel said, 'Alas, the LORD has brought together three kings, only to put us at the mercy of the Moabites.'
- 11 But Jehoshaphat said. 'Is there not a prophet of the LORD here through whom we may seek guidance of the LORD?' One of the officers of the king of Israel answered, 'Elisha son of Shaphat is here, the man who poured water on Elijah's hands.' 'The word of the LORD is with him', said Jehoshaphat. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to Elisha. Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'Why do you come to me? Go to the prophets of your father and your mother.' But the king of Israel said to him, 'No; the LORD has called us three kings out to put us at the mercy of the Moabites.' 'As the LORD of Hosts lives, whom I serve,' said Elisha, 'I would not spare a look or a glance for you, if it were not for my regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah. But now, fetch me a minstrel.' They fetched a minstrel, and while he was playing, the power of the LORD came upon Elisha and he said, 'This is the word of the LORD: "Pools will form all over this ravine." The LORD has decreed that you shall see neither wind nor rain, yet this ravine shall be filled with water for you and your army and your pack-animals to drink. But that is a mere trifle in the sight of the LORD; what he will also do, is to put Moab at your mercy. You will raze to the ground every fortified town and every noble city; you will cut down all their fine trees; you will stop up all the springs of water; and you will spoil every good piece of land by littering it with stones.' In the morning at the hour of the regular sacrifice they saw water flowing in from the direction of Edom, and the land was flooded.
- Meanwhile all Moab had heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, and every man, young and old, who could carry arms, was called out and stationed on the frontier. When they got up next morning and the sun had risen over the water, the

3.1-27: Israel's campaign against Mesha of Moab. In the alliance of Israel and Judah that was a part of Omri's policy (see 1 Kgs.16.23-34 n.), Judah dominated Edom (1 Kgs.22.47) while Israel dominated Moab (vv. 4-5), and the two cooperated in maintaining their dominance. 2: The sacred pillar Jehoram removed was presumably in Samaria. 5: A Moabite account of the successful revolt by Mesha, carved in stone, was discovered in 1868. 7: See similar words in 1 Kgs.22.4. 8: The strategy was to circle the south side of the Dead Sea. 15: The minstrel, . . . playing, suggests the use of music to induce the ecstatic state in which the power of the Lord was experienced. 22: The red seen by the Moabites arises from the red sandstone common in

23 Moabites saw the water in front of them red like blood and cried out, 'It is blood. The kings must have quarrelled and attacked one another. Now  
24 to the plunder, Moab!' When they came to the Israelite camp, the Israelites turned out and attacked them and drove the Moabites headlong in flight, and themselves entered the land of  
25 Moab, destroying as they went. They razed the cities to the ground; they littered every good piece of land with stones, each man casting one stone on to it; they stopped up every spring of water; they cut down all their fine trees; and they harried Moab until only in Kir-hareseth were any buildings left standing, and even this city the slingers surrounded and attacked.

26 When the king of Moab saw that the war had gone against him, he took seven hundred men with him, armed with swords, to cut a way through to the king of Aram, but they failed in  
27 the attempt. Then he took his eldest son, who would have succeeded him, and offered him as a whole-offering upon the city wall. The Israelites were filled with such consternation at this sight,<sup>a</sup> that they struck camp and returned to their own land.

4 The wife of a member of a company of prophets appealed to Elisha. 'My husband, your servant, has died', she said. 'You know that he was a man who feared the LORD; but a creditor has come to take away my two boys as his slaves.' Elisha said to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me what you have in the house.' 'Nothing at all', she  
3 answered, 'except a flask of oil.' 'Go out then', he said, 'and borrow vessels from all your neighbours; get as many  
4 empty ones as you can. Then, when you come home, shut yourself in with your sons, pour from the flask into all these vessels and, as they are filled,

set them aside.' She left him and shut  
5 herself in with her sons. As they brought her the vessels she filled them. When  
6 they were all full, she said to one of her sons, 'Bring me another.' 'There is not one left', he said. Then the flow of oil ceased. She came out and told the  
7 man of God, and he said, 'Go and sell the oil and redeem your boys who are being taken as pledges,<sup>b</sup> and you and they can live on what is left.'

It happened once that Elisha went  
8 over to Shunem. There was a great lady there who pressed him to accept her hospitality, and so, whenever he came that way, he stopped to take food there. One day she said to her husband,  
9 'I know that this man who comes here regularly is a holy man of God. Why not build up the wall to make  
10 him a little roof-chamber, and put in it a bed, a table, a seat, and a lamp, and let him stay there whenever he comes to us?' Once when he arrived  
11 and went to this roof-chamber and lay down to rest, he said to Gehazi, his  
12 servant, 'Call this Shunammite woman.' He called her and, when she appeared before the prophet, he said to his  
13 servant, 'Say to her, "You have taken all this trouble for us. What can I do for you? Shall I speak for you to the king or to the commander-in-chief?"' But she replied, 'I am content where I am, among my own people.' He said, 'Then  
14 what can be done for her?' Gehazi said, 'There is only this: she has no child and her husband is old.' 'Call  
15 her back', Elisha said. When she was called, she appeared in the doorway, and he said, 'In due season, this time  
16 next year, you shall have a son in your arms.' But she said, 'No, no, my lord, you are a man of God and would not  
17 lie to your servant.' Next year in due

<sup>a</sup> The Israelites . . . sight: or There was such great anger against the Israelites . . .

<sup>b</sup> redeem . . . pledges: or pay off your debt.

Edom. 25: Elisha's prophecy (v. 19) is nearly fulfilled here, but the Israelites do not gain final victory. 26: *The king of Aram* (Damascus) was always interested in aiding rebels against Israel. 27: The sacrifice of a prince was a last extreme step. On human sacrifice see Exod.22.29-30; Judg.11.30-39; 1 Kgs.16.34.

4.1-8.6: Various miracles of Elisha. This collection of stories (see also 2.19-25) magnifies the prophetic power of Elisha. Not until the Gospels does a comparable collection of miracle stories appear in biblical literature.

4.1-37: Elisha's prophetic powers. 1-7: This story is parallel to Elijah's first miracle during the drought (1 Kgs.17.8-16). 8-37: Elisha is related to the *great lady of Shunem* in several episodes (the concluding one is in 8.1-6). 8-17: The childless woman eventually bears a child;



season the woman conceived and bore a son, as Elisha had foretold.

18 When the child was old enough, he went out one day to the reapers where  
 19 his father was. All of a sudden he cried out to his father, 'O my head, my head!' His father told a servant to carry him  
 20 to his mother. He brought him to his mother; the boy sat on her lap till  
 21 midday, and then he died. She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door and went out.  
 22 She called her husband and said, 'Send me one of the servants and a she-ass, I must go to the man of God as fast as  
 23 I can, and come straight back.' 'Why go to him today?' he asked. 'It is neither new moon nor sabbath.'<sup>c</sup> 'Never mind that', she answered. When the ass was saddled, she said to her servant,  
 24 'Lead on and do not slacken pace unless I tell you.' So she set out and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. The man of God spied her in the distance and said to Gehazi, his servant, 'That is the Shunammite woman coming. Run and meet her, and ask, "Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the boy?"' She answered, 'All is well.'  
 27 When she reached the man of God on the hill, she clutched his feet. Gehazi came forward to push her away, but the man of God said, 'Let her alone; she is in great distress, and the LORD has concealed it from me and not told me.' 'My lord,' she said, 'did I ask for a son? Did I not beg you not to raise my hopes and then dash them?' Then he turned to Gehazi: 'Hitch up your cloak; take my staff with you and run. If you meet anyone on the way, do not stop to greet him; if anyone greets you, do not answer him. Lay my staff on the boy's face.'  
 30 But the mother cried, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you.' So he got up and followed her.<sup>d</sup>  
 31 Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound and no sign of

life. So he went back to meet Elisha and told him that the boy had not roused. When Elisha entered the house,  
 32 there was the boy dead, on the bed where he had been laid. He went into  
 33 the room, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the LORD. Then,  
 34 getting on to the bed, he lay upon the child, put his mouth to the child's mouth, his eyes to his eyes and his hands to his hands; and, as he pressed<sup>e</sup> upon him, the child's body grew warm. Elisha got up and walked once up and  
 35 down the room; then, getting on to the bed again, he pressed<sup>e</sup> upon him and breathed into him<sup>f</sup> seven times; and the boy opened his eyes. The prophet  
 36 summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call this Shunammite woman.' She answered his call and the prophet said, 'Take your child.' She came in and fell  
 37 prostrate before him. Then she took up her son and went out.

Elisha returned to Gilgal at a time  
 38 when there was a famine in the land. One day, when a group of prophets was sitting at his feet, he said to his servant, 'Set the big pot on the fire and prepare some broth for the company.'  
 39 One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine, and filled the skirt of his garment with bitter-apples.<sup>g</sup> He came back and sliced them into the pot, not knowing what they were. They poured it out for the  
 40 men to eat, but, when they tasted it, they cried out, 'Man of God, there is death in the pot', and they could not eat it. The prophet said, 'Fetch  
 41 some meal.' He threw it into the pot and said, 'Now pour out for the men to eat.' This time there was no harm in the pot.

A man came from Baal-shalisha,  
 42 bringing the man of God some of the new season's bread, twenty barley loaves, and fresh ripe ears of corn.<sup>h</sup> Elisha said, 'Give this to the people to  
 c Or full moon. d Or went with her.  
 e Prob. rdg.; Heb. crouched.  
 f and breathed into him: or and the boy sneezed.  
 g Or poisonous wild gourds.  
 h fresh . . . corn: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

compare Gen.18.1-15; 1 Sam. ch. 1. 18-37: The child miraculously born to the woman is later revived after an accidental death. The story parallels 1 Kgs.17.17-24.

4.38-44: Two food miracles. Elisha here does with food what he did with water in 2.19-22. The multiplying of the loaves of bread resembles the later miracles of Jesus (Mt.14.13-21; 15.32-38).

43 eat.' But his disciple protested, 'I cannot set this before a hundred men.' Still he repeated, 'Give it to the people to eat; for this is the word of the LORD: "They will eat and there will be some left over."' So he set it before them, and they ate and left some over, as the LORD had said.

5 NAAMAN, COMMANDER OF THE KING OF Aram's army, was a great man highly esteemed by his master, because by his means the LORD had given victory to Aram; but he was a leper.<sup>i</sup> On one of their raids the Aramaeans brought back as a captive from the land of Israel a little girl, who became a servant to Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master could meet the prophet who lives in Samaria, he would get rid of the disease for him.' Naaman went in and reported to his master word for word what the girl from the land of Israel had said. 'Very well, you may go,' said the king of Aram, 'and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. He delivered the letter to the king of Israel, which read thus. 'This letter is to inform you that I am sending to you my servant Naaman, and I beg you to rid him of his disease.' When the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, 'Am I a god<sup>j</sup> to kill and to make alive, that this fellow sends to me to cure a man of his disease? Surely you must see that he is picking a quarrel with me.' When Elisha, the man of God, heard how the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to him saying, 'Why did you rend your clothes? Let the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.' So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the entrance to Elisha's house. Elisha sent out a messenger to say to him, 'If you will go

and wash seven times in the Jordan, your flesh will be restored and you will be clean.' Naaman was furious and went away, saying, 'I thought he would at least have come out and stood, and invoked the LORD his God by name, waved his hand over the place and so rid me of the disease. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went off in a rage. But his servants came up to him and said, 'If the prophet had bidden you do something difficult, would you not do it? How much more then, if he tells you to wash and be clean?' So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored as a little child's, and he was clean.

Then he and his retinue went back to the man of God and stood before him; and he said, 'Now I know that there is no god anywhere on earth except in Israel. Will you accept a token of gratitude from your servant?' 'As the LORD lives, whom I serve,' said the prophet, 'I will accept nothing.' He was pressed to accept, but he refused. 'Then if you will not,' said Naaman, 'let me, sir, have two mules' load of earth. For I will no longer offer whole-offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. In this one matter only may the LORD pardon me: when my master goes to the temple of Rimmon to worship, leaning on my arm, and I worship in the temple of Rimmon when he worships there, for this let the LORD pardon me.' And Elisha bade him farewell.

Naaman had gone only a short distance on his way, when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, 'What? Has my master let this Aramaean, Naaman, go scot-free,

<sup>i</sup> he was a leper: or his skin was diseased.  
<sup>j</sup> Or Am I God.

5.1-27: Elisha cures Naaman's leprosy. The narrative speaks simply of *the king of Aram* and *the king of Israel* without names, a usual mark of legendary materials. 5: The money amounts to an enormous sum. 7: The narrative assumes that Damascus dominated *Israel*; this would be after the overthrow of the Omri dynasty; see 10.32-33; 13.3. 15-19: This viewpoint is on the verge of explicit monotheism; yet, *the LORD* must be worshiped on soil from his own land. *Rimmon*, a title of Hadad, the god of Damascus, was also known in Canaan (Zech.12.11).

and not accepted what he brought? As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.' So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he jumped down from his chariot to meet him and said, 'Is anything wrong?' 'Nothing,' said Gehazi, 'but my master sent me to say that two young men of the company of prophets from the hill-country of Ephraim have just arrived. Could you provide them with a talent of silver and two changes of clothing?' Naaman said, 'By all means; take two talents.' He pressed<sup>k</sup> him to take them; so he tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, and the two changes of clothing, and gave them to his two servants, and they walked ahead carrying them. When Gehazi came to the citadel<sup>l</sup> he took them from the two servants, deposited them in the house and dismissed the men; and they departed. When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha said, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' 'Nowhere', said Gehazi. But he said to him, 'Was I not with you in spirit when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it not true that you have the money? You may buy gardens with it,<sup>m n</sup> and olive-trees and vineyards, sheep and oxen, slaves and slave-girls; but the disease of Naaman will fasten on you and on your descendants for ever.' Gehazi left his presence, his skin diseased, white as snow.

6 A COMPANY OF PROPHETS SAID TO Elisha, 'You can see that this place where our community is living, under you as its head, is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan and each fetch a log, and make ourselves a place to live in.' The prophet agreed. Then one of them said, 'Please, sir, come with us.' 'I will', he said, and he went with them. When they reached the Jordan,

they began cutting down trees; but it chanced that, as one man was felling a trunk, the head of his axe flew off into the water. 'Oh, master!' he exclaimed, 'it was a borrowed one.' 'Where did it fall?' asked the man of God. When he was shown the place, he cut off a piece of wood and threw it in and made the iron float. Then he said, 'There you are, lift it out.' So he stretched out his hand and took it.

Once, when the king of Aram was making war on Israel, he held a conference with his staff at which he said, 'I mean to attack in such and such a direction.' But the man of God warned the king of Israel: 'Take care to avoid this place, for the Aramaeans are going down that way.' So the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had given him this warning; and the king took special precautions every time he found himself near that place. The king of Aram was greatly perturbed at this and, summoning his staff, he said to them, 'Tell me, one of you, who has betrayed us to the king of Israel?' 'None of us, my lord king,' said one of his staff; 'but Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedchamber.' 'Go and find out where he is,' said the king, 'and I will send and seize him.' He was told that the prophet was at Dothan, and he sent a strong force there with horses and chariots. They came by night and surrounded the city.

When the disciple of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, he saw a force with horses and chariots surrounding the city. 'Oh, master,' he said, 'which way are we to turn?' He answered, 'Do not be afraid, for those who are on our side are more than those on theirs.' Then

<sup>k</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. broke out on.*

<sup>l</sup> *Or hill.*

<sup>m</sup> *gardens with it: prob. rdg.; Heb. garments.*

<sup>n</sup> *Is it not . . . with it: or Was it time to get the money and to get garments?*

22: A *talent* (over sixty pounds) of silver (see p. 1035) was an extravagant amount for two needy young men. 24-27: The prophet's divine powers enforced justice among his adherents.

6.1-7: The floating axe head. This episode, showing only the prophet's miraculous power, is like those in 2.19-25 and ch. 4.

6.8-23: Elisha foils Aramaean raids. 8-10: As 8.7 shows, prophets could come and go between Israel and Damascus. The story does not mean, however, that Elisha conducted an efficient spy network. His knowledge was due to his supernatural powers. 17: *Horses and chariots of fire*

Elisha offered this prayer: 'O LORD, open his eyes and let him see.' And the LORD opened the young man's eyes, and he saw the hills covered with horses and chariots of fire all round  
 18 Elisha. As they came down towards him, Elisha prayed to the LORD: 'Strike this host, I pray thee, with blindness';  
 19 and he struck them blind as Elisha had asked. Then Elisha said to them, 'You are on the wrong road; this is not the city. Follow me and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he  
 20 led them to Samaria. As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open the eyes of these men and let them see again.' And he opened their eyes and they saw that they were inside  
 21 Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, 'My father, am I to destroy them?' 'No, you must not do that', he answered. 'You may destroy<sup>o</sup> those whom you have taken prisoner with your own sword and bow, but as for these men, give them food and water, and let them eat and drink, and then go back to their  
 23 master.' So he prepared a great feast for them, and they ate and drank and then went back to their master. And Aramaean raids on Israel ceased.  
 24 But later, Ben-hadad king of Aram called up his entire army and marched to the siege of Samaria. The city was near starvation, and they besieged it so closely that a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a kab of locust-beans for five  
 26 shekels. One day, as the king of Israel was walking along the city wall, a woman called to him, 'Help, my lord king!' He said, 'If the LORD will not bring you help, where can I find any for you? From threshing-floor or from  
 28 winepress? What is your trouble?' She replied, 'This woman said to me, "Give up your child for us to eat today, and we will eat mine tomorrow." So we  
 29 cooked my son and ate him; but when

I said to her the next day, "Now give up your child for us to eat", she had hidden him.' When he heard the  
 30 woman's story, the king rent his clothes. He was walking along the wall at the time, and when the people looked, they saw that he had sackcloth underneath, next to his skin. Then he  
 31 said, 'The LORD do the same to me and more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat stays on his shoulders today.'

Elisha was sitting at home, the elders  
 32 with him. The king had dispatched one of his retinue but, before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, 'See how this son of a murderer has sent to behead me! Take care, when the messenger comes, to shut the door and hold it fast against him. Can you not hear his master following on his heels?' While he was still speaking,  
 33 the king<sup>p</sup> arrived and said, 'Look at our plight! This is the LORD's doing. Why should I wait any longer for him to help us?' But Elisha answered, 'Hear  
 7 this word of the LORD: By this time tomorrow a shekel will buy a measure of flour or two measures of barley in the gateway of Samaria.' Then the  
 2 lieutenant on whose arm the king leaned said to the man of God, 'Even if the LORD were to open windows in the sky, such a thing could not happen!' He answered, 'You will see it with your own eyes, but none of it will you eat.'

At the city gate were four lepers.<sup>q</sup>  
 3 They said to one another, 'Why should we stay here and wait for death? If we  
 4 say we will go into the city, there is famine there, and we shall die; if we say we will stay here, we shall die just the same. Well then, let us go to the camp of the Aramaeans and give ourselves up: if they spare us, we shall live; if they put us to death, we can but die.' And so in the twilight they  
 5 set out for the Aramaean camp;

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Would you destroy.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. messenger.

<sup>q</sup> Or men suffering from skin-disease.

are often motifs in the Elijah-Elisha stories; see 2.11; 1.9-14 n. 22-23: The prisoners captured by supernatural means are evidence that divine power resists the *Aramaean raids*.

6.24-7.20: *Episodes in a siege of Samaria*. 24: *Ben-hadad*: there were several kings of Aram who bore this name. The name of the Israelite king is not given. Prophetic legends tend to lack precise historical references. 25: The prices were extremely high; see p. 1035. 30: The king's *sackcloth* showed how much he was concerned with the distress of his people. 31: Possibly Elisha was blamed because he was thought to embody anti-Aramaean policies that

6 but when they reached the outskirts, they found no one there; for the Lord had caused the Aramaean army to hear a sound like that of chariots and horses and of a great host, so that the word went round: 'The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and  
 7 the kings of Egypt to attack us.' They had fled at once in the twilight, abandoning their tents, their horses and asses, and leaving the camp as it stood, while  
 8 they fled for their lives. When the four men came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank and looted silver and gold and clothing, and made off and hid them. Then they came back, went into another tent and rifled it, and made off and hid  
 9 the loot. Then they said to one another, 'What we are doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait till morning, we shall be held to blame. We must go now and give the news to the king's household.' So they came and called  
 10 to the watch at the city gate and described how they had gone to the Aramaean camp and found not a single man in it and had heard no sound: nothing but horses and asses tethered,  
 11 and the tents left as they were. Then the watch called out and gave the news to  
 12 the king's household in the palace. The king rose in the night and said to his staff, 'I will tell you what the Aramaeans have done. They know that we are starving, and they have left their camp to go and hide in the open country, expecting us to come out, and then they can take us alive and enter  
 13 the city.' One of his staff said, 'Send out a party of men with some of the horses that are left; if they live, they will be as well off as all the other Israelites who are still left; if they die,  
 14 they will be no worse off than all those who have already perished. Let them go and see what has happened.' So they picked two mounted men, and the king dispatched them in the track of the Aramaean army with the order to  
 go and find out what had happened. They followed as far as the Jordan and found the whole road littered with clothing and equipment which the Aramaeans had flung aside in their haste. The messengers returned and reported this to the king. Then the  
 16 people went out and plundered the Aramaean camp, and a measure of flour was sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, so that the word of the LORD came true. Now the king had appointed the  
 17 lieutenant on whose arm he leaned to take charge of the gate, and the people trampled him to death there, just as the man of God had foretold when the king visited him. For when the man of God  
 18 said to the king, 'By this time tomorrow a shekel will buy two measures of barley or one measure of flour in the gateway of Samaria', the lieutenant had answered, 'Even if the LORD were to open windows in the sky, such a thing could not happen!' And the man of God had said, 'You will see it with your own eyes, but none of it will you eat.' And this is  
 20 just what happened to him: the people trampled him to death at the gate.

Elisha said to the woman whose  
 8 son he had restored to life, 'Go away at once with your household and find lodging where you can, for the LORD has decreed a seven years' famine and it has already come upon the land.' The woman acted at once on the word  
 2 of the man of God and went away with her household; and she stayed in the Philistine country for seven years. When she came back at the end of the  
 3 seven years, she sought an audience of the king to appeal for the return of her house and land. Now the king was  
 4 questioning Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, about all the great things Elisha had done; and, as he was  
 5 describing to the king how he had brought the dead to life, the selfsame woman began appealing to the king for her house and her land. 'My lord  
 r if they live . . . if they die: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

had reduced Samaria to dire straits. 7.17: Elisha's prophecies always come true, even if somewhat grimly.

8.1-6: The Shunammite woman as witness. This episode resumes the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman from 4.37. 4: As yet *Gehazi* does not seem to have suffered the leprosy of 5.24-27.

king,' said Gehazi, 'this is the very woman, and this is her son whom Elisha brought to life.' The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he entrusted the case to a eunuch and ordered him to restore all her property to her, with all the revenues from her land from the time she left the country till that day.

7 Elisha came to Damascus, at a time when Ben-hadad king of Aram was ill; and when he was told that the man of 8 God had arrived, he bade Hazael take a gift with him and go to the man of God and inquire of the LORD through him whether he would recover from 9 his illness. Hazael went, taking with him as a gift all kinds of wares of Damascus, forty camel-loads. When he came into the prophet's presence, he said, 'Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you to ask whether 10 he will recover from his illness.' 'Go and tell him that he will recover,' he answered; 'but the LORD has revealed 11 to me that in fact he will die.' The man of God stood there with set face like a man stunned, until he could bear it no 12 longer; then he wept. 'Why do you weep, my lord?' said Hazael. He answered, 'Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites: you will set their fortresses on fire and put their young men to the sword; you will dash their children to the ground and you will rip open their pregnant women.' 13 But Hazael said, 'But I am a dog, a mere nobody; how can I do this great thing?' Elisha answered, 'The LORD has revealed to me that you will be 14 king of Aram.' Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master, who asked him what Elisha had said. 'He told me that you would recover', he replied. 15 But the next day he took a blanket and, after dipping it in water, laid it over the king's face, and he died; and Hazael succeeded him.

In the fifth year of Jehoram son of 16 Ahab king of Israel, Joram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king. He was thirty-two years old 17<sup>b</sup> when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. He followed the practices of the kings 18 of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he had married Ahab's daughter; and he did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD. But for his 19 servant David's sake the LORD was unwilling to destroy Judah, since he had promised to give him and his sons a flame, to burn for all time.

During his reign Edom revolted 20 against Judah and set up its own king. Joram crossed over to Zair with all 21 his chariots. He and his chariot-commanders set out by night, but they were surrounded by the Edomites and defeated,<sup>c</sup> whereupon the people fled to their tents. So Edom has remained 22 independent of Judah to this day; Libnah also revolted at the same time. The other acts and events of Joram's 23 reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. So Joram rested with 24 his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David, and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

In the twelfth year of Jehoram son 25<sup>u</sup> of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah son of Joram king of Judah became king. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old 26 when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year; his mother was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri king of Israel. He followed the 27 practices of the house of Ahab and did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD like the house of Ahab, for he was connected with that house by marriage. He allied himself with 28 Jehoram son of Ahab to fight against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-

<sup>s</sup> Verses 17-22: cp. 2 Chr. 21, 5-10.

<sup>t</sup> and defeated: prob. rdg.; Heb. and he defeated Edom.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 25-29: cp. 2 Chr. 22, 1-6.

**8.7-15: Elisha and revolution in Damascus.** The Elisha stories now return to the larger account of the overthrow of the dynasty of Omri. The second of the three commissions given to Elijah at Mount Horeb (1 Kgs. 19.15-16) is here carried out. 10: The deception of Ben-hadad is God's will. 12: Elisha foresees the events of 10.32-33 and 13.3.

**8.16-29: The last years of the Omri dynasty.** *Joram of Judah* followed the policy of collaboration with the Northern Kingdom and the religious tolerance involved in that policy (v. 18). The power of the two kingdoms was declining; Israel had lost control of Moab (3.27), and now Judah loses control of Edom (vv. 20-22). 26: *Athaliah*, daughter of Jezebel, was to prove much more powerful than her son *Ahaziah*; see ch. 11.

gilead; but King Jehoram was wounded  
 29 by the Aramaeans, and returned to  
 Jezreel to recover from the wounds  
 which were inflicted on him at Ramoth  
 in battle with Hazael king of Aram;  
 and because of his illness Ahaziah son  
 of Joram king of Judah went down to  
 Jezreel to visit him.

9 ELISHA THE PROPHET SUMMONED ONE  
 of the company of prophets and said  
 to him, 'Hitch up your cloak, take this  
 flask of oil with you and go to Ramoth-  
 2 gilead. When you arrive, you will find  
 Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nim-  
 shi; go in and call him aside from his  
 fellow-officers, and lead him through  
 3 to an inner room. Then take the flask  
 and pour the oil on his head and say,  
 "This is the word of the LORD: I  
 anoint you king over Israel"; then open  
 4 the door and flee for your life.' So the  
 young prophet went to Ramoth-gilead.  
 5 When he arrived, he found the officers  
 sitting together and said, 'Sir, I have  
 a word for you.' 'For which of us?'  
 asked Jehu. 'For you, sir', he said.  
 6 He rose and went into the house, and  
 the prophet poured the oil on his head,  
 saying, 'This is the word of the LORD  
 the God of Israel: "I anoint you king  
 over Israel, the people of the LORD."  
 7 You shall strike down the house of  
 Ahab your master, and I will take ven-  
 geance on Jezebel for the blood of my  
 servants the prophets and for the blood  
 8 of all the LORD's servants. All the house  
 of Ahab shall perish and I will destroy  
 every mother's son of his house in  
 Israel, whether under the protection of  
 9 the family or not. And I will make the  
 house of Ahab like the house of Jerob-  
 oam son of Nebat and the house of  
 10 Baasha son of Ahijah. Jezebel shall be  
 devoured by dogs in the plot of  
 ground at Jezreel and no one will  
 bury her.'" Then he opened the door  
 11 and fled. When Jehu rejoined the  
 king's officers, they said to him, 'Is all

well? What did this crazy fellow want  
 with you?' 'You know him and the way  
 his thoughts run', he said. 'Nonsense!'  
 12 they replied; 'tell us what happened.'  
 'I will tell you exactly what he said:  
 "This is the word of the LORD: I  
 anoint you king over Israel.'" They  
 13 snatched up their cloaks and spread  
 them under him on the stones<sup>v</sup> of the  
 steps, and sounded the trumpet and  
 shouted, 'Jehu is king.'

Then Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son 14  
 of Nimshi, laid his plans against Je-  
 horam, while Jehoram and the Israelites  
 were defending Ramoth-gilead against  
 Hazael king of Aram. King Jehoram  
 had returned to Jezreel to recover from 15  
 the wounds inflicted on him by the  
 Aramaeans when he fought against  
 Hazael king of Aram. Jehu said to  
 them, 'If you are on my side, see that  
 no one escapes from the city to tell the  
 news in Jezreel.' He mounted his  
 chariot and drove to Jezreel, for Je- 16  
 horam was laid up there, and Ahaziah  
 king of Judah had gone down to visit  
 him.

The watchman standing on the 17  
 watch-tower in Jezreel saw Jehu and his  
 troop approaching and called out, 'I  
 see a troop of men.' Then Jehoram  
 said, 'Fetch a horseman and send to  
 find out if they come peaceably.' The 18  
 horseman went to meet him and said,  
 'The king asks, "Is it peace?"' Jehu  
 said, 'Peace? What is peace to you?  
 Fall in behind me.' Thereupon the  
 watchman reported, 'The messenger  
 has met them but he is not coming  
 back.' A second horseman was sent; 19  
 when he met them, he also said, 'The  
 king asks, "Is it peace?"' 'Peace?' said  
 Jehu. 'What is peace to you? Fall in  
 behind me.' Then the watchman re- 20  
 ported, 'He has met them but he is not  
 coming back. The driving is like the  
 driving of Jehu son<sup>w</sup> of Nimshi, for he

<sup>v</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
<sup>w</sup> Or grandson (cp. verse 2).

9.1-10.36: Jehu overthrows the dynasty of Omri. The third and last commission to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kgs.19.15-18) is carried out here. This fine piece of historical writing is without legendary coloring.

9.1-13: The anointing of Jehu. 1: Elisha must work in secret; therefore, he sends one of his disciples to anoint Jehu. 6-7: On the LORD's sanction of Jehu's dynasty, see 1 Kgs.11.29-39 n.

9.14-37: Jehu kills the reigning kings. 15: Jezreel served as a second capital of the Northern Kingdom, nearer the war front than Samaria. 17: Jezreel was about forty miles from Ramoth-gilead. It overlooked the valley going down to the Jordan River. 18-22: Jehoram is concerned

21 drives furiously.' 'Harness my chariot', said Jehoram. They harnessed it, and Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out each in his own chariot to meet Jehu, and met him  
 22 by the plot of Naboth of Jezreel. When Jehoram saw Jehu, he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' But he replied, 'Do you call it  
 23 peace while your mother Jezebel keeps up her obscene idol-worship and monstrous sorceries?' Jehoram wheeled  
 24 about and fled, crying out to Ahaziah, 'Treachery, Ahaziah!' Jehu seized his bow and shot Jehoram between the  
 25 shoulders; the arrow pierced his heart and he sank down in his chariot. Then Jehu said to Bidkar, his lieutenant,  
 26 'Pick him up and throw him into the plot of land belonging to Naboth of Jezreel; remember how, when you and  
 27 I were riding side by side behind Ahab his father, the LORD pronounced this sentence against him: "It is the very  
 28 word of the LORD: as surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, I will requite you in  
 29 this plot." So pick him up and throw him into it and thus fulfil the word of the LORD.' When Ahaziah king of  
 30 Judah saw this, he fled by the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu went after him and said, 'Make sure of him too.' They  
 31 shot him down in his chariot on the road up the valley<sup>x</sup> near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there.  
 32 His servants conveyed his body to Jerusalem and buried him in his tomb with his forefathers in the city of David.

In the eleventh year of Jehoram son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah.

Jehu came to Jezreel. Now Jezebel had heard what had happened; she had painted her eyes and dressed her hair, and she stood looking down from a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she said, 'Is it peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?' He looked

up at the window and said, 'Who is on my side, who?' Two or three eunuchs looked out, and he said, 'Throw  
 33 her down.' They threw her down, and some of her blood splashed on to the wall and the horses, which trampled  
 34 her underfoot. Then he went in and ate and drank. 'See to this accursed woman', he said, 'and bury her; for she  
 35 is a king's daughter.' But when they went to bury her they found nothing of her but the skull, the feet, and the  
 36 palms of the hands; and they went back and told him. Jehu said, 'It is the word of the LORD which his servant Elijah  
 37 the Tishbite spoke, when he said, "In the plot of ground at Jezreel the dogs shall devour the flesh of Jezebel, and  
 Jezebel's corpse shall lie like dung upon the ground in the plot at Jezreel so that no one will be able to say: This is  
 Jezebel."'

Now seventy sons of Ahab were left  
 10 in Samaria. Jehu therefore sent a letter to Samaria, to the elders, the rulers of the city, and to the tutors of Ahab's  
 children, in which he wrote: 'Now, when  
 2 this letter reaches you, since you have in your care your master's family as well as his chariots and horses, fortified  
 3 cities and weapons, choose the best and the most suitable of your master's family, set him on his father's throne,  
 4 and fight for your master's house.' They were panic-stricken and said, 'The  
 5 two kings could not stand against him; what hope is there that we can?' Therefore the comptroller of the  
 6 household and the governor of the city, with the elders and the tutors, sent this message to Jehu: 'We are  
 your servants. Whatever you tell us we will do; but we will not make anyone king. Do as you think fit.' Then he  
 wrote them a second letter: 'If you are on my side and will obey my orders, then bring the heads of your master's

<sup>x</sup> the valley: *prob. rdg.; Heb. to Gur.*

here about news from the war front. 25-26: The prophecy of 1 Kgs.21.19-29 is fulfilled. 27: Ahaziah, though king of Judah, was both grandson of Jezebel and ally of Jehoram. 30-37: Jezebel was now an elderly queen mother. 31: On Zimri, see 1 Kgs.16.8-12. 36-37: See 1 Kgs.21.23.

10.1-14: The execution of the royal families. The whole dynasty of Israel and its Judean allies had to be removed or else the religious issue would not be settled. 1: The seventy sons of Ahab: leading members of the royal family, not literally sons of Ahab; see similar groups



- sons to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow.' Now the royal princes, seventy in all, were with the nobles of the city who were bringing them up.
- 7 When the letter reached them, they took the royal princes and killed all seventy; they put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel.
- 8 When the messenger came to him and reported that they had brought the heads of the royal princes, he ordered them to be put in two heaps and left at the entrance of the city gate till morning.
- 9 In the morning he went out, stood there and said to all the people, 'You are fair judges. If I conspired against my master and killed him, who put all these to death? Be sure then that every word which the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab shall be fulfilled, and that the LORD has now done what he spoke through his servant Elijah.' So Jehu put to death all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, as well as all his nobles, his close friends, and his priests, until he had left not one survivor.
- 12 Then he set out for Samaria, and on the way there, when he had reached a shepherds' shelter,<sup>y</sup> he came upon the kinsmen of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, 'Who are you?' 'We are kinsmen of Ahaziah,' they replied; 'and we have come down to greet the families of the king and of the queen mother.'
- 14 'Take them alive', he said. So they took them alive; then they slew them and flung them into the pit that was there, forty-two of them; they did not leave a single survivor.
- 15 When he had left that place, he found Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and said, 'Are you with me heart and soul, as I am with you?' 'I am', said Jehonadab. 'Then if you are,' said Jehu, 'give me your hand.' He gave him his hand and Jehu helped him up into his chariot.
- 16 'Come with me,' he said, 'and you will see my zeal for the LORD.' So he took
- him with him in his chariot. When he came to Samaria, he put to death all of Ahab's house who were left there and so blotted it out, in fulfilment of the word which the LORD had spoken to Elijah. Then Jehu called all the people together and said to them, 'Ahab served the Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his ministers and priests; not one must be missing. For I am holding a great sacrifice to Baal, and no one who is missing from it shall live.' In this way Jehu outwitted the ministers of Baal in order to destroy them. So Jehu said, 'Let a sacred ceremony for Baal be held.' They did so, and Jehu himself sent word throughout Israel, and all the ministers of Baal came; there was not a man left who did not come. They went into the temple of Baal and it was filled from end to end. Then he said to the person who had charge of the wardrobe, 'Bring out robes for all the ministers of Baal'; and he brought them out. Then Jehu and Jehonadab son of Rechab went into the temple of Baal and said to the ministers of Baal, 'Look carefully and make sure that there are no servants of the LORD here with you, but only the ministers of Baal.' Then they went in to offer sacrifices and whole-offerings. Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside and said to them, 'I am putting these men in your charge, and any man who lets one escape shall answer for it with his life.' When he had finished offering the whole-offering, Jehu ordered the guards and the lieutenants to go and cut them all down, and let not one of them escape; so they slew them without quarter. The escort and the lieutenants then rushed into the keep of the temple of Baal and brought out the sacred pole<sup>z</sup> from the temple

<sup>y</sup> a shepherds' shelter; or Beth-eker of the Shepherds.  
<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. sacred pillars.

in Judg. 8.30; 9.5; 12.13; Num.11.16-17,24-30. 9: Jehu wished it to appear that not he alone was guilty of shedding royal blood.

10.15-36: Jehu's religious purge. Overt, and official, Baalism was destroyed in Israel. 15: Jehonadab son of Rechab: the leader of a religious order bound by vows of abstinence from certain features of settled life in Canaan; see Jer.35.1-11. 21: The temple of Baal was built by Ahab (1 Kgs.16.32). 22: The robes were ritual garments kept in the holy precincts.

27 of Baal and burnt it; and they pulled down the sacred pillar of the Baal and the temple itself and made a privy of it—as it is today. Thus Jehu stamped out the worship of Baal in Israel. He did not however abandon the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, but he maintained the worship of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan.

30 Then the LORD said to Jehu, 'You have done well what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all that it was in my mind to do. Therefore your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.' But Jehu was not careful to follow the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not abandon the sins of Jeroboam who led Israel into sin.

32 In those days the LORD began to work havoc on Israel, and Hazael struck at them in every corner of their territory eastwards from the Jordan: all the land of Gilead, Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh, from Aroer which is by the gorge of the Arnon, including Gilead and Bashan.

34 The other events of Jehu's reign, his achievements and his exploits, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Jehu rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria; and he was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz. Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years.

#### *Kings of Israel and Judah*

11<sup>a</sup> AS SOON AS ATHALIAH MOTHER OF Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she set out to destroy all the royal line.

But Jehosheba daughter of King 2 Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Ahaziah's son Joash and stole him away from among the princes who were being murdered; she put<sup>b</sup> him and his nurse in a bedchamber where he was hidden from Athaliah and was not put to death. He remained concealed with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah ruled the country. In the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the captains of units of a hundred, both of the Carites and of the guards, and he brought them into the house of the LORD; he made an agreement with them and put them on their oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son, and gave them the following orders: 'One third of you who are on duty on the sabbath are to be on guard in the palace; the rest of you are to be on special duty in the house of the LORD, one third at the Sur Gate and the other third at the gate with<sup>c</sup> the outrunners. Your two companies who are off duty on the sabbath shall be on duty for the king in the house of the LORD. So you shall be on guard round the king, each man with his arms at the ready, and anyone who comes near the ranks is to be put to death; you must be with the king wherever he goes.'

The captains carried out the orders of Jehoiada the priest to the letter. Each took his men, both those who came on duty on the sabbath and those who came off, and came to Jehoiada. The priest handed out to the captains King David's spears and shields, which were in the house of the LORD. Then the guards took up their stations, each

<sup>a</sup> Verses 1–20; cp. 2 Chr. 22,10–23, 21.  
<sup>b</sup> she put: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Chr. 22, 11; Heb. om.  
<sup>c</sup> Or behind.

27: *The sacred pillar of the Baal*: 3.2 reports it as removed by Jehoram; apparently it had been re-erected. 30: See 1 Kgs. 11.29–39 n. 32–33: Jehu's revolution meant the complete breakdown of Omri's policy and the dissolution of alliances with Phoenicia and Judah (see 1 Kgs. 16.23–34 n.). Isolated thereby, Israel had no hope of holding Transjordan against Damascus.

11.1–17.41: *The second period of the two kingdoms*. From the viewpoint of the compilers, the period of Elijah and Elisha had settled the question that Yahweh, not the Baal, was the god of Israel. The question that remained was the persistence of the cult of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan; see 1 Kgs. 12.25–33; 2 Kgs. 10.31.

11.1–20: *Athaliah overthrown in Jerusalem*. The revolution in Israel against the house of Omri was not immediately effective in the kingdom of Judah. 1: After *Ahaziah* was killed in the north (9.27) his mother *Athaliah*, daughter of Jezebel, determined to hold power in Jerusalem. No other queen is known to have ruled without a king in the two Hebrew kingdoms. 2: *Jehosheba* was wife of the priest Jehoiada according to 2 Chr. 22.11; thus, she had access to the Temple chambers. 4: *Carites*: foreign mercenaries; see 2 Sam. 8.18 n. 6: The location of

man carrying his arms at the ready, from corner to corner of the house to north and south,<sup>d</sup> surrounding the king. Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on his head, handed him the warrant and anointed him king. The people clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king.'

13 When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she came into the house of the LORD where the people were and found the king standing, as was the custom, on the dais,<sup>e</sup> amidst outbursts of song and fanfares of trumpets in his honour, and all the populace rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes and cried, 'Treason! Treason!' Jehoiada the priest gave orders to the captains in command of the troops: 'Bring her outside the precincts and put to the sword anyone in attendance on her'; for the priest said, 'She shall not be put to death in the house of the LORD.' So they laid hands on her and took her out by the entry for horses to the royal palace, and there she was put to death.

17 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they should be the LORD's people, and also between the king and the people. And all the people went into the temple of Baal and pulled it down; they smashed to pieces its altars and images, and they slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. Then Jehoiada set a watch over the house of the LORD; he took the captains of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and all the people, and they escorted the king from the house of the LORD through the Gate of the Guards to the royal palace, and seated him on the royal throne. The whole people rejoiced and the city was tranquil.

That is how Athaliah was put to the sword in the royal palace.

Joash was seven years old when he became king. In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty years; his mother was Zibiah of Beersheba. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, as Jehoiada the priest had taught him. The hill-shrines, however, were allowed to remain; the people still continued to sacrifice and make smoke-offerings there.

Then Joash ordered the priests to take all the silver brought as holy-gifts into the house of the LORD, the silver for which each man was assessed,<sup>f</sup> the silver for the persons assessed under his name, and any silver which any man brought voluntarily to the house of the LORD. He ordered the priests, also, each to make a contribution from his own funds, and to repair the house wherever it was found necessary. But in the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash the priests had still not carried out the repairs to the house. King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, 'Why are you not repairing the house? Henceforth you need not contribute from your own funds for the repair of the house.' So the priests agreed neither to receive money from the people nor to undertake the repairs of the house. Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in the lid and put it beside the altar on the right side going into the house of the LORD, and the priests on duty at the entrance put in it all the money brought into the house of the LORD. And whenever they saw that the chest was well filled, the king's secretary and

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* of the altar and the house.

<sup>e</sup> *Or* by the pillar.

<sup>f</sup> *Jl. 31—12. 15; cp. 2 Chr. 24. 1—14.*

<sup>g</sup> *the silver . . . assessed: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

these gates is uncertain. 12: The warrant was probably a document giving the king's royal titles and divine sanction, a usage derived from Egypt. 14: *The populace* is literally "the people of the land," a phrase designating the landed citizens of the kingdom, especially outside Jerusalem. They were to play an increasingly important role in the late history of Judah; see vv. 18–20; 15.5 n.; 16.15; 21.24; 23.30,35; 25.3,19. 17: The covenant established the same religious policy for Judah as Jehu had established in the north.

12.1–21: **Joash of Judah. 1:** *Forty years:* about 835–796 B.C. 3: Just as the failure to remove Jeroboam's golden calves was the great fault of northern kings, so the failure to remove the hill-shrines was the fault of the kings of Judah, until Hezekiah (18.4) and Josiah (23.4–20). 4–16: This section comes from a source concerned with the history of the Temple; see 22.3–7.

the high priest came and melted down the silver found in the house of the LORD and weighed it. When it had been checked, they gave the silver to the foremen over the work in the house of the LORD and they paid the carpenters and the builders working on the temple and the masons and the stone-cutters; they used it also to buy timber and hewn stone for the repairs and for all other expenses connected with them. They did not use the silver brought into the house of the LORD to make silver cups, snuffers, tossing-bowls, trumpets, or any gold or silver vessels; but they paid it to the workmen and used it for the repairs. No account was demanded from the foremen to whom the money was given for the payment of the workmen, for they were acting on trust. Money from guilt-offerings and sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD: it belonged to the priests.

Then Hazael king of Aram came up and attacked Gath and took it; and he moved on against Jerusalem. But Joash king of Judah took all the holy-gifts that Jehoshaphat, Joram, and Ahaziah his forefathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own holy-gifts, and all the gold that was found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and in the royal palace, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram; and he withdrew from Jerusalem.

The other acts and events of the reign of Joash are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. His servants revolted against him and struck him down in the house of Millo on the descent to Silla. It was his servants Jozachar son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer who struck the fatal blow; and he was buried with his forefathers in the city of David. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah.

In the twenty-third year of Joash son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria and he reigned seventeen years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and continued the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, and did not give them up. So the LORD was roused to anger against Israel and he made them subject for some years to Hazael king of Aram and Ben-hadad son of Hazael. Then Jehoahaz sought to placate the LORD, and the LORD heard his prayer, for he saw how the king of Aram oppressed Israel. The LORD appointed a deliverer for Israel, who rescued them from the power of Aram, and the Israelites settled down again in their own homes. But they did not give up the sinful practices of the house of Jeroboam who led Israel into sin, but continued in them; the goddess Asherah<sup>i</sup> remained in Samaria. Hazael had left Jehoahaz no armed force except fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand infantry; all the rest the king of Aram had destroyed and made like dust under foot.

The other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, and all his achievements and his exploits, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Jehoahaz rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria; and he was succeeded by his son Jehoash.

In the thirty-ninth year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned sixteen years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up any of the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, but continued in them. The other events of the reign of Jehoash, all his achievements, his

<sup>h</sup> Verses 20, 21: cp. 2 Chr. 24, 25-27.

<sup>i</sup> the goddess Asherah: or the sacred pole.

**17-18:** Judah also suffered from the breakdown of the alliance by Omri (1 Kgs. 16.23-34 n.). It was oppressed by Hazael, as was the kingdom of Israel (10.32-33 n.). **20-21:** The issues behind Joash's assassination are unknown. The crown prince was already of age (14.2).

**13.1-25: Jehoahaz and Jehoash of Israel.** These two reigns covered (roughly) 814-782 B.C. Israel was still suffering under the power of Damascus, but under Jehoash a recovery began, largely because Damascus was severely pressed by renewed Assyrian power. **4-5:** The shift in power is attributed to Jehoahaz's contriteness. The *deliverer* is probably Adad-nirari III of Assyria (811-783 B.C.), who decisively defeated Damascus in 802 B.C. **6:** The goddess Asherah was not purged, even from the public cult, to the same degree Baal had been. **12:** On Jehoash's

exploits and his war with Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Jehoash rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne.

Elisha fell ill and lay on his deathbed, and Jehoash king of Israel went down to him and wept over him and said, 'My father! My father, the chariots and the horsemen of Israel!' 'Take bow and arrows', said Elisha, and he took bow and arrows. 'Put your hand to the bow', said the prophet. He did so, and Elisha laid his hands on those of the king. Then he said, 'Open the window toward the east'; he opened it and Elisha told him to shoot, and he shot. Then the prophet said, 'An arrow for the LORD's victory, an arrow for victory over Aram! You will defeat Aram utterly at Aphek'; and he added, 'Now take up your arrows.' When the king had taken them, Elisha said, 'Strike the ground with them.' He struck three times and stopped. The man of God was furious with him and said, 'You should have struck five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram utterly; as it is, you will strike Aram three times and no more.'

Then Elisha died and was buried. Year by year Moabite raiders used to invade the land. Once some men were burying a dead man when they caught sight of the raiders. They threw the body into the grave of Elisha and made off; when the body touched the prophet's bones, the man came to life and rose to his feet.

All through the reign of Jehoahaz, Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel. But the LORD was gracious and took pity on them; because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he looked on them with favour and was unwilling to destroy them; nor has he even yet banished them from his sight.

When Hazael king of Aram died and was succeeded by his son Ben-hadad, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured the cities which Ben-hadad had taken in war from Jehoahaz his father; three times Jehoash defeated him and recovered the cities of Israel.

In the second year of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah succeeded his father. He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his mother was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not as his forefather David had done; he followed his father Joash in everything. The hill-shrines were allowed to remain; the people continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. When the royal power was firmly in his grasp, he put to death those of his servants who had murdered the king his father; but he spared the murderers' children in obedience to the LORD's command written in the law of Moses: 'Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children for their fathers; a man shall be put to death only for his own sin.' He defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela; he gave it the name Joktheel, which it still bears.

Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, to propose a meeting. But Jehoash king of Israel sent this answer to Amaziah king of Judah: 'A thistle in Lebanon sent to a cedar in Lebanon to say, "Give your daughter in marriage to my son." But a wild beast in Lebanon, passing by, trampled on the thistle. You have defeated Edom, it is true; and it has gone to your head. Stay at home and enjoy your triumph. Why should you in-

*j Verses 1-6: cp. 2 Chr. 25, 1-4.  
k Verses 8-14: cp. 2 Chr. 25, 17-24.*

war with Amaziah king of Judah, see 14.8-14. **14-20:** Two brief prophetic legends about Elisha are allocated to Jehoash's reign. *Three* Israelite victories against Aram (Damascus) are attributed to magical rituals performed by Elisha; see vv. 24-25. **23:** *Even yet:* the late compilers hold out some hope that both Israel and Judah can return from exile; compare 1 Kgs.8.27-53 n. and Jer. chs.30-31.

**14.1-22: Amaziah of Judah.** This was one of the more aggressive kings. **6:** *The law of Moses:* see Deut.24.15. **7:** Amaziah moved to reestablish Judean power in the south; compare 8.20-22. **8:** *Meeting:* a face-to-face encounter; a trial of strength. **9-10:** Jehoash knew that the two

volve yourself in disaster and bring yourself to the ground, and Judah with you?"

11 But Amaziah would not listen; so Jehoash king of Israel marched out, and he and Amaziah king of Judah met one another at Beth-shemesh in  
12 Judah. The men of Judah were routed  
13 by Israel and fled to their homes. But Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh. He went to Jerusalem and broke down the city wall from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, a distance of four  
14 hundred cubits. He also took all the gold and silver and all the vessels found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace, as well as hostages, and returned to Samaria.  
15 The other events of the reign of Jehoash, and all his achievements, his exploits and his wars with Amaziah king of Judah, are recorded in the  
16 annals of the kings of Israel. So Jehoash rested with his forefathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and he was succeeded by his son Jeroboam.  
17<sup>l</sup> Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah, outlived Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, by fifteen years.  
18 The other events of Amaziah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings  
19 of Judah. A conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there.  
20 Then his body was conveyed on horseback to Jerusalem, and there he was buried with his forefathers in the  
21 city of David. The people of Judah took Azariah, now sixteen years old, and made him king in succession to  
22 his father Amaziah. It was he who built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king rested with his forefathers.

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son  
23 of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria and reigned for forty-one  
24 years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the  
25 sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. He re-established the frontiers of Israel from  
26 Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in fulfilment of the word of the LORD the God of Israel spoken by his servant the prophet Jonah son of Amittai, of Gath-hepher. For the LORD had seen  
26 how bitterly Israel had suffered; no one was safe, whether under the protection of his family or not, and Israel was left defenceless. But the LORD had  
27 made no threat to blot out the name of Israel under heaven, and he saved them through Jeroboam son of Jehoash. The other events of Jeroboam's reign,  
28 and all his achievements, his exploits, the wars he fought and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath in  
29 Jaudi for<sup>m</sup> Israel, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Jeroboam rested with his forefathers the  
29 kings of Israel; and he was succeeded by his son Zechariah.

In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah<sup>n</sup> son of Amaziah king of Judah became king. He was sixteen years old when he came  
29 to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years; his mother was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. He did what  
3 was right in the eyes of the LORD, as Amaziah his father had done. But the  
4 hill-shrines were allowed to remain; the people still continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. The LORD  
5<sup>p</sup> struck the king with leprosy,<sup>q</sup> which he had till the day of his death; he

<sup>l</sup> Verses 17-22: cp. 2 Chr. 25. 25-26. 2.

<sup>m</sup> in Jaudi for: prob. rdg.; Heb. to Judah in.

<sup>n</sup> Uziah in verses 13, 30, 32, 34.

<sup>o</sup> Verses 2, 3: cp. 2 Chr. 26. 3, 4.

<sup>p</sup> Verses 5-7: cp. 2 Chr. 26. 21-23.

<sup>q</sup> Or a skin-disease.

kingdoms could be powerful only when allied. 15-16: This repeats 13.12-13. 19-21: The reasons for the conspiracy are not known.

14.23-15.7: Jeroboam II of Israel and Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah. Under these two kings the Israelite kingdoms attained, for the third and last time, a dominance over Syria-Palestine. As in the case of Omri, some kings of great historical significance receive scant treatment by the compilers of Kgs. 28: Jaudi may have been a minor kingdom in Syria. 15.2: Fifty-two years: These include several years of coregency by Azariah with his father before the latter's assassination. Azariah's death (compare Isa.6.1) brought an era to an end. 5: Regent: lit. "he judged the people of the land"; see 11.14 n.

was relieved of all duties and lived in his own house, while his son Jotham was comptroller of the household and regent. The other acts and events of Azariah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. So he rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Jotham.

In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned six months. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin.

Shallum son of Jabesh formed a conspiracy against him, attacked him in Ibleam, killed him and usurped the throne. The other events of Zechariah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. Thus the word of the LORD spoken to Jehu was fulfilled: 'Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.'

Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned one full month in Samaria. Then Menahem son of Gadi came up from Tirzah to Samaria, attacked Shallum son of Jabesh there, killed him and usurped the throne. The other events of Shallum's reign and the conspiracy that he formed are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

Then Menahem, starting out from Tirzah, destroyed Tappuah and everything in it and ravaged its territory; he ravaged it because it had not opened its gates to him, and he ripped open all the pregnant women.

In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king over Israel and he reigned

in Samaria for ten years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. In his days Pul king of Assyria invaded the country, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to obtain his help in strengthening his hold on the kingdom. Menahem laid a levy on all the men of wealth in Israel, and each had to give the king of Assyria fifty silver shekels. Then the king of Assyria withdrew without occupying the country. The other acts and events of Menahem's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel. So Menahem rested with his forefathers; and he was succeeded by his son Pekahiah.

In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned for two years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. Pekah son of Remaliah, his lieutenant, formed a conspiracy against him and, with the help of fifty Gileadites, attacked him in Samaria in the citadel of the royal palace, killed him and usurped the throne. The other acts and events of Pekahiah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned for twenty years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD; he did not give up the sinful practices of Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin. In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and seized Iyyon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor,

*r Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Argob and Arieh.*

**15.8-38: The decline of Israel.** After Jeroboam II's long reign, the dynasty of Jehu was overthrown. No stable regime was again established in the north. 12: See 10.31 and 1 Kgs. 11.29-39 n. 19: *Pul*: the Babylonian throne name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.). *Menahem* represented a policy of vassalage to Assyria; his contemporary opponent Pekah pursued an anti-Assyrian policy; see v. 27 n. 25: *Gileadites* disturbed the Israelite throne more than once; see 1 Kgs. 17.1. 27: Pekah's *twenty years* are counted from the death of Zechariah, the last king of the Jehu dynasty. He was a claimant to the throne throughout the reigns of Shallum, Menahem, and Pekahiah. His victory was the signal for an uprising in alliance with Damascus against Assyria; see v. 37; Isa. 7.1-9. 29-30: The rebellion against Tiglath-pileser was a great failure, and Israel lost all its northern territory. Such a disaster

Gilead, and Galilee, with all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria. Then Hoshea son of Elah formed a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him, killed him and usurped the throne in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. The other acts and events of Pekah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel.

In the second year of Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years; his mother was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Uzziah had done; but the hill-shrines were allowed to remain and the people continued to slaughter and burn sacrifices there. It was he who constructed the upper gate of the house of the LORD. The other acts and events of Jotham's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. In those days the LORD began to make Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah attack Judah. And Jotham rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David his forefather; and he was succeeded by his son Ahaz.

#### *Downfall of the northern kingdom*

IN THE SEVENTEENTH YEAR OF PEKAH son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God like his forefather David, but followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel; he even passed his son

through the fire, adopting the abominable practice of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed in favour of the Israelites. He slaughtered and burnt sacrifices at the hill-shrines and on the hill-tops and under every spreading tree.

Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel attacked Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz but could not bring him to battle. At that time the king of Edom<sup>u</sup> recovered Elath and drove the Judaeans out of it; so the Edomites entered the city and have occupied it to this day. Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria to say, 'I am your servant and your son. Come and save me from the king of Aram and from the king of Israel who are attacking me.' Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent them to the king of Assyria as a bribe. The king of Assyria listened to him; he advanced on Damascus, captured it, deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.

When King Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria at Damascus, he saw there an altar of which he sent a sketch and a detailed plan to Uriah the priest. Accordingly, Uriah built an altar, following all the instructions that the king had sent him from Damascus, and had it ready against the king's return. When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar, approached it and mounted the steps; there he burnt his whole-offering and his grain-offering and poured out his drink-offering, and he flung the blood of his shared-offerings against it. The bronze altar that was before

<sup>s</sup> Verses 33-35: cp. 2 Chr. 27. 1-3.

<sup>t</sup> Verses 2-4: cp. 2 Chr. 28. 1-4.

<sup>u</sup> the king of Edom: prob. rdg.; Heb. Rezin king of Aram.

invited yet another coup by a leader willing to come to terms with Assyria. 30: *The twentieth year of Jotham*: v. 33 gives *Jotham* only sixteen years; he must have reigned for some years as coregent with his father.

16.1-20: **Ahaz of Judah. 3:** In the late monarchic period some very primitive cult practices were revived; compare 3.27; Jer.7.30-31. 5-9: Compare Isa.7.1-9. 6: Because of pressure on Judah from the north, *Edom* was able again (see 8.20-22) to escape its domination. *Elath*: the harbor on the Gulf of Aqabah. 10-18: This passage is taken from a source about the history of the Temple; see 12.4-16. *Ahaz* had to make these changes because he became a vassal of Assyria. 14: *The bronze altar* was from Solomon's time; see 1 Kgs.8.64. 15: *On the people of the land*, see 11.14 n.



the LORD he removed from the front of the house, from between this altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of this altar. Then  
 15 King Ahaz gave these instructions to Uriah the priest: 'Burn on the great altar the morning whole-offering and the evening grain-offering, and the king's whole-offering and his grain-offering, and the whole-offering of all the people of the land, their grain-offering and their drink-offerings, and fling against it all the blood of the sacrifices. But the bronze altar shall be  
 16 mine, to offer morning sacrifice.' Uriah the priest did all that the king told  
 17 him. Then King Ahaz broke up the trolleys and removed the panels, and he took down the basin and the Sea of bronze from the oxen which supported  
 18 it and put it on a stone base. In the house of the LORD he turned round the structure they had erected for use on the sabbath, and the outer gate for the king, to satisfy the king of Assyria.  
 19<sup>v</sup> The other acts and events of the reign of Ahaz are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. So Ahaz rested with his forefathers and was buried with them in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Hezekiah.  
 17 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria and reigned  
 2 nine years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, but not as the previous kings of Israel had done.  
 3 Shalmaneser king of Assyria made war upon him and Hoshea became  
 4 tributary to him. But when the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was being disloyal to him, sending messengers to the king of Egypt at So,<sup>w</sup> and withholding the tribute which he had been paying year by year, the king of Assyria arrested him and put  
 5 him in prison. Then he invaded the whole country and, reaching Samaria,  
 6 besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea he captured Samaria and deported its people to Assyria and

settled them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of Media.

All this happened to the Israelites <sup>7</sup> because they had sinned against the LORD their God who brought them up from Egypt, from the rule of Pharaoh king of Egypt; they paid homage to other gods and observed the laws and <sup>8</sup> customs of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed before them and <sup>9</sup> uttered blasphemies against the LORD their God; they built hill-shrines for themselves in all their settlements, from watch-tower to fortified city, and set up sacred pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree, and burnt sacrifices at all the <sup>11</sup> hill-shrines there, as the nations did whom the LORD had displaced before them. By this wickedness of theirs they provoked the LORD's anger. They <sup>12</sup> worshipped idols, a thing which the LORD had forbidden them to do. Still <sup>13</sup> the LORD solemnly charged Israel and Judah by every prophet and seer, saying, 'Give up your evil ways; keep my commandments and statutes given in the law which I enjoined on your forefathers and delivered to you through my servants the prophets.' They would not listen, however, but <sup>14</sup> were as stubborn and rebellious as their forefathers had been, who refused to put their trust in the LORD their God: they rejected his statutes and <sup>15</sup> the covenant which he had made with their forefathers and the solemn warnings which he had given to them; they followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves; they imitated the nations round about them, a thing which the LORD had forbidden them to do. Forsaking every commandment <sup>16</sup> of the LORD their God, they made themselves images of cast metal, two calves, and also a sacred pole; they prostrated themselves to all the host of heaven and worshipped the Baal, and  
<sup>v</sup> Verses 19, 20: cp. 2 Chr. 28. 26, 27.  
<sup>w</sup> to the king of Egypt at So: prob. rdg.; Heb. to So king of Egypt.

**17.1–41: The fall of Israel.** The Deuteronomist attributes the fall of the Northern Kingdom to apostasy; he scorns the syncretistic religious practices of the population of the conquered area. **3:** *Shalmaneser V* (727–722 B.C.) began the siege of Samaria but the conquest was completed under *Sargon II* (722–705 B.C.). **6:** In his own inscriptions, *Sargon* claims to have deported 27,290 Israelites. **7–23:** Here the Deuteronomic compilers speak as commentators;

17 they made their sons and daughters pass through the fire. They practised augury and divination; they sold themselves to do what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD and so provoked his anger.

18 Thus it was that the LORD was incensed against Israel and banished them from his presence; only the tribe of Judah was left. Even Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but followed the practices adopted by Israel; so the LORD rejected the whole race of Israel and punished them and gave them over to plunderers and finally flung them out of his sight.

21 When he tore Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king, who seduced Israel from their allegiance to the LORD and led them into grave sin. The Israelites persisted in all the sins that Jeroboam had committed and did not give them up, until finally the LORD banished the Israelites from his presence, as he had threatened through his servants the prophets, and they were carried into exile from their own land to Assyria; and there they are to this day.

24 Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites; so they occupied Samaria and lived in its cities. In the early years of their settlement they did not pay homage to the LORD; and the LORD sent lions among them, and the lions preyed upon them. The king was told that the deported peoples whom he had settled in the cities of Samaria did not know the established usage of the god of the country, and that he had sent lions among them which were preying upon them because they did not know this. The king of Assyria, therefore, gave orders that one of the priests deported from Samaria should be sent back to live there and teach the people the usage of the god of the country. So one of the

deported priests came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should pay their homage to the LORD. But each of the nations made its own god, and they set them up within<sup>x</sup> the hill-shrines which the Samaritans had made, each nation in its own settlements. Succoth-benoth was worshipped by the men of Babylon, Nergal by the men of Cuth, Ashima by the men of Hamath, Nibhaz and Tartak by the Avvites; and the Sepharvites burnt their children as offerings to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. While still paying homage to the LORD, they appointed people from every class to act as priests of the hill-shrines and they resorted to them there. They paid homage to the LORD while at the same time they served their own gods, according to the custom of the nations from which they had been carried into exile.

They keep up these old practices to this day; they do not pay homage to the LORD, for they do not keep his statutes and his judgements, the law and commandment, which he enjoined upon the descendants of Jacob whom he named Israel. When the LORD made a covenant with them, he gave them his commandment: 'You shall not pay homage to other gods or bow down to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall pay homage to the LORD who brought you up from Egypt with great power and with outstretched arm; to him you shall bow down, to him you shall offer sacrifice. You shall faithfully keep the statutes, the judgements, the law, and the commandments which he wrote for you, and you shall not pay homage to other gods. You shall not forget the covenant which I made with you; you shall not pay homage to other gods. But to the LORD your God you shall pay homage, and he will preserve you from all your enemies.' However, they

<sup>x</sup> Or in niches at.    <sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. their.

usually they put a speech into the mouth of a famous leader or prophet. 19-20: At the time of the writing (see Introduction to 1 Kgs.) Judah has also fallen. 24-41: The imported population possessed a mixture of religious identities and practices, that later marked the Samaritans (v. 29); the practices were improper from the standpoint of later Judean norms. 41: To this day: the time of the Judean exile.

would not listen but continued their  
 41 former practices. While these nations  
 paid homage to the LORD they con-  
 tinued to serve their images, and their  
 children and their children's children  
 have maintained the practice of their  
 forefathers to this day.

- 18:2 IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HOSHEA SON OF  
 Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of  
 2 Ahaz king of Judah became king. He  
 was twenty-five years old when he came  
 to the throne, and he reigned in  
 Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his  
 mother was Abi daughter of Zechariah.  
 3 He did what was right in the eyes of the  
 LORD, as David his forefather had done.  
 4 It was he who suppressed the hill-  
 shrines, smashed the sacred pillars,  
 cut down every sacred pole and broke  
 up the bronze serpent that Moses had  
 made; for up to that time the Israelites  
 had been burning sacrifices to it; they  
 5 called it Nehushtan. He put his trust  
 in the LORD the God of Israel; there  
 was nobody like him among all the  
 kings of Judah who succeeded him or  
 among those who had gone before  
 6 him. He remained loyal to the LORD  
 and did not fail in his allegiance to him,  
 and he kept the commandments which  
 7 the LORD had given to Moses. So the  
 LORD was with him and he prospered  
 in all that he undertook; he rebelled  
 against the king of Assyria and was  
 8 no longer subject to him. He con-  
 quered the Philistine country as far as  
 Gaza and its boundaries, alike the  
 watch-tower and the fortified city.  
 9 In the fourth year of Hezekiah's  
 reign (that was the seventh year of  
 Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel)

Shalmaneser king of Assyria made an  
 attack on Samaria, invested it and 10  
 captured it after a siege of three years;  
 it was in the sixth year of Hezekiah  
 (the ninth year of Hoshea king of  
 Israel) that Samaria was captured.  
 The king of Assyria deported the 11  
 Israelites to Assyria and settled them  
 in Halah and on the Habor, the river  
 of Gozan, and in the cities of Media,  
 because they did not obey the LORD 12  
 their God but violated his covenant  
 and every commandment that Moses  
 the servant of the LORD had given them;  
 they would not listen and they would  
 not obey.

In the fourteenth year of the reign 13<sup>a</sup>  
 of Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of  
 Assyria attacked and took all the for-  
 tified cities of Judah. Hezekiah king of 14  
 Judah sent a message to the king of  
 Assyria at Lachish: 'I have done wrong;  
 withdraw from my land, and I will pay  
 any penalty you impose upon me.' So  
 the king of Assyria laid on Hezekiah  
 king of Judah a penalty of three  
 hundred talents of silver and thirty 15  
 talents of gold; and Hezekiah gave them  
 all the silver found in the house of the  
 LORD and in the treasuries of the royal  
 palace. At that time Hezekiah broke up 16  
 the doors of the temple of the LORD  
 and the door-frames which he himself  
 had plated, and gave them to the king  
 of Assyria.

From Lachish the king of Assyria 17  
 sent the commander-in-chief, the chief  
 eunuch, and the chief officer<sup>b</sup> with a  
 strong force to King Hezekiah at Jeru-

<sup>z</sup> Verses 1-3: cp. 2 Chr. 29. 1, 2.

<sup>a</sup> Verses 13-17: cp. Isa. 36. 1-22; 2 Chr. 32. 1-19.

<sup>b</sup> the commander-in-chief, the chief eunuch, and the chief officer: or Tartan, Rab-saris, and Rab-shakeh.

**18.1-20.21: The reign of Hezekiah.** The dating of Hezekiah's reign is one of the most difficult chronological problems in Kgs. According to 18.1 it began in 729 B.C.; according to 18.14, in 716/715, for Sennacherib's siege is known to have occurred in 701 B.C. The account of the reign consists of annalistic data (18.1-8, 13-16) and stories involving the prophet Isaiah at the siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (18.17-20.21).

**18.1-16: Hezekiah in the annals.** When the Assyrian king Sargon II died in 705, Hezekiah timed his rebellion to coincide with that of Merodach-baladan in Babylonia (see 20.12). The religious purge included removing local sanctuaries (the hill-shrines) in Judah in favor of the sole sanctuary in Jerusalem and purging venerated but superstitious practices from the cult at Jerusalem itself (v. 4). 4: The *hill-shrines* are suppressed for the first time; compare 1 Kgs. 3.2 and, e.g. 1 Kgs. 22.43. The *bronze serpent that Moses had made* was destroyed; the story of its supposed origin is preserved in Num. 21.4-9. 9-12: A brief summary of ch. 17. 13-16: This realistic report is contradicted in Sennacherib's own inscription only by his claim to have received eight hundred instead of *three hundred talents of silver* (v. 14).

**18.17-19.37: The siege and deliverance of Jerusalem.** Within the totality of the Deuteronomistic history (Deut.-2 Kgs.), this is the last time the LORD intervenes by prophecy and marvelous action on Israel's behalf. 17: For more details about *the conduit of the Upper Pool* see Isa. 7.3.

saalem, and they went up and came to Jerusalem and halted by the conduit of the Upper Pool on the causeway which leads to the Fuller's Field. When you called for the king, Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the comptroller of the household, came out to them, with Shebna the adjutant-general and Joah son of Asaph, the secretary of state. The chief officer said to them, 'Tell Hezekiah that this is the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria: "What ground have you for this confidence of yours? Do you think fine words can take the place of skill and numbers? On whom then do you rely for support in your rebellion against me? On Egypt? Egypt is a splintered cane that will run into a man's hand and pierce it if he leans on it. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt proves to all who rely on him. And if you tell me that you are relying on the LORD your God, is he not the god whose hill-shrines and altars Hezekiah has suppressed, telling Judah and Jerusalem that they must prostrate themselves before this altar in Jerusalem?"

'Now, make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses if you can find riders for them. Will you reject the authority of even the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Do you think that I have come to attack this place and destroy it without the consent of the LORD? No; the LORD himself said to me, "Attack this land and destroy it."

Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the chief officer, 'Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak Hebrew to us within earshot of the people on the city wall.' The chief officer answered, 'Is it to your master and to you that my master has sent me to say this? Is it not to the people sitting on the wall who, like you, will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?' Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew, 'Hear the message of the

Great King, the king of Assyria. These are the king's words: "Do not be taken in by Hezekiah. He cannot save you from me. Do not let him persuade you to rely on the LORD, and tell you that the LORD will save you and that this city will never be surrendered to the king of Assyria." Do not listen to Hezekiah; these are the words of the king of Assyria: "Make peace with me. Come out to me, and then you shall each eat the fruit of his own vine and his own fig-tree, and drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain and new wine, of corn and vineyards, of olives, fine oil, and honey—life for you all, instead of death. Do not listen to Hezekiah; he will only mislead you by telling you that the LORD will save you. Did the god of any of these nations save his land from the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Where are the gods of Samaria? Did they save Samaria from me? Among all the gods of the nations is there one who saved his land from me? And how is the LORD to save Jerusalem?"

The people were silent and answered not a word, for the king had given orders that no one was to answer him. Eliakim son of Hilkiah, comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and Joah son of Asaph, secretary of state, came to Hezekiah with their clothes rent and reported what the chief officer had said.

When King Hezekiah heard their report, he rent his clothes and wrapped himself in sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. He sent Eliakim comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and the senior priests, all covered in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, to give him this message from the king: 'This day is a day of trouble for us, a day of reproof and contempt. We are like a woman who has no strength to

c Verses 1-37: cp. Isa. 37. 1-38; 2 Chr. 32. 20-22.

18: *Shebna*: see Isa.22.15-19. 26: *Aramaic* was becoming the common language of commerce and diplomacy. 19.1: The penitent attitude is to gain the LORD's favor. 6-7: Isaiah's prophecy is only partially fulfilled in what follows; it does not include striking down the Assyrian army;

4 bear the child that is coming to the  
 birth. It may be that the LORD your  
 God heard all the words of the chief  
 officer whom his master the king of  
 Assyria sent to taunt the living God,  
 and will confute what he, the LORD  
 your God, heard. Offer a prayer for  
 5 those who still survive.' King Hezekiah's  
 6 servants came to Isaiah, and he told  
 them to say this to their master: 'This  
 is the word of the LORD: "Do not be  
 alarmed at what you heard when the  
 lackeys of the king of Assyria blas-  
 7 phemed me. I will put a spirit in him  
 and he shall hear a rumour and with-  
 draw to his own country; and there I  
 will make him fall by the sword.'"'

8 So the chief officer withdrew. He  
 heard that the king of Assyria had left  
 Lachish, and he found him attacking  
 9 Libnah. But when the king learnt that  
 Tirhakah king of Cush was on the way  
 to make war on him, he sent messengers  
 10 again to Hezekiah king of Judah, to say  
 to him. 'How can you be deluded by  
 your god on whom you rely when he  
 promises that Jerusalem shall not fall  
 into the hands of the king of Assyria?  
 11 Surely you have heard what the kings  
 of Assyria have done to all countries,  
 exterminating their people; can you  
 12 then hope to escape? Did their gods  
 save the nations which my forefathers  
 destroyed, Gozan, Harran, Rezep,  
 and the people of Beth-eden living in  
 13 Telassar? Where are the kings of  
 Hamath, of Arpad, and of Lahir, Se-  
 pharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?'

14 Hezekiah took the letter from the  
 messengers and read it; then he went  
 up into the house of the LORD, spread  
 15 it out before the LORD and offered  
 this prayer: 'O LORD God of Israel,  
 enthroned on the cherubim, thou alone  
 art God of all the kingdoms of the  
 earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.  
 16 Turn thy ear to me, O LORD, and listen;  
 open thine eyes, O LORD, and see;  
 hear the message that Sennacherib has

sent to taunt the living God. It is true, 17  
 O LORD, that the kings of Assyria  
 have ravaged the nations and their  
 lands, that they have consigned their 18  
 gods to the fire and destroyed them;  
 for they were no gods but the work  
 of men's hands, mere wood and stone.  
 But now, O LORD our God, save us 19  
 from his power, so that all the king-  
 doms of the earth may know that  
 thou, O LORD, alone art God.'

Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah 20  
 and said, 'This is the word of the  
 LORD the God of Israel: I have heard  
 your prayer to me concerning Sen-  
 nacherib king of Assyria. This is the 21  
 word which the LORD has spoken  
 concerning him:

The virgin daughter of Zion disdains  
 you,  
 she laughs you to scorn;  
 the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her  
 head  
 as you retreat.

Whom have you taunted and 22  
 blasphemed?

Against whom have you  
 clamoured,  
 casting haughty glances at the Holy  
 One of Israel?

You have sent your messengers to 23  
 taunt the Lord,  
 and said:

I have mounted my chariot and  
 done mighty deeds:

I have gone high up in the  
 mountains,  
 into the recesses of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars,  
 the best of its pines,

I have reached its farthest corners,  
 forest and meadow.

I have dug wells 24  
 and drunk the waters of a foreign  
 land,

and with the soles of my feet I have  
 dried up  
 all the streams of Egypt.

compare vv. 35-37. 8-13: This second ultimatum to Hezekiah, plus the fact that *Tirhakah* did not become king of Egypt before 690 B.C., has led some to think there were two different sieges of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, the second taking place around 689-688 B.C. A duplication of reports of the same siege is more likely. 14-19: Hezekiah's prayer here is much less related to the immediate situation than vv. 3-4. 15: *Enthroned on the cherubim*; see 1 Sam.4.4 n. 20-28: Isaiah's taunt song against Sennacherib is similar to the prophecy in Isa. 10.5-19, probably delivered on the occasion of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. 21: *Zion*: the city is

- 25 Have you not heard long ago?  
I did it all.  
In days gone by I planned it  
and now I have brought it about,  
making fortified cities tumble down  
into heaps of rubble.<sup>d</sup>
- 26 Their citizens, shorn of strength,  
disheartened and ashamed,  
were but as plants in the field, as  
green herbs,  
as grass on the roof-tops blasted  
before the east wind.<sup>e</sup>
- 27 I know your rising up<sup>f</sup> and your  
sitting down,  
your going out and your coming  
in.
- 28 The frenzy of your rage against me<sup>g</sup>  
and your arrogance  
have come to my ears.  
I will put a ring in your nose  
and a hook in your lips,  
and I will take you back by the  
road  
on which you have come.
- 29 This shall be the sign for you: this  
year you shall eat shed grain and in the  
second year what is self-sown; but in  
the third year sow and reap, plant  
vineyards and eat their fruit. The  
survivors left in Judah shall strike  
fresh root under ground and yield  
fruit above ground, for a remnant  
shall come out of Jerusalem and  
survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal  
of the LORD will perform this.
- 32 'Therefore, this is the word of the  
LORD concerning the king of Assyria:
- He shall not enter this city  
nor shoot an arrow there,  
he shall not advance against it with  
shield  
nor cast up a siege-ramp against it.
- 33 By the way on which he came he  
shall go back;  
this city he shall not enter.  
This is the very word of the  
LORD.
- 34 I will shield this city to deliver it,

for my own sake and for the sake of  
my servant David.'

That night the angel of the LORD <sup>35</sup>  
went out and struck down a hundred  
and eighty-five thousand men in the  
Assyrian camp; when morning dawned,  
they all lay dead. So Sennacherib <sup>36</sup>  
king of Assyria broke camp, went  
back to Nineveh and stayed there.  
One day, while he was worshipping in <sup>37</sup>  
the temple of his god Nisroch, Adram-  
melech and Sharezer his sons mur-  
dered him and escaped to the land of  
Ararat. He was succeeded by his son  
Esarhaddon.

At this time Hezekiah fell dangerous- <sup>20:1<sup>b</sup></sup>  
ly ill and the prophet Isaiah son of  
Amoz came to him and said, 'This is  
the word of the LORD: Give your last  
instructions to your household, for  
you are a dying man and will not  
recover.' Hezekiah turned his face to <sup>2</sup>  
the wall and offered this prayer to the  
LORD: 'O LORD, remember how I <sup>3</sup>  
have lived before thee, faithful and loyal  
in thy service, always doing what was  
good in thine eyes.' And he wept  
bitterly. But before Isaiah had left the <sup>4</sup>  
citadel, the word of the LORD came to  
him: 'Go back and say to Hezekiah, <sup>5</sup>  
the prince of my people: "This is the  
word of the LORD the God of your  
father David: I have heard your prayer  
and seen your tears; I will heal you  
and on the third day you shall go up  
to the house of the LORD. I will add <sup>6</sup>  
fifteen years to your life and deliver  
you and this city from the king of  
Assyria, and I will protect this city for  
my own sake and for my servant  
David's sake.'" Then Isaiah told them <sup>7</sup>  
to apply a fig-plaster; so they made  
one and applied it to the boil, and he

<sup>d</sup> heaps of rubble: *prob. rdg., cp. Isa. 37. 26; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>e</sup> the east wind: *prob. rdg., cp. Isa. 37. 27; Heb. it is mature.*

<sup>f</sup> your rising up: *prob. rdg., cp. Isa. 37. 28; Heb. om. Prob. rdg., cp. Isa. 37. 29; Heb. repeats the frenzy of your rage against me.*

<sup>h</sup> Verses 1-11: *cp. Isa. 38. 1-8, 21, 22.*

personified as a goddess. 27-28: The LORD speaks again, to Assyria. 32-34: This oracle speaks to a situation prior to the last desperate siege. 35: This miracle has neither been prepared for nor is it referred to elsewhere. 37: Sennacherib died in 681 B.C., twenty years after the siege of Jerusalem.

20.1-21: Two legends of Isaiah. 6: That fifteen years are added to Hezekiah's life is probably related to the problem of the chronology in Hezekiah's reign; compare 18.1-20.21 n.

8 recovered. Then Hezekiah asked Isaiah what sign the LORD would give him that he would be cured and would go up into the house of the LORD on the third day. And Isaiah said, 'This shall be your sign from the LORD that he will do what he has promised; shall the shadow go forward ten steps or back ten steps?' Hezekiah answered, 'It is an easy thing for the shadow to move forward ten steps; rather let it go back ten steps.' Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he made the shadow go back ten steps where it had advanced down the stairway of Ahaz.

12<sup>f</sup> At this time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent envoys with a gift to Hezekiah; for he had heard that he had been ill. Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them all his treasury, silver and gold, spices and fragrant oil, his armoury and everything to be found among his treasures; there was nothing in his house and in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and asked him, 'What did these men say and where have they come from?' 'They have come from a far-off country,' Hezekiah answered, 'from Babylon.' Then Isaiah asked, 'What did they see in your house?' 'They saw everything,' Hezekiah replied; 'there was nothing among my treasures that I did not show them,' 16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD: The time is coming, says the LORD, when everything in your house, and all that your forefathers have amassed till the present day, will be carried away to Babylon; not a thing shall be left. And some of the sons who will be born to you, sons of your own begetting, shall be taken and shall be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'

Hezekiah answered, 'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good'; thinking to himself that peace and security would last out his lifetime.

The other events of Hezekiah's reign, his exploits, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. 21 So Hezekiah rested with his forefathers and was succeeded by his son Manasseh.

### The last kings of Judah

MANASSEH WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD 21<sup>1</sup> when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-five years; his mother was Hephzi-bah. He did 2 what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, in following the abominable practices of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed in favour of the Israelites. He rebuilt the hill-shrines which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he erected altars to the Baal and made a sacred pole as Ahab king of Israel had done, and prostrated himself before all the host of heaven and worshipped them. He built 4 altars in the house of the LORD, that house of which the LORD had said, 'Jerusalem shall receive my Name.' He built altars for all the host of heaven 5 in the two courts of the house of the LORD; he made his son pass through 6 the fire, he practised soothsaying and divination, and dealt with ghosts and spirits. He did much wrong in the eyes of the LORD and provoked his anger; and the image that he had made of the 7 goddess Asherah he put in the house, the place of which the LORD had said to David and Solomon his son, 'This

*i* Verses 12-19: cp. Isa. 39: 1-8.  
*j* Verses 1-9: cp. 2 Chr. 33: 1-9.

**8-11:** The *sign* given is the backward movement of the sun's shadow on some stairs; this was a normal time-keeping device. **12-19:** *Merodach-baladan* rebelled against Sennacherib at the same time as Hezekiah; see 18.1-16 n. An actual eighth-century embassy to coordinate the rebellion is here combined with a more legendary prophetic story about Isaiah, which reflects a much later time (after 605 B.C.) when Babylon became a threat to, rather than an ally of, Judean independence. **18:** No *sons* of Hezekiah's *begetting* became Babylonian prisoners; Babylon as well as Judah was subject to Assyria.

**21.1-18:** *Manasseh and Judah.* The Northern Kingdom had fallen because the sins of Jeroboam were never removed. Manasseh's *fifty-five years* began with a coregency with Hezekiah (697 B.C.), not long after Sennacherib's defeat of the rebellion. **7:** *Asherah:* see 13.6.

house and Jerusalem, which I chose out of all the tribes of Israel, shall receive my Name for all time. I will not again make Israel outcasts from the land which I gave to their forefathers, if only they will be careful to observe all my commands and all the law that my servant Moses gave them.' But they did not obey, and Manasseh misled them into wickedness far worse than that of the nations which the LORD had exterminated in favour of the Israelites.

10 Then the LORD spoke through his  
11 servants the prophets: 'Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominable things, outdoing the Amorites before him in wickedness, and because he has led Judah into sin with his idols, this is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I will bring disaster on Jerusalem and Judah, disaster which will ring in the ears of all who hear of it. I will mark down every stone of Jerusalem with the plumb-line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe away Jerusalem as when a man wipes his plate and turns it upside down, and I will cast off what is left of my people, my own possession, and hand them over to their enemies. They shall be plundered and fall a prey to all their enemies; for they have done what is wrong in my eyes and have provoked my anger from the day their forefathers left Egypt up to the present day. 16 And this Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem full to the brim, not to mention the sin into which he led Judah by doing what is wrong in my eyes.' The other events and acts of Manasseh's reign, and the sin that he committed, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. So Manasseh rested with his forefathers and was buried in the

garden-tomb of his family, in the garden of Uzza; he was succeeded by his son Amon.

Amon was twenty-two years old <sup>19<sup>k</sup></sup> when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for two years; his mother was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD as his father Manasseh had done. He followed in his father's footsteps and served the idols that his father had served and prostrated himself before them. He forsook the LORD the God of his fathers and did not conform to his ways. King Amon's courtiers conspired against him and murdered him in his house; but the people of the land killed all the conspirators and made his son Josiah king in his place. The other events of Amon's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. He was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza; he was succeeded by his son Josiah.

Josiah was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for thirty-one years; his mother was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD; he followed closely in the footsteps of his forefather David, swerving neither right nor left.

In the eighteenth year of his reign <sup>3<sup>m</sup></sup> Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the adjutant-general, to the house of the LORD. 'Go to the high priest Hilkiah,' he said, 'and tell him to melt down the silver that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which those on duty at the entrance have received from the people, and to hand it over to the foremen 5

*k* Verses 19-24: cp. 2 Chr. 33. 21-25.

*l* Verses 1, 2: cp. 2 Chr. 34. 1, 2.

*m* Verses 3-20: cp. 2 Chr. 34. 8-28.

10-16: The condemnation is anonymous, spoken simply *through his servants the prophets*. 11: *Amorites*: see Gen. 15. 16 n.

21. 19-26: *Amon of Judah*. 19: Amon's *mother*, Manasseh's most important wife, was from *Jotbah*. 23: This assassination probably had some relation to the policy toward Assyria. 24: *The people of the land*: see 11. 14 n.

22. 1-23. 30: *Josiah*. With this king the Deuteronomic history reached its climax. *Josiah* carries out what all earlier kings are blamed for failing to do. He removes the hill-shrines in Judah and destroys the cult center in Bethel. Religiously, his program was deemed entirely correct, but—from the final viewpoint of Kgs.—he came one generation too late, for the divine decision about Judah had been made; see 21. 10-15; 23. 26-27. 3-7: *Josiah* instructs



in the house of the LORD, to pay the workmen who are carrying out repairs in it, the carpenters, builders, and masons, and to purchase timber and hewn stones for its repair. They are not to be asked to account for the money that has been given them; they are acting on trust.' The high priest Hilkiah told Shaphan the adjutant-general that he had discovered the book of the law in the house of the LORD, and he gave it to him, and Shaphan read it. Then Shaphan came to report to the king and told him that his servants had melted down the silver in the house of the LORD and handed it over to the foremen there. Then Shaphan the adjutant-general told the king that the high priest Hilkiah had given him a book, and he read it out in the king's presence. When the king heard what was in the book of the law, he rent his clothes, and ordered the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the adjutant-general, and Asaiah the king's attendant, to go and seek guidance of the LORD for himself, for the people, and for all Judah, about what was written in this book that had been discovered. 'Great is the wrath of the LORD', he said, 'that has been kindled against us, because our forefathers did not obey the commands in this book and do all that is laid upon us.'

So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shalum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe, and consulted her at her home in the second quarter of Jerusalem. 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel,' she answered: 'Say to the man who sent you to me, "This is the word of the LORD: I am bringing disaster on this place and its inhabitants as foretold in the book which the king of Judah has read, because they have forsaken me and burnt sacrifices to other

gods, provoking my anger with all the idols they have made with their own hands; therefore, my wrath is kindled against this place and will not be quenched." This is what you shall say to the king of Judah who sent you to seek guidance of the LORD: "This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: You have listened to my words and shown a willing heart, you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard me say that this place and its inhabitants would become objects of loathing and scorn, you rent your clothes and wept before me. Because of all this, I for my part have heard you. This is the very word of the LORD. Therefore, I will gather you to your forefathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace; you will not live to see all the disaster which I am bringing upon this place."' So they brought back word to the king.

Then the king sent and called all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem together, and went up to the house of the LORD; he took with him the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets, the whole population, high and low. There he read out to them all the book of the covenant discovered in the house of the LORD; and then, standing on the dais,<sup>o</sup> the king made a covenant before the LORD to obey him and keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and soul, and so fulfil the terms of the covenant written in this book. And all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

Next, the king ordered the high priest Hilkiah, the deputy high priest,<sup>p</sup> and those on duty at the entrance, to remove from the house of the LORD all the objects made for Baal and Asherah and all the host of heaven;

<sup>n</sup> Verses 1-3: cp. 2 Chr. 34. 29-32.

<sup>o</sup> Or by the pillar.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. priests.

*Shaphan* to institute the Temple repairs; compare 12.4-16. 8-13: The king's response to the *book* implies that it contained divine requirements not previously known. 14-20: The punishment promised in the book is inescapable, but because of the faithfulness of Josiah it is to be postponed until after his death. 23.1-3: *The book of the covenant* becomes authorized as the law of the land; the *book* is often taken to be the central portion of Deuteronomy, chs. 5-28. 4-14: The cult objects and sites of temples were regarded as illicit both from the viewpoint

he burnt these outside Jerusalem, in the open country by the Kidron, and carried the ashes to Bethel. He suppressed the heathen priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn sacrifices at the hill-shrines in the cities of Judah and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, as well as those who burnt sacrifices to Baal, to the sun and moon and planets and all the host of heaven. He took the symbol of Asherah<sup>q</sup> from the house of the LORD to the gorge of the Kidron outside Jerusalem, burnt it there and pounded it to dust, which was then scattered over the common burial-ground. He also pulled down the houses of the male prostitutes attached to the house of the LORD, where the women wove vestments in honour of Asherah. He brought in all the priests from the cities of Judah and desecrated the hill-shrines where they had burnt sacrifices, from Geba to Beersheba, and dismantled the hill-shrines of the demons<sup>r</sup> in front of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city, to the left of the city gate. These priests, however, never came up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem but used to eat unleavened bread with the priests of their clan. He desecrated Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one might make his son or daughter pass through the fire in honour of Molech.<sup>s</sup> He destroyed the horses that the kings of Judah had set up in honour of the sun at the entrance to the house of the LORD, beside the room of Nathan-melek the eunuch in the colonnade, and he burnt the chariots of the sun. He pulled down the altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof by the upper chamber of Ahaz and the altars made by Manasseh in the two courts of the house of the LORD; he pounded them to dust and threw it into the gorge of the Kidron. Also, on the east of Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Olives, the king desecrated

the hill-shrines which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the loathsome goddess of the Sidonians, and for Kemosh the loathsome god of Moab, and for Milcom the abominable god of the Ammonites; he broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the sacred poles and filled the places where they had stood with human bones.

At Bethel he dismantled the altar by<sup>t</sup> the hill-shrine made by Jeroboam son of Nebat who led Israel into sin, together with the hill-shrine itself; he broke its stones in pieces, crushed them to dust and burnt the sacred pole. When Josiah set eyes on the graves which were there on the hill, he sent and took the bones from them and burnt them on the altar to desecrate it, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD announced by the man of God when Jeroboam stood by the altar at the feast. But when he caught sight of the grave of the man of God who had foretold these things, he asked, 'What is that monument I see there?' The people of the city answered, 'The grave of the man of God who came from Judah and foretold all that you have done to the altar at Bethel.' 'Leave it alone,' he said; 'let no one disturb his bones.' So they spared his bones and also those of the prophet who came from Samaria. Further, Josiah suppressed all the hill-shrines in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had set up and thereby provoked the LORD's anger, and he did to them what he had done at Bethel. He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the hill-shrines who were there, and he burnt human bones upon them. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

The king ordered all the people to keep the Passover to the LORD their God, as this book of the covenant pre-

<sup>q</sup> symbol of Asherah: or sacred pole. <sup>r</sup> Or satyrs.  
<sup>s</sup> in honour of Molech: or for an offering.  
<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

of Josiah and of those who in postexilic times were faithful to the norms here set forth. 8-9: While *hill-shrines* were eliminated, their *priests* were incorporated into a more complex Jerusalemite priesthood. 13: Compare 1 Kgs.11.7. 15-20: Later in his reign, after Assyria had collapsed, Josiah moved to take over the territory of the former Northern Kingdom. He defended that territory against Pharaoh Necho II, at the cost of his life (vv. 29-30; compare 2 Chr.35.20-25). 16-18: See 1 Kgs.13.2,30-32. 21-23: The *Passover* observance was the occasion

- 22 scribed; no such Passover had been kept either when the judges were ruling Israel or during the times of the kings of Israel and Judah. But in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.
- 24 Further, Josiah got rid of all who called up ghosts and spirits, of all household gods and idols and all the loathsome objects seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he might fulfil the requirements of the law written in the book which the priest Hilkiah had discovered in the house of the LORD.
- 25 No king before him had turned to the LORD as he did, with all his heart and soul and strength, following the whole law of Moses; nor did any king like him appear again.
- 26 Yet the LORD did not abate his fierce anger; it still burned against Judah because of all the provocation which Manasseh had given him.
- 27 'Judah also I will banish from my presence', he declared, 'as I banished Israel; and I will cast off this city of Jerusalem which once I chose, and the house where I promised that my Name should be.'
- 28 The other events and acts of Josiah's reign are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah. It was in his reign that Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt set out for the river Euphrates to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah went to meet him; and when they met at Megiddo, Pharaoh Necho slew him. His attendants conveyed his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own burial place. Then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and anointed him king in place of his father.
- 31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months; his mother was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done. Pharaoh Necho removed him from the throne<sup>v</sup> in Jerusalem, and imposed on the land a fine of a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. Pharaoh Necho made Josiah's son Eliakim king in place of his father and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He took Jehoahaz and brought him to Egypt, where he died. Jehoiakim paid the silver and gold to Pharaoh, taxing the country to meet Pharaoh's demands; he exacted it from the people, from every man according to his assessment, so that he could pay Pharaoh Necho.
- Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years; his mother was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as his forefathers had done. During his reign Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took the field, and Jehoiakim became his vassal; but three years later he broke with him and revolted. The LORD launched against him raiding-parties of Chaldaeans, Aramaeans, Moabites, and Ammonites, letting them range through Judah and ravage it, as the LORD had foretold through his servants the prophets. All this happened to Judah in fulfilment of the LORD's purpose to banish them from his presence, because of all the sin that Manasseh had committed and because of the innocent blood that he had shed; he had drenched Jerusalem with innocent

<sup>u</sup> Verses 30-34: cp. 2 Chr. 36. 1-4.

<sup>v</sup> removed . . . throne: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Chr. 36. 3; Heb. bound him at Riblah in the land of Hamath when he was king . . .

on which the people reconstituted themselves as the people of God; compare 2 Chr. ch. 30 and Ezra 6.19-22. 26-27: See 21.10-15; 22.16-20. 29-30: By the account in 2 Chr.35.20-25 Josiah was moving to impede Necho's aid for the Assyrians at Carchemish. The Babylonians took and held that city, thanks, perhaps, to Josiah's delaying tactics against the Egyptians. 30: *The people of the land* were Josiah's primary support; see 11.14 n.

23.31-24.20: *The last kings of Judah.* 31-35: *Jehoahaz* was Josiah's second son, born to his second wife (vv. 31,36). After Josiah's death he, rather than Jehoiakim, the eldest son, was put on the throne by "the people of the land" (v. 30). Accordingly, Necho put the older son on the throne (609 B.C.) and imposed a heavy fine on the people of the land, who had been the mainstay of Josiah's movement; see 11.14 n. 24.1: *Nebuchadnezzar* won the battle of Carchemish in 605 (see Jer.46.2), driving Egyptian forces out of Syria. *Jehoiakim* took the first opportunity, however, to rebel against the new Babylonian master. 2: See Jer.25.9 3-4: See 21.10-15.

blood, and the LORD would not forgive  
 5 him. The other events and acts of  
 Jehoiakim's reign are recorded in the  
 6 annals of the kings of Judah. He rested  
 with his forefathers, and was succeeded  
 7 by his son Jehoiachin. The king of  
 Egypt did not leave his own land again,  
 because the king of Babylon had  
 stripped him of all his possessions, from  
 the Torrent of Egypt to the river  
 Euphrates.

*Downfall of the southern kingdom*

8<sup>w</sup> JEHOIACHIN WAS EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD  
 when he came to the throne, and he  
 reigned in Jerusalem for three months;  
 his mother was Nehushta daughter of  
 9 Elnathan of Jerusalem. He did what  
 was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as  
 10 his father had done. At that time the  
 troops of Nebuchadnezzar king of  
 Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and  
 11 besieged the city. Nebuchadnezzar  
 arrived while his troops were besieging  
 12 it, and Jehoiachin king of Judah, his  
 mother, his courtiers, his officers, and  
 his eunuchs, all surrendered to the  
 king of Babylon. The king of Babylon,  
 now in the eighth year of his reign,  
 13 took him prisoner; and, as the LORD  
 had foretold, he carried off all the trea-  
 sures of the house of the LORD and of  
 the royal palace and broke up all the  
 vessels of gold which Solomon king of  
 Israel had made for the temple of the  
 14 LORD. He carried the people of Jeru-  
 salem into exile, the officers and the  
 fighting men, ten thousand in number,  
 together with all the craftsmen and  
 smiths; only the weakest class of people  
 15 were left. He deported Jehoiachin to  
 Babylon; he also took into exile from  
 Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother  
 and his wives, his eunuchs and the  
 16 foremost men of the land. He also  
 deported to Babylon all the men of sub-  
 stance, seven thousand in number,  
 and a thousand craftsmen and smiths,

all of them able-bodied men and  
 skilled armourers. He made Mattaniah, 17  
 uncle of Jehoiachin, king in his place  
 and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old 18<sup>x</sup>  
 when he came to the throne, and he  
 reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years;  
 his mother was Hamutal daughter of  
 Jeremiah of Libnah. He did what was 19  
 wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as  
 Jehoiakim had done. Jerusalem and 20  
 Judah so angered the LORD that in the  
 end he banished them from his sight;  
 and Zedekiah rebelled against the  
 king of Babylon.

In the ninth year of his reign, in the 25<sup>y</sup>  
 tenth month, on the tenth day of the  
 month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Bab-  
 ylon advanced with all his army against  
 Jerusalem, invested it and erected  
 watch-towers against it on every side;  
 the siege lasted till the eleventh year of 2  
 King Zedekiah. In the fourth month 3  
 of that year,<sup>z</sup> on the ninth day of the  
 month, when famine was severe in the  
 city and there was no food for the  
 common people, the city was thrown 4  
 open. When Zedekiah king of Judah  
 saw this,<sup>a</sup> he and all his armed escort  
 left the city and fled by night through  
 the gate called Between the Two Walls,  
 near the king's garden. They escaped  
 towards the Arabah, although the Chal-  
 daeans were surrounding the city. But 5  
 the Chaldaean army pursued the king  
 and overtook him in the lowlands of  
 Jericho; and all his company was  
 dispersed. The king was seized and 6  
 brought before the king of Babylon at  
 Riblah, where he pleaded his case  
 before him. Zedekiah's sons were slain 7  
 before his eyes; then his eyes were put  
 out, and he was brought to Babylon  
 in fetters of bronze.

In the fifth month, on the seventh 8  
 day of the month, in the nineteenth year

w Verses 8-17: cp. 2 Chr. 36, 9, 10.

x 24, 18-25, 21: cp. Jer. 52, 1-27.

y Verses 1-12: cp. Jer. 39, 1-10; verses 1-17: cp. 2 Chr. 36, 17-20.

z In . . . year: prob. rdg., cp. Jer. 52, 6; Heb. om.

a When . . . this: prob. rdg., cp. Jer. 39, 4; Heb. om.

10-17: Jehoiakim had rebelled against *Nebuchadnezzar*, but he died before the inevitable sur-  
 render. His young son *Jehoiachin* thus bore the brunt of the anti-Babylonian policy. 18-20:  
*Zedekiah* appears repeatedly in the Book of Jer., e.g. Jer. 21.1-7; 38.14-28; 39.1-10.

25.1-30: The destruction of Jerusalem. 2-4: *Jerusalem* fell on July 29, 587 B.C.; some scholars,  
 assuming an autumn new year, give the year as 586. The city was destroyed one month later  
 (v. 8). Some records were seemingly removed during that month and were thus available to the  
 Deuteronomic historians. *The common people* (v. 4) were "the people of the land"; see 11.14 n.

of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the king's bodyguard, came to Jerusalem and set fire to the house of the LORD and the royal palace; all the houses in the city, including the mansion of Gedaliah,<sup>b</sup> were burnt down. The Chaldaean forces with the captain of the guard pulled down the walls all round Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan captain of the guard deported the rest of the people left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and any remaining artisans.<sup>c</sup> He left only the weakest class of people to be vine-dressers and labourers.

The Chadaeans broke up the pillars of bronze in the house of the LORD, the trolleys, and the Sea of bronze, and took the metal to Babylon. They took also the pots, shovels, snuffers, saucers, and all the vessels of bronze used in the service of the temple. The captain of the guard took away the precious metal, whether gold or silver, of which the fire-pans and the tossing-bowls were made. The bronze of the two pillars, the one Sea, and the trolleys, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, was beyond weighing. The one pillar was eighteen cubits high and its capital was bronze; the capital was three cubits high, and a decoration of network and pomegranates ran all round it, wholly of bronze. The other pillar, with its network, was exactly like it.

The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the deputy chief priest and the three on duty at the entrance; he took also from the city a eunuch who was in charge of the fighting men, five of those with right of access to the king who were still in the city, the adjutant-general<sup>d</sup> whose duty was to muster the people for war, and sixty men of the people who were still there. These Nebuzaradan captain of the guard brought to the king of Babylon at

Riblah. There, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them flogged and put to death. So Judah went into exile from their own land.

Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, governor over the few people whom he had left in Judah. When the captains of the armed bands and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, they all came to him at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth of Netophah, and Jaazaniah of Beth-maacah. Then Gedaliah gave them and their men this assurance: 'Have no fear of the Chaldaean officers. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon; and then all will be well with you.' But in the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was a member of the royal house, came with ten men and murdered Gedaliah and the Jews and Chadaeans who were with him at Mizpah. Thereupon all the people, high and low, and the captains of the armed bands, fled to Egypt for fear of the Chadaeans.

In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach<sup>e</sup> king of Babylon in the year of his accession showed favour to Jehoiachin king of Judah. He brought him out of prison, treated him kindly and gave him a seat at table above the kings with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin discarded his prison clothes and lived as a pensioner of the king for the rest of his life. For his maintenance, a regular daily allowance was given him by the king as long as he lived.

<sup>b</sup> Gedaliah: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a great man.

<sup>c</sup> any remaining artisans: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. Jer. 52. 15.*

*Heb.* the remaining crowd.

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds commander-in-chief.

<sup>e</sup> *Verses 27-30: cp. Jer. 52. 31-34. f Or Evil-marduk.*

13-17: The bronze work of the Temple court is described in 1 Kgs. 7.15-46 and 7.13-51 n. 19: That there was an officer responsible for mustering the people ("the people of the land"; see 11.14 n.) for war indicates the dependence of the Judean monarchy on a draft in its later years. 22: It should be noted that *Gedaliah* was the grandson of Josiah's adjutant-general (22.3), sharing a pro-Babylonian orientation with Josiah. 23-26: Compare Jer. chs. 41-44. 27-30: Compare Jer. 52.31-34. This last hopeful word of the Deuteronomic history may be a later appendix. It reaffirms a motif of the whole work, that the LORD will not forever abandon the house of David.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles are the first and larger part of a comprehensive work continued in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The entire work is concerned with the proper service of the LORD at the Temple in Jerusalem: how that service was established by David (1 Chr.), how it was finally lost through the folly of the kings of Judah (2 Chr.), and how it was restored by Ezra and Nehemiah. The writing was completed some time during the fourth century B.C.

The Chronicler made extensive use of the books of Samuel and Kings, often taking over long passages without major change; the annotations to those books can be consulted. He also made use of historical sources not otherwise known (see, e.g. 2 Chr. 11.5-12; 26.11-13). He reproduced genealogical lists which probably reflect conditions earlier than his own time (see, e.g. 1 Chr. chs. 23-27).

David is the center of attention in 1 Chronicles. After a genealogical survey of history until David (chs. 1-9), David is treated in four blocks of material: his accession to the throne (chs. 10-12), his bringing the Ark into Jerusalem (chs. 13-16), his military achievements (chs. 18-20), and his elaborate preparation for the building of the Temple before his death (chs. 21-29). 2 Chronicles carries on the account of David's dynasty.

While some of the sources used have great historical value, the Chronicler's work itself should not be read as precise history. He presents, rather, a liturgical history of the City of David, with a prevalent mood and atmosphere of joyful veneration of a sacred past, centered in the Temple. Most of the numbers which he gives and the battles which he describes are more like figures in stained-glass windows than in real life. The heroes of his work are the faithful servants of the sanctuary, the Levites, and especially the singers. It is usually thought that the Chronicler was himself one of these singers.

## *Genealogies from Adam to Saul*

11,2<sup>a</sup> **A**DAM, SETH, ENOSH, KENAN, MAHA-  
3 lalé, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah,  
4 Lamech, Noah.

The sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

5<sup>b</sup> The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan,<sup>c</sup> Tubal, Meshech and 6 Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, 7 Diphath and Togarmah. The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim<sup>d</sup> and Rodanim.

8<sup>e</sup> The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim,<sup>f</sup> 9 Put and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama and Sabtecha. The sons of Raama: Sheba

10 and Dedan. Cush was the father of Nimrod, who began to show himself a 11<sup>g</sup> man of might on earth. From Mizraim sprang the Lydians, Anamites, Leha-

bites, Naphtuhites, Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Capthorites, from whom the Philistines were descended.

Canaan was the father of Sidon, 13 who was his eldest son, and Heth,<sup>h</sup> the 14 Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and 16 the Hamathites.

The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, 17<sup>i</sup> Arphaxad, Lud<sup>j</sup> and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash. Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, 18 and Shelah the father of Eber. Eber 19 had two sons: one was named Peleg,<sup>k</sup>

*a* Verses 2-4: cp. Gen. 5. 9-32.

*b* Verses 5-7: cp. Gen. 10. 2-4.

*c* Or Greece.

*d* Or Tarshish of the Kittians.

*e* Verses 8-10: cp. Gen. 10. 6-8.

*f* Or Egypt.

*g* Verses 11-16: cp. Gen. 10. 13-18.

*h* Or the Hittites. *i* Verses 17-23: cp. Gen. 10. 22-29.

*j* Or the Lydians. *k* That is Division.

**1.1-9.44: Genealogical prologues.** To his liturgical history of the City of David, the Chronicler gave a universal setting by assembling the genealogies of 1 Chr. chs. 1-9, recording the line from Adam to David, with whom the liturgical history really began. Within this overall plan, some of the sources utilized had their own purposes, as is noted. A striking feature is the almost total absence of narrative here; world history simply moves through the families of man until it reaches David.

**1.1-54: From Adam to Israel.** Here the materials are from Genesis; special materials from the Chronicler's own circle (see Introduction) either were not required or were not available. **1-4:** The Chronicler provides only the briefest list of the names of the antediluvians, omitting data, such as their ages at the birth of their sons given in Gen. 5.3-31. **5-23:** This is a catalogue

- because in his time the earth was divided, and his brother's name was
- 20 Joktan. Joktan was the father of Almo-  
 21 dad, Sheleph, Hazarmoth, Jerah, Had-  
 22 oram, Uzal, Diklah, Ebal,<sup>t</sup> Abimael,  
 23 Sheba, Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.
- 24<sup>m</sup> The line of<sup>n</sup> Shem: Arphaxad, Shelah,  
 25,26 Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah,  
 27,28 Abram, also known as Abraham, whose sons were Isaac and Ishmael.
- 29<sup>o</sup> The sons of<sup>p</sup> Ishmael in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the eldest, then  
 30 Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma,  
 31 Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Teman, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were Ishmael's sons.
- 32<sup>q</sup> The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and  
 33 Dedan. The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Enoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.
- 34 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac's sons were Esau and Israel.
- 35<sup>r</sup> The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel,  
 36 Jeush, Jalam and Korah. The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam,  
 37 Kenaz, Timna and Amalek. The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah.
- 38<sup>s</sup> The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer and  
 39 Dishan. The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam; and Lotan had a sister named  
 40 Timna. The sons of Shobal: Alvan,
- Manahath, Ebal, Shephi and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. The son<sup>t</sup> of Anah: Dishon. The sons of  
 41 Dishon: Amram, Eshban, Ithran and Cheran. The sons of Ezer: Bilhan,  
 42 Zavan and Akan. The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.
- These are the kings who ruled over  
 43<sup>u</sup> Edom before there were kings in Israel: Bela son of Beor, whose city was named Dinhabah. When he died, he  
 44 was succeeded by Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah. When Jobab died, he was  
 45 succeeded by Husham of Teman. When  
 46 Husham died, he was succeeded by Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in Moabite country. His city was named Avith. When Hadad died,  
 47 he was succeeded by Samlah of Masrekah. When Samlah died, he was  
 48 succeeded by Saul of Rehoboth on the River. When Saul died, he was suc-  
 49 ceeded by Baal-hanan son of Akbor. When Baal-hanan died, he was suc-  
 50 ceeded by Hadad. His city was named Pai; his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred a woman of Me-  
 zahab.<sup>v</sup>
- After Hadad died the chiefs in Edom 51

<sup>i</sup> Or Obal, cp. Gen. 10. 28.

<sup>m</sup> Verses 24-27: cp. Gen. 11. 10-26.

<sup>n</sup> The line of: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>o</sup> Verses 29-31: cp. Gen. 25. 13-16.

<sup>p</sup> The sons of: prob. rdg., cp. Gen. 25. 13; Heb. om.

<sup>q</sup> Verses 32. 33: cp. Gen. 25. 1-4.

<sup>r</sup> Verses 35-37: cp. Gen. 36. 4, 5, 9-13.

<sup>s</sup> Verses 38-42: cp. Gen. 36. 20-28.

<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. sons; the same correction is made in several other places in chs. 1-9.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 43-54: cp. Gen. 36. 31-43.

<sup>v</sup> Or daughter of Mezahab.

of nations rather than simply a genealogy; compare Gen. ch. 10. 24-27: The genealogy from *Shem* through *Abraham* is given. Just as there were ten generations before the flood, so there were ten from the flood to Abraham. 29-54: Here the Chronicler rearranges the genealogies found in Genesis. He consistently lists first the descendants who do not lead to David. 29-34: The offspring of Abraham are given in three groups; each son was from a different wife, Hagar, Keturah, and Sarah. See v. 32 n. 31: The Chronicler does not comment here (as does Gen. 25.16) that the twelve names of 1.29-30 were tribal and territorial groups. The twelve tribes of *Ishmael* at some time formed a union like that of the twelve tribes of Israel. 32: The Chronicler mentions specifically *Keturah*, but not Hagar or Sarah. 33: Gen. 25.3 includes two sons of *Dedan*, omitted here, probably inadvertently. 34: The Chronicler regularly uses the name *Israel* rather than Jacob. 35-54: The longer treatment given to the descendants of *Esau* is probably due to the extent of the materials available in Gen. 36.31-43 rather than to any special importance of their own. 35-37: The Chronicler greatly abbreviates Gen. 36.1-14, mainly by eliminating some repetitions and the references to the Canaanite wives of *Esau*. 36: The Chronicler, or his source, mistakes *Timna* for a son instead of a concubine; see Gen. 36.12. 38-42: The Chronicler skips the lists of chiefs of the tribes of Edom (Gen. 36.15-19). Instead, surprisingly, he gives lists of the clans of pre-Edomite inhabitants, *the sons of Seir* (Seir was a mountainous region south of Judah), called Horites in the Genesis source. 43-50: It is remarkable that Israelites should have preserved this careful list of *the kings of Edom*. The form of the Edomite monarchy apparently required that the kingship pass from one family to another, as no dynastic principle was observed. Since the city of each king is also listed, that too was apparently a point of importance. 51-54: The Chronicler makes these *chiefs* successors to the kings; in his source

were: chief Timna, chief Aliah, chief  
52 Jetheth, chief Oholibamah, chief Elah,  
53 chief Pinon, chief Kenaz, chief Teman,  
54 chief Mibzar, chief Magdiel and chief  
Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

2 These were the sons of Israel: Reu-  
ben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,  
2 Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naph-  
tali, Gad and Asher.

3 The sons of Judah: Er, Onan and  
Shelah; the mother of these three was  
a Canaanite woman, Bathshua.<sup>w</sup> Er,  
Judah's eldest son, displeased the LORD  
4 and the LORD slew him. Then Tamar,  
Judah's daughter-in-law, bore him  
Perez and Zerah, making in all five  
5 sons of Judah. The sons of Perez:  
6 Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Zerah:  
Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and  
7 Darda, five in all. The son of Zimri:  
Carmi.<sup>x</sup> The son of Carmi: Achar,  
who troubled Israel by his violation of  
8 the sacred ban. The son of Ethan:  
9 Azariah. The sons of Hezron: Jerah-  
meel, Ram and Caleb. Ram was the  
10 father of Amminadab, Amminadab  
father of Nahshon prince of Judah.  
11 Nahshon was the father of Salma,  
12 Salma father of Boaz, Boaz father of  
13 Obed, Obed father of Jesse. The eldest  
son of Jesse was Eliab, the second

Abinadab, the third Shimea, the 14  
fourth Nethaneel, the fifth Raddai, the 15  
sixth Ozem, the seventh David; their 16  
sisters were Zeruah and Abigail. The  
sons of Zeruah: Abishai, Joab and  
Asahel, three in all. Abigail was the 17  
mother of Amasa; his father was Jether  
the Ishmaelite.

Caleb son of Hezron had Jerioth by 18  
Azubah his wife;<sup>y</sup> these were her  
sons: Jeshur, Shobab and Ardon.  
When Azubah died, Caleb married 19  
Ephrath, who bore him Hur. Hur was 20  
the father of Uri, and Uri father of  
Bezalel. Later, Hezron, then sixty years 21  
of age, had intercourse with the  
daughter of Machir father of Gilead,  
having married her, and she bore  
Segub. Segub was the father of Jair, 22  
who had twenty-three cities in Gilead.  
Geshur and Aram took from their 23  
Havvoth-jair, and Kenath and its de-  
pendent villages, a total of sixty towns.  
All these were descendants of Machir  
father of Gilead. After the death of 24  
Hezron, Caleb had intercourse with  
Ephrathah and she bore him Ashhur  
the founder of Tekoa.

<sup>w</sup> Bathshua: or daughter of Shua.

<sup>x</sup> The son . . . Carmi: prob. rdg. (cp. Josh. 7. 1, 18);  
Heb. om.

<sup>y</sup> his wife: prob. rdg.; Heb. a woman and.

(Gen.36.51-54) they simply form an alternative list of earlier chiefs; the significance of this alternative list is no longer clear.

2.1-55: The offspring of Judah. The details of the lists provided here present complexities. 1-2: There is considerable variety in the sequence in which the twelve *sons of Israel* are listed in Scripture; see, e.g. Gen.29.32-30.24 (Benjamin in 35.16-18); 35.23-25; and 46.8-25. The list here is close to Gen.35.23-25 and Exod.1.2-4, though *Dan* could well be linked with *Naphali*, as sons of the same mother. 3-17: An initial genealogy carries the main line from the *sons of Judah* to the generation of *David* and his contemporary relatives; no part of the genealogies was more important to the Chronicler. 3-5: For the names and events referred to here, see Gen. ch. 38. 5: The *Perez-Hezron* line is most important; see vv. 9-15. 6: Here some traditional names of wise men and singers are incorporated into the minor Judean line of *Zerah*; see *Ethan* and *Heman* as inspired musicians in 15.17-18 and 25.1 (Jeduthun = Ethan). Compare 1 Kgs. 4.31 (which has no mention of *Zimri*). 7: *Zimri* is included here as a son of *Zerah* (see v. 6 n.), in order to link the Judahite genealogy of the "troubler" *Achar* with the minor Judean clan of *Zerah*; compare Josh.7.1,18. *Achar* and *Achon*, and *Zimri* and *Zabdi* (of Josh.7.1, etc.) are pronunciation or copyist variants of the same names. 9-12: The three *sons of Hezron* are particularly important because the rest of this genealogy of Judah traces their descendants separately: *Ram* (vv. 10-17), *Caleb* (vv. 18-24), and *Jerahmeel* (vv. 25-41). 11-12: *Nahshon* is listed as the chief of the Judahites during Israel's Wilderness sojourn (Num.1.7), but the same position is occupied by Caleb in another tradition (Num.13.6). On *Boaz*, *Obed*, and *Jesse*, the immediate ancestors of David, see Ruth 4.13-17. 13: On the sons of *Jesse*, see 1 Sam.16.1-13. 16: The main account of the *sons of Zeruah* and their role in the rise of David is in 2 Sam. chs. 2-3; see especially 2 Sam.2.18-24. 18-24: *Caleb* was a name claimed as an ancestor by many clans in Judah with Hebron as their major city; see Josh. 14.6-15; 15.13-19. Several different lists of Calebite clans and villages arranged as family trees were seemingly available to the Chronicler: he used them even though they were not fully consistent; see vv. 42-55 and 4.11-15. 18: The different wives of an ancestor stand for different groupings of clans or villages within the one tribe or tribal division. 20: On *Bezalel*, artisan of the Tabernacle, see Exod.31.2. 21-23: The area of northeastern Transjordan (*Gilead*) was partially colonized by Israelites from west of the Jordan, though the colonists are not otherwise identified as Judeans; see



25 The sons of Jerahmeel eldest son of  
 Hezron by<sup>z</sup> Ahijah were Ram the  
 26 eldest, Bunah, Oren and Ozem. Jerahmeel  
 had another wife, whose name  
 was Atarah; she was the mother of  
 27 Onam. The sons of Ram eldest son of  
 Jerahmeel: Maaz, Jamin and Eker.  
 28 The sons of Onam: Shammai and  
 Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab  
 29 and Abishur. The name of Abishur's  
 wife was Abihail; she bore him Ahban  
 30 and Molid. The sons of Nadab: Seled  
 and Ephraim; Seled died without  
 31 children. Ephraim's son was Ishi, Ishi's  
 son Sheshan, Sheshan's son Ahlai.  
 32 The sons of Jada brother of Shammai:  
 Jether and Jonathan; Jether died  
 33 without children. The sons of Jonathan:  
 Peleth and Zaza. These were the descend-  
 ants of Jerahmeel.  
 34 Sheshan had daughters but no sons.  
 He had an Egyptian servant named  
 35 Jarha; he gave his daughter in mar-  
 riage to this Jarha, and she bore him  
 36 Attai. Attai was the father of Nathan,  
 37 Nathan father of Zabad, Zabad father  
 38 of Ephlal, Ephlal father of Obed, Obed  
 father of Jehu, Jehu father of Azariah,  
 39 Azariah father of Helez, Helez father  
 40 of Elasa, Elasa father of Sisamai,  
 41 Sisamai father of Shallum, Shallum  
 father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah  
 42 father of Elishama.  
 The sons of Caleb brother of Jerahmeel:  
 43 Mesha the eldest, founder of Hebron.  
 The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tap-  
 44 puah, Rekem and Shema. Shema was  
 the father of Raham father of Jor-  
 koam, and Rekem was the father of  
 45 Shammai. The son of Shammai was  
 Maon, and Maon was the founder  
 46 of Beth-zur. Ephah, Caleb's concu-  
 bine, was the mother of Haran, Moza

and Gazez; Haran was the father of  
 Gazez. The sons of Jahdai: Regem,  
 47 Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah and  
 Shaaph. Maacah, Caleb's concubine,  
 48 was the mother of Sheber and Tir-  
 hanah; she bore also Shaaph founder  
 49 of Madmannah, and Sheva founder of  
 Machbenah and Gibeab. Caleb also had  
 a daughter named Achsah.

The descendants of Caleb: the sons  
 50 of Hur, the eldest son of Ephrathah:  
 Shobal the founder of Kiriath-jearim,  
 Salma the founder of Bethlehem, and  
 51 Hareph the founder of Beth-gader.  
 Shobal the founder of Kiriath-jearim  
 52 was the father of Reaiah<sup>b</sup> and the an-  
 cestor of half the Manahethites.<sup>c</sup>

The clans of Kiriath-jearim: Ithrites,  
 53 Puhites, Shumathites, and Mishrait-  
 es, from whom were descended the Zareath-  
 ites and the Eshtaulites.

The descendants of Salma: Bethle-  
 54 hem, the Netophathites, Ataroth, Beth-  
 joab, half the Manahethites, and the  
 Zorites.

The clans of Sophrithes<sup>d</sup> living at  
 55 Jabez: Tirathites, Shimeathites, and  
 Suchathites. These were Kenites who  
 were connected by marriage with the  
 ancestor of the Rechabites.

These were the sons of David, born  
 31<sup>e</sup> at Hebron: the eldest Amnon, whose  
 mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel; the  
 second Daniel, whose mother was  
 Abigail of Carmel; the third Absalom,  
 2 whose mother was Maacah daughter of  
 Talmai king of Geshur; the fourth  
 Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith;  
 the fifth Shephatiah, whose mother 3

<sup>z</sup> by: prob. rdg.: Heb. om.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds the sons of.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 4. 2; Heb. the seer.

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. verse 54; Heb. Menuhoth.

<sup>d</sup> Or secretaries.

<sup>e</sup> Verses 1-4: cp. 2 Sam. 3. 2-5.

Josh.13.29-31. 25-41: The sons of Jerahmeel were another group of clans that were eventually absorbed into Judah by taking a place in the genealogy of Hezron alongside Ram and Caleb (see v. 9). 34-41: A mixture of Canaanite and Egyptian (slave) people in southern Palestine is historically probable. 42-54: The additional Caleb genealogies show special interest in place names (used as if they were personal names) and in the founding of towns. Hebron, for example, appears as the city in v. 42 and as an ancestor in v. 43, while Bethlehem appears as a son of Salma in v. 54. 55: By mentioning Sophrithes ("scribes"), the Chronicler may be drawing on a list of professional accountants, in effect, lawyers. Compare the function of Baruch, the scribe, in Jer.32.9-12. The Rechabites presumably refers to the sons of Rechab who appear in 2 Kgs. 10.15-16 and Jer.35.1-11. This verse suggests a link between the old Kenite clan to which Moses' father-in-law belonged (Judg.4.11) and the Rechabites of later times.

3.1-24: The line of David. This is a continuation of the line of Ram from 2.17. 1-9: The sons of David are listed as in 2 Sam.3.2-5 and 5.14-16. A comparison of minor differences in the three lists of David's sons born at Jerusalem (2 Sam.5.14-16; 1 Chr.3.5-8; 14.4-7) is

was Abital; the sixth Ithream, whose  
 4 mother was David's wife Eglah. These  
 six were born at Hebron, where David  
 reigned seven years and six months.  
 In Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three  
 5<sup>f</sup> years, and there the following sons  
 were born to him: Shimea, Shobab,  
 Nathan and Solomon; these four were  
 sons of Bathsheba daughter of Am-  
 6 miel. There were nine others: Ithar,  
 7 Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg,  
 8 Japhia, Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet.  
 9 These were all the sons of David, with  
 their sister Tamar, in addition to his  
 sons by concubines.  
 10 Solomon's son was Rehoboam, his  
 son Abia, his son Asa, his son Jehosha-  
 11 phat, his son Joram, his son Ahaziah,  
 12 his son Joash, his son Amaziah, his  
 son Azariah, his son Jotham, his son  
 13 Ahaz, his son Hezekiah, his son Manas-  
 14 seh, his son Amon, and his son Josiah.  
 15 The sons of Josiah: the eldest was  
 Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the  
 third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum.  
 16 The sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah and  
 17 Zedekiah. The sons of Jeconiah, a pris-  
 18 oner:<sup>g</sup> Shealtiel, Malchiram, Pedaiah,  
 19 Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and  
 20 Nedabiah. The sons of Pedaiah: Zerub-  
 21 babel and Shimei. The sons of Zerub-  
 22 babel: Meshullam and Hananiah; they  
 had a sister, Shelomith. There were five  
 23 others; Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah,  
 Hasadiah and Jushab-hesed. The sons  
 of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Isaiah; his  
 son was Rephaiah, his son Arnan, his  
 son Obadiah, his son Shecaniah. The  
 sons of Shecaniah: Shemaiah,<sup>h</sup> Hattush,  
 Igeal, Bariah, Neariah and Shaphat, six  
 in all. The sons of Neariah: Elieoenai,  
 Hezekiah and Azrikam, three in all.

The sons of Elieoenai: Hodaiah, Elia- 24  
 shib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Dalaiah  
 and Anani, seven in all.

The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, 4  
 Carmi, Hur and Shobal. Reaiah son of  
 2 Shobal was the father of Jahath,  
 Jahath father of Ahumai and Lahad.  
 These were the clans of the Zorathites.

The sons of Etam: Jezeel, Ishma, 3-4  
 Idbash, Penuel the founder of Gedor,  
 and Ezer the founder of Hushah; they  
 had a sister named Hazeleponi. These  
 were the sons of Hur: Ephrathah the  
 eldest, the founder of Bethlehem.

Ashhur the founder of Tekoa had 5  
 two wives, Helah and Naarah. Naarah 6  
 bore him Ahuzam, Hephher, Temeni and  
 Haahashtari.<sup>i</sup> These were the sons of  
 Naarah. The sons of Helah: Zereth, 7  
 Jezoar, Ethnan and Coz. Coz was the 8  
 father of Anub and Zobebah and the  
 clans of Aharhel son of Harum.

Jabez ranked higher than his brothers; 9  
 his mother called him Jabez because,  
 as she said, she had borne him in 10  
 pain. Jabez called upon the God of  
 Israel and said, 'I pray thee, bless me  
 and grant me wide territories. May 10  
 thy hand be with me, and do me no  
 harm, I pray thee, and let me be free  
 from pain'; and God granted his  
 petition.

Kelub brother of Shuah was the 11  
 father of Mehir the father of Eshton.  
 Eshton was the father of Beth-rapha, 12  
 Paseah, and Tehinnah father of Ir-  
 nahash. These were the men of Rechah.

The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and 13

<sup>f</sup> Verses 5-8: cp. 14. 4-7; 2 Sam. 5. 14-16.

<sup>g</sup> Jeconiah, a prisoner; or Jeconiah: Assir, . . .

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and the sons of Shemaiah.

<sup>i</sup> Temeni and Haahashtari: or the Temanite and the  
 Ahashtarite.

instructive for the difficulties facing ancient writers in transmitting such lists. 10-14: The kings of Judah from *Solomon* to *Josiah* are listed without reference to brothers or other members of the royal family. Athaliah (2 Kgs. ch. 11), the one queen to rule over Judah, and an evil woman, is omitted. 14-16: The order and number of the *sons of Josiah* are confused. No *Johanan* is otherwise known; *Jehoiakim* was the eldest son, though *Shallum* (with the throne name *Jehoahaz*) reigned three months before *Jehoiakim* came to the throne; see 2 Kgs. 23.28-37. Also, *Zedekiah* was *Jehoiakim's* younger brother, not his son; see 2 Kgs. 24.17-18. 17-24: For the descendants of David after *Jeconiah* (*Jehoiachin*), the Chronicler is the only extant source, though *Shealtiel* is mentioned in Ezra 3.2, and *Zerubbabel* is known to have been governor when the Temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem; see Hag. 1.1,12; 2.2 (see also *Sheshbazzar* in Ezra 1.8). The number of generations listed here after *Jeconiah* may be significant for the date of the final form of the book; eleven are listed. If twenty years is calculated between the birth of first sons, the list will come down to about 375 B.C., a probable date on other grounds for the Chronicler's work.

4.1-23: Further lists of the clans of Judah. The tribes were very fluid entities, constantly absorbing and losing smaller clan or family units. Consequently, enumerations of the families

Seraiah. The sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.

14 Meonothai was the father of Ophrah. Seraiah was the father of Joab founder of Ge-harashim,<sup>j</sup> for they were craftsmen.

15 The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah and Naam. The son of Elah: Kenaz.

16 The sons of Jehaleleel: Ziph and Ziphah, Tiria and Asareel.

17-18 The sons of Ezra: Jether, Mered, Ephraim and Jalon. These were the sons of Bithiah daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered had married; she conceived and gave birth to<sup>k</sup> Miriam, Shammai and Ishbah founder of Eshtemoa. His Jewish wife was the mother of Jered founder of Gedor, Heber founder of Soco, and Jekuthiel founder of Zanoah.

19 The sons of his<sup>l</sup> wife Hodiah sister of Naham were Daliah father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.

20 The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinah, Ben-hanan and Tilon.

The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.

21 The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er founder of Lecah, Laadah founder of Mareshah, the clans of the guild of linen-workers at Ashbea, Jokim, the men of Kozeba, Joash, and Saraph who fell out with Moab and came back to Bethlehem.<sup>m</sup> (The records are ancient.) They were the potters, and those who lived at Netaim and Gederah were there on the king's service.

24 The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Saul, his son Shallum, his son Mibsam and his son Mishma.

26 The sons of Mishma: his son Hamuel, his son Zaccur and his son Shimei.

27 Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but others of his family had fewer children, and the clan as a whole did not increase as much as the tribe of

28 Judah. They lived at Beersheba, Mola-

dah, Hazar-shual, Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, 29 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-mar- 30,31 caboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-birei, and Shaaraim. These were their cities until David came to the throne. Their settle- 32 ments<sup>n</sup> were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan, five cities in all. They had also hamlets round these 33 cities as far as Baal. These were the places where they lived.

The names on their register were: Meshobab, Jamelech, Joshah son of 34 Amaziah, Joel, Jehu son of Josibiah, 35 son of Seraiah, son of Asiel, Elioenai, 36 Jaakobah, Jeshohaiiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, Ziza son of Shiphi, 37 son of Allon, son of Jedaiah, son of Shimri, son of Shemaiah, whose names 38 are recorded as princes in their clans, and their families had greatly increased. They then went from the approaches 39 to Gedor east of the valley in search of pasture for their flocks. They found 40 rich and good pasture in a wide stretch of open country where everything was quiet and peaceful; before then it had 41 been occupied by Hamites. During the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah these whose names are written above 42 came and destroyed the tribes of Ham<sup>o</sup> and the Meunites whom they found there. They annihilated them so that no trace of them has remained to this day; and they occupied the land 43 in their place, for there was pasture for their flocks. Of their number five 44 hundred Simeonites invaded the hill-country of Seir, led by Pelatiah, Near- 45 iah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. They destroyed all who were left 46 of the surviving Amalekites; and they live there still.

The sons of Reuben, the eldest of 5

*j* Or the Valley of Craftsmen.

*k* and gave birth to: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

*l* his: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

*m* and came . . . Bethlehem: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

*n* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. hamlets.*

*o* the tribes of Ham: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. verse 40*; *Heb. their tribes.*

of the same tribe would vary at different times. In the time of the Chronicler, only the tribe of Judah was still organized in anything like the old fashion. For that tribe many materials were available, but they were not reducible to a coherent picture.

424-43: The sons of Simeon. Simeon had ceased to be a separate tribe long before the Chronicler's time. 41-43: The military actions and migrations suggested here are not otherwise known.

5.1-26: The tribes east of the Jordan. After three chapters on the descendants of Judah, attention is given much more briefly to the other sons of Israel. 1-10: Vv. 2-3 explain the order in which the first genealogies are given. The firstborn son (*Reuben*) would normally be

Israel's sons. (He was, in fact, the first son born, but because he had committed incest with a wife of his father's the rank of the eldest was transferred to the sons of Joseph, Israel's son, who, however, could not be registered as the eldest son. Judah held the leading place among his brothers because he fathered a ruler, and the rank of the eldest was his, not<sup>p</sup> Joseph's.) The sons of Reuben, the eldest of Israel's sons: Enoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. The sons of Joel: his son Shemaiah, his son Gog, his son Shimei, his son Micah, his son Reaia, his son Baal, his son Beerah, whom Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a prince of the Reubenites. His kinsmen, family by family, as registered in their tribal lists: Jeiel the chief, Zechariah, Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel. They lived in Aroer, and their lands stretched as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. Eastwards they occupied territory as far as the edge of the desert which stretches from the river Euphrates, for they had large numbers of cattle in Gilead. During Saul's reign they made war on the Hagarites, whom they conquered, occupying their encampments over all the country east of Gilead. Adjoining them were the Gadites, occupying the district of Bashan as far as Salcah: Joel the chief; second in rank, Shapham; then Jaanai and Shaphat in Bashan. Their fellow-tribesmen belonged to the families of Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jachan, Zia and Heber, seven in all. These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jeshishai, son of Jahdo, son of Buz. Ahi son of Abdiel, son of Guni, was head of their family; they lived in Gilead, in Bashan and its villages, in all the common land of Sharon as far

as it stretched. These registers were all compiled in the reigns of Jotham king of Judah and Jeroboam king of Israel.

The sons of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh: of their fighting men armed with shield and sword, their archers and their battle-trained soldiers, forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty were ready for active service. They made war on the Hagarites, Jetur, Nephish, and Nodab. They were given help against them, for they cried to their God for help in the battle, and because they trusted him he listened to their prayer, and the Hagarites and all their allies surrendered to them.<sup>q</sup> They drove off their cattle, fifty thousand camels, two hundred and fifty thousand sheep, and two thousand asses, and they took a hundred thousand captives. Many had been killed, for the war was of God's making, and they occupied the land instead of them until the exile.

Half the tribe of Manasseh lived in the land from Bashan to Baalhermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon, and were numerous also in Lebanon. The heads of their families were: Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, all men of ability and repute, heads of their families. But they sinned against the God of their fathers, and turned wantonly to worship the gods of the peoples whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up Pul king of Assyria, that is Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he carried into exile Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, where they are to this day.

<sup>p</sup> his, not: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>q</sup> They were . . . surrendered to them: or They attacked them boldly, and the Hagarites and all their allies surrendered to them, for they cried . . . to their prayer.

given first; but Judah had fathered a ruler, David, and therefore his genealogy was given first. 4-7: There are two lists, one giving the succession of sons (vv. 4-6) and one the three contemporary families (v. 7). 10: *Hagarites*: see vv. 18-22. 11-17: *Gadites*: there are again two lists, one of families and one of generations. 17: These genealogies are brought down to the time of the exile of the Northern Kingdom, the late eighth century; see vv. 6,22,26. The lists are, in fact, not long enough to cover such a period of time. 18-22: The tribes east of the Jordan had conflicts with north Arabian tribes, *Hagarites*, related to Hagar, Abraham's servant wife; see Gen. ch. 16 and 21.9-21. 23-24: Eastern *Manasseh*: only families are given here; the main genealogy is in 7.14-18. 26: On the conquest (in 733 B.C.), see 2 Kgs.15.29. *Pul* and *Tiglath-pileser* are different names for the same king.

6 THE SONS OF LEVI: GERSHON,<sup>r</sup> KOHATH  
 2 and Merari. The sons of Kohath:  
 Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.  
 3 The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses  
 and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Na-  
 4<sup>s</sup> dab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Elea-  
 zar was the father of Phinehas, Phinehas  
 5 father of Abishua, Abishua father of  
 6 Bukki, Bukki father of Uzzi, Uzzi  
 father of Zerariah, Zerariah father of  
 7 Meraioth, Meraioth father of Amariah,  
 8 Amariah father of Ahitub, Ahitub  
 father of Zadok, Zadok father of Ahi-  
 9 maaz, Ahimaaz father of Azariah, Azar-  
 10 iah father of Johanan, and Johanan  
 father of Azariah, the priest who  
 officiated in the LORD's house which  
 11 Solomon built at Jerusalem. Azariah  
 was the father of Amariah, Amariah  
 12 father of Ahitub, Ahitub father of  
 Zadok, Zadok father of Shallum,  
 13 Shallum father of Hilkiah, Hilkiah  
 14 father of Azariah, Azariah father of  
 Seraiah, and Seraiah father of Jehoza-  
 15 dak. Jehozadak went into exile when  
 the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem  
 into exile under Nebuchadnezzar.  
 16<sup>t</sup> The sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath  
 17 and Merari. The sons of Gershom:  
 18 Libni and Shimei. The sons of Kohath:  
 Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.  
 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi.  
 The clans of Levi, family by family:  
 20<sup>u</sup> Gershom: his son Libni, his son Jahath,  
 21 his son Zimma, his son Joah, his son  
 Iddo, his son Zerah, his son Jeaterai.  
 22<sup>v</sup> The sons of Kohath: his son Ammi-  
 nadab, his son Korah, his son Assir,  
 23 his son Elkanah, his son Ebiasaph,  
 24 his son Assir, his son Tahath, his son  
 Uriel, his son Uziah, his son Saul.  
 25 The sons of Elkanah: Amasai and  
 26 Ahimoth, his son Elkanah, his son  
 27 Zophai, his son Nahath, his son Eliab,  
 his son Jeroham, his son Elkanah.

The sons of Samuel: Joel the eldest 28  
 and Abiah the second. The sons of 29  
 Merari: his son Mahli, his son Libni,  
 his son Shimei, his son Uzza, his son 30  
 Shimea, his son Haggiah, his son  
 Asaiah.

These are the men whom David 31  
 appointed to take charge of the music  
 in the house of the LORD when the  
 Ark should be deposited there. They 32  
 performed their musical duties before  
 the Tent of the Presence until Solomon  
 built the house of the LORD in Jeru-  
 salem, and took their regular turns of  
 duty there. The following, with their 33  
 descendants, took this duty. Of the  
 line of Kohath: Heman the musician,  
 son of Joel, son of Samuel, son of 34  
 Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Eliel,  
 son of Toah, son of Zuph, son of Elka- 35  
 nah, son of Mahath, son of Amasai,  
 son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of 36  
 Azariah, son of Zephaniah, son of 37  
 Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph,  
 son of Korah, son of Izhar, son of 38  
 Kohath, son of Levi, son of Israel.  
 Heman's colleague Asaph stood at his 39  
 right hand. He was the son of Berach-  
 iah, son of Shimea, son of Michael, 40  
 son of Baaseiah, son of Malchiah,  
 son of Ethni, son of Zerah, son of Ada- 41<sup>w</sup>  
 iah, son of Ethan, son of Zimma,  
 42 son of Shimei, son of Jahath, son of  
 Gershom, son of Levi. On their left 44  
 stood their colleague of the line of  
 Merari: Ethan son of Kishi, son of  
 Abdi, son of Malluch, son of Hashab- 45  
 iah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah,  
 son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of 46  
 Shamer, son of Mahli, son of Mushi,  
 47 son of Merari, son of Levi. Their 48

<sup>r</sup> Gershom in verses 16 and 17.

<sup>s</sup> Verses 4-8: cp. verses 50-53.

<sup>t</sup> Verses 16-19: cp. Exod. 6. 16-19.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 20, 21: cp. verses 41-43.

<sup>v</sup> Verses 22-28: cp. verses 33-38.

<sup>w</sup> Verses 41-43: cp. verses 20, 21.

6.1-81: The genealogies and settlements of the Levites. The genealogies of the clans of the Levites were of as great interest to the Chronicler as the ancestry of David. Among the sons of Levi, the sons of Aaron occupied a special place as priests; the rest of the three main clans had other liturgical functions. These lists are genealogies, giving the succession of generations. In chs. 23-26, lists of the same clans are given according to contemporary family groups. 3-15: The Aaronites are listed to the time of the Judean Exile in 587 B.C. 8: Zadok was not originally an Aaronite, but came to be regarded as such in the late monarchic period; see 2 Sam. 8.17 n.; Ezek. 44.9-16. 16-30: Though the organization of the Levites into these three clans was postexilic (with, however, older beginnings), these lists go down only to the time of David. See 23.8-23 n. for other lists of Levites. 23-27: The fourth *Elkanah* is intended as *Samuel's* father, though it is clear from 1 Sam. 1.1 that he was not a Levite. 31-48: The genealogies of the Chronicler's favorite Levites, the musicians, are full and careful; compare

kinsmen the Levites were dedicated to all the service of the Tabernacle, the house of God.

49 But it was Aaron and his descendants who burnt the sacrifices on the altar of whole-offering and the altar of incense, in fulfilment of all the duties connected with the most sacred gifts, and to make expiation for Israel, exactly as Moses the servant of God had

50<sup>2</sup> commanded. The sons of Aaron: his son Eleazar, his son Phinehas, his son

51 Abishua, his son Bukki, his son Uzzi,

52 his son Zerariah, his son Meraioth,

53 his son Amariah, his son Ahitub, his son Zadok, his son Ahimaaz.

54 These are their settlements in encampments in the districts assigned to the descendants of Aaron, to the clan of Kohath, for it was to them that the

55 lot had fallen: they gave them Hebron in Judah, with the common land round

56 it, but they assigned to Caleb son of Jephunneh the open country belonging

57<sup>3</sup> to the town and its hamlets. They gave to the sons of Aaron: Hebron the city<sup>2</sup> of refuge, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa,

58,59 Hilen, Debir, Ashan, and Bethshemesh, each with its common land.

60 And from the tribe of Benjamin: Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth, each with its common land, making thirteen cities in all by their clans.

61 They gave to the remaining clans of the sons of Kohath ten cities by lot

62 from the half tribe of Manasseh. To the sons of Gershom according to their clans they gave thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and

63 Manasseh in Bashan. To the sons of Merari according to their clans they gave by lot twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

64 Israel gave these cities, each with its

65 common land, to the Levites. (The cities mentioned above, from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, were assigned by lot.)

66 Some of the clans of Kohath had

67 cities allotted<sup>a</sup> to them. They gave

them the city<sup>b</sup> of refuge, Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, Gezer, Jokmeam, Beth-horon, Aijalon, and Gath-rimmon, each with its common land. From the half tribe of Manasseh, 68,69

Aner and Bileam, each with its common land, were given to the rest of the clans of Kohath. 70

To the sons of Gershom they gave 71 from the half tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan, and Ashtaroth, each with its common land. From the tribe of 72 Issachar: Kedesh, Daberath, Ramoth, and Anem, each with its common land. 73 From the tribe of Asher: Mashal, 74 Abdon, Hukok, and Rehob, each with 75 its common land. From the tribe of 76 Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee, Hammon, and Kiriathaim, each with its common land.

To the rest of the sons of Merari they 77 gave from the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmon and Tabor, each with its common land. On the east of Jordan, opposite 78 Jericho, from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer-in-the-wilderness, Jahzah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath, each with its 79 common land. From the tribe of Gad: 80 Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer, each with its common 81 land.

The sons of Issachar: Tola, Pua, 7 1<sup>c</sup> Jashub and Shimron, four. The sons of 2 Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jerial, Jahmai, Jibsam, and Samuel, all able men and heads of families by paternal descent from Tola according to their tribal lists; their number in David's time was twenty-two thousand six hundred. The son of Uzzi: Izrahiah. The sons of 3 Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel and Isshiah, making a total of five, all of them chiefs. In addition there were 4 bands of fighting men recorded by families according to the tribal lists to

*x* Verses 50-53: cp. verses 4-8.

*y* Verses 57-81: cp. Josh. 21. 13-39.

*z* Prob. rdg., cp. Josh. 21. 13; Heb. cities.

*a* allotted: prob. rdg., cp. Josh. 21. 20; Heb. of their frontier.

*b* Prob. rdg., cp. Josh. 21. 21; Heb. cities.

*c* Verses 1, 6, 13, 30 and 8. 1-5: cp. Gen. 46. 13, 17, 21-24.

15.16-22; 16.4-42; ch. 25. 49-53: A second genealogy of *Aaron* shows that the special sacrificial duties passed down to *Zadok*. 54-81: The Chronicler draws materials concerning the Levite settlements from Josh. ch. 21. In theory there were forty-eight Levite cities (see the numbers in vv. 60-65), but forty-eight names are not given.

7.1-40: The northern tribes. For the remaining tribes, except Benjamin, the Chronicler gives a few generations for each tribe; he emphasizes their military strength at the time David became

- the number of thirty-six thousand, for they had many wives and children.
- 5 Their fellow-tribesmen in all the clans of Issachar were able men, eighty-seven thousand; every one of them was registered.
- 6 The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher
- 7 and Jediael, three. The sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth and Iri, five. They were heads of their families and able men; the number registered was twenty-two thousand and thirty-
- 8 four. The sons of Becher: Zemira, Joash, Eliezer, Elieonai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abiah, Anathoth and Alemeth;
- 9 all these were sons of Becher according to their tribal lists, heads of their families and able men; and the number registered was twenty-thousand two
- 10 hundred. The son of Jediael: Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Kenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish and
- 11 Ahishahar. All these were descendants of Jediael, heads of<sup>d</sup> families and able men. The number was seventeen thousand two hundred men, fit for active service in war.
- 12 The sons of Dan:<sup>e</sup> Hushim and the sons of Aher.<sup>f</sup>
- 13 The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, Shallum. These were sons of Bilhan.
- 14<sup>g</sup> The sons of Manasseh,<sup>h</sup> born of his concubine, an Aramaean: Machir
- 15 father of Gilead. Machir married a woman whose name was<sup>i</sup> Maacah. The second son was named Zelophehad, and Zelophehad had daughters.
- 16 Maacah wife of Machir had a son whom she named Peresh. His brother's name was Sheresh, and his sons were
- 17 Ulam and Rakem. The son of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead son of Machir, son of Manasseh. His sister Hammoleketh was the mother of
- 18 Ishhod, Abiezer and Mahalah. The sons of Shemida: Ahian, Shechem, Likhi and Aniam.
- 20 The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, his son Bered, his son Tahath, his son
- Eladah, his son Tahath, his son Zabad, 21 his son Shuthelah. Ephraim's other sons Ezer and Elead were killed by the native Gittites when they came down to lift their cattle. Their father Ephraim 22 long mourned for them, and his kinsmen came to comfort him. Then he had intercourse with his wife; she conceived and had a son whom he named Beriah (because disaster<sup>j</sup> had come on his family). He had a daughter named 24 Sherah; she built Lower and Upper Beth-horon and Uzen-sherah. He also 25 had a son named Rephah; his son was Resheph, his son Telah, his son Tahan, his son Laadan, his son Ammihud, his 26 son Elishama, his son Nun, his son Joshua.
- 27 Their lands and settlements were: 28 Bethel and its dependent villages, to the east Naaran, to the west Gezer, Shechem, and Gaza, with their vil-
- 29 lages. In the possession of Manasseh were Beth-shean, Taanach, Megiddo, and Dor, with their villages. In all of these lived the descendants of Joseph the son of Israel.
- 30 The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah, together with their sister Serah. The sons of Beriah: Heber 31 and Malchiel father of Birzavith. Heber was the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua. The 33 sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal and Ashvath. These were the sons of Japhlet. The sons of Shomer: Ahi, 34 Rohgah, Jehubbah and Aram. The sons of his brother Hotham:<sup>k</sup> Zophah, Imna, Shelesh and Amal. The sons of 36 Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, Bezer, Hod, Shamma, 37 Shilshah, Ithran and Beera. The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispah and Ara. The sons of Ulla: Arah, Haniel and 39

<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. to the heads of.

<sup>e</sup> The sons of Dan: prob. rdg., cp. Gen. 46. 23; Heb. And

Shuppim and Huppim, the sons of Ir.

<sup>f</sup> Or another

<sup>g</sup> Verses 14-19: cp. Num. 26. 29-33.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Asriel.

<sup>i</sup> whose name was: prob. rdg.; Heb. to Huppim and

Shuppim, and his sister's name was . . .

<sup>j</sup> Heb. berahah.

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. verse 32; Heb. Helem.

king; compare ch. 12. As is mostly the case, the numbers are exaggerated. 6: Instead of Benjamin, this is the list for Zebulun, otherwise the only tribe missing. Benjamin is given in ch. 8. 12-13: Apparently little tradition survived about Dan and Naphtali. 14: Manasseh is regarded as the grandfather of Gilead because of an early colonization of Gilead east of the Jordan by settlers from Manasseh west of it. Machir had an Aramaean mother because Gilead often shared territory with the Aramaeans.

- 40 Rezia. All these were descendants of Asher, heads of families, picked men of ability, leading princes. They were enrolled among the fighting troops; the total number was twenty-six thousand men.
- 8 The sons of Benjamin were: the eldest Bela, the second Ashbel, the 2 third Aharah, the fourth Nohah and 3 the fifth Rapha. The sons of Bela: 4 Addar, Gera father of Ehud.<sup>l</sup> Abishua, 5 Naaman, Ahoah, Gera, Shephuphan 6 and Huram. These were the sons of Ehud, heads of families living in Geba, who were removed to Manahath: Naaman, Ahiah, and Gera—he 7 it was who removed them. He was the 8 father of Uzza and Ahihud. Shaharaim had sons born to him in Moabite country, after putting away his wives Mahasham and Baara. By his wife Hodesh he 9 had Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcham, 10 Jeuz, Shachia and Mirmah. These were 11 his sons, heads of families. By Mahasham he had had Abitub and Elpaal. 12 The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, Shamed who built Ono and Lod with 13 its villages, also Beriah and Shema who were heads of families living in Aijalon, 14,15 having expelled the inhabitants of Gath. Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, Zebadiah, Arad, Ader, Michael, Ispah, 16 and Joha were sons of Beriah; Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hezeki, Heber, Ishmerai, Jezliah, and Jobab were sons of 17 Elpaal; Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, Elienai, 18 Zilthai, Eliel, Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were sons of Shimei; Ishpan, 19,20 Heber, Eliel, Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, 21 Hananiah, Elam, Antothiah, Iphedeiah, and Penuel were sons of Shashak; 22 Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, Jare-siah, Elijah, and Zichri were sons of 23 Jeroham. These were enrolled in the 24,25 tribal lists as heads of families, chiefs living in Jerusalem.
- 26,27 Jehiel founder of Gibeon lived at

Gibeon; his wife's name was Maacah. His eldest son was Abdon, followed 30 by Zur, Kish, Baal, Nabad, Gedor, 31 Ahio, Zacher and Mikloth. Mikloth was the father of Shimeah; they lived alongside their kinsmen in Jerusalem.

Ner was the father of Kish, Kish 33 father of Saul, Saul father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab and Eshbaal. Jonathan's son was Merib- 34 baal, and he was the father of Micah. The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, 35 Tarea and Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Jehoaddah, Jehoaddah father of Alemeth, Azmoth and Zimri. Zimri 37 was the father of Moza, and Moza father of Binea; his son was Raphah, his son Elasa, and his son Azel. 38 Azel had six sons, whose names were Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and Hanan. All these were 39 sons of Azel. The sons of his brother Eshek: the eldest Ulam, the second 40 Jeush, the third Eliphelet. The sons of Ulam were able men, archers, and had many sons and grandsons, a hundred and fifty. All these were descendants of Benjamin.

### The restored community

SO ALL ISRAEL WERE REGISTERED AND 9 recorded in the book of the kings of Israel; but Judah for their sins were carried away to exile in Babylon. The 22 first to occupy their ancestral land in their cities were lay Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple-servitors. Jerusa- 3 lem was occupied partly by Judahites, partly by Benjamites, and partly by men of Ephraim and Manasseh. Judah- 4 ites:<sup>o</sup> Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, a <sup>l</sup> father of Ehud: *prob. rdg., cp. Judg. 3. 15; Heb. Abihud.*  
<sup>m</sup> Verses 29-38: *cp. 9. 35-44.*  
<sup>n</sup> Verses 2-22: *cp. Neh. 11. 3-22.*  
<sup>o</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

8.1-40: **Benjamin.** The Chronicler's materials show greater interest in *Benjamin* than in any other of the tribes except Judah and Levi. In the postexilic period much of the former territory of Benjamin was attached to Judah; thus Benjaminites were prominent in the post-exilic community around Jerusalem; see 9.7-9 and Neh. 7.27-38; 11.7-9. 33-40: The mention of *Saul* (v. 33) prepares for ch. 10; the Chronicler, however, carries the genealogy through the monarchic period.

9.1-44: **The restored community.** This chapter forms an appendix to chs. 1-8. It lists the families, especially of the Temple personnel, resettled after the Exile. Lists were compiled from sources such as Neh. ch. 11. 1: *The book of the kings of Israel*: this probably refers to chs. 1-8, understanding that the official tribal lists were once the particular concern of kings.



descendant of Perez son of Judah.  
 5 Shelanites: Asaiah the eldest and his  
 6 sons. The sons of Zerach: Jeuel and six  
 hundred and ninety of their kinsmen.  
 7 Benjamites: Sallu son of Meshullam,  
 8 son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah,  
 9 Uzzi, son of Micri, Meshullam son  
 of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of  
 9 Ibniah, and their recorded kinsmen  
 numbering nine hundred and fifty-six,  
 all heads of families.

10 Priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin,  
 11 Azariah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshul-  
 lam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth,  
 son of Ahitub, the officer in charge of  
 12 the house of God, Adaiah son of Jeroham,  
 son of Pashhur, son of Malchiah,  
 Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah,  
 son of Meshullam, son of Meshille-  
 13 mith, son of Immer, and their col-  
 leagues, heads of families numbering  
 one thousand seven hundred and  
 sixty, men of substance and fit for the  
 work connected with the service of the  
 house of God.

14 Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub,  
 son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, a  
 15 descendant of Merari, Bakbakkar,  
 Heresh, Galal, Mattaniah son of Mica,  
 16 son of Zichri, son of Asaph, Obadiah  
 son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of  
 Jeduthun, and Berechiah son of Asa,  
 son of Elkanah, who lived in the ham-  
 lets of the Netophathites.

17 The door-keepers were Shallum,  
 Akkub, Talmon, and Ahiman; their  
 18 brother Shallum was the chief. Until  
 then they had all been door-keepers in  
 the quarters of the Levites at the king's  
 19 gate, on the east. Shallum son of Kore,  
 son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and  
 his kinsmen of the Korahite family  
 were responsible for service as guards  
 of the thresholds of the Tabernacle;  
 their ancestors had performed the  
 duty of guarding the entrances to the  
 20 camp of the LORD. Phinehas son of  
 Eleazar had been their overseer in the  
 21 past—the LORD be with him! Zechariah  
 son of Meshelemiah was the door-  
 keeper of the Tent of the Presence.

22 Those picked to be door-keepers

numbered two hundred and twelve  
 in all, registered in their hamlets.  
 David and Samuel the seer had in-  
 23 stalled them because they were trust-  
 worthy. They and their sons had  
 charge, by watches, of the gates of the  
 house, the tent-dwelling of the LORD.  
 The door-keepers were to be on four  
 24 sides, east, west, north, and south.  
 Their kinsmen from their hamlets had  
 25 to come on duty with them for seven  
 days at a time in turn. The four principal  
 26 door-keepers were chosen for their  
 trustworthiness; they were Levites and  
 had charge of the rooms and the stores  
 in the house of God. They always slept  
 27 in the precincts of the house of God  
 (for the watch was their duty) and they  
 had charge of the key for opening the  
 gates every morning. Some of them had  
 28 charge of the vessels used in the service  
 of the temple, keeping count of them  
 as they were brought in and taken out.  
 Some of them were detailed to take  
 29 charge of the furniture and all the  
 sacred vessels, the flour, the wine, the  
 oil, the incense, and the spices.

Some of the priests compounded the  
 30 ointment for the spices. Mattithiah  
 31 the Levite, the eldest son of Shallum  
 the Korahite, was in charge of the  
 preparation of the wafers because he  
 was trustworthy. Some of their Kohath-  
 32 ite kinsmen were in charge of setting  
 out the rows of the Bread of the  
 Presence every sabbath.

These, the musicians, heads of  
 33 Levite families, were lodged in rooms  
 set apart for them, because they were  
 liable for duty by day and by night.

These are the heads of Levite families,  
 34 chiefs according to their tribal lists,  
 living in Jerusalem.

Jehiel founder of Gibeon lived at  
 35<sup>p</sup> Gibeon; his wife's name was Maacah,  
 and his sons were Abdon the eldest,  
 36 Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, Gedor,  
 37 Ahio, Zechariah and Mikloth. Mikloth  
 was the father of Shimeam; they lived  
 alongside their kinsmen in Jerusalem.<sup>q</sup>  
 Ner was the father of Kish, Kish father  
 39

<sup>p</sup> Verses 35-44: cp. 8. 29-38.  
<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds with their kinsmen.

17-32: This attention to the door-keepers is out of proportion to that given to the other groups. The Chronicler esteemed very highly their functions as well as their trustworthiness; compare ch. 26. 35-44: A repetition of 8.29-38; it prepares for ch. 10.

of Saul, Saul father of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab and Eshbaal.

- 40 The son of Jonathan was Meribbaal, and Meribbaal was the father of  
 41 Micah. The sons of Micah: Pithon,  
 42 Melech, Tahrea and Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Jarah, Jarah father of Alemeth, Azmoth, and Zimri; Zimri  
 43 father of Moza, and Moza father of Binea; his son was Rephaiah, his son  
 44 Elasa, his son Azel. Azel had six sons, whose names were Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

### The death of Saul

- 10:1<sup>r</sup> THE PHILISTINES FOUGHT A BATTLE against Israel, and the men of Israel were routed, leaving their dead on  
 2 Mount Gilboa. The Philistines hotly pursued Saul and his sons and killed the three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab  
 3 and Malchishua. The battle went hard for Saul, for some archers came upon him and he was wounded by them.  
 4 So he said to his armour-bearer, 'Draw your sword and run me through, so that these uncircumcised brutes may not come and make sport of me.' But the armour-bearer refused, he dared not; whereupon Saul took his own sword  
 5 and fell on it. When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too  
 6 fell on his sword and died. Thus Saul died and his three sons; his whole house  
 7 perished at one and the same time. And all the Israelites in the Vale, when they saw that their army had fled and that Saul and his sons had perished, fled likewise, abandoning their cities, and

the Philistines went in and occupied them.

Next day, when the Philistines came  
 8 to strip the slain, they found Saul and his sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa. They stripped him, cut off his head  
 9 and took away his armour; then they sent messengers through the length and breadth of their land to take the good news to idols and people alike. They deposited his armour in the  
 10 temple of their god,<sup>s</sup> and nailed up his skull in the temple of Dagon. When  
 11 the people of Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, the bravest of them set out together to  
 12 recover the bodies of Saul and his sons; they brought them back to Jabesh and buried their bones under the oak-tree there, and fasted for seven days. Thus Saul paid with his life for his  
 13 unfaithfulness: he had disobeyed the word of the LORD and had resorted to  
 14 ghosts for guidance. He had not sought guidance of the LORD, who therefore destroyed him and transferred the kingdom to David son of Jesse.

### David king over Israel

11:1<sup>t</sup> THEN ALL ISRAEL ASSEMBLED AT HEBRON to wait upon David. 'We are your own  
 flesh and blood', they said. 'In the past,  
 2 while Saul was still king, you led the forces of Israel to war, and you brought them home again. And the LORD your God said to you, "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel,

<sup>r</sup> Verses 1-12: cp. 1 Sam. 31. 1-13.

<sup>s</sup> Or gods.

<sup>t</sup> Verses 1-9: cp. 2 Sam. 5. 1-3, 6-10.

**10.1-12.40: David established as king.** The first block of David materials (see Introduction) shows how Israel unanimously acknowledged David's kingship. Materials drawn from 1 and 2 Sam. were reorganized to give the following sequence: death of Saul; David made king of Israel at Hebron; the capture of Jerusalem, which becomes David's capital; and an enumeration of the chiefs and heroes who made David king (chs. 10-11). Additional lists of warriors and of military contingents from the twelve tribes (ch. 12) are given from sources other than 1 and 2 Sam.

**10.1-14: Saul is removed.** The account of Saul's death is taken from 1 Sam. ch. 31. The circumstances leading to the death scene, so richly developed there, are ignored by the Chronicler here. He treats Saul as only an obstacle to David's kingship. 6: Saul's *whole house* did not perish at the battle of Gilboa (2 Sam. 2.8-10; ch. 9). However, the Chronicler does not narrate the subsequent demise of that house (see 2 Sam. 21.1-14). 13-14: This is the Chronicler's succinct summary. He knew of the accounts in 1 Sam. chs. 15 and 28 but omitted them.

**11.1-9: David, as king, takes Jerusalem.** The Chronicler retains his excerpts from 2 Sam. in the order in which they appear in that book (5.1-3, 6-10; 23.8-39), even though his own additions (ch. 12) pertain to slightly earlier events. He organized his material more by topic

- 3 you shall be their prince.” All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; there David made a covenant with them before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had said through the lips of Samuel.
- 4 Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (that is Jebus, where the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, lived). The people of Jebus said to David, ‘Never shall you come in here’; none the less David did capture the stronghold of Zion, and it is now known as the City of David. David said, ‘The first man to kill a Jebusite shall become a commander or an officer’, and the first man to go up was Joab son of Zeruiah; so he was given the command.
- 7 David took up his residence in the stronghold: that is why they called it the City of David. He built the city round it, starting at the Millo and including its neighbourhood, while Joab reconstructed the rest of the city.
- 9 So David steadily grew stronger, for the LORD of Hosts was with him.
- 10<sup>u</sup> Of David’s heroes these were the chief, men who lent their full strength to his government and, with all Israel, joined in making him king; such was the LORD’s decree for Israel. First came Jashoboam the Hachmonite, chief of the three; he it was who brandished his spear over three hundred, all slain at one time. Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the heroic three. He was with David at Pas-dammim where the Philistines had gathered for battle in a field carrying a good crop of barley; and when the people had fled from the Philistines
- 14 he stood his ground in the field, saved it<sup>v</sup> and defeated them. So the LORD brought about a great victory.
- 15 Three of the thirty chiefs went down
- to the rock to join David at the cave of Adullam, while the Philistines were encamped in the Vale of Rephaim. At that time David was in the stronghold, and a Philistine garrison held Bethlehem. One day a longing came over David, and he exclaimed, ‘If only I could have a drink of water from the well<sup>w</sup> by the gate of Bethlehem!’ At this the three made their way through the Philistine lines and drew water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. But David refused to drink it; he poured it out to the LORD and said, ‘God forbid that I should do such a thing! Can I drink the blood of these men? They have brought it at the risk of their lives.’ So he would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the heroic three.
- Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the thirty. He once brandished his spear over three hundred dead, and he was famous among the thirty. He held higher rank than the rest of the thirty and became their captain, but he did not rival the three. Benaiah son of Jehoiada, from Kabzeel, was a hero of many exploits. It was he who smote the two champions of Moab, and who went down into a pit and killed a lion on a snowy day. It was he who also killed the Egyptian, a giant seven and a half feet high armed with a spear as big as the beam of a loom; he went to meet him with a club, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand and killed him with his own weapon. Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, famous among the heroic thirty.<sup>x</sup> He was more famous than the rest of the thirty, but did not rival the three. David appointed him to his household.

<sup>u</sup> Verses 10–41: cp. 2 Sam. 23. 8–39.

<sup>v</sup> saved it: or cleared it of the Philistines.

<sup>w</sup> Or cistern.

<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. three.

than by chronology. 3: The reference to *Samuel’s* prophecy is an addition to the excerpt from 2 Sam. 5–6: The text simplifies some textual problems in 2 Sam.5.6–8. 8: *Joab*: an addition to the Samuel source.

11.10–47: *David’s warrior heroes*. The Chronicler uses the list of David’s heroes from 2 Sam. ch. 23 without significant change but with a new purpose, expressed in v. 10. 10–14: The Chronicler omits the third of the three, Shammah (2 Sam.23.11). 15–19: The confusion as to whether these were three of the thirty chiefs (v. 15) or the heroic three (v. 19) derives from the source in 2 Sam.23.13–17. The heroic three is most likely meant. 20–21: The thirty and three reflect a ten-to-one ratio among commanders, similar to that employed in the administration of the labor forces; compare 1 Kgs.5.16 n. 25: David’s household is enumerated in 18.14–17.

26 These were his valiant heroes: Asahel  
 27 the brother of Joab, and Elhanan  
 28 son of Dodo from Bethlehem; Sham-  
 29 moth from Harod,<sup>y</sup> and Helez from a  
 30 place unknown; Ira son of Ikkesh from  
 31 Tekoa, and Abiezer from Anathoth;  
 32 Sibbecai from Hushah, and Ilai the  
 33 Ahohite; Maharai from Netophah,  
 34 and Heled son of Baanah from Netop-  
 35 hah; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah  
 36 of Benjamin, and Benaiah from Pira-  
 37 thon; Hurai from the ravines of Gaash,  
 38 and Abiel from Beth-arabah; Azmoth  
 39 from Bahurim, and Eliahba from Shaal-  
 40 bon; Hashem the Gizonite, and Jon-  
 41 athan son of Shage the Hararite;  
 42 Ahiam son of Sacar the Hararite, and  
 43 Eliphai son of Ur; Hephher from  
 44 Mecherah, and Ahijah from a place  
 45 unknown; Hezro from Carmel, and  
 46 Naari son of Ezbai; Joel the brother of  
 47 Nathan, and Mibhar the son of Hagg-  
 48 geri; Zelek the Ammonite, and Naha-  
 49 rai from Beeroth, armour-bearer to  
 50 Joab son of Zeruah; Ira the Ithrite,  
 51 and Gareb the Ithrite; Uriah the Hit-  
 52 tite, and Zabad son of Ahlai. Adina  
 53 son of Shiza the Reubenite, a chief of  
 54 the Reubenites, was over these thirty.  
 55 Also Hanan son of Maacah, and Josh-  
 56 aphat the Mithnite; Uzziab from Ash-  
 57 taroth, Shama and Jeiel the sons of  
 58 Hotham from Aroer; Jedaiel son of  
 59 Shimri, and Joha his brother, the  
 60 Tizite; Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai  
 61 and Joshaviah sons of Elnaam, and  
 62 Ithmah the Moabite; Eliel, Obed, and  
 63 Jasiel, from Zobah.<sup>z</sup>

12 These are the men who joined  
 David at Ziklag while he was banned  
 from the presence of Saul son of  
 Kish. They ranked among the warriors  
 2 valiant in battle. They carried bows and  
 could sling stones or shoot arrows with

the left hand or the right; they were  
 Benjamites, kinsmen of Saul. The  
 3 foremost were Ahiezer and Joash, the  
 sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; Zeiel  
 and Pelet, men of Beth-azmoth; Bera-  
 4 chah and Jehu of Anathoth; Ishmaiah  
 the Gibeonite, a hero among the thirty  
 and a chief among them; Jeremiah,  
 Jahaziel, Johanan, and Josabad of  
 Gederah; Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah,  
 5 Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Har-  
 uphite; Elkanah, Isshiah, Azareel,  
 6 Joezer, Jashobeam, the Korahites;  
 and Joelah and Zebadiah sons of  
 7 Jeroham, of Gedor.

Some Gadites also joined David  
 8 the stronghold in the wilderness, valiant  
 men trained for war, who could handle  
 the heavy shield and spear, grim as  
 lions and swift as gazelles on the hills.  
 Ezer was their chief, Obadiah the  
 9 second, Eliab the third; Mishmannah  
 10 the fourth and Jeremiah the fifth; Attai  
 11 the sixth and Eliel the seventh; Jo-  
 12 hanan the eighth and Elzabad the  
 ninth; Jeremiah the tenth and Mach-  
 13 banai the eleventh. These were chiefs  
 14 of the Gadites in the army, the least  
 of them a match for a hundred, the  
 greatest a match for a thousand. These  
 15 were the men who in the first month  
 crossed the Jordan, which was in full  
 flood in all its reaches, and wrought  
 havoc in the valleys, east and west.

Some men of Benjamin and Judah  
 16 came to David at the stronghold. David  
 17 went out to them and said, 'If you  
 come as friends to help me, join me and  
 welcome; but if you come to betray  
 me to my enemies, innocent though  
 I am of any crime of violence, may the  
 God of our fathers see and judge.' At  
 18

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Sam. 23. 25; Heb. Haror.  
<sup>z</sup> from Zobah: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

26-41: *Valiant heroes*: thirty-one names are from 2 Sam. 23.24-39, where it is said (v. 39) that there were thirty-seven heroes in all. 42-47: Sixteen names are added by the Chronicler from another source. If a group of thirty leading warriors was maintained constantly over a period of many years, far more than just thirty men would have been required. The longer list may reflect that fact.

12.1-40: *The contingents that came to David*. The Chronicler's purpose is to show a progressive transfer of allegiance to David on the part of Israel's military forces. There are five stages in the process; the Chronicler supplies a list of warriors for each, except the third. 1-7: The first contingent. While David was at *Ziklag* (as a vassal of Achish, king of Gath; see 1 Sam. ch. 27), some of Saul's own best warriors joined him. 8-15: The second contingent. *The stronghold* where David was a fugitive (1 Sam. 22.4) was near Moab. The territory of the *Gadites* was north of Moab in Transjordan. 15: The Gadites had to cross *the Jordan* to reach Judah. On the flood in *the first month*, see Josh. 3.15; 4.19. 16-18: The third contingent: *men of Benjamin and Judah*. No list is given here, but the unqualified devotion of the new supporters

that a spirit took possession of Amasai, the chief of the thirty, and he said:

We are on your side, David!  
 We are with you, son of Jesse!  
 Greetings, greetings to you  
 and greetings to your ally!  
 For your God is your ally.

So David welcomed them and attached them to the columns of his raiding parties.

19 Some men of Manasseh had deserted to David when he went with the Philistines to war against Saul, though he did not, in fact, fight on the side of the Philistines. Their princes brusquely dismissed him, saying to themselves that he would desert them for his master Saul, and that would cost them

20 their heads. The men of Manasseh who deserted to him when he went to Ziklag were these: Adnah, Jozabad, Jedjail, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zilthai, each commanding his thousand in

21 Manasseh. It was they who stood valiantly by David against the raiders, for they were all good fighters, and they were given commands in his forces.  
 22 From day to day men came in to help David, until he had gathered an immense army.  
 23 These are the numbers of the armed bands which joined David at Hebron to transfer Saul's sovereignty to him,  
 24 as the LORD had said: men of Judah, bearing heavy shield and spear, six thousand eight hundred, drafted for  
 25 active service; of Simeon, fighting men drafted for active service, seven  
 26 thousand one hundred; of Levi, four  
 27 thousand six hundred, together with Jehoiada prince of the house of Aaron and three thousand seven hundred men,  
 28 and Zadok a valiant fighter, with twenty-  
 29 two officers of his own clan; of Benjamin, Saul's kinsmen, three thousand,

though most of them had hitherto remained loyal to the house of Saul; of Ephraim, twenty thousand eight  
 30 hundred, fighting men, famous in their own clans; of the half tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand, who had been  
 31 nominated to come and make David king; of Issachar, whose tribesmen  
 32 were skilled in reading the signs of the times to discover what course Israel should follow, two hundred chiefs, with all their kinsmen under their  
 33 command; of Zebulun, fifty thousand troops well-drilled for battle, armed  
 34 with every kind of weapon, bold and single-minded; of Naphtali, a thousand and officers with thirty-seven thousand  
 35 men bearing heavy shield and spear; of the Danites, twenty-eight thousand  
 36 six hundred well-drilled for battle; of Asher, forty thousand troops well-  
 37 drilled for battle; of the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh east of Jordan, a hundred and twenty  
 thousand, armed with every kind of  
 weapon.

All these warriors, bold men in  
 38 battle, came to Hebron, loyally determined to make David king over the whole of Israel; the rest of Israel, too, had but one thought, to make him king. They spent three days there with David,  
 39 eating and drinking, for their kinsmen made provision for them. Their neigh-  
 40 bours also round about, as far away as Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali, brought food on asses and camels, on mules and oxen, supplies of meal, fig-cakes, raisin-cakes, wine and oil, oxen and sheep, in plenty; for there was rejoicing in Israel.

DAVID CONSULTED THE OFFICERS OVER  
 13 units of a thousand and a hundred on every matter brought forward. Then he  
 2 said to the whole assembly of Israel, 'If you approve, and if the LORD our

is emphasized. 19-22: The fourth contingent. When the crisis between Saul and the Philistines reached its height (1 Sam. ch. 29), more of Saul's followers, in this case *men of Manasseh*, went over to David at *Ziklag* and aided against *the raiders*; see 1 Sam. ch. 30. 23-37: The fifth contingent. After Saul's death, all Israel came over to *David at Hebron* (see 2 Sam. 5.1-5). Thus, the Chronicler gives a list of forces from all twelve tribes (plus contingents of Levites and priests, vv. 26-28). Old data from muster lists of Israelite militia (possibly in the time of Josiah) probably lie behind the list. The terms *thousand* and *hundred* were originally conventional terms for military units, not actual numbers.

13.1-16.43: **The Ark is established in Jerusalem.** The second block of Davidic material (see Introduction) turns to David's establishing the proper service of the LORD in Jerusalem. In

God opens a way, let us<sup>a</sup> send to our kinsmen who have stayed behind, in all the districts of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites in the cities where they have common lands, bidding them join us. Let us fetch the Ark of our God, for while Saul lived we never resorted to it.' The whole assembly resolved to do this; the entire nation approved it.

So David assembled all Israel from the Shihor in Egypt to Lebo-hamath, in order to fetch the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. Then David and all Israel went up to Baalah, to Kiriath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to fetch the Ark of God, the LORD enthroned upon the cherubim, the Ark which bore his name.<sup>c</sup> And they conveyed the Ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, with Uzza and Ahio guiding the cart. David and all Israel danced for joy before God without restraint to the sound of singing, of harps and lutes, of tambourines, and cymbals and trumpets. But when they came to the threshing-floor of Kidon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzza put out his hand to hold the Ark. The LORD was angry with Uzza and struck him down because he had put out his hand to the Ark. So he died there before God. David was vexed because the LORD's anger had broken out upon Uzza, and he called the place Perez-uzza,<sup>d</sup> the name it still bears. David was afraid of God that day and said, 'How can I harbour the Ark of God after this?' So he did not take the Ark with him into the City of David, but turned aside and carried it to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. Thus the Ark of God remained beside the house of Obed-edom, in its tent,<sup>e</sup> for three months, and the LORD blessed the family of Obed-edom and all that he had.

14:1<sup>f</sup> Hiram king of Tyre sent an embassy

to David; he sent cedar logs, and masons and carpenters with them to build him a house. David knew by now that the LORD had confirmed him as king over Israel and had made his royal power stand higher for the sake of his people Israel.

David married more wives in Jerusalem, and more sons and daughters were born to him. These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhah, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet.

When the Philistines learnt that David had been anointed king over the whole of Israel, they came up in force to seek him out. David, hearing of this, went out to face them. Now the Philistines had come and raided the Vale of Rephaim. So David inquired of God, 'If I attack the Philistines, wilt thou deliver them into my hands?' And the LORD answered, 'Go; I will deliver them into your hands.' So he went up and attacked them at Baal-perazim and defeated them there. 'God has used me to break through my enemies' lines,' David said, 'as a river breaks its banks'; that is why the place was named Baal-perazim.<sup>h</sup> The Philistines left their gods behind them there, and by David's orders these were burnt.

The Philistines made another raid on the Vale. Again David inquired of God, and God said to him, 'No, you must go up towards their rear; wheel round without making contact and<sup>i</sup> come upon them opposite the aspens.

*a* and if: . . . let us: or and if it is from the LORD our God, let us seize the opportunity and . . .

*b* Verses 6-14: cp. 2 Sam. 6. 2-11.

*c* which bore his name: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

*d* That is Outbreak on Uzza.

*e* Or in his tent.

*f* Verses 1-16: cp. 2 Sam. 5. 11-25.

*g* Verses 4-7: cp. 3. 5-8.

*h* That is Baal of Break-through.

*i* No . . . contact and: or Do not go up to the attack; withdraw from them and then . . .

2 Sam. ch. 6 the two movements of the Ark are related successively. The Chronicler retains the first movement without change (13.5-14) but inserts other materials from 2 Sam. ch. 14 before the second movement (chs. 15-16). He elaborates the second movement with special materials of his own.

13.1-14: **The first movement of the Ark.** The Chronicler adds his own introduction, vv. 1-4, which emphasizes the unison of Israel's action; the main account, however, simply follows 2 Sam. 6.2-11.

14.1-17: **David secures his position.** This chapter is mostly drawn from 2 Sam., but the Chronicler inserts it between the two Ark movements. 4-7: Compare 3.1-9 n.

- 15 Then, as soon as you hear a rustling sound in the tree-tops, you shall give battle, for God will have gone out before you to defeat the Philistine army.<sup>1</sup>
- 16 David did as God commanded, and they drove the Philistine army in flight
- 17 all the way from Gibeon to Gezer. So David's fame spread through every land, and the LORD inspired all nations with dread of him.
- 15 DAVID BUILT HIMSELF QUARTERS IN THE City of David, and prepared a place for the Ark of God and pitched a tent**
- 2 for it. Then he decreed that only Levites should carry the Ark of God, since they had been chosen by the LORD to carry it and to serve him<sup>2</sup> for ever.
- 3 Next David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for
- 4 it. He gathered together the sons of
- 5 Aaron and the Levites: of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief with a hundred
- 6 and twenty of his kinsmen; of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief with two hundred and twenty of his kins-
- 7 men; of the sons of Gershon, Joel the chief with a hundred and thirty of his
- 8 kinsmen; of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief with two hundred
- 9 of his kinsmen; of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief with eighty of his kins-
- 10 men; of the the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief with a hundred and
- 11 twelve of his kinsmen. And David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, together with the Levites, Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and
- 12 Amminadab, and said to them, 'You who are heads of families of the Levites, hallow yourselves, you and your kinsmen, and bring up the Ark of the LORD the God of Israel to the
- 13 place which I have prepared for it. It was because you were not present the

first time, that the LORD our God broke out upon us. For we had not sought his guidance as we should have done.' So the priests and the Levites<sup>14</sup> hallowed themselves to bring up the Ark of the LORD the God of Israel, and<sup>15</sup> the Levites carried the Ark of God, bearing it on their shoulders with poles as Moses had prescribed at the command of the LORD.

David also ordered the chiefs of the<sup>16</sup> Levites to install as musicians those of their kinsmen who were players skilled in making joyful music on their instruments, lutes and harps and cymbals. So the Levites installed Heman<sup>17</sup> son of Joel and, from his kinsmen, Asaph son of Berechiah; and from their kinsmen the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah, together with their kins-

18 men of the second degree, Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphehu, and Mikneiah, and the door-keepers Obed-edom and Jeiel. They installed the musicians Heman,<sup>19</sup> Asaph, and Ethan to sound the cymbals of bronze; Zechariah, Jaaziel,<sup>20</sup> Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah to play on lutes;<sup>k</sup> Mattithiah, Eliphehu, Mik-

21 neiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azariah to play on harps.<sup>l</sup> Kenaniah, officer<sup>22</sup> of the Levites, was precentor in charge of the music because of his proficiency. Berechiah and Elkanah were door-

23 keepers for the Ark, while the priests Shebaniah, Jehoshaphat, Nethaneel,<sup>24</sup> Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer sounded the trumpets before the Ark of God; and Obed-edom and Jehiah also were door-keepers for the Ark.

<sup>j</sup> Or it.

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds al alamoth, possibly a musical term.

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds al hashsheminih lenasseah, possibly musical terms.

**15.1-16.43: The Ark and its Levitical service.** The account of the bringing up of the Ark in 2 Sam.6.12-19 is greatly expanded by the Chronicler's interest in the Levites, and especially the Levitical musicians. 1-15: In the Chronicler's view, the outbreak of the LORD against Uzza in 13.7-11 was because the Levites were not carrying the Ark; see v. 13. Therefore, on the second attempt to bring up the Ark, the Levites had to carry it. 4-10: Normally there are only three families of Levites, not six; compare 6.16-30; 23.6-23. Hebron and Uzziel appear as sons of Kohath, 6.18; 23.12; and, more rarely, Elizaphan is listed as a son of Uzziel, Lev.10.4 (here spelled "Elzaphan"); Num.3.30; 2 Chr.29.13. 16-24: The provision for carefully defined groups of musicians is a late development, mostly from the postexilic organization of the Temple, though based on older monarchic practice. Vv. 17-18 give the basic list, vv. 19-24 supplementary lists and comments. The lists are not completely consistent with each other.

- 25<sup>m</sup> Then David and the elders of Israel and the captains of units of a thousand went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD with much rejoicing from the house of Obed-  
26 edom. Because God had helped the Levites who carried the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.
- 27 Now David and all the Levites who carried the Ark, and the musicians, and Kenaniah the precentor,<sup>n</sup> were arrayed in robes of fine linen; and  
28 David had on a linen ephod. All Israel escorted the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD with shouts of acclamation, blowing on horns and trumpets, clashing cymbals and playing on  
29 lutes and harps. But as the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD was entering the city of David, Saul's daughter Michal looked down through a window and saw King David dancing and making merry, and she despised him in her heart.
- 16<sup>o</sup> When they had brought in the Ark of God, they put it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they offered whole-offerings and shared-  
2 offerings before God. After David had completed these sacrifices, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD  
3 and gave food, a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins, to each  
4 Israelite, man or woman. He appointed certain Levites to serve before the Ark of the LORD, to repeat the Name, to confess and to praise the LORD the  
5 God of Israel. Their leader was Asaph; second to him was Zechariah; then came Jaaziel,<sup>p</sup> Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-  
6 edom, and Jeiel, with lutes and harps, Asaph, who sounded the cymbals; and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests, who blew the trumpets before the
- Ark of the Covenant of God continuously throughout that day. It was  
7 then that David first ordained the offering of thanks to the LORD by Asaph and his kinsmen:
- Give the LORD thanks and invoke  
him by name,  
make his deeds known in the world  
around.  
Pay him honour with song and  
psalm  
and think upon all his wonders.  
Exult in his hallowed name;  
10 let those who seek the LORD be joyful in heart.  
Turn to the LORD, your strength,<sup>r</sup>  
11 seek his presence always.  
Remember the wonders that he  
12 has wrought,  
his portents and the judgements  
he has given,  
O offspring of Israel his servants, O  
13 chosen sons of Jacob.
- He is the LORD our God;  
14 his judgements fill the earth.  
He called to mind his covenant  
15 from long ago,<sup>s</sup>  
the promise he extended to a  
thousand generations—  
the covenant made with Abraham,  
16 his oath given to Isaac,  
the decree by which he bound  
17 himself for Jacob,  
his everlasting covenant with  
Israel:  
'I will give you the land of  
18 Canaan', he said,  
'to be your possession, your  
patrimony.'

<sup>m</sup> Verses 25–29: cp. 2 Sam. 6. 12–16.

<sup>n</sup> the precentor: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>o</sup> Verses 1–3: cp. 2 Sam. 6. 17–19.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; cp. 15. 18, 20; Heb. Jeiel.

<sup>q</sup> Verses 8–22: cp. Ps. 105. 1–15.

<sup>r</sup> your strength: or the symbol of his strength; lit. and his strength.

<sup>s</sup> from long ago: or for ever.

15.25–16.3: After the liturgical arrangements, the Ark is brought in. 2 Sam. 6.12–19 is revised. 26: The Chronicler makes *the Levites* the reason for the sacrifices. 27: In the Chronicler's version, all the officials wear ritual garments and David's modesty is preserved; contrast 2 Sam. 6.14, 20. 29: *Michal's* motives are eliminated here; compare 2 Sam. 6.20. 16.4–36: There were three guilds of Levitical musicians; those of Heman, *Asaph*, and Ethan or Jeduthun (6.33–47; 15.17–18; 25.1–8). Only that of *Asaph*, however, was assigned to the service of the Ark because, from the Chronicler's viewpoint, the other two guilds were still serving at the Tabernacle in Gibeon; see vv. 39–42. 5–6: Including the two *priests, who blew trumpets*, twelve musicians are listed. On the *trumpets*, see Num. 10.1–10. 7: The Chronicler is familiar with a regular order of *offering of thanks* at the Temple, an order attributed to David. 8–36: The Chronicler or one of his sources composed a hymn of praise by drawing on parts of hymns now



19 A small company it was,  
few in number, strangers in that  
land,  
20 roaming from nation to nation,  
from one kingdom to another;  
21 but he let no man ill-treat them,  
for their sake he admonished  
kings:  
22 'Touch not my anointed servants,  
do my prophets no harm.'

23<sup>f</sup> Sing to the LORD, all men on earth,  
proclaim his triumph day by day.  
24 Declare his glory among the  
nations,  
his marvellous deeds among all  
peoples.  
25 Great is the LORD and worthy of all  
praise;  
he is more to be feared than all  
gods.  
26 For the gods of the nations are  
idols every one;  
but the LORD made the heavens.  
27 Majesty and splendour attend  
him,  
might and joy are in his dwelling.

28 Ascribe to the LORD, you families  
of nations,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and  
might;  
29 ascribe to the LORD the glory due  
to his name,  
bring a gift and come before him.  
Bow down to the LORD in the  
splendour of holiness,<sup>u</sup>  
30 and dance in his honour, all  
men on earth.  
He has fixed the earth firm,  
immovable.  
31 Let the heavens rejoice and the  
earth exult,  
let men declare among the nations,  
'The LORD is king.'  
32 Let the sea roar and all the creatures  
in it,  
let the fields exult and all that is  
in them;  
33 then let the trees of the forest  
shout for joy

before the LORD when he comes to  
judge the earth.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,<sup>34<sup>p</sup></sup>  
for his love endures for ever.  
Cry, 'Deliver us, O God our saviour,<sup>35<sup>w</sup></sup>  
gather us in and save us from the  
nations  
that we may give thanks to thy  
holy name  
and make thy praise our pride.'

Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel<sup>36</sup>  
from everlasting to everlasting.

And all the people said 'Amen' and  
'Praise the LORD.'

David left Asaph and his kinsmen<sup>37</sup>  
there before the Ark of the Covenant  
of the LORD, to perform regular service  
before the Ark as each day's duty re-<sup>38</sup>  
quired; as door-keepers he left Obed-  
edom son of Jeduthun, and Hosah.  
(Obed-edom and his kinsmen were<sup>39</sup>  
sixty-eight in number.) He left Zadok  
the priest and his kinsmen the priests  
before the Tabernacle of the LORD  
at the hill-shrine in Gibeon, to make<sup>40</sup>  
offerings there to the LORD upon the  
altar of whole-offering regularly morn-  
ing and evening, exactly as it is written  
in the law enjoined by the LORD upon  
Israel. With them he left Heman and<sup>41</sup>  
Jeduthun and the other men chosen  
and nominated to give thanks to the  
LORD, 'for his love endures for ever.'  
They had trumpets and cymbals for<sup>42</sup>  
the players, and the instruments used  
for sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun  
kept the gate.

So all the people went home, and<sup>43</sup>  
David returned to greet his household.

AS SOON AS DAVID WAS ESTABLISHED IN<sup>171<sup>x</sup></sup>  
his house, he said to Nathan the

<sup>t</sup> Verses 23-33: cp. Ps. 96. 1-13.

<sup>u</sup> Or in holy vestments.

<sup>v</sup> Verse 34: cp. Ps. 107. 1.

<sup>w</sup> Verses 35, 36: cp. Ps. 106. 47, 48.

<sup>x</sup> Verses 1-27: cp. 2 Sam. 7. 1-29.

contained in the canonical book of Psalms. Only a concluding note of lamentation (v. 35) suggests a different mood. 37-42: From the Chronicler's viewpoint, the service of the Mosaic Tabernacle was still in Gibeon while the new Davidic service of the Ark was in Jerusalem. The two services were to be merged in Solomon's time; see 2 Chr. 1.2-6; 5.4.

17.1-27: The LORD establishes David's house. The remaining two blocks of material con-

prophet, 'Here I live in a house of cedar, while the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD is housed in curtains.'

2 Nathan answered David, 'Do whatever you have in mind, for God is with you.' But that night the word of God came to Nathan: 'Go and say to David my servant, "This is the word of the LORD: It is not you who shall build me a house to dwell in. Down to this day I have never dwelt in a house since I brought Israel up from Egypt; I lived in a tent and a tabernacle.<sup>y</sup> Wherever I journeyed with Israel, did I ever ask any of the judges whom I appointed shepherds of my people why they had not built me a house of cedar?" Then say this to my servant David: "This is the word of the LORD of Hosts: I took you from the pastures, and from following the sheep, to be prince over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have destroyed all the enemies in your path. I will make you as famous as the great ones of the earth. I will assign a place for my people Israel; there I will plant them, and they shall dwell in their own land. They shall be disturbed no more, never again shall wicked men wear them down as they did from the time when I first appointed judges over Israel my people, and I will subdue all your enemies. But I will make you great and the LORD shall build up your royal house. When your life ends and you go to join your forefathers, I will set up one of your family, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. It is he shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for all time. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. I will never withdraw my love from him as I withdrew it from your predecessor. But I will give him a sure place in my house and kingdom for all time, and his throne shall be established for ever."

15 Nathan recounted to David all that had been said to him and all that had

been revealed. Then King David went into the presence of the LORD and took his place there and said, 'What am I, LORD God, and what is my family, that thou hast brought me thus far? It was a small thing in thy sight, O God, to have planned for thy servant's house in days long past, and now thou lookest upon me as a man already embarked on a high career, O LORD God. What more can David say to thee of the honour thou hast done thy servant, well though thou knowest him? For the sake of thy servant, LORD, and according to thy purpose, thou hast brought me to all this greatness. O LORD, we have never heard of one like thee; there is no god but thee. And thy people Israel, to whom can they be compared? Is there any other nation on earth whom God has gone out to redeem from slavery, to make them his people? Thou hast won a name for thyself by great and terrible deeds, driving out nations before thy people whom thou didst redeem from Egypt. Thou hast made thy people Israel thy own for ever, and thou, O LORD, hast become their God. But now, LORD, let what thou hast promised for thy servant and his house stand fast for all time; make good what thou hast said. Let it stand fast, that thy fame may be great for ever, and let men say, "The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God." So shall the house of thy servant David be established before thee. Thou, my God, hast shown me thy purpose to build up thy servant's house; therefore I have been able to pray before thee. Thou, O LORD, art God, and thou hast made these noble promises to thy servant; thou hast been pleased to bless thy servant's house, that it may continue always before thee; thou it is who hast blessed it, and it shall be blessed for ever.'

<sup>y</sup> I lived . . . tabernacle: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* I have been from tent to tent and from a tabernacle.

cerning David (chs. 18–20, 21–29) are introduced by ch. 17. 2 Sam. ch. 7 is drawn on to show that David was a man of war (the motif presented in chs. 18–20) and that, consequently, not he but his son would build the LORD's house. Nevertheless, David makes all the preparations for the Temple (chs. 21–29). This latter view is stated explicitly in the Chronicler's speech in 22.7–10. Contrast ch. 17 with 2 Sam. ch. 24.

18:2 After this David defeated the Philistines and conquered them, and took  
 2 from them Gath with its villages; he defeated the Moabites, and they became subject to him and paid him  
 3 tribute. He also defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah-hamath, who was on his way to set up a monument of  
 4 victory by the river Euphrates. From him David captured a thousand chariots, seven thousand horsemen and twenty thousand foot; he hamstringed all the chariot-horses, except a  
 5 hundred which he retained. When the Aramaeans of Damascus came to the help of Hadadezer king of Zobah, David destroyed twenty-two thousand  
 6 of them, and established garrisons among these Aramaeans; they became subject to him and paid him tribute. Thus the LORD gave David victory  
 7 wherever he went. David took the gold quivers borne by Hadadezer's servants and brought them to Jerusalem. He also took a great quantity of bronze<sup>a</sup> from Hadadezer's cities, Tibhath and Kun; from this Solomon made the Sea of bronze,<sup>a</sup> the pillars, and the bronze<sup>a</sup> vessels.  
 9 When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer king of Zobah,  
 10 he sent his son Hadoram to King David to greet him and to congratulate him on defeating Hadadezer in battle (for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou); and he brought with him vessels of gold,  
 11 silver, and copper, which King David dedicated to the LORD. He dedicated also the silver and the gold which he had carried away from all the other nations, from Edom and Moab, from the Ammonites and the Philistines, and from Amalek.  
 12 Edom was defeated by Abishai son of Zeruiah, who destroyed eighteen thousand of them in the Valley of Salt and stationed garrisons in the country.  
 13 All the Edomites now became subject

to David. Thus the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

David ruled over the whole of Israel<sup>14b</sup> and maintained law and justice among all his people. Joab son of Zeruiah was  
 15 in command of the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was secretary of state; Zadok and Abiathar son of Ahimelech, son of Ahitub,<sup>c</sup> were priests; Shavsha was adjutant-general; Benaiah son of Jehoiada commanded the Kerethite and Pelethite guards. The eldest sons of David were in attendance on the king.

Some time afterwards Nahash king<sup>19:1d</sup> of the Ammonites died and was succeeded by his son. David said, 'I must  
 2 keep up the same loyal friendship with Hanun son of Nahash as his father showed me', and he sent a mission to condole with him on the death of his father. But when David's envoys entered the country of the Ammonites to condole with Hanun, the Ammonite  
 3 princes said to Hanun, 'Do you suppose David means to do honour to your father when he sends you his condolences? These men of his are spies whom he has sent to find out how to overthrow the country.' So  
 4 Hanun took David's servants, and he shaved them, cut off half their garments up to the hips, and dismissed them. When David heard how they had been  
 5 treated, he sent to meet them, for they were deeply humiliated, and ordered them to wait in Jericho and not to return until their beards had grown again. The Ammonites knew that they  
 6 had brought themselves into bad odour with David, so Hanun and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents of silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Aram-naharaim,<sup>e</sup> Maacah, and Aram-

<sup>z</sup> Verses 1-13: cp. 2 Sam. 8. 1-14.

<sup>a</sup> Or copper.

<sup>b</sup> Verses 14-17: cp. 2 Sam. 8. 15-18; 20. 23-26; 1 Kgs. 4. 2-4.

<sup>c</sup> and Abiathar . . . Ahitub: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Sam. 8. 17; Heb. son of Ahitub and Abimelech son of Abiathar.

<sup>d</sup> Verses 1-19: cp. 2 Sam. 10. 1-19.

<sup>e</sup> That is Aram of Two Rivers.

**18.1-19.19: David's imperial victories.** The Chronicler includes the accounts of David's victories from 2 Sam. chs. 8, 10, 12, and 21. However, he omits the stories of David's court life related in 2 Sam. chs. 11-20. 4: The numbers differ from those of 2 Sam. 8.4. 8: The Chronicler infers that this bronze must have been put to a good use, i.e. the making of such objects as Solomon's Sea of bronze. 17: The Chronicler has views of priesthood that prohibit David's sons from being priests, as they are in 2 Sam. 8.18; therefore, here they are only in attendance on the king.

7 zobah.<sup>f</sup> They hired thirty-two thousand chariots and the king of Maacah and his people, who came and encamped before Medeba, while the Ammonites came from their cities and  
8 mustered for battle. When David heard of it, he sent out Joab and all the  
9 fighting men. The Ammonites came and took up their position at the entrance to the city, while the allied kings took  
10 up theirs in the open country. When Joab saw that he was threatened both front and rear, he detailed some picked  
11 Israelite troops and drew them up facing the Aramaeans. The rest of his forces he put under his brother Abishai, who took up a position facing the  
12 Ammonites. 'If the Aramaeans prove too strong for me,' he said, 'you must come to my relief; and if the Ammonites prove too strong for you, I  
13 will relieve you. Courage! Let us fight bravely for our people and for the cities<sup>g</sup> of our God. And the LORD's  
14 will be done.' But when Joab and his men came to close quarters with the Aramaeans, they put them to flight;  
15 and when the Ammonites saw them in flight, they too fled before his brother Abishai and entered the city. Then  
16 Joab came to Jerusalem. The Aramaeans saw that they had been worsted by Israel, and they sent messengers to summon other Aramaeans from the Great Bend of the Euphrates under Shophach, commander of Hadadezer's  
17 army. Their movement was reported to David, who immediately mustered all the forces of Israel, crossed the Jordan and advanced against them and took up battle positions. The Aramaeans likewise took up positions facing  
18 David and engaged him, but were put to flight by Israel. David slew seven thousand Aramaeans in chariots and forty thousand infantry, killing Shophach the commander of the army.

When Hadadezer's men saw that they had been worsted by Israel, they sued for peace and submitted to David. The Aramaeans were never again willing to give support to the Ammonites.

AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR, WHEN 20:1<sup>h</sup> kings take the field, Joab led the army out and ravaged the Ammonite country. He came to Rabbah and laid siege to it, while David remained in Jerusalem; he reduced the city and razed it to the ground. David took the  
2 crown from the head of Milcom and found that it weighed a talent of gold and was set with a precious stone, and this he placed on his own head. He also removed a great quantity of booty from the city; he took its inhabitants  
3 and set them to work with saws and other iron tools, sharp and toothed. David did this to all the cities of the Ammonites; then he and all his people returned to Jerusalem.

Some time later war with the 4:1 Philistines broke out in Gezer; it was then that Sibbechai of Hushah killed Sippai, a descendant of the Rephaim, and the Philistines were reduced to submission. In another war with the 5 Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi brother of Goliath of Gath, whose spear had a shaft like a weaver's beam. In yet another war in Gath, 6 there appeared a giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in all; he too was descended from the Rephaim, and 7 when he defied Israel, Jonathan son of David's brother Shimea killed him. These giants were the descendants of 8 the Rephaim in Gath, and they all fell at the hands of David and his men.

<sup>f</sup> Maacah, and Aram-zobah: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Aramaacah, and Zobah.

<sup>g</sup> Or altars.

<sup>h</sup> Verses 1-3: cp. 2 Sam. 12. 26-31.

<sup>i</sup> Verses 4-7: cp. 2 Sam. 21. 18-22.

20.1-8: War with the Ammonites and Philistines. While the dramatic military action of ch. 19 is unchanged from its source (2 Sam. ch. 10), care is taken to avoid any hint of the Bathsheba-Uriah story (2 Sam. chs. 11-12), and even of Joab's efforts to insure that David was the conqueror of Rabbah in person; compare 2 Sam. 12.26-29. 4-8: Materials about the exploits of David's heroes not previously used by the Chronicler find their appropriate place here. 4: *The Rephaim*: legendary inhabitants of southern and eastern Palestine noted for their unusual stature. 5: The Chronicler does not narrate the David and Goliath story; however, he eliminates the inconsistency between that story and 2 Sam. 21.19 by making *Elhanan* the slayer of the *brother of Goliath* rather than of Goliath himself. 6: *Gath*: see 1 Sam. 5.8. 7: *Shimea*: Shammah of 1 Sam. 16.9

21<sup>j</sup> NOW SATAN, SETTING HIMSELF AGAINST Israel, incited David to count the  
 2 people. So he instructed Joab and his public officers to go out and number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and to  
 3 report the number to him. Joab answered, 'Even if the LORD should increase his people a hundredfold, would not your majesty still be king and all the people your slaves? Why should your majesty want to do this?  
 4 It will only bring guilt on Israel.' But Joab was overruled by the king; he set out and went up and down the whole country. He then came to Jerusalem  
 5 and reported to David the numbers recorded: those capable of bearing arms were one million one hundred thousand in Israel, and four hundred  
 6 and seventy thousand in Judah. Levi and Benjamin were not counted by Joab, so deep was his repugnance against the king's order.  
 7 God was displeased with all this and  
 8 proceeded to punish Israel. David said to God, 'I have done a very wicked thing: I pray thee remove thy servant's guilt, for I have been very foolish.'  
 9 And the LORD said to Gad, David's  
 10 seer, 'Go and tell David, "This is the word of the LORD: I have three things to offer you; choose one of them and I  
 11 will bring it upon you."' So Gad came to David and said to him, 'This is the word of the LORD: "Make your choice:  
 12 three years of famine, three months of harrying by your foes and close pursuit by the sword of your enemy, or three days of the LORD's own sword, bringing pestilence throughout the country, and the LORD's angel working destruction in all the territory of Israel." Consider now what answer I am to take  
 13 back to him who sent me.' Thereupon David said to Gad, 'I am in a desperate plight; let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; and let me not fall into the hands of  
 14 man.' So the LORD sent a pestilence

throughout Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel died. And God sent  
 15 an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but, as he was destroying it, the LORD saw and repented of the evil, and said to the destroying angel at the moment when he was standing beside the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, 'Enough! Stay your hand.'

When David looked up and saw the  
 16 angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with his sword drawn in his hand and stretched out over Jerusalem, he and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell prostrate to the ground; and David said to God, 'It  
 17 was I who gave the order to count the people. It was I who sinned, I, the shepherd,<sup>k</sup> who did wrong. But these poor sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, let thy hand fall upon me and upon my family, but check this plague on the people.'<sup>l</sup>

The angel of the LORD, speaking  
 18 through the lips of Gad, commanded David to go to the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite and to set up there an altar to the LORD. David went up  
 19 as Gad had bidden him in the LORD's name. Ornan's four sons who were with  
 20 him hid themselves, but he was busy threshing his wheat when he turned and saw the angel. As David approached,  
 21 Ornan looked up and, seeing the king, came out from the threshing-floor and prostrated himself before him. David said to Ornan, 'Let me  
 22 have the site of the threshing-floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; sell it me at the full price, that the plague which has attacked my people may be stopped.' Ornan answered  
 23 David, 'Take it and let your majesty do as he thinks fit; see, here are the oxen for whole-offerings, the threshing-sledges for the fuel, and the wheat for

<sup>j</sup> Verses 1-27: cp. 2 Sam. 24. 1-25.

<sup>k</sup> I, the shepherd: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* doing wrong.

<sup>l</sup> check . . . people: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* among thy people, not for a plague.

21.1-22.1: The consecration of the Temple site. This is taken from the story of the altar site of the Solomonic Temple (2 Sam. ch. 24). The story serves here as the introduction to David's preparations for the Temple that Solomon would build (chs. 22-29), after the empire will have been secured; see 17.1-27 n. 1: *Satan* means "the Adversary." See the role he plays in Job 1.6-12; compare 1 Kgs. 22.19-23; Zech. 3.1-2; and, in a poetic context, Ps. 82. 5: Compare the numbers in 2 Sam. 24.9. 6: *Levi* was not a tribal territory; to count Levites (local priests) was not the same as to count the men of a tribe. Why *Benjamin* should be omitted is not clear. 22-25: Compare David's refusal to take the site as a gift, for religious reasons, with Abram's

the grain-offering; I give you every-  
 24 thing.' But King David said to Ornan,  
 'No, I will pay the full price; I will  
 not present to the LORD what is  
 yours, or offer a whole-offering which  
 25 has cost me nothing.' So David gave  
 Ornan six hundred shekels of gold for  
 26 the site, and built an altar to the  
 LORD there; on this he offered whole-  
 offerings and shared-offerings, and  
 called upon the LORD, who answered  
 him with fire falling from heaven on the  
 27 altar of whole-offering. Then, at the  
 LORD's command, the angel sheathed  
 his sword.

28 It was when David saw that the LORD  
 had answered him at the threshing-  
 floor of Ornan the Jebusite that he  
 29 offered sacrifice there. The tabernacle  
 of the LORD and the altar of whole-  
 offering which Moses had made in the  
 wilderness were then at the hill-shrine  
 30 in Gibeon; but David had been un-  
 able to go there and seek God's guid-  
 ance, so shocked and shaken was he  
 22 at the sight of the angel's sword. Then  
 David said, 'This is to be the house of  
 the LORD God, and this is to be an altar  
 of whole-offering for Israel.'

#### *The temple and its organization*

2 DAVID NOW GAVE ORDERS TO ASSEMBLE  
 the aliens resident in Israel, and he set  
 them as masons to dress hewn stones  
 3 and to build the house of God. He  
 laid in a great store of iron to make  
 nails and clamps for the doors, more  
 4 bronze than could be weighed and  
 cedar-wood without limit; the men of  
 Sidon and Tyre brought David an  
 5 ample supply of cedar. David said,  
 'My son Solomon is a boy of tender

years, and the house that is to be  
 built to the LORD must be exceedingly  
 magnificent, renowned and celebrated  
 in every land; therefore I must make  
 preparations for it myself.' So David  
 made abundant preparation before his  
 death.

He sent for Solomon his son and 6  
 charged him to build a house for the  
 LORD the God of Israel. 'Solomon, 7  
 my son,' he said, 'I had intended to  
 build a house in honour of the name  
 of the LORD my God; but the LORD 8  
 forbade me and said, "You have shed  
 much blood in my sight and waged  
 great wars; for this reason you shall  
 not build a house in honour of my  
 name. But you shall have a son who 9<sup>m</sup>  
 shall be a man of peace; I will give  
 him peace from all his enemies on every  
 side; his name shall be Solomon,  
 'Man of Peace', and I will grant peace  
 and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall 10  
 build a house in honour of my name;  
 he shall be my son and I will be a  
 father to him, and I will establish the  
 throne of his sovereignty over Israel  
 for ever.'" Now, Solomon my son, the 11  
 LORD be with you! May you prosper  
 and build the house of the LORD your  
 God, as he promised you should. But 12  
 may the LORD grant you wisdom and  
 discretion, so that when he gives you  
 authority in Israel you may keep the law  
 of the LORD your God. You will prosper 13  
 only if you are careful to observe  
 the decrees and ordinances which the  
 LORD enjoined upon Moses for Israel;  
 be strong and resolute, neither faint-  
 hearted nor dismayed.

'In spite of' all my troubles, I have 14  
 here ready for the house of the LORD  
 m Verse 9: cp. 1 Kgs. 5, 4.

response to the king of Sodom in Gen.14.21-24. 26: On the tradition of the *fire from heaven*, see 1 Kgs. 18.38 n. 21.28-22.1: This is the Chronicler's own comment on the episode he has taken from 2 Sam.

22.2-29.30: **The preparations for the Temple.** These materials are derived from different sources preserved in the Chronicler's circle. Ch. 22 is mostly repeated in chs. 28-29; the two sections are probably two renderings of the same topic. Chs. 23-27, lists of Levites and other groups, are not closely connected to the speeches in the surrounding chapters. Such lists probably existed separately in the Chronicler's circle.

22.2-19: **A survey of the preparations.** David assembles the workers and materials, addresses Solomon (see 28.20-21), and gives a charge to the officers of Israel (see 28.1-10). 2: On the *aliens* as a source of labor, see 1 Kgs.9.15-23 n. 8: The Chronicler did not alter the Samuel account when he gave it in ch. 17; there the LORD declined a house of cedar because he had always dwelt in a tent (17.4-6). Here, the Chronicler gives his own reason: that David shed much blood in the conquest of his empire. 9: In contrast to David, *Solomon* was a "Man of Peace"; the Heb. Solomon (*Shelōmōh*) is related to the noun *peace* (*shālōm*). 14: *The troubles*

a hundred thousand talents of gold and a million talents of silver, with great quantities of bronze and iron, more than can be weighed; timber and stone, too, I have got ready; and you may

15 add to them. Besides, you have a large force of workmen, masons, sculptors, and carpenters, and countless men

16 skilled in work of every kind, in gold and silver, bronze and iron. So now to work, and the LORD be with you!

17 David ordered all the officers of Israel to help Solomon his son: 'Is not the LORD your God with you? Will he not give you peace on every side? For he has given the inhabitants of the land into my power, and they will be subject

19 to the LORD and his people. Devote yourselves, therefore, heart and soul, to seeking guidance of the LORD your God, and set about building his sanctuary, so that the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD and God's holy vessels may be brought into a house built in honour of his name.'

23 David was now an old man, weighed down with years, and he appointed

2 Solomon his son king over Israel. He gathered together all the officers of Israel, the priests, and the Levites. The Levites were enrolled from the age of thirty upwards, their males being

4 thirty-eight thousand in all. Of these, twenty-four thousand were to be responsible for the maintenance and service of the house of the LORD, six thousand to act as officers and magistrates, four thousand to be doorkeepers, and four thousand to praise the LORD on the musical instruments which David had made for the service

6 of praise. David organized them in

divisions, called after Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the sons of Levi.

The sons of Gershon: Laadan and

7 Shimei. The sons of Laadan: Jehiel

8 the chief, Zethan and Joel, three.<sup>n</sup> These were the heads of the families

9 grouped under Laadan. The sons of

10 Shimei: Jahath, Ziza, Jeush and Beriah, four. Jahath was the chief and Ziza

11 the second, but Jeush and Beriah, having few children, were reckoned for duty as a single family.

The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar,

12 Hebron and Uzziel, four. The sons of

13 Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart, he and his sons in perpetuity, to dedicate the most holy gifts,<sup>o</sup> to burn sacrifices before the LORD, to serve him, and to give the blessing in his name for ever, but the

14 sons of Moses, the man of God, were to keep the name of Levite. The sons of

15 Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. The sons

16 of Gershom: Shubael the chief. The

17 sons of Eliezer: Rehabiah the chief. Eliezer had no other sons, but Rehabiah had very many. The sons of

18 Izhar: Shelomoth the chief. The sons of

19 Hebron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third and Jekameam the fourth. The sons of

20 Uzziel: Micah the chief and Isshiah the second.

The sons of Merari: Mahli and

21 Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. When Eleazar died, he left

22 daughters but no sons, and their cousins, the sons of Kish, married them. The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder

23 and Jeremoth, three.

<sup>n</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds* The sons of Shimei: Shelomith, Haziel and Haran, three.

<sup>o</sup> to dedicate . . . gifts: *or* to be hallowed as most holy.

may be the acute family problems and rebellions related in 2 Sam. chs. 12–20 but omitted by the Chronicler.

23.1–26.32: **The divisions of the religious personnel.** Other than the genealogies of chs. 1–10, this is the most "technical" section of 1 and 2 Chr., and important to the Chronicler's circle in that the family lists of Levites and priests established the legitimacy of and the priorities for the many personnel involved in the service and benefits of the postexilic Temple.

23.1–32: **The Levites.** 3–6: These statements apply to all the Levitical groups to be listed. Here, the Levites did not begin active service until *the age of thirty*. Later, when more men were needed in active service, the age was lowered to twenty-five (Num.8.24), and even to twenty (23.24,27). 8–23: For other genealogies of the Levites, see Exod.6.16–25; Num.3.17–39; 1 Chr.6.19–29; 24.20–30. The three main clans, *Gershon*, *Kohath*, and *Merari*, are firm in all lists. The third generation is also very consistent, though *Gershon's* first son otherwise appears as Libni instead of *Laadan*. Except for the genealogies of Aaron (see ch. 24), only Chr. gives names beyond the third generation, and those names differ in each list. This list gives the families active at one time within the several Levitical clans. The list in 1 Chr.6.19–29, on the other hand, traces the lineage of each clan through several generations. When one of the sons is

- 24 Such were the Levites, grouped by families in the father's line whose heads were entered in the detailed list; they performed duties in the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty upwards. For David said, 'The LORD the God of Israel has given his people peace and has made his abode in Jerusalem for ever. The Levites will no longer have to carry the Tabernacle or any of the vessels for its service.' By these last words of David the Levites were enrolled from the age of twenty upwards. Their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD: they were responsible for the care of the courts and the rooms, for the cleansing of all holy things, and the general service of the house of God; for the rows of the Bread of the Presence, the flour for the grain-offerings, unleavened wafers, cakes baked on the griddle, and pastry, and for the weights and measures. They were to be on duty continually before the LORD every morning and evening, giving thanks and praise to him, and at every offering of whole-offerings to the LORD, on sabbaths, new moons and at the appointed seasons, according to their prescribed number. The Levites were to have charge of the Tent of the Presence and of the sanctuary, but the sons of Aaron their kinsmen were charged with the service of worship in the house of the LORD.
- 24 The divisions of the sons of Aaron: his sons were Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu died before their father, leaving no sons; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar held the office of priest. David, acting with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar and with Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar,

organized them in divisions for the discharge of the duties of their office. The male heads of families proved to be more numerous in the line of Eleazar than in that of Ithamar, so that sixteen heads of families were grouped under the line of Eleazar and eight under that of Ithamar. He organized them by drawing lots among them, for there were sacred officers<sup>p</sup> and officers of God in the line of Eleazar and in that of Ithamar. Shemaiah clerk, a Levite, son of Nethaneel, wrote down the names in the presence of the king, the officers, Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and of the heads of the priestly and levitical families, one priestly family being taken from the line of Eleazar and one from that of Ithamar. The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchiah, the sixth to Mijamin, the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abiah, the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Apses, the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. This was their order of duty for the discharge of their service when they entered the house of the LORD, according to the rule prescribed for them by their ancestor Aaron, who had received his instructions from the LORD the God of Israel.

<sup>p</sup> sacred officers: or officers of the sanctuary.

referred to as *chief*, it means he was the leader for that group in carrying out its Temple duties. If only the last generation of each family is counted, twenty-one families are listed. However, two families were merged because neither was large enough to carry out its duties separately (v. 11), and one family had no male descendants (v. 22). 25-26: On the earlier duties of the Levites, see Num. chs. 3-4. 27: On the age, see vv. 3-6 n. The *last words* here are meant to acknowledge that though David once said thirty years, his last word was *twenty*.

24.1-31: The divisions of the priests. The genealogy of Aaron, tracing the line of the chief priests, is given in 6.1-15. Here, the names of the priestly families who alternated in service at the Temple are given. The twenty-four families probably each served from Sabbath to Sabbath according to an established order; see 9.25 and Lk.1.5-10. The income from the altar service went partly to all the *sons of Aaron* and partly to the priests who were presiding at any given time; compare Lev.2.3,10; 7.14,32-35. 6: Solemn measures were taken to assure a proper



20 Of the remaining Levites: of the sons  
of Amram: Shubael. Of the sons of  
21 Shubael: Jehdeiah. Of Rehabiah: Is-  
22 shiah, the chief of Rehabiah's sons. Of  
the line of Izhar: Shelomoth. Of the sons  
23 of Shelomoth: Jahath. The sons of Heb-  
ron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the  
second, Jahaziel the third and Jekame-  
24 eam the fourth. The sons of Uzziel:  
Micah. Of the sons of Micah: Shamir;  
25 Micah's brother: Isshiah. Of the sons  
26 of Isshiah: Zechariah. The sons of  
Merari: Mahli and Mushi and also<sup>a</sup>  
27 Jaaziah his son. The sons of Merari:  
of Jaaziah: Beno, Shoham, Zaccur and  
28 Ibri. Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no  
29 sons; of Kish: the sons of Kish: Jerah-  
30 meel; and the sons of Mushi: Mahli,  
Eder and Jerimoth. These were the  
31 Levites by families. These also, side  
by side with their kinsmen the sons of  
Aaron, cast lots in the presence of  
King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and  
the heads of the priestly and levitical  
families, the senior and junior houses  
casting lots side by side.

25 David and his chief officers assigned  
special duties to the sons of Asaph,  
of Heman, and of Jeduthun, leaders in  
inspired prophecy to the accompani-  
ment of harps, lutes, and cymbals;  
the number of the men who performed  
this work in the temple was as follows.  
2 Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph,  
Nethaniah and Asarelah; these were  
3 under Asaph, a leader in inspired  
prophecy under the king. Of the sons  
of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Izri,<sup>r</sup> Isaiah,  
Shimei, Hashabiah, Mattithiah, these  
six under their father Jeduthun, a  
leader in inspired prophecy to the  
accompaniment of the harp, giving  
4 thanks and praise to the LORD. Of the  
sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah,  
Uzziel, Shubael, Jerimoth, Hananiah,

Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-  
ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir,  
and Mahazioth; all these were sons 5  
of Heman the king's seer, given to him  
through the promises of God for his  
greater glory. God had given Heman  
fourteen sons and three daughters,  
and they all served under their father 6  
for the singing in the house of the  
LORD; they took part in the service of  
the house of God, with cymbals, lutes,  
and harps, while Asaph, Jeduthun,  
and Heman were under the king.  
Reckoned with their kinsmen, trained 7  
singers of the LORD, they brought the  
total number of skilled musicians up to  
two hundred and eighty-eight. They 8  
cast lots for their duties, young and  
old, master-singer and apprentice side  
by side.

The first lot fell<sup>s</sup> to Joseph: he and 9  
his brothers and his sons, twelve.<sup>t</sup>  
The second to Gedaliah: he and his  
brothers and his sons, twelve. The third 10  
to Zaccur: his sons and his brothers,  
twelve. The fourth to Izri: his sons and 11  
his brothers, twelve. The fifth to Neth-  
aniah: his sons and his brothers, 12  
twelve. The sixth to Bukkiah: his sons 13  
and his brothers, twelve. The seventh 14  
to Asarelah: his sons and his brothers,  
twelve. The eighth to Isaiah: his sons 15  
and his brothers, twelve. The ninth to 16  
Mattaniah: his sons and his brothers,  
twelve. The tenth to Shimei: his sons 17  
and his brothers, twelve. The eleventh 18  
to Azareel: his sons and his brothers,  
twelve. The twelfth to Hashabiah: 19  
his sons and his brothers, twelve. The 20  
thirteenth to Shubael: his sons and his  
brothers, twelve. The fourteenth to 21  
Mattithiah: his sons and his brothers,

<sup>a</sup> and also: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the sons of.

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *cp. verse 11*; *Heb.* Zerl.

<sup>s</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds to Asaph.

<sup>t</sup> *Heb.* . . . twelve: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

priestly service and to give each family its due. 20-31: An appendix containing an alternative list to 23.16-23.

25.1-31: **The singers and musicians.** 1: The name of the third guild varies: it is Ethan in 6.31-48 and 15.16-24, but Jeduthun in 16.41; 25.3,6; 2 Chr.5.12; 29.14; and Neh.11.17. The two names became identified; it is unknown whether originally they reflected two separate clans. *Asaph* appears in the Heb. headings of Pss.50,73-83; Ethan, Ps.89; and *Jeduthun*, Pss.39,62,77. These headings are not given in the New English Bible; see p. xxi. *Prophecy*: see 5 n. 5; *Seer*: there is reflected the kinship between music and prophecy; compare 2 Chr.20.14 and 2 Kgs.3.14-16. 7: *Two hundred and eighty-eight*: twelve singers for each of the twenty-four divisions, matching the divisions of the priests in ch. 24. A different number, four thousand, is given in 23.5. 9-31: The twenty-four names are given in the order of their duty as determined by lot (see the same for the priests in 24.5-6).

- 22 twelve. The fifteenth to Jeremoth: his  
 23 sons and his brothers, twelve. The  
 sixteenth to Hananiah: his sons and his  
 24 brothers, twelve. The seventeenth to  
 Joshbekashah: his sons and his brothers,  
 25 twelve. The eighteenth to Hanani:  
 26 his sons and his brothers, twelve. The  
 nineteenth to Mallothi: his sons and his  
 27 brothers, twelve. The twentieth to Elia-  
 thah: his sons and his brothers, twelve.  
 28 The twenty-first to Hothir: his sons  
 29 and his brothers, twelve. The twenty-  
 second to Giddalti: his sons and his  
 30 brothers, twelve. The twenty-third to  
 Mahazioth: his sons and his brothers,  
 31 twelve. The twenty-fourth to Romamti-  
 ezer: his sons and his brothers, twelve.
- 26 The divisions of the door-keepers:  
 Korahites: Meshelemiah son of Kore,  
 2 son of Ebiasaph.<sup>u</sup> Sons of Meshele-  
 miah: Zechariah the eldest, Jediah the  
 second, Zebediah the third, Jathniel  
 3 the fourth, Elam the fifth, Jehohanan  
 4 the sixth, Elioenai the seventh. Sons of  
 Obed-edom: Shemaiah the eldest,  
 Jehozabad the second, Joah the third,  
 Sacar the fourth, Nethaneel the fifth,  
 5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh,  
 Poulthai the eighth (for God had  
 6 blessed him). Shemaiah, his son, was  
 the father of sons who had authority  
 in their family, for they were men of  
 7 great ability. Sons of Shemaiah:  
 Othni, Rephael, Obed, Elzabad and his  
 brothers Elihu and Semachiah, men of  
 8 ability. All these belonged to the family  
 of Obed-edom; they, their sons and  
 brothers, were men of ability, fit for  
 service in the temple; total: sixty-two.  
 9 Sons and brothers of Meshelemiah,  
 all men of ability, eighteen. Sons of  
 10 Hosah, a Merarite: Shimri the chief  
 (he was not the eldest, but his father  
 11 had made him chief), Hilkiah the  
 second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah  
 the fourth. Total of Hosah's sons and  
 brothers: thirteen.
- 12 The male heads of families con-  
 stituted the divisions of the door-

keepers; their duty was to serve in the  
 house of the LORD side by side with  
 their kinsmen. Young and old, family 13  
 by family, they cast lots for the gates.  
 The lot for the east gate fell to She- 14  
 lemiah; then lots were cast for his son  
 Zechariah, a prudent counsellor, and  
 he was allotted the north gate. To 15  
 Obed-edom was allotted the south  
 gate, and the gatehouse to his sons.  
 Hosah<sup>v</sup> was allotted the west gate, to- 16  
 gether with the Shallecheth gate on  
 the ascending causeway. Guard corre-  
 sponded to guard. Six Levites were on 17  
 duty daily on the east side, four on the  
 north and four on the south, and two  
 at each gatehouse; at the western colon- 18  
 nade there were four at the causeway  
 and two at the colonnade itself. These 19  
 were the divisions of the door-keepers,  
 Korahites and Merarites.

Fellow-Levites were in charge of the 20  
 stores of the house of God and of the  
 stores of sacred gifts. Of the children 21  
 of Laadan, descendants of the Gershon-  
 ite line through Laadan, heads of  
 families in the group of Laadan the Ger-  
 shonite, Jehiel and<sup>w</sup> his brothers Zetham 22  
 and Joel were in charge of the stores of  
 the house of the LORD. Of the families 23  
 of Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel,  
 Shubael son of Gershon, son of Moses, 24  
 was overseer of the stores. The line of  
 Eliezer his brother: his son Rehabiah,  
 his son Isaiah, his son Joram, his son 25  
 Zichri, and his son Shelomoth. This 26  
 Shelomoth and his kinsmen were in  
 charge of all the stores of the sacred  
 gifts dedicated by David the king, the  
 heads of families, the officers over  
 units of a thousand and a hundred, and  
 other officers of the army. They had 27  
 dedicated some of the spoils taken in  
 the wars for the upkeep of the house  
 of the LORD. Everything which Samuel 28

<sup>u</sup> son of Ebiasaph: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from the sons of Asaph.

<sup>v</sup> Hosah: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Shuppim and Hosah.

<sup>w</sup> Jehiel and: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Jehieli. The sons of Jehieli . . .

26.1–32: The door-keepers and other Levites. Compare 9.17–24; 15.23–24; 16.37–42. 1–11: The leaders of the clans of door-keepers—Meshelemiah (v. 1), Obed-edom (v. 4), and Hosah (v. 10)—are only minor figures in Levite lists. The overlap of names with those of musical clans perhaps suggests a close relationship between gatekeepers and musicians. 12–19: The structure of the Temple as reflected in these guard posts envisions the postexilic age of the Chronicler, not Solomon's Temple; compare 9.17–32. 20–32: The Levites engaged in administrative tasks. 21–22: Three officials were in charge of stores in the Temple. 23–24: The overseer(s) of the stores were from different families, perhaps to insure fairness in handling them. 26: A still different

the seer, Saul son of Kish, Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedicated, in short every sacred gift, was under the charge of Shelomoth and his kinsmen. Of the family of Izhar, Kenaniah and his sons acted as clerks and magistrates in the secular affairs of Israel. Of the family of Hebron, Hashabiah and his kinsmen, men of ability to the number of seventeen hundred, had the oversight of Israel west of the Jordan, both in the work of the LORD and in the service of the king. Also of the family of Hebron, Jeriah was the chief. (In the fortieth year of David's reign search was made in the family histories of the Hebronites, and men of great ability were found among them at Jazer in Gilead.) His kinsmen, all men of ability, two thousand seven hundred of them, heads of families, were charged by King David with the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, in religious and civil affairs alike.

- 27 THE NUMBER OF THE ISRAELITES—THAT is to say, of the heads of families, the officers over units of a thousand and a hundred, and the clerks who had their share in the king's service in the various divisions which took monthly turns of duty throughout the year—was twenty-four thousand in each division.
- 2 First, Jashobeam son of Zabdiel commanded the division for the first month with twenty-four thousand in his division; a member of the house of Perez, he was chief officer of the temple staff for the first month. Eleazar son of<sup>x</sup> Dodai the Ahohite commanded the division for the second month with twenty-four thousand in his division.
- 5 Third, Benaiah son of Jehoiada the chief priest, commander of the army, was the officer for the third month with twenty-four thousand in his division
- 6 (he was the Benaiah who was one of the

thirty warriors and was a chief among the thirty); but his son Ammizabad commanded his division. Fourth, Asahel, the brother of Joab, was the officer commanding for the fourth month with twenty-four thousand in his division; and his successor was Zebediah his son. Fifth, Shamhuth the Zerahite<sup>y</sup> was the officer commanding for the fifth month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Sixth, Ira son of Ikkesh, a man of Tekoa, was the officer commanding for the sixth month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Seventh, Helez an Ephraimite, from a place unknown, was the officer commanding for the seventh month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Eighth, Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the family of Zerah, was the officer commanding for the eighth month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Ninth, Abiezer, from Anathoth in Benjamin, was the officer commanding for the ninth month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Tenth, Maharai the Netophathite, of the family of Zerah, was the officer commanding for the tenth month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Eleventh, Benaiah the Pirathonite, from Ephraim, was the officer commanding for the eleventh month with twenty-four thousand in his division. Twelfth, Heldai the Netophathite, of the family of Othniel, was the officer commanding for the twelfth month with twenty-four thousand in his division.

The following were the principal officers in charge of the tribes of Israel: of Reuben, Eliezer son of Zichri; of Simeon, Shephatiah son of Maacah; of Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; of Aaron, Zadok; of Judah, Elihu a kinsman of David; of Issachar, Omri son

<sup>x</sup> Eleazar son of: prob. rdg., cp. 11. 12; Heb. om.  
<sup>y</sup> the Zerahite: prob. rdg.; Heb. the Izrah.

family was in charge of . . . the sacred gifts. 29–32: Three other groups of Levites conducted secular judicial and administrative tasks outside of Jerusalem: clerks and magistrates (v. 29); administrators west of the Jordan (v. 30); and administrators east of the Jordan (vv. 31–32). Compare 2 Chr. 19.18–11 and Deut. 17.8–13.

27.1–34: Officials of the realm. 1–15: In his own time, David was in no position to rule through such a schematic arrangement; also, the postexilic period offered no opportunity for such exaggerated numbers as twenty-four thousand people in each of the twelve divisions. 16–22: The tribe of Asher is omitted, yet Aaron is included (v. 17) as if a tribe; contrast 12.26–27,

19 of Michael; of Zebulun, Ishmaiah  
 20 son of Obadiah; of Naphtali, Jerimoth  
 son of Azriel; of Ephraim, Hoshea son  
 of Azariah; of the half tribe of Manas-  
 21 seh, Joel son of Pedaiah; of the half  
 of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo son of  
 Zechariah; of Benjamin, Jaasiel son of  
 22 Abner; of Dan, Azareel son of Jero-  
 ham. These were the officers in charge  
 of the tribes of Israel.

23 David took no census of those under  
 twenty years of age, for the LORD had  
 promised to make the Israelites as many  
 24 as the stars in the heavens. Joab son of  
 Zeruiah did begin to take a census  
 but he did not finish it; this brought  
 harm upon Israel, and the census was  
 not entered in the chronicle of King  
 David's reign.

25 Azmoth son of Adiel was in charge  
 of the king's stores; Jonathan son of  
 Uzziah was in charge of the stores in  
 the country, in the cities, in the  
 26 villages and in the fortresses. Ezri son  
 of Kelub had oversight of the workers  
 on the land; Shimei of Ramah was in  
 charge of the vine-dressers, while Zabdi  
 of Shephem had charge of the produce  
 of the vineyards for the wine-cellar.  
 28 Baal-hanan the Gederite supervised the  
 wild olives and the sycomore-figs in the  
 Shephelah; Joash was in charge of  
 29 the oil-stores. Shitrai of Sharon was  
 in charge of the herds grazing in Sharon,  
 Shaphat son of Adlai of the herds in  
 30 the vales. Obil the Ishmaelite was in  
 charge of the camels, Jehdeiah the Mero-  
 nothite of the asses. Jaziz the Hagerite  
 was in charge of the flocks. All these  
 were the officers in charge of King  
 32 David's possessions. David's favourite  
 nephew Jonathan, a counsellor, a  
 discreet and learned man, and Jehiel  
 the Hachmonite, were tutors to the  
 33 king's sons. Ahithophel was a king's  
 counsellor; Hushai the Archite was  
 34 the King's Friend. Ahithophel was  
 succeeded by Jehoiada son of Ben-  
 aiah, and Abiathar. Joab was com-  
 mander of the army.

DAVID ASSEMBLED AT JERUSALEM ALL 28  
 the officers of Israel, the officers over  
 the tribes, over the divisions engaged  
 in the king's service, over the units of a  
 thousand and a hundred, and those in  
 charge of all the property and the  
 cattle of the king and of his sons, as  
 well as the eunuchs, the heroes and all  
 the men of ability. Then King David 2  
 rose to his feet and said, 'Hear me,  
 kinsmen and people. I had in mind to  
 build a house as a resting-place for the  
 Ark of the Covenant of the LORD  
 which might serve as a footstool for the  
 feet of our God, and I made prepara-  
 tions to build it. But God said to me, 3  
 "You shall not build a house in honour  
 of my name, for you have been a fighting  
 man and you have shed blood." Never- 4  
 theless, the LORD the God of Israel  
 chose me out of all my father's family  
 to be king of Israel in perpetuity; for  
 it was Judah that he chose as ruling  
 tribe, and, out of the house of Judah,  
 my father's family; and among my  
 father's sons it was I whom he was  
 pleased to make king over all Israel.  
 And out of all my sons—for the LORD 5  
 gave me many sons—he chose Solom-  
 on to sit upon the throne of the LORD's  
 sovereignty over Israel; and he said 6  
 to me, "It is Solomon your son who  
 shall build my house and my courts,  
 for I have chosen him to be a son to  
 me and I will be a father to him. I will 7  
 establish his sovereignty in perpetuity,  
 if only he steadfastly obeys my com-  
 mandments and my laws as they are  
 now obeyed." Now therefore, in the 8  
 presence of all Israel, the assembly of  
 the LORD, and within the hearing of our  
 God, I bid you all study carefully the  
 commandments of the LORD your  
 God, that you may possess this good  
 land and hand it down as an inheritance  
 for all time to your children after you.  
 And you, Solomon my son, acknowl- 9  
 edge your father's God and serve him  
 with whole heart and willing mind, for  
 the LORD searches all hearts and dis-

where Aaron is listed but not counted as a tribe. 23–24: On the census, see 21.1–6. 32–34: This Jonathan is elsewhere unmentioned, as is the case with Jehiel. On Ahithophel see 2 Sam.15.31; 16.23; 17.23. On Hushai, 2 Sam.15.32–37; 16.16–19; 17.5–16. On Abiathar, 1 Sam.22.20–23; on Joab, 2 Sam. 2.12–17.

28.1–29.30: David's farewell addresses and his death. This whole block of material is an elaboration of David as founder of the dynasty and the preparer for the Temple, but not its

cerns every invention of men's thoughts. If you search for him, he will let you find him, but if you forsake him, he will

10 cast you off for ever. Remember, then, that the LORD has chosen you to build a house for a sanctuary: be steadfast and do it.'

11 David gave Solomon his son the plan of the porch of the temple<sup>2</sup> and its buildings, strong-rooms, roof-chambers and inner courts, and the shrine

12 of expiation;<sup>a</sup> also the plans of all he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD and for all the rooms around it, for the stores of God's house and

13 for the stores of the sacred gifts, for the divisions of the priests and the Levites, for all the work connected with the service of the house of the LORD and for all the vessels used in its

14 service. He prescribed the weight of gold for all the gold vessels<sup>b</sup> used in the various services, and the weight of silver<sup>c</sup> for all the silver vessels used in

15 the various services; and the weight of gold for the gold lamp-stands and their lamps; and the weight of silver for the silver lamp-stands, the weight

16 required for each lamp-stand and its lamps according to the use of each; and the weight of gold for each of the tables for the rows of the Bread of the Presence, and of silver for the silver

17 tables. He prescribed also the weight of pure gold for the forks, tossing-bowls and cups, the weight of gold for each of the golden dishes and of silver<sup>c</sup> for

18 each of the silver dishes; the weight also of refined gold for the altar of incense, and of gold for the model of the chariot, that is the cherubim with their wings outspread to screen the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. 'All this

19 was drafted by the LORD's own hand,' said David; 'my part was to consider the detailed working out of the plan.'

20 Then David said to Solomon his son, 'Be steadfast and resolute and do it; be neither faint-hearted nor dismayed,

for the LORD God, my God, will be

with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work needed for the service of the house of the LORD. Here are the 21 divisions of the priests and the Levites, ready for all the service of the house of God. In all the work you will have the help of every willing craftsman for any task; and the officers and all the people will be entirely at your command.'

King David then said to the whole 29 assembly, 'My son Solomon is the one chosen by God, Solomon alone, a boy of tender years; and this is a great

work, for it is a palace not for man but for the LORD God. Now to the 2 best of my strength I have made ready for the house of my God gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze

for the bronze, iron for the iron, and wood for the woodwork, together with cornelian and other gems for setting, stones for mosaic work, precious stones

of every sort, and marble in plenty. Further, because I delight in the house 3 of my God, I give my own private store of gold and silver for the house of my God—over and above all the store

which I have collected for the sanctuary—namely three thousand talents 4 of gold, gold from Ophir, and seven thousand talents of fine silver for over-

laying the walls of the buildings, for 5 providing gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, and for any work

to be done by skilled craftsmen. Now who is willing to give with open hand to the LORD today?'

Then the heads of families, the 6 officers administering the tribes of Israel, the officers over units of a thousand and a hundred, and the officers in charge of the king's service,

responded willingly and gave for the 7 work of the house of God five thousand talents of gold, ten thousand darics,

<sup>z</sup> of the temple: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*  
<sup>a</sup> the shrine . . . expiation: or the place for the Ark with its cover.  
<sup>b</sup> for . . . vessels: *prob. rdg.; Heb. for gold.*  
<sup>c</sup> of silver: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

builder. 11–19: Just as Moses received a divine plan for the first sanctuary (Exod.25.9), so David is the recipient of a divine pattern for the Temple (v. 19). 18: *The Ark* is called a *chariot* because originally it was a mobile throne; see 1 Sam.4.4. 21: These farewell speeches take account of the lists in chs. 23–27, as the speeches in ch. 22 do not. 29.1–5: Compare David's provisions in 22.3–4,14–15. 6–9: On the extravagant generosity by the people, compare Exod. 35.4–29. 7: *Darics* were Persian coins, indicating a date of origin of the passage not earlier

ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and a hundred thousand talents of iron. Further, those who possessed precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, into the charge of Jehiel the Gershonite. The people rejoiced at this willing response, because in the loyalty of their hearts they had given willingly to the LORD; King David also was full of joy, and he blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly and said, 'Blessed art thou, LORD God of our father Israel, from of old and for ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is thine;<sup>d</sup> thine, O LORD, is the sovereignty, and thou art exalted over all as head. Wealth and honour come from thee; thou rulest over all; might and power are of thy disposing; thine it is to give power and strength to all. And now, we give thee thanks, our God, and praise thy glorious name. 'But what am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to give willingly like this? For everything comes from thee, and it is only of thy gifts that we give to thee. We are aliens before thee and settlers, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are like a shadow, we have no abiding place. O LORD our God, from thee comes all this wealth that we have laid up to build a house in honour of thy holy name, and everything is thine. I know, O my God, that thou dost test the heart and that plain honesty pleases thee; with an honest heart I have given all these gifts willingly, and have rejoiced now to see thy people here present give willingly to thee. O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel our fathers, maintain this purpose for ever in thy people's thoughts and direct their hearts toward thyself. Grant

that Solomon my son may loyally keep thy commandments, thy solemn charge, and thy statutes, that he may fulfil them all and build the palace for which I have prepared.'

Then, turning to the whole assembly, David said, 'Now bless the LORD your God.' So all the assembly blessed the LORD the God of their fathers, bowing low and prostrating themselves before the LORD and the king. The next day they sacrificed to the LORD and offered whole-offerings to him, a thousand oxen, a thousand rams, a thousand lambs, with the prescribed drink-offerings, and abundant sacrifices for all Israel. So they ate and drank before the LORD that day with great rejoicing. They then appointed Solomon, David's son, king a second time and anointed him as the LORD's prince, and Zadok as priest. So Solomon sat on the LORD's throne as king in place of his father David, and he prospered and all Israel obeyed him. All the officers and the warriors, as well as all the sons of King David, swore fealty to King Solomon. The LORD made Solomon stand very high in the eyes of all Israel, and bestowed upon him sovereignty such as no king in Israel had had before him.

David son of Jesse had ruled over the whole of Israel, and the length of his reign over Israel was forty years; he ruled for seven years in Hebron, and for thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died in ripe old age, full of years, wealth, and honour; and Solomon his son ruled in his place. The events of King David's reign from first to last are recorded in the books of Samuel the seer, of Nathan the prophet, and of Gad the seer, with a full account of his reign, his prowess, and of the times through which he and Israel and all the kingdoms of the world had passed.

*d* is thine: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

than 400 B.C. 8: *Jehiel*: see 26.21. 10-19: The speech of an ideal king, from the postexilic perspective. Such a speech by David is found in the Deuteronomic history in 2 Sam.7.18-29. 18: *God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel*: a phrasing favored by the Chronicler; see 2 Chr.30.6 (also Elijah's prayer in 1 Kgs.18.36). 22-25: The enthronement of Solomon; see 23.1. 22: The high priest Zadok was anointed because in postexilic practice, the high priest had the civil functions which in preexilic times belonged to the king. 29: *The books of Samuel and Nathan* may be 1 Sam. and most of 2 Sam. respectively; the book of *Gad* could be 2 Sam. chs. 21-24, used by the Chronicler in 1 Chr. chs. 11, 17, and 20.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

2 Chronicles is part of an idealized history of the elect people, especially of the kingdom of Judah (see Introduction to 1 Chronicles). The segment of that history encompassed in 2 Chronicles extends from Solomon to the Babylonian Exile.

The most distinctive feature of 2 Chronicles is the speeches attributed to faithful kings and prophets (see, e.g. 13.5-12 and ch. 20). Such speeches were often placed in the mouths of worthy figures of the monarchic age by the later period in which they were composed.

The Chronicler frequently interprets the past of which he tells in the light of the piety that flourished at Jerusalem after the Exile.

## *The reign of Solomon and dedication of the temple*

1 **K**ING SOLOMON, DAVID'S SON, strengthened his hold on the kingdom, for the LORD his God was with him and made him very great.

2 Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the officers over units of a thousand and of a hundred, the judges and all the leading men of Israel, the heads of families; and he, together with all the assembled people, went to the hill-shrine at Gibeon; for the Tent of God's Presence, which Moses the LORD's servant had made in the wilderness, was there. (But David had brought up the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place which he had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) The altar of bronze also, which Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the Tabernacle of the LORD; and Solomon and the assembly resorted to it.<sup>a</sup> There Solomon went up to the altar of bronze before the LORD in the Tent of the Presence and offered on it a thousand whole-offerings. That night God appeared to Solomon and said, 'What shall I give you? Tell me.'  
8 Solomon answered, 'Thou didst show

great and constant love to David my father and thou hast made me king in his place. Now, O LORD God, let thy word to David my father be confirmed, for thou hast made me king over a people as numerous as the dust on the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people; for who is fit to govern this great people of thine?' God answered Solomon, 'Because this is what you desire, because you have not asked for wealth or possessions or honour<sup>c</sup> or the lives of your enemies or even long life for yourself, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are given to you; I shall also give you wealth and possessions and honour<sup>c</sup> such as no king has had before you and none shall have after you.' Then Solomon returned from the hill-shrine at Gibeon, from before the Tent of the Presence, to Jerusalem and ruled over Israel.

Solomon got together many chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, and he stabled some in the chariot-towns and kept others at hand in Jerusalem. The king made silver and

<sup>a</sup> resorted to it: or worshipped him.

<sup>b</sup> Verses 7-12: cp. 1 Kgs. 3. 5-14.    <sup>c</sup> Or riches.

<sup>d</sup> Verses 14-17: cp. 9. 25-28; 1 Kgs. 10. 26-29.

**1.1-9.31: Solomon and the Temple.** The Chronicler draws most of his material concerning Solomon from 1 Kgs. chs. 3-10. He omits the struggle for David's throne in 1 Kgs. chs. 1-2. Thereby, he comes quickly to the building and dedication of the Temple.

**1.1-17: Solomon's wisdom and wealth.** Solomon's dream at Gibeon (vv. 7-13) is abbreviated from the 1 Kgs. 3.4-10 source; an excerpt is also given (14-17) to document Solomon's wealth which God said would be given as well as wisdom (1 Kgs. 10.26-29). **3-4:** Because a hill-shrine, was normally pagan, and it could appear unseemly for Solomon to have gone to a pagan shrine, v. 3 mentions the Mosaic Tent of God's Presence; yet v. 4 then comments that the Ark was not in this tent, but on hand at Jerusalem! The Tent of God's Presence and the Ark come together in 5.4-5. **14-17:** This passage on Solomon's wealth also occurs in 9.25-28.

gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig in the Shephelah. Horses were imported from Egypt and Coa for Solomon; the royal merchants obtained them from Coa by purchase. Chariots were imported from Egypt for six hundred silver shekels each, and horses for a hundred and fifty; in the same way the merchants obtained them for export from all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

2 Solomon resolved to build a house in honour of the name of the LORD, and a royal palace for himself. He engaged seventy thousand hauliers and eighty thousand quarrymen, and three thousand six hundred men to superintend them. Then Solomon sent this message to Hiram king of Tyre: 'You were so good as to send my father David cedar-wood to build his royal residence. Now I am about to build a house in honour of the name of the LORD my God and to consecrate it to him, so that I may burn fragrant incense in it before him, and present the rows of the Bread of the Presence regularly, and whole-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed festivals of the LORD our God; for this is a duty laid upon Israel for ever. The house I am about to build will be a great house, because our God is greater than all gods. But who is able to build him a house when heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain him? And who am I that I should build him a house, except that I may burn sacrifices before him? Send me then a skilled craftsman, a man able to work in gold and silver, copper<sup>f</sup> and iron, and in purple, crimson, and violet yarn, who is also an expert engraver and will work with my skilled workmen in Judah and in Jerusalem who were provided by David my father. Send me also cedar, pine, and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your men are expert at felling the trees of

Lebanon; my men will work with yours to get an ample supply of timber ready for me, for the house which I shall build will be great and wonderful. I will supply provisions for your servants, the woodmen who fell the trees: twenty thousand kor of wheat and twenty thousand kor of barley, with twenty thousand bath of wine and twenty thousand bath of oil.'

Hiram king of Tyre sent this answer by letter to Solomon: 'It is because of the love which the LORD has for his people that he has made you king over them.' The letter went on to say, 'Blessed is the LORD the God of Israel, maker of heaven and earth, who has given to King David a wise son, endowed with intelligence and understanding, to build a house for the LORD and a royal palace for himself. I now send you a skillful and experienced craftsman, master Hiram. He is the son of a Danite woman, his father a Tyrian; he is an experienced worker in gold and silver, copper<sup>f</sup> and iron, stone and wood, as well as in purple, violet, and crimson yarn, and in fine linen; he is also a trained engraver who will be able to work with your own skilled craftsmen and those of my lord David your father, to any design submitted to him. Now then, let my lord send his servants the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine, which he promised; we will fell all the timber in Lebanon that you need and float it as rafts to the roadstead at Joppa, and you will convey it from there up to Jerusalem.'

Solomon took a census of all the aliens resident in Israel, similar to the census which David his father had taken; these were found to be a hundred and fifty-three thousand six hundred. He made seventy thousand of them hauliers and eighty thousand quarrymen, and three thousand six hundred superintendents to make the people work.

<sup>e</sup> Verses 3-16: cp. 1 Kgs. 5. 2-11. <sup>f</sup> Or bronze.

2.1-18: Preparation for building the Temple. 4-6: The Chronicler adds to his source his own view of the religious service; compare 1 Kgs.5.1-6. 3: Hiram here and Hiram of Kgs. are the same man. 11-12: The Chronicler heightens Hiram's praise of the LORD and of Solomon (1 Kgs.5.7). 17-18: The source, 1 Kgs.5.13-18, makes no mention of these aliens; rather, it is Israelites there who do the work.



- 3 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, on the site which David had prepared on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.
- 2<sup>o</sup> He began to build in the second month 3 of the fourth year of his reign. These are the foundations which Solomon laid for building the house of God: the length, according to the old standard of measurement, was sixty cubits and the breadth twenty. The vestibule in front of the house<sup>b</sup> was twenty cubits long, spanning the whole breadth of the house, and its height was twenty; on the inside he overlaid it with pure gold. He panelled the large chamber with pine, covered it with fine gold and carved on it palm-trees and chain-work. He adorned the house with precious stones for decoration, and the gold he used was from Parvaim. He covered the whole house with gold, its rafters and frames, its walls and doors; and he carved cherubim on the walls.
- 8 He made the Most Holy Place twenty cubits long, corresponding to the breadth of the house, and twenty cubits broad. He covered it all with six hundred talents of fine gold, and the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He also covered the upper chambers with gold.
- 10<sup>f</sup> In the Most Holy Place he carved two images of cherubim and overlaid them with gold. The total span of the wings of the cherubim was twenty cubits. A wing of the one cherub extended five cubits to reach the wall of the house, while its other wing reached out five cubits to meet a wing of the other cherub. Similarly, a wing of the second cherub extended five cubits to reach the other wall of the house, while its other wing met a wing of the first cherub. The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits; they stood with their feet on the ground, facing the outer chamber. He made the Veil of violet, purple, and crimson yarn, and fine linen, and embroidered cherubim on it.
- In front of the house he erected two pillars eighteen cubits high, with an architrave five cubits high on top of each. He made chainwork like a necklace<sup>k</sup> and set it round the tops of the pillars, and he carved a hundred pomegranates and set them in the chain-work. He erected the two pillars in front of the temple, one on the right and one on the left; the one on the right he named Jachin<sup>l</sup> and the one on the left Boaz.<sup>m</sup>
- He then made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits broad, and ten cubits high. He also made the Sea of cast metal; it was round in shape, the diameter from rim to rim being ten cubits; it stood five cubits high, and it took a line thirty cubits long to go round it. Under the Sea, on every side, completely surrounding the thirty cubits of its circumference, were what looked like gourds,<sup>p</sup> two rows of them, cast in one piece with the Sea itself. It was mounted on twelve oxen, three facing north, three west, three south, and three east, their hind quarters turned inwards; the Sea rested on top of them. Its thickness was a hand-

g Verses 2-4: cp. 1 Kgs. 6. 1-3.

h house: prob. rdg.; Heb. length.

i Verses 10-13: cp. 1 Kgs. 6. 23-28.

j Verses 15-17: cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 15-21.

k necklace: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

l Or Jachun, meaning It shall stand.

m Or Booz, meaning In strength.

n Verses 2-5: cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 23-26.

o Prob. rdg.; Heb. ten.

p Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 24; Heb. oxen.

3.1-5.1: The construction of the Temple. The Chronicler greatly reduces from 1 Kgs. 6.1-7.22 the description of the basic structure of the Temple; he omits altogether the building of Solomon's palace (1 Kgs. 7.1-12). 1: *Moriah*: Rabbinic tradition uses the mention here of Moriah to identify it with Mount Zion; compare too Gen. 22.2. Possibly this rabbinic identification is as old as the age of the Chronicler. 4: *Its height was twenty* (see Tfn. h): note that the figure is taken from the Sept., but the MT reads "a hundred and twenty"; this latter is either an error or else an exaggeration characteristic of the Chronicler. The source, 1 Kgs. 6.2, reads "thirty." 5: *Pine* is given here instead of the cedar of 1 Kgs. 6.18. That all the wood was covered with fine gold (six hundred talents' worth, see v. 8) is an embroidered exaggeration. 14: *The Veil* is possibly the Chronicler's own contribution, reflecting the postexilic temple of his time; the source (1 Kgs. 6.2, 31) speaks of doors, though the Wilderness Tabernacle (Exod. 16.31) had a Veil (Exod. 36.35). See Mt. 27.51; Mk. 15.38; Lk. 23.45. 17: See Tfn. j. 4.1: *The altar of bronze* is not directly mentioned in 1 Kgs. ch. 7, but see 1 Kgs. 8.64 and n. there.

breadth; its rim was made like that of a cup, shaped like the calyx of a lily; when full it held three thousand  
6 baths. He also made ten basins for washing, setting five on the left side and five on the right; in these they rinsed everything used for the whole-offering. The Sea was made for the priests to wash in.

7 He made ten golden lamp-stands in the prescribed manner and set them in the temple, five on the right side and  
8 five on the left. He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right and five on the left; and he made a hundred golden tossing-bowls.  
9 He made the court of the priests and the great precinct and the doors for it, and overlaid the doors of both  
10 with copper; he put the Sea at the right side, at the south-east corner of the temple.

11<sup>q</sup> Hiram made the pots, the shovels, and the tossing-bowls. So he finished the work which he had undertaken for King  
12 Solomon on the house of God. The two pillars; the two bowl-shaped capitals<sup>r</sup> on the tops of the pillars; the two ornamental networks to cover the two  
13 bowl-shaped capitals on the tops of the pillars; the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowl-shaped  
14 capitals on the two<sup>s</sup> pillars; the ten<sup>t</sup> trolleys and the ten<sup>t</sup> basins on the  
15 trolleys; the one Sea and the twelve oxen which supported it; the pots, the  
16 shovels, and the tossing-bowls<sup>u</sup>—all these<sup>v</sup> objects master Hiram made of bronze, burnished work for King Solomon for the house of the LORD.  
17 In the Plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the foundry between  
18 Succoth and Zeredah. Solomon made great quantities of all these objects; the weight of the copper<sup>w</sup> used was beyond reckoning.

19 Solomon made also all the furnishings for the house of God: the golden altar, the tables upon which was set the  
20 Bread of the Presence, the lamp-stands

of red gold whose lamps burned before the inner shrine in the prescribed manner, the flowers and lamps and tongs of  
21 solid gold, the snuffers, tossing-bowls, 22 saucers, and firepans of red gold, and, at the entrance to the house, the inner doors leading to the Most Holy Place and those leading to the sanctuary, of gold.

When all the work which Solomon 5 did for the house of the LORD was completed, he brought in the sacred treasures of his father David, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and deposited them in the storehouses of the house of God.

THEN SOLOMON SUMMONED THE ELDERS 2<sup>x</sup> of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes who were chiefs of families in Israel, to assemble in Jerusalem, in order to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from the City of David, which is called Zion. All the men of  
3 Israel assembled in the king's presence at the pilgrim-feast in the seventh month. When the elders of Israel had  
4 all come, the Levites took the Ark and carried it up with the Tent of the  
5 Presence and all the sacred furnishings of the Tent: it was the priests and the Levites together who carried them up.  
6 King Solomon and the whole congregation of Israel, assembled with him before the Ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen in numbers past counting or  
7 reckoning. Then the priests brought in the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD to its place, the inner shrine of the house, the Most Holy Place, beneath  
8 the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the Ark, and formed a covering above the Ark and its poles. The  
9 poles projected, and their ends could

q 4. 11—5. 1: cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 40–51.

r bowl-shaped capitals: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 41; Heb. the bowls and the capitals.

s two: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 42; Heb. surface of the

t the ten: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 43; Heb. he made the

u tossing-bowls: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 45; Heb. forks.

v Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 7. 45; Heb. their.

w Or bronze.

x Verses 2–10: cp. 1 Kgs. 8. 1–9.

6: Basins: See 1 Kgs. 7. 38–39. That the Sea was used to wash in is the Chronicler's contribution. 5.2–7.22: The dedication and divine acceptance of the Temple. The source is 1 Kgs. 8.1–9.9. 2–14: The Ark is brought into the Temple. See 11–13 n. 3–4: The Chronicler omits Ethaniam (1 Kgs. 8.2), the Canaanite name of the seventh month September-October; he replaces priests

be seen from the Holy Place immediately in front of the inner shrine, but from nowhere else outside; they are there to this day. There was nothing inside the Ark but the two tablets which Moses had put there at Horeb, the tablets of the covenant<sup>y</sup> which the LORD made with the Israelites when they left Egypt.

11 Now when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had hallowed themselves without keeping to their divisions), all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and their kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, stood with cymbals, lutes, and harps, to the east of the altar, together with a hundred and twenty priests who blew trumpets.

13 Now the trumpeters and the singers joined in unison to sound forth praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and the song was raised with trumpets, cymbals, and musical instruments, in praise of the LORD, because 'that<sup>z</sup> is good, for his love endures for ever'; and the house was filled with the cloud of the glory of the LORD. The priests could not continue to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God. Then Solomon said:

O LORD who hast chosen to dwell  
in thick darkness,

2 here have I built thee a lofty house,  
a habitation for thee to occupy for  
ever.

3 And as they stood waiting, the king turned round and blessed all the assembly of Israel in these words: 'Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel who spoke directly to my father David and has himself fulfilled his promise. For he said, "From the day when I brought my people out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel where I should build a house for my Name to be there, nor did I choose any man to be prince over my people

Israel. But I chose Jerusalem for my Name to be there, and I chose David to be over my people Israel." My father David had in mind to build a house in honour of the name of the LORD the God of Israel, but the LORD said to him, "You purposed to build a house in honour of my name; and your purpose was good. Nevertheless, you shall not build it; but the son who is to be born to you, he shall build the house in honour of my name." The LORD has now fulfilled his promise: I have succeeded my father David and taken his place on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built the house in honour of the name of the LORD the God of Israel. I have installed there the Ark containing the covenant of the LORD which he made with Israel.'

Then Solomon, standing in front of the altar of the LORD, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands. He had made a bronze<sup>b</sup> platform, five cubits long, five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had placed it in the centre of the precinct. He mounted it and knelt down in the presence of the assembly, and, spreading out his hands towards heaven, he said, 'O LORD God of Israel, there is no god like thee in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant with thy servants and showing them constant love while they continue faithful to thee in heart and soul. Thou hast kept thy promise to thy servant David my father; by thy deeds this day thou hast fulfilled what thou didst say to him in words. Now, therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep this promise of thine to thy servant David my father: "You shall never want for a man appointed by me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons look to their ways and conform to my law, as you have done in my sight." And now, O LORD God of Israel,

<sup>y</sup> the tablets of the covenant: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 8. 9; Heb. om.*

<sup>z</sup> Or he.

<sup>a</sup> Verses 1-39: *cp. 1 Kgs. 8. 12-50.*

<sup>b</sup> Or copper.

(1 Kgs.8.3) with *Levites* as the bearers of the *Ark*; see 1 Chr.15.1-15. 11-13: The Chronicler adds the role of Levites and the musicians here as he did at David's bringing up of the Ark in 1 Chr.15.16-22; 16.4-6. 14: *The cloud of the glory*: see 1 Kgs.8.10-11 n. 6.1-42: The Chronicler makes few alterations in the benediction and prayer of *Solomon* as given in 1 Kgs.8.12-50. 13: The *bronze platform*, added by the Chronicler, is not mentioned in 1 Kgs.

let the word which thou didst speak to thy servant David be confirmed.

- 18 'But can God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain thee; how much  
19 less this house that I have built! Yet attend to the prayer and the supplication of thy servant, O LORD my God; listen to the cry and the prayer which  
20 thy servant utters before thee, that thine eyes may ever be upon this house day and night, this place of which thou didst say, "It shall receive my Name"; so mayest thou hear thy servant when he prays towards this place. Hear thou the supplications of thy servant and of thy people Israel when they pray towards this place. Hear from heaven thy dwelling and, when thou hearest, forgive.  
22 'When a man wrongs his neighbour and he is adjured to take an oath, and the adjuration is made before thy altar in this house, then do thou hear from heaven and act: be thou thy servants' judge, requiting the guilty man and bringing his deeds upon his own head, acquitting the innocent and rewarding him as his innocence may deserve.  
24 'When thy people Israel are defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against thee, and they turn back to thee, confessing thy name and making their prayer and supplication before thee in this house, do thou hear from heaven; forgive the sin of thy people Israel and restore them to the land which thou gavest to them and to their forefathers.  
26 'When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because thy servant and thy people Israel have sinned against thee, and when they pray towards this place, confessing thy name and forsaking their sin when they feel thy punishment, do thou hear in heaven and forgive their sin; so mayest thou teach them the good way which they should follow, and grant rain to thy land which thou hast given to thy people as their own possession.  
28 'If there is famine in the land, or pestilence, or black blight or red, or locusts new-sloughed or fully grown, or if their enemies besiege them in any<sup>c</sup>

of their cities, or if plague or sickness befall them, then hear the prayer or 29 supplication of every man among thy people Israel, as each one, prompted by his own suffering and misery, spreads out his hands towards this house; hear 30 it from heaven thy dwelling and forgive. And, as thou knowest a man's heart, reward him according to his deeds, for thou alone knowest the hearts of all men; and so they will fear and obey 31 thee all their lives in the land thou gavest to our forefathers.

'The foreigner too, the man who does 32 not belong to thy people Israel, but has come from a distant land because of thy great fame and thy strong hand and arm outstretched, when he comes and prays towards this house, hear 33 from heaven thy dwelling and respond to the call which the foreigner makes to thee, so that like thy people Israel all peoples of the earth may know thy fame and fear thee, and learn that this house which I have built bears thy name.

'When thy people go to war with 34 their enemies, wherever thou dost send them, and they pray to thee, turning towards this city which thou hast chosen and towards this house which I have built in honour of thy name, do thou 35 from heaven hear their prayer and supplication, and grant them justice.

'Should they sin against thee (and 36 what man is free from sin?) and shouldst thou in thy anger give them over to an enemy, who carries them captive to a land far or near; if in the 37 land of their captivity they learn their lesson and turn back and make supplication to thee in that land and say, "We have sinned and acted perversely and wickedly", if they turn back to thee 38 with heart and soul in the land of their captivity to which they have been taken, and pray, turning towards their land which thou gavest to their forefathers and towards this city which thou didst choose and this house which I have built in honour of thy name; then 39 from heaven thy dwelling do thou hear their prayer and supplications and grant them justice. Forgive thy people their

*c* In any: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* in the land.

40 sins against thee. Now, O my God, let  
thy eyes be open and thy ears atten-  
tive to the prayer made in this place.  
41 Arise now, O LORD God, and come to  
thy place of rest, thou and the Ark  
of thy might. Let thy priests, O LORD  
God, be clothed with salvation and thy  
42 saints rejoice in prosperity. O LORD  
God, reject not thy anointed prince;  
remember thy servant David's loyal  
service.<sup>d</sup>

7 When Solomon had finished this  
prayer, fire came down from heaven  
and consumed the whole-offering and  
the sacrifices, while the glory of the  
2 LORD filled the house. The priests were  
unable to enter the house of the  
LORD because the glory of the LORD  
3 had filled it. All the Israelites were  
watching as the fire came down with  
the glory of the LORD on the house,  
and where they stood on the paved  
court they bowed low to the ground  
and worshipped and gave thanks to  
the LORD, because 'that<sup>e</sup> is good, for  
his love endures for ever.'

4 Then the king and all the people  
5 offered sacrifice before the LORD. King  
Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-  
two thousand oxen and a hundred and  
twenty thousand sheep; in this way  
the king and all the people dedicated  
6 the house of God. The priests stood at  
their appointed posts; so too the  
Levites with their musical instruments  
for the LORD's service, which King  
David had made for giving thanks to  
the LORD—'for his love endures for  
ever'—whenever he rendered praise  
with their help; opposite them, the  
priests sounded their trumpets; and  
all the Israelites were standing there.

7<sup>f</sup> Then Solomon consecrated the  
centre of the court which lay in front<sup>g</sup>  
of the house of the LORD; there he

offered the whole-offerings and the  
fat portions of the shared-offerings,  
because the bronze altar which he  
had made could not take the whole-  
offering, the grain-offering, and the fat  
portions. So Solomon and all Israel 8  
with him, a very great assembly from  
Lebo-hamath to the Torrent of Egypt,  
celebrated the pilgrim-feast at that  
time for seven days. On the eighth day 9  
they held a closing ceremony; for they  
had celebrated the dedication of the  
altar for seven days; the pilgrim-feast  
lasted seven days. On the twenty-third 10  
day of the seventh month he sent the  
people to their homes, happy and glad  
at heart for all the prosperity granted  
by the LORD to David and Solomon  
and to his people Israel.

When Solomon had finished the house 11  
of the LORD and the royal palace and  
had successfully carried out all that  
he had planned for the house of the  
LORD and the palace, the LORD 12  
appeared to him by night and said,  
'I have heard your prayer and I have  
chosen this place to be my place of  
sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens 13  
and there is no rain, or command the  
locusts to consume the land, or send a  
pestilence against my people, if my 14  
people whom I have named my own  
submit and pray to me and seek me and  
turn back from their evil ways, I will  
hear from heaven and forgive their  
sins and heal their land. Now my eyes 15  
will be open and my ears attentive to  
the prayers which are made in this  
place. I have chosen and consecrated 16  
this house, that my Name may be  
there for all time and my eyes and my

<sup>d</sup> thy servant . . . service: or thy constant love for David  
thy servant.

<sup>e</sup> Or he.

<sup>f</sup> Verses 7-22: cp. 1 Kgs. 8. 64-9. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Or to the east.

40-42: These verses follow not the Kgs. source, but Ps. 132.8-10. 41-42: These verses are added. V. 42 reverts to David; see 1 Chr. 28.1-29.30 n. Solomon is the *anointed prince*. 7.1-3: 1 Kgs. 8.54-66 has a second benediction instead of an immediate divine response to Solomon's prayer. The Chronicler gives a second divine sign, drawing on the tradition of *fire from heaven* to consecrate an altar; compare Lev. 9.24; 1 Kgs. 18.38; 1 Chr. 21.26. The *glory* sanctioned the house; the *fire* sanctioned the altar. 7-8: Compare 1 Kgs. 8.64-65. 9-10: The Chronicler is concerned to make clear the different sacred times involved; see 1 Kgs. 8.66. On his understand- ing, there were two seven-day periods, one to dedicate the altar (compare Ezek. 43.18-27) and one to observe the regular autumn festival of Tabernacles, which lasted from the fifteenth through the twenty-first day of the seventh month. *The eighth day* of the Tabernacles festival was to be specially consecrated (Lev. 23.36). Only on *the twenty-third day* of the month, therefore, were the people dismissed. 11-22: From 1 Kgs. 9.1-9; but vv. 13-15 are here added to furnish hope.

- 17 heart be fixed on it for ever. And if you, on your part, live in my sight as your father David lived, doing all I command you, and observing my statutes and my judgements, then I will establish your royal throne, as I promised by a covenant granted to your father David when I said, "You shall never want for a man to rule over Israel." But if you turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and if you go and serve other gods and prostrate yourselves before them, then I will uproot you from my land which I gave you, I will reject this house which I have consecrated in honour of my name, and make it a byword and an object-lesson among all peoples.
- 21 And this house will become a ruin; every passer-by will be appalled at the sight of it, and they will ask, "Why has the LORD so treated this land and this house?" The answer will be, "Because they forsook the LORD the God of their fathers, who brought them out of Egypt, and clung to other gods, prostrating themselves before them and serving them; that is why the LORD has brought this great evil on them."
- 8<sup>h</sup> Solomon had taken twenty years to build the house of the LORD and his own palace, and he rebuilt the cities which Hiram had given him and settled Israelites in them. He went to Hamath-zobah and seized it, and rebuilt Tadmor in the wilderness and all the store-cities which he had built in Hamath. He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon as fortified cities with walls and barred gates, and Baalath, as well as all his store-cities, and all the towns where he quartered his chariots and horses; and he carried out all his cherished plans for building in Jerusalem, in the Lebanon, and throughout his whole dominion. All the survivors of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who did not belong to
- Israel—that is their descendants who survived in the land, wherever the Israelites had been unable to exterminate them—were employed by Solomon on forced labour, as they still are. He put none of the Israelites to forced labour for his public works; they were his fighting men, his captains and lieutenants, and the commanders of his chariots and of his cavalry. These were King Solomon's officers, two hundred and fifty of them, in charge of the foremen who superintended the people.
- Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the house he had built for her, for he said, 'No wife of mine shall live in the house of David king of Israel, because this place which the Ark of the LORD has entered is<sup>i</sup> holy.'
- Then Solomon offered whole-offerings to the LORD on the altar which he had built to the east of the vestibule, according to what was required for each day, making offerings according to the law of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual appointed feasts—the pilgrim-feasts of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles.<sup>j</sup> Following the practice of his father David, he drew up the roster of service for the priests and that for the Levites for leading the praise and for waiting upon the priests, as each day required, and that for the door-keepers at each gate; for such was the instruction which David the man of God had given. The instructions which David had given concerning the priests and the Levites and concerning the treasuries were not forgotten.
- By this time all Solomon's work was achieved, from the foundation of the house of the LORD to its completion; the house of the LORD was perfect. Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber

<sup>h</sup> Verses 1-18: cp. 1 Kgs. 9. 10-28.

<sup>i</sup> this place which . . . is: prob. rdg.; Heb. those which . . . are.

<sup>j</sup> Or Booths.

8.1-9.31: Solomon's works, wisdom, and wealth. The Chronicler makes only slight changes in his source. 1-28: Compare 1 Kgs. 9.10-28. 2-4: In 1 Kgs. 9.10-11 it was Solomon who gave cities to Hiram, not the reverse. The source did not mention the campaign to the north (vv. 3-4). 11: Compare 1 Kgs. 9.24. Solomon's comment is added by the Chronicler. 13: The Chronicler adds the occasions on which the sacrifices are to be offered according to Mosaic legislation; see Lev. ch. 23 and Num. chs. 28-29. 14-15: The priestly and Levitical organizations

and to Eloth on the coast of Edom,  
 18 and Hiram sent ships under the  
 command of his own officers and  
 manned by crews of experienced  
 seamen; and these, in company with  
 Solomon's servants, went to Ophir  
 and brought back four hundred and  
 fifty talents of gold, which they  
 delivered to King Solomon.

9:1<sup>k</sup> THE QUEEN OF SHEBA HEARD OF SOLO-  
 mon's fame and came to test him with  
 hard questions. She arrived in Jeru-  
 salem with a very large retinue, camels  
 laden with spices, gold in abundance,  
 and precious stones. When she came to  
 Solomon, she told him everything  
 2 she had in her mind, and Solomon  
 answered all her questions; not one of  
 them was too abstruse for him to  
 3 answer. When the queen of Sheba saw  
 the wisdom of Solomon, the house  
 4 which he had built, the food on his  
 table, the courtiers sitting round him,  
 his attendants and his cupbearers in  
 their livery standing behind, and the  
 stairs by which he went up to the house  
 5 of the LORD, there was no more spirit  
 left in her. Then she said to the king,  
 'The report which I heard in my own  
 country about you and your wisdom  
 6 was true, but I did not believe what they  
 told me until I came and saw for my-  
 self. Indeed, I was not told half of the  
 greatness of your wisdom; you surpass  
 7 the report which I had of you. Happy  
 are your wives, happy these courtiers of  
 yours who wait on you every day and  
 8 hear your wisdom! Blessed be the  
 LORD your God who has delighted in  
 you and has set you on his throne as  
 his king; because in his love your  
 God has elected Israel to make it  
 endure for ever, he has made you king  
 over it to maintain law and justice.'  
 9 Then she gave the king a hundred and  
 twenty talents of gold, spices in great  
 abundance, and precious stones. There  
 had never been any spices to equal  
 those which the queen of Sheba gave to  
 King Solomon.

10 Besides all this, the servants of  
 Hiram and of Solomon, who had  
 brought gold from Ophir, brought also

cargoes of alium wood and precious  
 stones. The king used the wood to 11  
 make stands for the house of the LORD  
 and for the royal palace, as well as  
 harps and lutes for the singers. The  
 like of them had never before been  
 seen in the land of Judah.

King Solomon gave the queen of 12  
 Sheba all she desired, whatever she  
 asked, besides his gifts in return for<sup>l</sup>  
 what she had brought him. Then she  
 departed and returned with her retinue  
 to her own land.

Now the weight of gold which 13  
 Solomon received yearly was six hun-  
 dred and sixty-six talents, in addition 14  
 to the tolls levied on merchants and on  
 traders who imported goods; all the  
 kings of Arabia and the regional  
 governors also<sup>m</sup> brought gold and  
 silver to the king.

King Solomon made two hundred 15  
 shields of beaten gold, and six hundred  
 shekels of gold went to the making of  
 each one; he also made three hundred 16  
 bucklers of beaten gold, and three  
 hundred shekels of gold went to the  
 making of each buckler. The king  
 put these into the House of the Forest  
 of Lebanon.

The king also made a great throne of 17  
 ivory and overlaid it with pure gold.  
 Six steps and a footstool for the throne 18  
 were all encased in gold. There were  
 arms on each side of the seat, with a  
 lion standing beside each of them, and 19  
 twelve lions stood on the six steps, one  
 at either end of each step. Nothing like  
 it had ever been made for any mon-  
 arch. All Solomon's drinking vessels 20  
 were of gold, and all the plate in the  
 House of the Forest of Lebanon was of  
 red gold; silver was reckoned of no  
 value in the days of Solomon. The 21  
 king had a fleet of ships plying to  
 Tarshish with Hiram's men; once  
 every three years this fleet of merchant-  
 men came home, bringing gold and  
 silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys.

Thus King Solomon outdid all the 22

<sup>k</sup> Verses 1-24: cp. 1 Kgs. 10. 1-25.

<sup>l</sup> his gifts . . . for: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>m</sup> all . . . also: *or* and on all the kings of Arabia and the regional governors who . . .

ascribed to *David* in 1 Chr. chs. 23-26 are referred to. 9.1-28: These reports are taken over

kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom, and all the kings of the earth courted him, to hear the wisdom which God had put in his heart. Each brought his gift with him, vessels of silver and gold, garments, perfumes and spices, horses and mules, so much year by year.

25<sup>n</sup> Solomon had standing for four thousand horses and chariots, and twelve thousand cavalry horses, and he stabled some in the chariot-towns and kept others at hand in Jerusalem. He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the border of Egypt. He made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig in the Shephelah. Horses were imported from Egypt and from all countries for Solomon.

29<sup>o</sup> The rest of the acts of Solomon's reign, from first to last, are recorded in the history of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah of Shiloh, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat. Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over the whole of Israel for forty years. Then he rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David his father, and he was succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

*The kings of Judah from  
Rehoboam to Ahaz*

10<sup>1p</sup> REHOBAM WENT TO SHECHEM, FOR ALL Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it in Egypt, where he had taken refuge to escape Solomon, he returned from Egypt. They now recalled him, and he and all Israel came to Rehoboam and said, 'Your father laid a cruel yoke upon us; but if you will now lighten the cruel slavery he imposed on us and the heavy yoke he laid on us,

we will serve you.' 'Give me three days,' he said, 'and come back again.' So the people went away. King Rehoboam then consulted the elders who had been in attendance on his father Solomon while he lived: 'What answer do you advise me to give to this people?' And they said, 'If you show yourself well-disposed to this people and gratify them by speaking kindly to them, they will be your servants ever after.' But he rejected the advice which the elders gave him. He next consulted those who had grown up with him, the young men in attendance, and asked them, 'What answer do you advise me to give to this people's request that I should lighten the yoke which my father laid on them?' The young men replied, 'Give this answer to the people who say that your father made their yoke heavy and ask you to lighten it; tell them: "My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. My father laid a heavy yoke on you; I will make it heavier. My father used the whip on you; but I will use the lash."' Jeroboam and the people all came back to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered. And the king gave them a harsh answer. He rejected the advice which the elders had given him and spoke to the people as the young men had advised: 'My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it heavier. My father used the whip on you; but I will use the lash.' So the king would not listen to the people; for the LORD had given this turn to the affair, in order that the word he had spoken by Ahijah of Shiloh to Jeroboam son of Nebat might be fulfilled.

When all Israel saw<sup>q</sup> that the king would not listen to them, they answered:

*n* Verses 25-28: cp. 1. 14-17; 1 Kgs. 10. 26-29.

*o* Verses 29-31: cp. 1 Kgs. 11. 41-43.

*p* Verses 1-19: cp. 1 Kgs. 12. 1-19.

*q* saw: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Kgs. 12. 16; Heb. om.

almost unchanged from 1 Kgs. 10.1-25. 29-31: The Chronicler omits the entire negative side of Solomon's reign as given in 1 Kgs. 11.1-40. He lists some prophetic sources, though none of these is mentioned in 1 Kgs. 11.41; see 1 Chr. 29.29 n. *Ahijah of Shiloh* is included even though the Chronicler omits the account of his prophecy; compare 1 Kgs. 11.29-39. *Iddo the seer* is also mentioned in 12.15 and 13.22, but is otherwise unknown.

10.1-28.27: *The kings of Judah from Rehoboam to Ahaz. 10.1-11.4*: The beginning of the reign of *Rehoboam*. The account here is taken over without change from 1 Kgs. 12.12-19, 21-24. In omitting 1 Kgs. 12.20 the Chronicler also omits the crowning of Jeroboam, an event distasteful to him.



What share have we in David?

We have no lot in the son of Jesse.

Away to your homes, O Israel;

now see to your own house, David.

17 So all Israel went to their homes, and Rehoboam ruled over those Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah.

18 Then King Rehoboam sent out Hadoram, the commander of the forced levies, but the Israelites stoned him to death; whereupon King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste and fled to Jerusalem. From that day to this, Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David.

11<sup>17</sup> When Rehoboam reached Jerusalem, he assembled the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen warriors, to fight against Israel and recover his kingdom. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: 'Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the Israelites in Judah and Benjamin, "This is the word of the LORD: You shall not go up to make war on your kinsmen. Return to your homes, for this is my will."' So they listened to the word of the LORD and abandoned their campaign against Jeroboam.

5 Rehoboam resided in Jerusalem and built up the defences of certain cities in Judah. The cities in Judah and Benjamin which he fortified were Beth-lehem, Etam, Tekoa, Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. He strengthened the fortifications of these fortified cities, and put governors in them, as well as supplies of food, oil, and wine. Also he stored shields and spears in every one of the cities, and strengthened their fortifications. Thus he retained possession of Judah and Benjamin.

Now the priests and the Levites throughout the whole of Israel resorted to Rehoboam from all their territories; for the Levites had left all their common land and their own patrimony and had gone to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his successors rejected their services as priests of the LORD, and he appointed his own priests for the hill-shrines, for the demons,<sup>s</sup> and for the calves which he had made. Those, from all the tribes of Israel, who were resolved to seek the LORD the God of Israel followed the Levites to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD the God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and for three years made Rehoboam son of Solomon secure, because he followed the example of David and Solomon during that time.

Rehoboam married Mahalath, whose father was Jerimoth son of David and whose mother was Abihail daughter of Eliab son of Jesse. His sons by her were: Jeush, Shemariah and Zaham. Next he married Maacah granddaughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza and Shelomith. Of all his wives and concubines, Rehoboam loved Maacah most; he had in all eighteen wives and sixty concubines and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. He appointed Abijah son of Maacah chief among his brothers, making him crown prince and planning to make him his successor on the throne. He showed discretion in detailing his sons to take charge of all the fortified cities throughout the whole territory of Judah and Benjamin; he also made generous provision for them and procured them<sup>t</sup> wives.

When the kingdom of Rehoboam

<sup>r</sup> Verses 1-4: cp. 1 Kgs. 12. 21-24. <sup>s</sup> Or satyrs.  
<sup>t</sup> procured them: prob. rdg.: Heb. asked for a multitude of . . .

11.5-12.16: The rest of the reign of Rehoboam. The Chronicler proceeds (vv. 5-12) to use a source otherwise unknown but quite credible historically (with the exception, at times, of the numbers given). 13-16: The Chronicler portrays the faithfulness of the Levites; they abandon the apostate Northern Kingdom. Historically, circles of Levites remained in the Northern Kingdom until its fall in 722/21; after that they became important in reform movements in the surviving Southern Kingdom. 14: See 1 Kgs. 12.31. 17: Rehoboam was first faithful to the LORD in the manner of David and Solomon; afterward he was unfaithful and brought trouble upon himself. Thus is established a pattern also exemplified by other kings; see Asa, 16.7-10; Joash, 24.1-24; Amaziah, 25.14-24; and Uzziah, 26.16-21. 18-23: The source is unknown. The Chronicler gives here the abundance of Rehoboam's wives, but he has previously omitted Solomon's abundance, 1 Kgs. 11.3. 12.1-12: 1 Kgs. treated the invasion of Shishak as simply

was on a firm footing and he became strong, he forsook the law of the LORD, he and all Israel with him. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, because of this disloyalty to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, and brought with him from Egypt an innumerable following of Libyans, Sukkites, and Cushites.<sup>u</sup> He captured the fortified cities of Judah and reached Jerusalem. Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leading men of Judah, who had assembled in Jerusalem before the advance of Shishak, and said to them, 'This is the word of the LORD: You have abandoned me; therefore I now abandon you to Shishak.' The princes of Israel and the king submitted and said, 'The LORD is just.' When the LORD saw that they had submitted, there came from him this word to Shemaiah: 'Because they have submitted I will not destroy them, I will let them barely escape; my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak, but they shall become his servants; then they will know the difference between serving me and serving the rulers of other countries.' Shishak king of Egypt in his attack on Jerusalem removed the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the royal palace. He seized everything, including the shields of gold that Solomon had made. King Rehoboam replaced them with bronze shields and entrusted them to the officers of the escort who guarded the entrance of the royal palace. Whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the escort entered, carrying the shields;

afterwards they returned them to the guard-room. Because Rehoboam submitted, the LORD's wrath was averted from him, and he was not utterly destroyed; Judah enjoyed prosperity.

Thus King Rehoboam increased his power in Jerusalem. He was forty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel as the place to receive his Name. Rehoboam's mother was a woman of Ammon called Naamah. He did what was wrong, he did not make a practice of seeking guidance of the LORD. The events of Rehoboam's reign, from first to last, are recorded in the histories of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer.<sup>v</sup> There was continual fighting between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. He rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Abijah.

IN THE EIGHTEENTH YEAR OF KING JEROBAM'S REIGN ABIJAH BECAME KING OF JUDAH. HE REIGNED IN JERUSALEM FOR THREE YEARS; HIS MOTHER WAS MAACAH DAUGHTER OF URIEL OF GIBEAH. THERE WAS FIGHTING BETWEEN ABIJAH AND JEROBOAM. ABIJAH DREW UP HIS ARMY OF FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND PICKED TROOPS IN ORDER OF BATTLE, WHILE JEROBOAM FORMED UP AGAINST HIM WITH EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND PICKED TROOPS. ABIJAH TOOK UP POSITION ON THE SLOPES OF MOUNT ZEMARAIM IN THE HILL-COUNTRY OF EPHRAIM AND CALLED OUT, 'HEAR ME, JEROBOAM AND ALL ISRAEL: OUGHT YOU NOT

<sup>u</sup> Or Nubians. <sup>v</sup> Verses 9-11: cp. 1 Kgs. 14. 25-28.

<sup>w</sup> Verses 13-16: cp. 1 Kgs. 14. 29-31.

<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds to be enrolled by genealogy.

an event of Rehoboam's reign; the Chronicler sees it as a punishment for some fault and explains that it is a result of *Rehoboam's* forsaking the LORD. 4-8: The repentance of the Judeans and the consequent limitation of the punishment are characteristic motifs of the Chronicler's history. 15: The Chronicler tends to cite sources written by prophets rather than court annals; contrast 1 Kgs. 14.29.

13.1-14.1: The reign of Abijah. A longer account is given here than the brief mention in 1 Kgs. 15.1-8 (there Abijah's name is spelled Abijam). 2: Here Abijah's mother is a daughter of *Uriel of Gibeah* whereas in 1 Kgs. 15.2 she is the daughter (probably granddaughter) of Abishalom, who was probably David's rebellious son Absalom (2 Sam. chs. 13-18). The Chronicler may have wanted to avoid having Absalom an ancestor of later kings. The mother's name is given both as *Micaiah* and *Maacah*. In 15.16, she is called mother of Asa, with mother to be understood as grandmother. 3: The Chronicler shows interest in the numbers of Judean armies and the armies of their enemies, usually to glorify the Judean kings or their God. The numbers are unreliable. 5-12: The speech presents the two motifs of greatest concern to the Chronicler: the validity of the dynasty of *David* as the one proper kingship in *Israel*, and the

to know that the LORD the God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel to David and his descendants in perpetuity by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon son of David, rose in rebellion against his lord, and certain worthless scoundrels gathered round him, who stubbornly opposed Solomon's son Rehoboam when he was young and inexperienced, and he was no match for them. Now you propose to match yourselves against the kingdom of the LORD as ruled by David's sons, you and your mob of supporters and the golden calves which Jeroboam has made to be your gods. Have you not dismissed from office the Aaronites, priests of the LORD, and the Levites, and followed the practice of other lands in appointing priests? Now, if any man comes for consecration with an offering of a young bull and seven rams, you accept him as a priest to a god that is no god. But as for us, the LORD is our God and we have not forsaken him; we have Aaronites as priests ministering to the LORD with the Levites, duly discharging their office. Morning and evening, these burn whole-offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD and offer the Bread of the Presence arranged in rows on a table ritually clean; they also kindle the lamps on the golden lamp-stand every evening. Thus we do indeed keep the charge of the LORD our God, whereas you have forsaken him. God is with us at our head, and his priests stand there with trumpets to signal the battle-cry against you. Men of Israel, do not fight the LORD

the God of your fathers; you will have no success.'

Jeroboam sent a detachment of his troops to go round and lay an ambush in the rear, so that his main body faced Judah while the ambush lay behind them. The men of Judah turned to find that they were engaged front and rear. Then they cried to the LORD for help. The priests sounded their trumpets, and the men of Judah raised a shout, and when they did so, God put Jeroboam and all Israel to rout before Abijah and Judah. The Israelites fled before the men of Judah, and God delivered them into their power. So Abijah and his men defeated them with very heavy losses, and five hundred thousand picked Israelites fell in the battle. After this, the Israelites were reduced to submission, and Judah prevailed because they relied on the LORD the God of their fathers. Abijah followed up his victory over Jeroboam and captured from him the cities of Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, with their villages. Jeroboam did not regain his power during the days of Abijah; finally the LORD struck him down and he died.

But Abijah established his position; he married fourteen wives and became the father of twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. The other events of Abijah's reign, both what he said and what he did, are recorded in the story of the prophet Iddo. Abijah rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David; and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Asa. In his days the land was at peace for ten years.

Asa did what was good and right in 2

validity of the *Aaronite* priesthood and the service of the *Levites* at Jerusalem. Compare 1 Chr. 29.10-19. The Northern Kingdom, given more serious treatment in the Book of Kings, is dealt with negatively and only partially by the Chronicler. 5: *A covenant of salt* was an eternal agreement (Num.18.19) sealed by both parties eating of the same food. 8: The origin of the *golden calves* (1 Kgs.12.26-30) was deliberately omitted; the mention here is therefore strange. 11: The ritual service assumed here is that of the Mosaic Tabernacle; compare 2.4-6 and Exod.25.23-40; 29.38-42; 30.1-10. 13-20: This battle account expresses the Chronicler's view of battles; see also 20.22-27. The LORD throws the enemy army into panic or confusion, and the (smaller) army of the righteous is victorious because of divine intervention. The numbers involved are typical of the Chronicler's exaggerations. 20: Actually, Jeroboam survived Abijah (1 Kgs.15.8-9). 21: The statistics of *Abijah's* family are quite credible for a Judean king. 22: *Iddo*: see 9.29-31 n. 14.1: *The ten years of peace* refer to the first ten years of Asa's reign.

14.2-16.14: *The reign of Asa*. Two main occurrences were reported concerning Asa in 1 Kgs.: his religious reform (1 Kgs.15.9-15) and his successful war against Baasha of Israel (1 Kgs. 15.16-22). These lead the Chronicler to a lengthy account (chs. 14-16), absent from Kgs., of Asa's faithfulness to the LORD, including a divinely given military victory (14.2-15.19; see 13.13-20 n.), and a shorter period of warfare (16.1-14) in which his reliance on foreign alliances instead of the LORD brings him suffering from disease (16.12). 2-7: The Chronicler sees the

3 the eyes of the LORD his God. He suppressed the foreign altars and the hill-shrines, smashed the sacred pillars and hacked down the sacred poles, and ordered Judah to seek guidance of the LORD the God of their fathers and to keep the law and the commandments. He also suppressed the hill-shrines and the incense-altars in all the cities, and the kingdom was at peace under him. He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land was at peace. He had no war to fight during those years, because the LORD had given him security. He said to the men of Judah, 'Let us build these cities and fortify them, with walls round them, and towers and barred gates. The land still lies open before us. Because we have sought guidance of the LORD our God, he has sought us and given us security on every side.' So they built and prospered.

8 Asa had an army equipped with shields and spears; three hundred thousand men came from Judah, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, shield-bearers and archers; all were valiant warriors. Zerah the Cushite came out against them with an army a million strong and three hundred chariots. When he reached Mareshah, Asa came out to meet him and they took up position in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. Asa called upon the LORD his God and said, 'There is none like thee, O LORD, to help men, whether strong or weak; help us, O LORD our God, for on thee we rely and in thy name we have come out against this horde. O LORD, thou art our God, how can man vie with thee?' So the LORD gave Asa and Judah victory over the Cushites and they fled, and Asa and his men pursued them as far as Gerar. The Cushites broke before the LORD and his army, and many of them fell mortally wounded; and Judah carried off great loads

of spoil. They destroyed all the cities around Gerar, for the LORD had struck the people with panic; and they plundered the cities, finding rich spoil in them all. They also killed the herdsmen and seized many sheep and camels, and then they returned to Jerusalem.

The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, 'Hear me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him; if you look for him, he will let himself be found; if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to interpret the law and without law.<sup>y</sup> But when, in their distress, they turned to the LORD the God of Israel and sought him, he let himself be found by them. At those times there was no safety for people as they went about their business; the inhabitants of every land had their fill of trouble; there was ruin on every side, nation at odds with nation, city with city, for God harassed them with every kind of distress. But now you must be strong and not let your courage fail; for your work will be rewarded.' When Asa heard these words,<sup>z</sup> he resolutely suppressed the loathsome idols in all Judah and Benjamin and in the cities which he had captured in the hill-country of Ephraim; and he repaired the altar of the LORD which stood before the vestibule of the LORD's house.<sup>a</sup> Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and all who had come from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon to reside among them; for great numbers had come over to him from Israel, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. So they assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign, and that

<sup>y</sup> without law; or without the law.

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and the prophecy, Oded the prophet.

<sup>a</sup> house: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

reform of religious practice as the cause of the period of peace. 5: Contrast 15.17, and its source (1 Kgs.15.14). 9: *Zerah the Cushite*: his identity is uncertain. Cush is sometimes Ethiopia, but also an Arabian tribe, as is probable here. This account is another example of the stylized combat in which the LORD intervenes for the victory of the righteous people; see 13.13–20 n.

15.1–19: *Asa's religious reform*. 1–7: One of the typical speeches developed within the Chronicler's circle; see Introduction to 2 Chr. 1: *Azariah son of Oded* is otherwise unknown. A prophet Oded is mentioned in 28.9. Notice v. 8 and Tfn. z. 10: *The third month (Sivan)* was

day they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep from the spoil which they had brought.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek guidance of the LORD the God of their fathers with all their heart and soul; all who would not seek the LORD the God of Israel were to be put to death, young and old, men and women alike.

14 Then they bound themselves by an oath to the LORD, with loud shouts of acclamation while trumpets and horns sounded; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, because they had bound themselves with all their heart and had sought him earnestly, and he had let himself be found by them. So the LORD

16<sup>b</sup> gave them security on every side. King Asa also deprived Maacah his grandmother of her rank as queen mother because she had an obscene object made for the worship of Asherah; Asa cut it down, ground it to powder and burnt it in the gorge of the Kidron.

17 Although the hill-shrines were allowed to remain in Israel, Asa himself remained faithful all his life. He brought into the house of God all his father's votive offerings and his own, gold and silver and sacred vessels. And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

16<sup>c</sup> In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah to cut off all

2 access to Asa king of Judah. So Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the royal palace, and sent this request to Ben-hadad king of Aram, whose capital

3 was Damascus: 'There is an alliance between us, as there was between our fathers. I now send you herewith silver and gold; break off your alliance with Baasha king of Israel, so that he may abandon his campaign against me.'

4 Ben-hadad listened willingly to King Asa and ordered the commanders of

his armies to move against the cities of Israel, and they attacked Iyyon, Dan, Abel-mayim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. When Baasha heard of it, he

5 ceased fortifying Ramah and stopped all work on it. Then King Asa took

6 with him all the men of Judah and they carried away the stones of Ramah and the timbers with which Baasha had fortified it; and he used them to fortify Geba and Mizpah.

At that time the seer Hanani came to

7 Asa king of Judah and said to him, 'Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Israel has escaped. The

8 Cushites and the Libyans, were they not a great army with a vast number of chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your power. The eyes of the

9 LORD range through the whole earth, to bring aid and comfort to those whose hearts are loyal to him. You have acted foolishly in this affair; you will have wars from now on.' Asa was

10 angry with the seer and put him in the stocks; for these words of his had made the king very indignant. At the same time he treated some of the people with great brutality.

The events of Asa's reign, from first

11<sup>d</sup> to last, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah and Israel. In the

12 thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became gravely affected with gangrene in his feet; he did not seek guidance of the LORD but resorted to physicians. He rested with his forefathers, in the

13 forty-first year of his reign, and was buried in the tomb which he had bought<sup>e</sup>

14 for himself in the city of David, being laid on a bier<sup>f</sup> which had been heaped with all kinds of spices skilfully

*b* Verses 16-18: cp. 1 Kgs. 15. 13-15.

*c* Verses 1-6: cp. 1 Kgs. 15. 17-22.

*d* Verses 11-14: cp. 1 Kgs. 15. 23, 24.

*e* Or dug.

*f* Or in a niche.

June-July, the time of the grain harvest. The reference may be to the early summer pilgrim-feast, called Harvest, or Weeks (Exod.23.16; 34.22). The sacrificial *sheep* often have a ten-to-one ratio to the *oxen*.

**16.1-14: War and apostasy.** 1-6: There is little change from 1 Kgs.15.17-22. 7-10: The Chronicler adds a homily to his source material. It prepares for v. 12. *Hanani* figures only here; his son, the prophet Jehu, figures in 19.2; 20.34 and 1 Kgs.16.1,7; but Jehu's time was a half century earlier. *The eyes . . . that range through the whole earth* recall Zech.4.4-5. **11-14:** The Chronicler adds here to 1 Kgs.15.23-24 the comments about *physicians*, *the tomb*, *the bier*, and *the great fire*. **14:** An unusually full funeral description.

compounded; and they kindled a great fire in his honour.

17 ASA WAS SUCCEEDED BY HIS SON Jehoshaphat, who determined to resist  
2 Israel by force. He posted troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and stationed officers<sup>g</sup> throughout Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which  
3 his father Asa had captured. The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, for he followed the example his father had set in his early years and did not resort to the  
4 Baalim; he sought guidance of the God of his father and obeyed his commandments and did not follow the  
5 practices of Israel. So the LORD established the kingdom under his rule, and all Judah brought him gifts, and his wealth and fame<sup>h</sup> became very  
6 great. He took pride in the service of the LORD; he also suppressed the hill-shrines and the sacred poles in Judah.

7 In the third year of his reign he sent his officers, Ben-hayil, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethaneel, and Micaiah, to  
8 teach in the cities of Judah, together with the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobiah, and Tobadonijah,<sup>i</sup> accompanied by the priests  
9 Elishama and Jehoram. They taught in Judah, having with them the book of the law of the LORD; they went round the cities of Judah, teaching the people.

10 So the dread of the LORD fell upon all the rulers of the lands surrounding Judah, and they did not make war on Jehoshaphat. Certain Philistines brought a gift, a great quantity of silver, to Jehoshaphat; the Arabs too brought him seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand  
12 seven hundred he-goats. Jehoshaphat

became ever more powerful and built fortresses and store-cities in Judah; and he had much work on hand in  
13 the cities of Judah. He had regular, seasoned troops in Jerusalem, enrolled according to their clans in this  
14 way: of Judah, the officers over units of a thousand: Adnah the commander, together with three hundred thousand seasoned troops; and next to him the  
15 commander Johanan, with two hundred and eighty thousand; and next to  
16 him Amasiah son of Zichri, who had volunteered for the service of the LORD, with two hundred thousand seasoned troops; and of Benjamin: an  
17 experienced soldier Eliada, with two hundred thousand men armed with bows and shields; next to him Jehoza-  
18 bad, with a hundred and eighty thousand fully-armed men. These were  
19 the men who served the king, apart from those whom the king had posted in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

When Jehoshaphat had become very  
18 wealthy and famous,<sup>j</sup> he allied himself with Ahab by marriage. Some years  
20 afterwards he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria, and Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for him and his retinue, and incited him to attack Ramoth-gilead. What Ahab king of Israel said  
21 to Jehoshaphat king of Judah was this: 'Will you join me in attacking Ramoth-gilead?' And he answered, 'What is mine is yours, myself and my  
22 people; I will join with you in the war.' Then Jehoshaphat said to the king  
23 of Israel, 'First let us seek counsel from the LORD.' The king of Israel assembled  
24 the prophets, some four hundred of them, and asked them, 'Shall I attack Ramoth-gilead or shall I refrain?'

<sup>g</sup> Or garrisons. <sup>h</sup> Or riches.  
<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the Levites.  
<sup>j</sup> Or rich. <sup>k</sup> Verses 2-34: cp. 1 Kgs. 22. 2-35.

17.1-20.37: **The reign of Jehoshaphat.** The only incident of *Jehoshaphat's* reign related at any length in Kgs. is the battle in which Ahab was killed, presented here in ch. 18. Jehoshaphat was one of the great kings of Judah, however, and the Chronicler greatly expands the account of him.

17.1-19.11: **Organizing the righteous kingdom.** The account of Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (ch. 18) is placed between descriptions of Jehoshaphat's good administration of the kingdom. 1b-6: This is not in Kgs. 6: Yet according to 20.33 *the hill-shrines* were not removed. Compare 1 Kgs. 15.24. 7-9: The king's instruction of the people here is an added element. 10-19: Again this is an added element. The *troops* attributed to *Jehoshaphat* add up to 1,160,000 men. The numbers reflect the exaggerations usual in the Chronicler's writing. 18.1-34: The affairs of the Northern Kingdom are usually neglected by the Chronicler, but the dramatic narrative of *Ahab's* death is here included for the sake of *Jehoshaphat's* part in it. Apart from vv. 1-2, the material is mostly from 1 Kgs. 22.1-35. 1: See 2 Kgs. 8.18, 25-27. 2: The verse expands

6 'Attack,' they answered; 'God will deliver it into your hands.' Jehoshaphat asked, 'Is there no other prophet of the LORD here through whom we may  
7 seek guidance?' 'There is one more', the king of Israel answered, 'through whom we may seek guidance of the LORD, but I hate the man, because he never prophesies any good for me; never anything but evil. His name is Micaiah son of Imla.' Jehoshaphat  
8 exclaimed, 'My lord king, let no such word pass your lips!' So the king of Israel called one of his eunuchs and told him to fetch Micaiah son of Imla with all speed.

9 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were seated on their thrones, clothed in their royal robes and in shining armour, at the entrance to the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before  
10 them. One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made himself horns of iron and said, 'This is the word of the LORD: "With horns like these you shall  
11 gore the Aramaeans and make an end of them."' In the same vein all the prophets prophesied, 'Attack Ramoth-gilead and win the day; the LORD will  
12 deliver it into your hands.' The messenger sent to fetch Micaiah told him that the prophets had with one voice given the king a favourable answer. 'And mind you agree with them', he  
13 added. 'As the LORD lives,' said Micaiah, 'I will say only what my God tells me to say.'

14 When Micaiah came into the king's presence, the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall I attack Ramoth-gilead or shall I refrain?' 'Attack and win the day,' he said, 'and it will fall into  
15 your hands.' 'How often must I adjure you', said the king, 'to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?'  
16 Then Micaiah said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd; and I heard the LORD say, "They have no master; let them go home in peace."' The king of  
17 Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you that he never prophesies good  
18 for me, nothing but evil?' Micaiah

went on, 'Listen now to the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD seated on his throne, with all the host of heaven in attendance on his right and on his left. The LORD said, "Who will entice  
19 Ahab to attack and fall on' Ramoth-gilead?" One said one thing and one said another; then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, "I will entice him." "How?" said the LORD. "I will go out", he said,  
20 "and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." "You shall entice him," said the LORD, "and you shall succeed; go and do it." You see, then,  
21 how the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, because he has decreed disaster for you.' Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah  
22 came up to Micaiah and struck him in the face: 'And how did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?' he said. Micaiah answered, 'That you  
23 will find out on the day when you run into an inner room to hide yourself.' Then the king of Israel ordered Micaiah  
24 to be arrested and committed to the custody of Amon the governor of the city and Joash the king's son.<sup>m</sup> 'Lock this fellow up', he said, 'and give him  
25 prison diet of bread and water until I come home in safety.' Micaiah retorted, 'If you do return in safety, the LORD has not spoken by me.'<sup>n</sup>

26 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah marched on Ramoth-gilead, and the king of Israel said to  
27 Jehoshaphat, 'I will disguise myself to go into battle, but you shall wear your royal robes.' So he went into battle in disguise. Now the king of Aram had  
28 commanded the captains of his chariots not to engage all and sundry but the king of Israel alone. When the captains saw Jehoshaphat, they thought  
29 he was the king of Israel and wheeled to attack him. But Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD came to his help; and God drew them away from him.  
30 When the captains saw that he was not the king of Israel, they broke off the attack on him. But one man drew his  
31 sword and struck Jehoshaphat in the thigh, and he fell to the ground. When the king of Israel saw that he was not the king of Israel, they broke off the attack on him. But one man drew his  
32 sword and struck Jehoshaphat in the thigh, and he fell to the ground. When the king of Israel saw that he was not the king of Israel, they broke off the attack on him. But one man drew his  
33 sword and struck Jehoshaphat in the thigh, and he fell to the ground.

<sup>l</sup> Or at. <sup>m</sup> son: or deputy.  
<sup>n</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and he said, 'Listen, peoples, all together.'

1 Kgs.22.2. 31: The LORD's overt intervention is the Chronicler's addition; see 1 Kgs.22.33.

bow at random and hit the king of Israel where the breastplate joins the plates of the armour. So he said to his driver, 'Wheel round and take me out of the line; I am wounded.' When the day's fighting reached its height, the king of Israel was facing the Aramaeans, propped up in his chariot; he remained so till evening, and at sunset he died.

19 As Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned in safety to his home in Jerusalem, Jehu son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet him and said, 'Do you take delight in helping the wicked and befriending the enemies of the LORD? The LORD will make you suffer for this. Yet there is some good in you, for you have swept away the sacred poles from the land and have made a practice of seeking guidance of God.'

4 Jehoshaphat had his residence in Jerusalem, but he went out again among his people from Beersheba to the hill-country of Ephraim and brought them back to the LORD the God of their fathers. He appointed judges throughout the land, one in each of the fortified cities of Judah, and said to them, 'Be careful what you do; you are there as judges, to please not man but the LORD, who is with you when you pass sentence. Let the dread of the LORD be upon you, then; take care what you do, for the LORD our God will not tolerate injustice, partiality, or bribery.'

8 In Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests and some heads of families by paternal descent in Israel to administer the law of the LORD and to arbitrate in lawsuits among the inhabitants<sup>o</sup> of the city, and he gave them these instructions: 'You must always act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with singleness of mind. In every suit which comes before you from your kinsmen, in

whatever city they live, whether cases of bloodshed or offences against the law or the commandments, against statutes or regulations, you shall warn them to commit no offence against the LORD; otherwise you and your kinsmen will suffer for it. If you act thus, you will be free of all offence. Your authority in all matters which concern the LORD is Amariah the chief priest, and in those which concern the king it is Zebediah son of Ishmael, the prince of the house of Judah; the Levites are your officers. Be strong and resolute, and may the LORD be on the side of the good!'

It happened some time afterwards that the Moabites, the Ammonites, and some of the Meunites made war on Jehoshaphat. News was brought to him that a great horde of them was attacking him from beyond the Dead Sea, from Edom, and was already at Hazazontamar, which is En-gedi. Jehoshaphat in his alarm resolved to seek guidance of the LORD and proclaimed a fast for all Judah. Judah gathered together to ask counsel of the LORD; from every city of the land they came to consult him. Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the LORD, in front of the New Court, and said, 'O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? Thou rulest over all the kingdoms of the nations; in thy hand are strength and power, and there is none who can withstand thee. Didst not thou, O God our God, dispossess the inhabitants of this land in favour of thy people Israel, and give it for ever to the descendants of Abraham thy friend? So they lived in it and have built a sanctuary in it in honour of thy name and said, "Should evil come upon us, war or flood,<sup>p</sup> pestilence or famine, we will stand

<sup>o</sup> in . . . inhabitants: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>p</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. judgement.*

19.1-3: *Jehoshaphat* is reprimanded in this expansion by a prophet, Jehu, for collaborating with the Northern Kingdom, as was his father Asa; see 16.7-10 n. 5-7: This is an expansion by the Chronicler. On instruction to the *judges*, compare Deut.1.16-17. 8-11: The Chronicler adds that supreme courts were appointed in *Jerusalem* with highest authority for both religious and civil cases. 8: *Israel* here is the entire people, not just the Northern Kingdom.

20.1-37: *Jehoshaphat's great victory*. This full narrative is typical of the Chronicler's expansions. They are, as usual, the religious speech (vv. 5-12,20) made by the king or else a prophet (vv. 15-17), and are ascribed to successive stages of the action. 1: *Meunites* were an Arab tribe. The Heb. reads "Ammonites," but is corrected, as in other modern translations,



before this house and before thee, for in this house is thy Name, and we will cry to thee in our distress and thou wilt hear and save." Thou didst not allow Israel, when they came out of Egypt, to enter the land of the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the people of the hill-country of Seir, so they turned aside and left them alone and did not destroy them. Now see how these people repay us: they are coming to drive us out of thy possession which thou didst give to us. Judge them, O God our God, for we have no strength to face this great horde which is invading our land; we know not what we ought to do; we lift our eyes to thee.'

13 So all Judah stood there before the LORD, with their dependants, their wives and their children. Then, in the midst of the assembly, the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the line of Asaph, and he said, 'Attend, all Judah, all inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat; this is the word of the LORD to you: "Have no fear; do not be dismayed by this great horde, for the battle is in God's hands, not yours. Go down to meet them tomorrow; they will come up by the Ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. It is not you who will fight this battle; stand firm and wait, and you will see the deliverance worked by the LORD: he is on your side, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; go out tomorrow to face them; for the LORD is on your side.'" ' Jehoshaphat bowed his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD to make obeisance to him. Then the Levites of the lines of Kohath and Korah stood up and praised the LORD the God of Israel with a mighty shout.

20 So they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and, as they were starting, Jehoshaphat

took his stand and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: hold firmly to your faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will prosper.' After consulting with the people, he appointed men to sing to the LORD and praise the splendour of his holiness<sup>q</sup> as they went before the armed troops, and they sang:

Give thanks to the LORD,  
for his love endures for ever.

As soon as their loud shouts of praise were heard, the LORD deluded the Ammonites and Moabites and the men of the hill-country of Seir, who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. It turned out that the Ammonites and Moabites had taken up a position against the men of the hill-country of Seir, and set themselves to annihilate and destroy them; and when they had exterminated the men of Seir, they savagely attacked one another. So when Judah came to the watch-tower in the wilderness and looked towards the enemy horde, there they were all lying dead upon the ground; none had escaped. When Jehoshaphat and his men came to collect the booty, they found a large number of cattle, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they plundered until they could carry away no more. They spent three days collecting the booty, there was so much of it. On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berakah,<sup>r</sup> the name that it bears to this day because they blessed the LORD there. Then all the men of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, returned home to the city in triumph; for the LORD had given them cause to triumph over their enemies. They entered Jerusalem with lutes, harps, and trumpets playing, and went into the house of the LORD. So the dread of God fell upon the rulers of every country, when they heard that

<sup>q</sup> Or singers in sacred vestments to praise the LORD.  
<sup>r</sup> That is Valley of Blessing.

from 26.7. 10: Compare Deut.2.1-19. *Seir* is the area from which the Meunites came; here it does not mean Edom, as elsewhere it does. 17: See 13.13-20 n. 22, 28: Note the music before and after the battle. 23: Some internal dissension seems to have arisen. The Meunites are slain

the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel; and the realm of Jehoshaphat was at peace, God giving him security on all sides.

31<sup>8</sup> Thus Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-five years; his mother was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. He followed in the footsteps of Asa his father and did not swerve from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. But the hill-shrines were allowed to remain, and the people did not set their hearts upon the God of their fathers. The other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from first to last, are recorded in the history of Jehu son of Hanani, which is included in the annals of the kings of Israel.

35 Later Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel; he did wrong in joining with him to build ships for trade with Tarshish; these were built in Ezion-geber. But Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah denounced Jehoshaphat with this prophecy: 'Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will bring your work to nothing.' So the ships were wrecked and could not make the voyage to Tarshish.

21 JEHOSEPHAT RESTED WITH HIS FOREFATHERS and was buried with them in the city of David. He was succeeded by his son Joram, whose brothers were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah, sons of Jehoshaphat. All of them were sons of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and their father gave them many gifts, silver and

gold and other costly things, as well as fortified cities in Judah; but the kingship he gave to Joram because he was the eldest.

When Joram was firmly established on his father's throne, he put to the sword all his brothers and also some of the princes of Israel. He was thirty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. He followed the practices of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he had married Ahab's daughter; and he did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD. But for the sake of the covenant which he had made with David, the LORD was unwilling to destroy the house of David, since he had promised to give him and his sons a flame, to burn for all time.

During his reign Edom revolted against Judah and set up its own king. Joram, with his commanders and all his chariots, advanced into Edom. He and his chariot-commanders set out by night, but they were surrounded by the Edomites and defeated.<sup>u</sup> So Edom has remained independent of Judah to this day. Libnah revolted against him at the same time, because he had forsaken the LORD the God of his fathers, and because he had built hill-shrines in the hill-country of Judah and had seduced the inhabitants of Jerusalem into idolatrous practices and corrupted Judah.

A letter reached Joram from Elijah the prophet, which ran thus: 'This is the word of the LORD the God of David your father: "You have not

<sup>s</sup> Verses 31-33: cp. 1 Kgs. 22. 41-43.

<sup>t</sup> Verses 5-10: cp. 2 Kgs. 8. 17-22.

<sup>u</sup> and defeated: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and he defeated them.

by their erstwhile allies. 31-35: The passage is rewritten from 1 Kgs. 22.41-49, *Israel* here strangely replacing Judah there. 35-37: Here the motif is added that Jehoshaphat's alliance with *Ahaziah* was evil, and caused the *ships* to be *wrecked*. *Eliezer* is mentioned only here. *Ezion-geber* (v. 36) is identified with Elath on the Gulf of Aqabah, which gave access to the Red Sea. *Tarshish* is often identified with Spain (possibly correctly; see Jonah 1.3), but Spain is hardly possible here, since it is on the Mediterranean.

21.1-24.27: A period of failures. The Chronicler now deals with a succession of four reigns disastrous to Judah. At points he greatly amplifies his source to increase the wickedness of the kings (2 Kgs. 8.16-11.20), but also omits an abundance of material. 1-20: *Joram's* reign. 2-4: Joram's killing of his *brothers* is not otherwise attested; it is hard to know whether the material is historical, or whether the Chronicler has increased Joram's misdeeds, and thereby his consequent punishment. 10-11: The reasons given for *Libnah's* revolt are the Chronicler's own contribution. 12-20: The letter from *Elijah* and the ensuing defeats were added by the Chronicler. Apparently the figure of Elijah, magnified in later legend, was already a commanding one.

followed in the footsteps of Jehoshaphat your father and of Asa king of Judah, but have followed the kings of Israel and have seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the house of Ahab did; and you have put to death your own brothers, sons of your father's house, men better than yourself. Because of all this, the LORD is about to strike a heavy blow at your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you yourself will suffer from a chronic disease of the bowels, until they prolapse and become severely ulcerated." Then the LORD aroused against Joram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabs who live near the Cushites, and they invaded Judah and made their way right through it, carrying off all the property which they found in the king's palace, as well as his sons and wives; not a son was left to him except the youngest, Jehoahaz. It was after all this that the LORD struck down the king with an incurable disease of the bowels. It continued for some time, and towards the end of the second year the disease caused his bowels to prolapse, and the painful ulceration brought on his death. But his people kindled no fire in his honour as they had done for his fathers. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eight years. His passing went unsung, and he was buried in the city of David, but not in the burial-place of the kings.

**22:**<sup>v</sup> Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the raiders who had joined the Arabs in the campaign had killed all the elder sons. So Ahaziah son of Joram became king of Judah.

2 He was forty-two years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for one year; his mother was Athaliah granddaughter of Omri.

3 He too followed the practices of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counsellor in wickedness. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD like the house of Ahab, for they had

been his counsellors after his father's death, to his undoing. He followed their counsel also in the alliance he made with Jehoram son of Ahab king of Israel, to fight against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. But Jehoram was wounded by the Aramaeans, and returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which were inflicted on him at Ramoth in battle with Hazael king of Aram.

Because of Jehoram's illness Ahaziah son of Joram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to visit him. It was God's will that the visit of Ahaziah to Jehoram should be the occasion of his downfall. During the visit he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to bring the house of Ahab to an end. So it came about that Jehu, who was then at variance with the house of Ahab, found the officers of Judah and the kinsmen of Ahaziah who were his attendants, and killed them. Then he searched out Ahaziah himself, and his men captured him in Samaria, where he had gone into hiding. They brought him to Jehu and put him to death; they gave him burial, for they said, 'He was a son of Jehoshaphat who sought the guidance of the LORD with his whole heart.' Then the house of Ahaziah had no one strong enough to rule.

As soon as Athaliah mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she set out to extirpate the royal line of the house of Judah. But Jehosheba daughter of King Joram took Ahaziah's son Joash and stole him away from among the princes who were being murdered; she put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. Thus Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was Ahaziah's sister, hid Joash from Athaliah so that she did not put him to death. He remained concealed with them in the house of God for six years, while Athaliah ruled the country.

<sup>v</sup> Verses 1-6: cp. 2 Kgs. 8. 25-29.  
<sup>w</sup> 22. 10-23. 21: cp. 2 Kgs. 11. 1-20.

22.1-12: Ahaziah. 2: He was twenty-two (2 Kgs.8.26), not *forty-two*, at his accession. 7: The comment about *God's will* is the Chronicler's addition. The account of *Jehu's* revolution (2 Kgs.9.1-10.31) is here greatly compressed, with much of the material in Kgs. omitted.

23 In the seventh year Jehoiada felt himself strong enough to make an agreement with Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri, all captains of units of a hundred.

2 They went all through Judah and gathered to Jerusalem the Levites from the cities of Judah and the heads of clans in Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. All the assembly made a compact with the king in the house of God, and Jehoiada said to them, 'Here is the king's son! He shall be king, as the LORD promised that the sons of David should be. This is what you must do: a third of you, priests and Levites, as you come on duty on the sabbath, are to be on guard at the threshold gates, another third are to be in the royal palace, and another third are to be at the Foundation Gate, while all the people will be in the courts of the house of the LORD. Let no one enter the house of the LORD except the priests and the attendant Levites; they may enter, for they are holy, but all the people shall continue to keep the LORD's charge. The Levites shall mount guard round the king, each with his weapons at the ready; anyone who tries to enter the house is to be put to death. They shall stay with the king wherever he goes.'

8 The Levites and all Judah carried out the orders of Jehoiada the priest to the letter. Each captain took his men, both those who came on duty on the sabbath and those who came off, for Jehoiada the priest had not released the outgoing divisions. And Jehoiada the priest handed out to the captains King David's spears, shields, and bucklers, which were in the house of God; and he posted all the people, each man carrying his weapon at the ready, from corner to corner of the house to north and south,<sup>z</sup> surrounding the king. Then they brought out the king's son, put the crown on his head, handed him the warrant and proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him;

and a shout went up: 'Long live the king.' When Athaliah heard the noise of the people as they ran about cheering for the king, she came into the house of the LORD where the people were and found the king standing on the dais<sup>y</sup> at the entrance, amidst outbursts of song and fanfares of trumpets in his honour; all the populace were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and singers with musical instruments were leading the celebrations. Athaliah rent her clothes and cried, 'Treason! Treason!' Jehoiada the priest gave orders to<sup>z</sup> the captains in command of the troops: 'Bring her outside the precincts and let anyone in attendance on her be put to the sword'; for the priest said, 'Do not kill her in the house of the LORD.' So they laid hands on her and took her to the royal palace and killed her there at the passage to the Horse Gate.

Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD<sup>a</sup> and the whole people and the king, that they should be the LORD's people. And all the people went into the temple of Baal and pulled it down; they smashed its altars and images, and they slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. Then Jehoiada committed the supervision of the house of the LORD to the charge of the priests and the Levites whom David had allocated to the house of the LORD, to offer whole-offerings to the LORD as prescribed in the law of Moses, with the singing and rejoicing as handed down from David. He stationed the door-keepers at the gates of the house of the LORD, to prevent anyone entering who was in any way unclean. Then he took the captains of units of a hundred, the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and they escorted the king from the house of the LORD through the Upper Gate to the royal palace, and seated him on the royal throne. The whole people rejoiced and

<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds of the altar and the house.

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 11. 14; Heb. by his pillar.

<sup>z</sup> gave orders to: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 11. 15; Heb. brought out.

<sup>a</sup> the LORD: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 11. 17; Heb. him.

23.1-21: Athaliah. 1-3: The Chronicler added proper names as well as all references to the Levites. 18-19: Some revision of, and addition to, the source, 2 Kgs. 11.1-16, brings the account into line with the Chronicler's view of Levites, singers, door-keepers, and the law of Moses.

the city was tranquil. That is how Athaliah was put to the sword.

24<sup>1b</sup> Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty years; his mother was Zibiah of Beersheba. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD as long as Jehoiada the priest was alive. Jehoiada chose him two wives, and he had a family of sons and daughters.

Some time after this, Joash decided to repair the house of the LORD. So he assembled the priests and the Levites and said to them, 'Go through the cities of Judah and collect the annual tax from all the Israelites for the restoration of the house of your God, and do it quickly.' But the Levites did not act quickly. The king then called for Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, 'Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax imposed by Moses the servant of the LORD and by the assembly of Israel for the Tent of the Tokens?' For the wicked Athaliah and her adherents had broken into the house of God and had devoted all its holy things to the service of the Baalim. So the king ordered them to make a chest and to put it outside the gate of the house of the LORD; and proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that the people should bring to the LORD the tax imposed on Israel in the wilderness by Moses the servant of God. And all the leaders and all the people gladly brought their taxes and cast them into the chest until it was full. Whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites and they saw that it was well filled, the king's secretary and the chief priest's officer would come to empty it, after which it was carried back to its place. This they did daily, and they collected a great sum of money. The king and Jehoiada gave it to those responsible for carrying out the work in the house of the LORD, and they hired masons and carpenters to do the repairs, as well as craftsmen in iron

and copper<sup>c</sup> to restore the house. So the workmen proceeded with their task and the new work progressed under their hands; they restored the house of God according to its original design and strengthened it. When they had finished, they brought what was left of the money to the king and to Jehoiada, and it was made into vessels for the house of the LORD, both for service and for sacrificing, saucers and other vessels of gold and silver. While Jehoiada lived, whole-offerings were offered in the house of the LORD continually.

Jehoiada, now old and weighed down with years, died at the age of a hundred and thirty and was buried with the kings in the city of David, because he had done good in Israel and served God and his house.

After the death of Jehoiada the leading men of Judah came and made obeisance to the king. He listened to them, and they forsook the house of the LORD the God of their fathers and worshipped sacred poles and idols. And Judah and Jerusalem suffered for this wickedness. But the LORD sent prophets to bring them back to himself, prophets who denounced them and were not heeded. Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood looking down on the people and said to them, 'This is the word of God: "Why do you disobey the commands of the LORD and court disaster? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you."' But they made common cause against him, and on orders from the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. King Joash did not remember the loyalty of Zechariah's father Jehoiada but killed his son, who said as he was dying, 'May the LORD see this and exact the penalty.'

At the turn of the year an Aramaean army advanced against Joash; they invaded Judah and Jerusalem and massacred all the officers, so that the

24.1-27: Joash. The source is 2 Kgs. ch. 12. 15-22: This is entirely from the Chronicler. As elsewhere, a good king turns bad toward the end of his reign and receives punishment; compare 11.17 n. 23-24: This revision of 2 Kgs.12.17-18 (which see) adds the motif of punishment.

army ceased to exist, and sent all their  
 24 spoil to the king of Damascus. Although the Aramaeans had invaded with a small force, the LORD delivered a very great army into their hands, because the people had forsaken the LORD the God of their fathers; and Joash suffered just punishment.  
 25<sup>d</sup> When the Aramaeans had withdrawn, leaving the king severely wounded, his servants conspired against him to avenge the death of the son of Jehoiada the priest; and they killed him on his bed. Thus he died and was buried in the city of David, but not in the burial-place of the  
 26 kings. The conspirators were Zabab son of Shimeath an Ammonite woman and Jehozabad son of Shimrith a  
 27 Moabite woman. His children, the many oracles about him, and his reconstruction of the house of God are all on record in the story given in the annals of the kings. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah.

25<sup>1e</sup> AMAZIAH WAS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his mother was Jehoaddan of  
 2 Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly. When the royal power was firmly in his grasp, he put to death those of his servants who had murdered the  
 3 king his father; but he spared their children, in obedience to the LORD's command written in the law of Moses: 'Fathers shall not die for their children,  
 4 nor children for their fathers; a man shall die only for his own sin.'  
 5 Then Amaziah assembled the men of Judah and drew them up by families, all Judah and Benjamin as well, under officers over units of a thousand and a hundred. He mustered those of twenty

years old and upwards and found their number to be three hundred thousand, all picked troops ready for service, able to handle spear and shield. He also  
 6 hired a hundred thousand seasoned troops from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. But a man of God came to  
 7 him and said, 'My lord king, do not let the Israelite army march with you; the LORD is not with Israel—all these  
 8 Ephraimites! For, if you make these people<sup>f</sup> your allies in the war, God will overthrow you in battle; he has power to help or to overthrow.' Then Amaziah  
 9 said to the man of God, 'What am I to do about the hundred talents which I have spent on the Israelite army?' The man of God answered, 'It is in the  
 10 LORD's power to give you much more than that.' So Amaziah detached the troops which had come to him from Ephraim and sent them home; that infuriated them against Judah and they went home in a rage.

Then Amaziah took heart and led  
 11 his men to the Valley of Salt and there killed ten thousand men of Seir. The  
 12 men of Judah captured another ten thousand men alive, brought them to the top of a cliff<sup>g</sup> and hurled them  
 13 over so that they were all dashed to pieces. Meanwhile the troops which  
 14 Amaziah had sent home without allowing them to take part in the battle raided the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon, massacred three thousand people in them and carried off quantities of booty.

After Amaziah had returned from the  
 14 defeat of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir and, setting them up as his own gods, worshipped them and burnt sacrifices to them. The  
 15

<sup>d</sup> Verses 25-27: cp. 2 Kgs. 12, 20, 21.

<sup>e</sup> Verses 1-4: cp. 2 Kgs. 14, 1-6.

<sup>f</sup> these people: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>g</sup> a cliff: or Sela.

26: That the two assassins were sons of an *Ammonite woman* and a *Moabite woman* is the Chronicler's own comment. For him, evil influence is likely to come from foreigners.

25.1-28.27: Four kings assessed concerning their faithfulness. The Chronicler continues his recasting of the source, 2 Kgs. 14.1-16.21, sometimes drastically adding incidents to show that only faithfulness to the LORD leads to welfare and peace. The first two kings, Amaziah and Uzziah, are faithful at first and then unfaithful; the third, Jotham, is faithful, the fourth, Ahaz, completely unfaithful.

25.1-28: Amaziah. The source is 2 Kgs. 14.1-20. The brief report of Amaziah's Edomite campaign in the source is here expanded by the Chronicler in four respects: the king's military force is listed (vv. 5-6); a prophet dissuades him from employing northern mercenaries (vv. 7-10); the military destruction is increased (vv. 11-13); and Amaziah's veneration of the

LORD was angry with Amaziah for this and sent a prophet who said to him, 'Why have you resorted to gods who could not save their own people from you?' But while he was speaking, the king said to him, 'Have we appointed you counsellor to the king? Stop! Why risk your life?' The prophet did stop, but first he said, 'I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel.'

<sup>17</sup><sup>h</sup> Then Amaziah king of Judah, after consultation, sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, to propose a meeting. <sup>18</sup> But Jehoash king of Israel sent this answer to Amaziah king of Judah: 'A thistle in Lebanon sent to a cedar in Lebanon to say, "Give your daughter in marriage to my son." But a wild beast in Lebanon, passing by, trampled on the thistle. You have defeated Edom, you say, but it has gone to your head. Enjoy your glory at home and stay there. Why should you involve yourself in disaster and bring yourself to the ground, and Judah with you?'

<sup>20</sup> But Amaziah would not listen; and this was God's doing in order to give Judah into the power of Jehoash, because they had resorted to the gods of Edom. So Jehoash king of Israel marched out, and he and Amaziah king of Judah met one another at Bethshemesh in Judah. The men of Judah were routed by Israel and fled to their homes. But Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, at Bethshemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem. There he broke down the city wall from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits; he also took<sup>t</sup> all the gold and silver and all the vessels found in the house of God, in the care of Obed-edom, and the treasures of the royal palace, as well as hostages, and returned to Samaria.

<sup>25</sup><sup>f</sup> Amaziah son of Joash, king of Judah,

outlived Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, by fifteen years. The other <sup>26</sup> events of Amaziah's reign, from first to last, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah and Israel. From <sup>27</sup> the time when he turned away from the LORD, there was conspiracy against him in Jerusalem and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there. Then his body was conveyed on <sup>28</sup> horseback to Jerusalem, and there he was buried with his forefathers in the city of David.

All the people of Judah took Uzziah, <sup>26</sup> now sixteen years old, and made him king in succession to his father Amaziah. It was he who built Eloth and re- <sup>2</sup> stored it to Judah after the king rested with his forefathers.

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he <sup>3</sup><sup>k</sup> came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years; his mother was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. He <sup>4</sup> did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as Amaziah his father had done. He set himself to seek the guidance of <sup>5</sup> God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; as long as he sought guidance of the LORD, God caused him to prosper.

He took the field against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod; and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and among the Philistines. God aided him <sup>7</sup> against them, against the Arabs who lived in Gur-baal, and against the Meunites. The Ammonites brought <sup>8</sup> gifts to Uzziah and his fame spread to the borders of Egypt, for he had become very powerful. Besides, he built <sup>9</sup> towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the escarpment, and fortified them. He <sup>10</sup> built other towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, for he had large

*h* Verses 17-24: cp. 2 Kgs. 14, 8-14.

*i* he also took; prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 14, 14; Heb. om.

*j* 25, 25-26, 2: cp. 2 Kgs. 14, 17-22.

*k* Verses 3, 4: cp. 2 Kgs. 15, 2, 3.

captured Edomite idols becomes the occasion of divine disfavor (vv. 14-16). <sup>20</sup>: The Chronicler adds the comment that *Amaziah's* rashness was God's punishment for the apostasy referred to in vv. 14-16.

<sup>26.1-23</sup>: *Uzziah*. In 2 Kgs. 15.1-34 he is usually called *Azariah*; one name may be personal, the other a throne name. <sup>1</sup>: *Eloth*: Elath. <sup>6-15</sup>: The Chronicler expands here, following sources other than 2 Kgs. Those sources gave an accurate view, however, of *Uzziah's* historical im-

herds of cattle both in the Shephelah and in the plain. He also had farmers and vine-dressers in the hill-country and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

11 Uzziah had an army of soldiers trained and ready for service, grouped according to the census made by Jeiel the adjutant-general and Maaseiah the clerk under the direction of Hananiah, 12 one of the king's commanders. The total number of heads of families which supplied seasoned warriors was two 13 thousand six hundred. Under their command was an army of three hundred and seven thousand five hundred, a powerful fighting force to aid 14 the king against his enemies. Uzziah prepared for the whole army shields, 15 and<sup>l</sup> sling-stones. In Jerusalem he had machines designed by engineers for use upon towers and bastions, made to discharge arrows and large stones. His fame spread far and wide, for he was so wonderfully gifted that he became very powerful.

16 But when he grew powerful his pride led to his own undoing:<sup>m</sup> he offended against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense 17 on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest and eighty others of the LORD's priests, courageous men, went in after 18 King Uzziah, confronted him and said, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the Aaronite priests who have been consecrated for that office. Leave the sanctuary; for you have offended, and that will certainly bring you no honour from 19 the LORD God.' The king, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, was indignant; and because of his indignation at the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests, there in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of 20 incense. When Azariah the chief priest and the other priests looked towards

him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead and they hurried him out of the temple, and indeed he himself hastened to leave, because the LORD had struck him with the disease. And 21<sup>n</sup> King Uzziah remained a leper till the day of his death; he lived in his own house as a leper, relieved of all duties and excluded from the house of the LORD, while his son Jotham was controller of the household and regent. The other events of Uzziah's reign, 22 from first to last, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. So he 23 rested with his forefathers and was buried in a burial-ground, but not that of the kings; for they said, 'He is a leper'; and he was succeeded by his son Jotham.

Jotham was twenty-five years old 271<sup>o</sup> when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years; his mother was Jerushah daughter of Zadok. He did what was right in the 2 eyes of the LORD, as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD; the people, however, continued their corrupt practices. He constructed the 3 upper gate of the house of the LORD and built extensively on the wall at Ophel. He built cities in the hill- 4 country of Judah, and forts and towers on the wooded hills. He made war on 5 the king of the Ammonites and defeated him; and that year the Ammonites gave him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kor of wheat and ten thousand of barley. They paid him the same tribute in the second and third years. Jotham became very pow- 6 erful because he maintained a steady course of obedience to the LORD his God. The other events of Jotham's 7 reign, all that he did in war and in peace, are recorded in the annals of

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdt.; Heb. adds for.

<sup>m</sup> his pride . . . undoing: or he became so proud that he acted corruptly.

<sup>n</sup> Verses 21-23: cp. 2 Kgs. 15. 5-7.

<sup>o</sup> Verses 1-3: cp. 2 Kgs. 15. 33-35.

portance. 12-13: This is one of the few instances in which the numbers given by the Chronicler are not artificial and schematic, for the Chronicler had older, written sources at his disposal. 16-23: The source simply reported Uzziah's leprosy; the Chronicler here explains it as a result of a cultic offense on Uzziah's part. 22: *Isaiah*: 2 Kgs. 15.6 speaks rather of the "annals of the kings of Judah." *From first to last* exaggerates the attention to Uzziah found in *Isaiah*.

27.1-28.27: *Jotham and Ahaz*. *Jotham* receives only favorable treatment (27.1-9); *Ahaz* (28.1-27) only unfavorable. 2: The king is portrayed as faithful; the infidelity is on the part



8 the kings of Israel and Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in 9 Jerusalem for sixteen years. He rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of David; and he was succeeded by his son Ahaz.

28<sup>12</sup> AHAZ WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD WHEN he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. He did not do what was right in the eyes of the 2 LORD like his forefather David, but followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel, and cast metal images for the 3 Baalim. He also burnt sacrifices in the Valley of Ben-hinnom; he even burnt his sons in the fire according to the abominable practice of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed in 4 favour of the Israelites. He slaughtered and burnt sacrifices at the hill-shrines and on the hill-tops and under every spreading tree.

5 The LORD his God let him suffer at the hands of the king of Aram, and the Aramaeans defeated him, took many captives and brought them to Damascus; he was also made to suffer at the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted 6 a severe defeat on him. This was Pekah son of Remaliah, who killed in one day a hundred and twenty thousand men of Judah, seasoned troops, because they had forsaken the LORD the God of 7 their fathers. And Zichri, an Ephraimite hero, killed Maaseiah the king's son<sup>q</sup> and Azrikam the comptroller of the household and Elkanah the king's 8 chief minister. The Israelites took captive from their kinsmen two hundred thousand women and children; they also took a large amount of booty and brought it to Samaria.

9 A prophet of the LORD was there, Oded by name; he went out to meet the army as it returned to Samaria and said to them, 'It is because the LORD the God of your fathers is angry with Judah that he has given them into your power; and you have massacred them in a rage that has towered up to heaven. 10 Now you propose to force the people

of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, into slavery. Are not you also guilty men before the LORD your God? Now, listen to me. Send back those 11 you have taken captive from your kinsmen, for the anger of the LORD is roused against you.' Next, some 12 Ephraimite chiefs, Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Hezekiah<sup>r</sup> son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai, met those who were returning from the war and said 13 to them, 'You must not bring these captives into our country; what you are proposing would make us guilty before the LORD and add to our sins and transgressions. We are guilty enough already, and there is fierce anger against Israel.' So the armed men left 14 the captives and the spoil with the officers and the assembled people. The captives were put in charge of 15 men nominated for this duty, who found clothes from the spoil for all who were naked. They clothed them and shod them, gave them food and drink, and anointed them; those who were tottering from exhaustion they conveyed on the backs of asses, and so brought them to their kinsmen in Jericho, in the Vale of Palm Trees. Then they themselves returned to Samaria.

At that time King Ahaz sent to the 16 king of Assyria for help. The Edomites 17 had invaded again and defeated Judah and taken away prisoners; and the 18 Philistines had raided the cities of the Shephelah and of the Negeb of Judah and had captured Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, and Gederoth, as well as Socoth, Timnah, and Gimzo with their villages, and occupied them. The LORD had 19 reduced Judah to submission because of Ahaz king of Judah; for his actions in Judah had been unbridled and he had been grossly unfaithful to the LORD. 20 Then Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria marched against him and, so far from assisting him, pressed him hard. Ahaz 21 stripped the house of the LORD, the king's palace and the houses of his

<sup>p</sup> Verses 1-4: cp. 2 Kgs. 16. 2-4.

<sup>q</sup> son; or deputy.

<sup>r</sup> Or Jehizkiah.

of the people. This latter is added by the Chronicler. 28.6-15: This episode is the Chronicler's own contribution. 16-21: The Chronicler has eliminated the positive assistance the Assyrian king rendered Ahaz; compare 2 Kgs. 16. 5-9. He gives instead the viewpoint found in Isa. 7.1-17.

officers, and gave the plunder to the king of Assyria; but all to no purpose.

- 22 This King Ahaz, when hard pressed, became more and more unfaithful to the LORD; he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him and said, 'The gods of the kings of Aram helped them; I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me.' But in fact they caused his downfall and that of all 24 Israel. Then Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and broke them up, and shut the doors of the house of the LORD; he made himself 25 altars at every corner in Jerusalem, and at every single city of Judah he made hill-shrines to burn sacrifices to other gods and provoked the anger of the LORD the God of his fathers.
- 26<sup>s</sup> The other acts and all the events of his reign, from first to last, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Judah and 27 Israel. So Ahaz rested with his forefathers and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but was not given burial with the kings of Judah. He was succeeded by his son Hezekiah.

*The kings of Judah from  
Hezekiah to the exile*

- 29<sup>t</sup> HEZEKIAH WAS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years; his mother was Abijah daughter 2 of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as David his forefather had done.
- 3 In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the gates of the house of the LORD and repaired them.
- 4 He brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them together in 5 the square on the east side, and said to them, 'Levites, listen to me. Hallow yourselves now, hallow the house of

the LORD the God of your fathers, and remove the pollution from the sanctuary. For our forefathers were unfaithful and did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD our God: they forsook him, they would have nothing to do with his dwelling-place, they turned their backs on it. They shut the doors 7 of the porch and extinguished the lamps, they ceased to burn incense and offer whole-offerings in the sanctuary to the God of Israel. Therefore the 8 anger of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem and he made them repugnant, an object of horror and derision, as you see for yourselves. Hence it is 9 that our fathers have fallen by the sword, our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity. Now I intend 10 that we should pledge ourselves to the LORD the God of Israel, in order that his anger may be averted from us. So, 11 my sons, let no time be lost; for the LORD has chosen you to serve him and to minister to him, to be his ministers and to burn sacrifices.'

Then the Levites set to work— 12 Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah of the family of Kohath; of the family of Merari, Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehalelel; of the family of Gershon, Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah; of the 13 family of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; of the family of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; of the family of Heman, 14 Jehiel and Shimei; and of the family of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. They 15 assembled their kinsmen and hallowed themselves, and then went in, as the king had instructed them at the LORD's command, to purify the house of the LORD. The priests went inside to purify 16 the house of the LORD; they removed all the pollution which they found in

<sup>s</sup> Verses 26, 27: cp. 2 Kgs. 16, 19, 20.  
<sup>t</sup> Verses 1, 2: cp. 2 Kgs. 18, 1-3.

29.1-32.33: **The reign of Hezekiah.** *Hezekiah* is portrayed in Kgs. as one of the most faithful kings; the Chronicler greatly elaborates the account of his reign, with chs. 29-31 entirely his addition. Ch. 32, on the other hand, is an abbreviated version of 2 Kgs. 18.13-20.21. In the Chronicler's account, Hezekiah gave more attention to the Temple and its service than any king since Solomon; see 30.26.

29.1-36: **Restoration of the Temple service.** After the apostasy of Ahaz (28.24), *Hezekiah's* first act was to restore the proper Temple service. The Chronicler's special interest in *the Levites and singers* reappears (vv. 12-14, 25-26, 34). After sixteen days of renovating the Temple (vv. 3-19), the renewal of service consisted of sacrifices by the king and leaders (vv. 20-30) and then by all the assembled people (vv. 31-36).

the temple into the court of the house of the LORD, and the Levites took it from them and carried it outside to the gorge of the Kidron. They began the rites on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day they reached the porch; then for eight days they consecrated the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. Then they went into the palace and said to King Hezekiah, 'We have purified the whole of the house of the LORD, the altar of whole-offering with all its vessels, and the table for the Bread of the Presence arranged in rows with all its vessels; and we have put in order and consecrated all the vessels which King Ahaz cast aside during his reign, when he was unfaithful. They are now in place before the altar of the LORD.'

Then King Hezekiah rose early, assembled the officers of the city and went up to the house of the LORD. They brought seven bulls, seven rams, and seven lambs for the whole-offering,<sup>u</sup> and seven he-goats as a sin-offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah; these he commanded the priests of Aaron's line to offer on the altar of the LORD. So the bulls were slaughtered, and the priests took their blood and flung it against the altar; the rams were slaughtered, and their blood was flung against the altar; the lambs were slaughtered, and their blood was flung against the altar. Then the he-goats for the sin-offering were brought before the king and the assembly, who laid their hands on them; and the priests slaughtered them and used their blood as a sin-offering on the altar to make expiation for all Israel. For the king had commanded that the whole-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel.

He posted the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, lutes, and harps, according to the rule prescribed by David, by Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; for this rule had come from the LORD through his prophets. The Levites stood ready with

the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Hezekiah gave the order that the whole-offering should be offered on the altar. At the moment when the whole-offering began, the song to the LORD began too, with the trumpets, led by the instruments of David king of Israel. The whole assembly prostrated themselves, the singers sang and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the whole-offering was complete. When the offering was complete, the king and all his company bowed down and prostrated themselves. And King Hezekiah and his officers commanded the Levites to praise the LORD in the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they praised him most joyfully and bowed down and prostrated themselves.

Then Hezekiah said, 'You have now given to the LORD with open hands; approach with your sacrifices and thank-offerings for the house of the LORD.' So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank-offerings; and every man of willing spirit brought whole-offerings. The number of whole-offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, a hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these made a whole-offering to the LORD. And the consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. But the priests were too few and could not flay all the whole-offerings; so their colleagues the Levites helped them until the work was completed and all the priests had hallowed themselves—for the Levites had been more scrupulous than the priests in hallowing themselves. There were indeed whole-offerings in abundance, besides the fat of the shared-offerings and the drink-offerings for the whole-offerings. In this way the service of the house of the LORD was restored; and Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had done for the people and because it had come about so suddenly.

Then Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to

<sup>u</sup> for the whole-offering: *prob. rdg.: Heb. om.*

30.1-27: Hezekiah's great Passover in Jerusalem. The Chronicler did not relate the fall of the Northern Kingdom (compare 2 Kgs.18.9-12); this chapter reflects Hezekiah's effort to unite the divided kingdoms into a single one centered in the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem

Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem to keep the Passover of the LORD the God of Israel. The king and his officers and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month, but they had not been able to keep it at that time, because not enough priests had hallowed themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. The proposal was acceptable to the king and the whole assembly. So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover of the LORD the God of Israel. Never before had so many kept it according to the prescribed form. Couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officers, proclaiming the royal command: 'Turn back, men of Israel, to the LORD the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may turn back to those of you who escaped capture by the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your forefathers and your kinsmen, who were unfaithful to the LORD the God of their fathers, so that he made them an object of horror, as you yourselves saw. Do not be stubborn as your forefathers were; submit yourselves to the LORD and enter his sanctuary which he has sanctified for ever, and worship the LORD your God, so that his anger may be averted from you. For when you turn back to the LORD, your kinsmen and your children will win compassion from their captors and return to this land. The LORD your God is gracious and compassionate, and he will not turn away from you if you turn back to him.'

So the couriers passed from city to city through the land of Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as Zebulun, but they were treated with scorn and ridicule. However, a few men of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun submitted and came to Jerusalem. Further, the hand

of God moved the people in Judah with one accord to carry out what the king and his officers had ordered at the LORD's command.

Many people, a very great assembly, came together in Jerusalem to keep the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They began by removing the altars in Jerusalem; they removed the altars for burning sacrifices and threw them into the gorge of the Kidron. They killed the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month; and the priests and the Levites were bitterly ashamed. They hallowed themselves and brought whole-offerings to the house of the LORD. They took their accustomed places, according to the direction laid down for them in the law of Moses the man of God; the priests flung against the altar the blood which they received from the Levites. But many in the assembly had not hallowed themselves; therefore the Levites had to kill the passover lamb for every one who was unclean, in order to hallow him to the LORD. For a majority of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not kept themselves ritually clean, and therefore kept the Passover irregularly. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD grant pardon to every one who makes a practice of seeking guidance of God, the LORD the God of his fathers, even if he has not observed the rules for the purification of the sanctuary.' The LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. And the Israelites who were present in Jerusalem kept the feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD every day with unrestrained fervour.<sup>v</sup> Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who had shown true understanding in the service of the LORD. So they spent the seven days of the festival sacrificing

<sup>v</sup> with unrestrained fervour: *prob. rdg.*; Heb. with powerful instruments.

Temple; see his appeal in vv. 6-9. None of this material is in 2 Kgs. 2: A *Passover in the second month*: compare Num.9.1-14. The festival of *Unleavened Bread* (v. 13) was not normally held in the second month. 14: In the first month (ch. 29) the Temple was purified; now the city is cleansed. 15-20: Only the daytime Passover rituals are reported; the nocturnal meal (see Exod.12.1-14) is not relevant to the Chronicler's purpose.

shared-offerings and making confession to<sup>w</sup> the LORD the God of their fathers.

- 23 Then the whole assembly agreed to keep the feast for another seven days; so they kept it for another seven days  
24 with general rejoicing. For Hezekiah king of Judah set aside for the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep, and his officers set aside for the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and priests hallowed  
25 themselves in great numbers. So the whole assembly of Judah, including the priests and the Levites, rejoiced, together with all the assembly which came out of Israel, and the resident aliens from Israel and those who lived in  
26 Judah. There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, the like of which had not been known there since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel.  
27 Then the priests and the Levites stood to bless the people: the LORD listened to their cry, and their prayer came to God's holy dwelling-place in heaven.

- 31 When this was over, all the Israelites present went out to the cities of Judah and smashed the sacred pillars, hacked down the sacred poles and broke up the hill-shrines and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had made an end of them. That done, the Israelites returned, each to his own patrimony in his own city.

- 2 Then Hezekiah installed the priests and the Levites in office, division by division, allotting to each priest or Levite his own particular duty, for whole-offerings or shared-offerings, to give thanks or to sing praise, or to serve in the gates of the several quarters in the LORD's house.

- 3 The king provided from his own resources, as the share due from him, the whole-offerings for both morning and evening, and for sabbaths, new moons, and appointed seasons, as prescribed in the law of the LORD. He  
4 ordered the people living in Jerusalem

to provide the share due from the priests and the Levites, so that they might devote themselves entirely to the law of the LORD. As soon as the king's  
5 order was issued to the Israelites, they gave generously from the firstfruits of their corn and new wine, oil and honey, all the produce of their land; they brought a full tithe of everything. The  
6 Israelites and the Judaeans living in the cities of Judah also brought a tithe of cattle and sheep, and a tithe of all produce as offerings dedicated to the LORD their God, and they stacked the produce in heaps. They began to  
7 deposit the heaps in the third month and completed them in the seventh. When Hezekiah and his officers came  
8 and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. Hezekiah  
9 asked the priests and the Levites about these heaps, and Azariah the chief  
10 priest, who was of the line of Zadok, answered, 'From the time when the people began to bring their contribution into the house of the LORD, they have had enough to eat, enough and to spare; indeed, the LORD has so greatly blessed them that they have this great store left over.'

Then Hezekiah ordered store-rooms  
11 to be prepared in the house of the LORD, and this was done; and the people  
12 honestly brought in their contributions, the tithe, and their dedicated gifts. The overseer in charge of them was Conaniah the Levite, with Shimei his brother as his deputy; Jehiel, Azaziah,  
13 Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were appointed by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the chief overseer of the house of God, to assist Conaniah and Shimei his brother. And Kore son of Imnah  
14 the Levite, keeper of the East Gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contributions made to the LORD and the most sacred offerings. Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua,  
15

<sup>w</sup> making confession to: or confessing.

31.1–21: The support of the Temple service. Hezekiah's first act had prepared the Temple (ch. 29) and his second, the city as the center for all Israel (ch. 30); here his third act prepares the land for the support of the proper service of the LORD. The land is first cleansed of offensive religious objects (v. 1), then its abundant produce is amassed for support of the Temple (vv. 2–10), and finally the king reorganizes the Temple personnel for a just distribution of that produce (vv. 11–19).

Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah in the priestly cities assisted him in the fair distribution of portions to their kinsmen, young and old<sup>x</sup> alike, by divisions. Irrespective of their registration, shares were distributed to all males three years of age and upwards who entered the house of the LORD to take their daily part in the service, according to their divisions, as their office demanded. The priests were registered by families, the Levites from twenty years of age and upwards by their offices in their divisions. They were registered with all their dependants, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, the whole company of them, because in virtue of their permanent standing they had to keep themselves duly hallowed. As for the priests of Aaron's line in the common lands attached to their cities, in every city men were nominated to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to every one who was registered with the Levites.

Such was the action taken by Hezekiah throughout Judah; he did what was good and right and loyal in the sight of the LORD his God. Whatever he undertook in the service of the house of God and in obedience to the law and the commandment to seek guidance of his God, he did with all his heart, and he prospered.

32:1<sup>y</sup> After these events and this example of loyal conduct, Sennacherib king of Assyria invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, believing that he could attach them to himself. 2 When Hezekiah saw that he had come and was determined to attack Jerusalem, he consulted his civil and military officers about blocking up the springs outside the city; and they encouraged him. They gathered together a large number of people and blocked up all the springs and the stream which flowed through the land. 'Why,' they said, 'should Assyrian kings come here and find plenty of water?' Then the king acted boldly; he made good every breach in the city wall and erected

towers on it; he built another wall outside it and strengthened the Millo of the city of David; he also collected a great quantity of weapons and shields. He appointed military commanders over the people and assembled them in the square by the city gate and spoke encouragingly to them in these words: 'Be strong; be brave. Do not let the king of Assyria or the rabble he has brought with him strike terror or panic into your hearts. We have more on our side than he has. He has human strength; but we have the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.' So spoke Hezekiah king of Judah, and the people were buoyed up by his words.

After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria, while he and his high command were at Lachish, sent envoys to Jerusalem to deliver this message to Hezekiah king of Judah and to all the Judaeans in Jerusalem: 'Sennacherib king of Assyria says, "What gives you confidence to stay in Jerusalem under siege? Hezekiah is misleading you into risking death by famine or thirst where you are, when he tells you that the LORD your God will save you from the grip of the Assyrian king. Was it not Hezekiah himself who suppressed the LORD's hill-shrines and altars and told the people of Judah and Jerusalem that they must prostrate themselves before one altar only and burn sacrifices there? You know very well what I and my forefathers have done to all the peoples of the lands. Were the gods of these nations able to save their lands from me? Not one of the gods of these nations, which my forefathers exterminated, was able to save his people from me. Much less will your god save you! How, then, can Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you like this? How can you believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to save his people from me or my forefathers? Much less will your gods save you!"'

<sup>x</sup> Or high and low.

<sup>y</sup> Verses 1-19: cp. 2 Kgs. 18. 13-37; Isa. 36. 1-22.

32.1-33: Sennacherib's assault and Hezekiah's response. The Chronicler shortens the account in 2 Kgs. 18.13-20.19 but also adds comments of his own, e.g. vv. 3-8, 22-23, and 27-31.

16 The envoys of Sennacherib spoke still more against the LORD God and  
 17 against his servant Hezekiah. And the king himself wrote a letter to defy the LORD the God of Israel, in these terms: 'Just as the gods of other nations could not save their people from me, so the god of Hezekiah will not save his people from me.' Then they shouted in Hebrew at the top of their voices at the people of Jerusalem on the wall, to strike them with fear and terror, hoping thus to capture the city. They described the god<sup>d</sup> of Jerusalem as being like the gods of the other peoples of the earth—things made by the hands of men.

20<sup>a</sup> In this plight King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried to heaven in prayer. So the LORD sent an angel who cut down all the fighting men, as well as the leaders and the commanders, in the camp of the king of Assyria, so that he went home disgraced to his own land. When he entered the temple of his god, certain of his own sons struck him down with their swords.

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from Sennacherib king of Assyria and all their enemies; and he gave them respite on every side. Many people brought to Jerusalem offerings for the LORD and costly gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was held in high honour by all the nations.

24 About this time Hezekiah fell dangerously ill and prayed to the LORD; the LORD said, 'I will heal you',<sup>b</sup> and granted him a sign. But, being a proud man, he was not grateful for the good done to him, and Judah and Jerusalem suffered for it. Then, proud as he was, Hezekiah submitted, and the people of Jerusalem with him, and the LORD's anger did not fall on them again in Hezekiah's time.

27 Hezekiah enjoyed great wealth and fame.<sup>c</sup> He built for himself treasuries for silver and gold, precious stones and

spices, shields and other costly things; and barns for the harvests of corn, 28 new wine, and oil; and stalls for every kind of cattle, as well as sheepfolds. He 29 amassed<sup>d</sup> a great many flocks and herds; God had indeed given him vast riches. It was this same Hezekiah who 30 blocked the upper outflow of the waters of Gihon and directed them downwards and westwards to the city of David. In fact, Hezekiah was successful in everything he attempted, even in the 31 affair of the envoys sent by the king<sup>e</sup> of Babylon—the envoys who came to inquire about the portent which had been seen in the land at the time when God left him to himself, to test him and to discover all that was in his heart.

The other events of Hezekiah's reign, 32 and his works of piety, are recorded in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz and in the annals of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Hezekiah rested 33 with his forefathers and was buried in the uppermost of the graves of David's sons; all Judah and the people of Jerusalem paid him honour when he died, and he was succeeded by his son Manasseh.

MANASSEH WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD 33!<sup>f</sup> when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-five years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of 2 the LORD, in following the abominable practices of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed in favour of the Israelites. He rebuilt the hill-shrines 3 which his father Hezekiah had dismantled, he erected altars to the Baalim and made sacred poles, he prostrated himself before all the host of heaven and worshipped them. He built 4 altars in the house of the LORD, that house of which the LORD had said, 'In Jerusalem shall my Name be for

<sup>z</sup> Or gods.

<sup>a</sup> Verses 20–22; cp. 2 Kgs. 19. 1–37; Isa. 37. 1–38.

<sup>b</sup> I will heal you; prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 5; Heb. om.

<sup>c</sup> Or riches. <sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds cities.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 12; Heb. officers.

<sup>f</sup> Verses 1–9; cp. 2 Kgs. 21. 1–9.

24–26: The verses abridge 2 Kgs. 20. 1–9, to suggest that worthy Hezekiah was less than perfect; compare Isa. 38. 1–39. 8.

33. 1–25: Manasseh and Amon. In 2 Kgs. *Manasseh* is the worst king of the Davidic dynasty. It was during his reign that the LORD finally gave up on Jerusalem and Judah (2 Kgs. 21. 10–16). Here, however, Manasseh repents and is restored. This theme possibly arises from the very long reign of *fifty-five years*, which the Chronicler may have thought was due to some good on the

5 ever.' He built altars for all the host of  
 6 heaven in the two courts of the house  
 of the LORD; he made his sons pass  
 through the fire in the Valley of Ben-  
 hinnom, he practised soothsaying,  
 divination, and sorcery, and dealt with  
 ghosts and spirits. He did much wrong  
 in the eyes of the LORD and provoked  
 7 his anger; and the image that he had  
 carved in relief he put in the house of  
 God, the place of which God had said  
 to David and Solomon his son, 'This  
 house and Jerusalem, which I chose  
 out of all the tribes of Israel, shall  
 8 receive my Name for all time. I will not  
 again displace Israel from the land  
 which I assigned to their forefathers,  
 if only they will be careful to observe  
 all that I commanded them through  
 Moses, all the law, the statutes, and the  
 9 rules.' But Manasseh misled Judah and  
 the inhabitants of Jerusalem into  
 wickedness far worse than that of the  
 nations which the LORD had exter-  
 minated in favour of the Israelites.

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to  
 11 his people, but they paid no heed. So  
 the LORD brought against them the  
 commanders of the army of the king of  
 Assyria; they captured Manasseh with  
 spiked weapons, and bound him with  
 fetters, and brought him to Babylon.  
 12 In his distress he prayed to the LORD  
 his God and sought to placate him,  
 and made his humble submission before  
 13 the God of his fathers. He prayed, and  
 God accepted his petition and heard  
 his supplication. He brought him back  
 to Jerusalem and restored him to the  
 throne; and thus Manasseh learnt that  
 the LORD was God.

14 After this he built an outer wall for  
 the city of David, west of Gihon in the  
 gorge, and extended it to the entrance  
 by the Fish Gate, enclosing Ophel;  
 and he raised it to a great height. He  
 also put military commanders in all  
 15 the fortified cities of Judah. He re-  
 moved the foreign gods and the carved  
 image from the house of the LORD and  
 all the altars which he had built on the

temple mount and in Jerusalem, and  
 threw them out of the city. Moreover, 16  
 he repaired the altar of the LORD and  
 sacrificed at it shared-offerings and  
 thank-offerings, and commanded Judah  
 to serve the LORD the God of Israel.  
 But the people still continued to sacrifi- 17  
 ce at the hill-shrines, though only to  
 the LORD their God.

The rest of the acts of Manasseh, his 18  
 prayer to his God, and the discourses  
 of the seers who spoke to him in the  
 name of the LORD the God of Israel,  
 are recorded in the chronicles of the  
 kings of Israel. His prayer and the 19  
 answer he received to it, and all his sin  
 and unfaithfulness, and the places  
 where he built hill-shrines and set up  
 sacred poles and carved idols, before he  
 submitted, are recorded in the chron- 20  
 icles of the seers. So Manasseh rested  
 with his forefathers and was buried in  
 the garden-tomb of<sup>g</sup> his family; he was  
 succeeded by his son Amon.

Amon was twenty-two years old 21<sup>b</sup>  
 when he came to the throne, and he  
 reigned in Jerusalem for two years. He 22  
 did what was wrong in the eyes of the  
 LORD as his father Manasseh had done.  
 He sacrificed to all the images that his  
 father Manasseh had made, and wor- 23  
 shipped them. He was not submissive  
 before the LORD like his father  
 Manasseh; his guilt was much greater.  
 His courtiers conspired against him 24  
 and murdered him in his house; but the 25  
 people of the land killed all the con-  
 spirators and made his son Josiah king  
 in his place.

JOSIAH WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD WHEN HE 34<sup>i</sup>  
 came to the throne, and he reigned in  
 Jerusalem for thirty-one years. He did 2  
 what was right in the eyes of the LORD;  
 he followed in the footsteps of his fore-  
 father David, swerving neither right  
 nor left. In the eighth year of his reign, 3

<sup>g</sup> the garden-tomb of: *prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 21. 18; Heb. om.*

<sup>h</sup> Verses 21-25: *cp. 2 Kgs. 21. 19-24.*

<sup>i</sup> Verses 1, 2. *cp. 2 Kgs. 22, 1, 2.*

king's part. 18: The Gr. translation adds the penitential prayer of Manasseh, found in the Apocrypha.

34.1-35.27: Josiah, the faithful king (2 Kgs. chs. 22-23). In 2 Kgs. Josiah's great religious reform was a concentrated event after the discovery of the *book of the law*; here his purge of pagan practices preceded that discovery (14-18) and, indeed, lasted six years (3-7). The



when he was still a boy, he began to seek guidance of the God of his forefather David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the hill-shrines and the sacred poles, and the carved idols and the images of metal. He saw to it that the altars for the Baalim were destroyed and he hacked down the incense-altars which stood above them; he broke in pieces the sacred poles and the carved and metal images, grinding them to powder and scattering it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burnt the bones of the priests on their altars and purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, he burnt down their houses wherever he found them; he destroyed the altars and the sacred poles, ground the idols to powder, and hacked down the incense-altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup> In the eighteenth year of his reign, after he had purified the land and the house, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah son of Joahaz the secretary of state to repair the house of the LORD his God. They came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the silver that had been brought to the house of God, the silver which the Levites, on duty at the threshold, had gathered from Manasseh, Ephraim, and all the rest of Israel, as well as from Judah and Benjamin and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. It was then handed over to the foremen in charge of the work in the house of the LORD, and these men, working in the house, used it for repairing and strengthening the fabric; they gave it also to the carpenters and builders to buy hewn stone, and timber for rafters and beams, for the buildings which the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin. The men did their work honestly under the direction of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the line of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, members of the family of Kohath. These also had control of the

porters and directed the workmen of every trade. The Levites were all skilled musicians, and some of them were secretaries, clerks, or door-keepers. When they fetched the silver which had been brought to the house of the LORD, the priest Hilkiah discovered the book of the law of the LORD which had been given through Moses. Then Hilkiah told Shaphan the adjutant-general, 'I have discovered the book of the law in the house of the LORD.' Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he brought it to the king and reported to him: 'Your servants are doing all that was entrusted to them. They have melted down the silver in the house of the LORD and have handed it over to the foremen and the workmen.' Shaphan the adjutant-general also told the king that the priest Hilkiah had given him a book; and he read it out in the king's presence. When the king heard what was in the book of the law, he rent his clothes, and ordered Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the adjutant-general, and Asaiah the king's attendant, to go and seek guidance of the LORD, for himself and for all who still remained in Israel and Judah, about the contents of the book that had been discovered. 'Great is the wrath of the LORD,' he said, 'and it has been poured out upon us because our forefathers did not observe the command of the LORD and do all that is written in this book.'

So Hilkiah and those whom the king had instructed went to Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum son of Tikvah,<sup>k</sup> son of Hasrah, the keeper of the wardrobe, and consulted her at her home in the second quarter of Jerusalem. 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel,' she answered: 'Say to the man who sent you to me, "This is the word of the LORD: I am bringing disaster on this place and its inhabitants, fulfilling all the imprecations recorded in the book which was read in the presence of the king of Judah,

<sup>j</sup> Verses 8-32: cp. 2 Kgs. 22. 3-23. 3.  
<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 22. 14; Heb. Tokhath.

Chronicles's view is probably correct. 8-13: Greater attention is paid here to the Levites and Temple workers than in the source, 2 Kgs. 22.3-7. 9: *The silver*: see 24.4. 29-33: This is based

25 because they have forsaken me and burnt sacrifices to other gods, provoking my anger with all the idols they have made with their own hands; therefore my wrath is poured out upon this place and will not be quenched.”

26 This is what you shall say to the king of Judah who sent you to seek guidance of the LORD: “This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: You have

27 listened to my words and shown a willing heart, you humbled yourself before God when you heard what I said about this place and its inhabitants; you humbled yourself and rent your clothes and wept before me. Because of all this,<sup>l</sup> I for my part have heard you. This is the very word of the LORD.

28 Therefore, I will gather you to your forefathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace; you will not live to see all the disaster which I am bringing upon this place and upon its inhabitants.”” So they brought back word to the king.

29 Then the king sent and called all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem together, and went up to the house of the LORD; he took with him all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites, the whole population, high and low. There he read them the whole book of the covenant discovered in the house of the

31 LORD; and then, standing on the dais, the king made a covenant before the LORD to obey him and keep his commandments, his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart and soul, and so fulfil the terms of the covenant

32 written in this book. Then he swore an oath with all who were present in Jerusalem to keep the covenant.<sup>m</sup> Thereafter the inhabitants of Jerusalem did obey the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Josiah removed all abominable things from all the territories of the Israelites, so that everyone living in Israel might serve the LORD his God. As long as he lived they did

not fail in their allegiance to the LORD the God of their fathers.

Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD 35 in Jerusalem, and the passover lamb was killed on the fourteenth day of the first month. He appointed the priests 2 to their offices and encouraged them to perform the service of the house of the LORD. He said to the Levites, the 3 teachers of Israel, who were dedicated to the LORD, ‘Put the holy Ark in the house which Solomon son of David king of Israel built; it is not to be carried about on your shoulders. Now is the time to serve the LORD your God and his people Israel: prepare 4 yourselves by families according to your divisions, following the written instructions of David king of Israel and those of Solomon his son; and 5 stand in the Holy Place as representatives of the family groups of the lay people, your brothers, one division of Levites to each family group. Kill the 6 passover lamb and hallow yourselves and prepare for your brothers to fulfil the word of the LORD given through Moses.’

Josiah contributed on behalf of all 7 the lay people present thirty thousand small cattle, that is young rams and goats, for the Passover, in addition to three thousand bulls; all these were from the king’s own resources. And 8 his officers contributed willingly for the people, the priests, and the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave on behalf of the priests two thousand six hundred small cattle for the Passover, in addition to three hundred 9 bulls. And Conaniah, Shemaiah and Nethaneel his brothers, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabab, the chiefs of the Levites, gave on behalf of the Levites for the Passover five thousand small cattle in addition to five hundred bulls.

<sup>l</sup> Because of all this: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
<sup>m</sup> to keep the covenant: *prob. rdg.*, *cp.* 2 Kgs. 23. 3; *Heb.* and Benjamin.

on 2 Kgs.23.1–20. 35.1–19: The Chronicler expands the brief report of a *Passover* observance in 2 Kgs.23.21–23. As usual, he emphasizes the part of *the Levites* and *the singers*. 3: The statement here seems to imply that the *Ark* had been regularly moved for religious ceremonies prior to Josiah’s time; contrast 1 Chr.13.15–16. The exact function of the *Ark* in the older Temple service is obscure; see Jer.3.16. 4: *Written instructions of David*: see 1 Chr. chs. 23–26. 7–9: Similar gifts are described in 1 Chr.29.6–9. 10–15: Characteristically, the Chronicler

10 When the service had been arranged, the priests stood in their places and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. They killed the passover victim, and the priests flung the blood against the altar as the Levites flayed the animals. Then they removed the fat flesh,<sup>n</sup> which they allocated to the people by groups of families for them to offer to the LORD, as prescribed in the book of Moses; and so with the bulls. They cooked the passover victim over the fire according to custom, and boiled the holy offerings in pots, cauldrons, and pans, and served them quickly to all the people.

14 After that they made the necessary preparations for themselves and the priests, because the priests of Aaron's line were engaged till nightfall in offering whole-offerings and the fat portions; so the Levites made the necessary preparations for themselves and for the priests of Aaron's line.

15 The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places according to the rules laid down by David and by Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, the king's seers. The door-keepers stood, each at his gate; there was no need for them to leave their posts, because their kinsmen the Levites had made the preparations for them.

16 In this manner all the service of the LORD was arranged that day, to keep the Passover and to offer whole-offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. The people of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time and the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; none of the kings of Israel had ever kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and Levites and all Judah and

Israel who were present and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign this Passover was kept.

After Josiah had thus organized all the service of the house, Necho king of Egypt marched out to attack Carchemish on the Euphrates; and Josiah went out to confront him. But Necho sent envoys to him, saying, 'What do you want with me, king of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today, only with those with whom I am at war. God has purposed to speed me on my way, and God is on my side; do not stand in his way, or he will destroy you.' Josiah would not be deflected from his purpose but insisted on fighting; he refused to listen to Necho's words spoken at God's command, and he sallied out to join battle in the vale of Megiddo. The archers shot at him; he was severely wounded and told his bodyguard to carry him off. They lifted him out of his chariot and carried him in his viceroy's chariot to Jerusalem. There he died and was buried among the tombs of his ancestors, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. Jeremiah also made a lament for Josiah; and to this day the minstrels, both men and women, commemorate Josiah in their lamentations. Such laments have become traditional in Israel, and they are found in the written collections.

The other events of Josiah's reign and his works of piety, all performed in accordance with what is laid down in the law of the LORD, and his acts, from first to last, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah.

THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND TOOK JOSIAH'S SON JEHOAHAZ and made him king in

<sup>n</sup> fat flesh; or whole-offering.  
<sup>o</sup> Verses 1-4: cp. 2 Kgs. 23: 30-34.

reports the importance, absent from his source, of the Levites and other Temple workers. 16-19: Based on 2 Kgs. 23: 22-23. 18: *Since the days of the prophet Samuel*: the meaning is, since the beginning of the monarchy; compare 2 Kgs. 23: 22. This unique *Passover* expressed the unity of all Israel, otherwise lacking throughout the monarchic period. 21-22: Historically, Josiah's policy of resistance to Necho arose from his collaboration with the Babylonians; see 2 Kgs. 23: 29-30 n. Here that collaboration is viewed as a violation of God's will, expressed by the foreign king himself. This addition, by the Chronicler, explains how the otherwise righteous Josiah fell in battle. 25: *Jeremiah* goes unmentioned in Kgs. Compare Jer. 22: 10-11, 15.

36.1-23: *The end of the Judean monarchy*. The Chronicler condenses the account in 2 Kgs. 23: 30-24: 15, yet also adds to it, for example, v. 14. 1-4: The account of Jehoahaz is much

- 2 place of his father in Jerusalem. He was twenty-three years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months. Then Necho king of Egypt deposed him and fined the country a hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold, and made his brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem in his place, changing his name to Jehoiakim; he also carried away his brother Jehoahaz to Egypt. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD his God. So Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against him and put him in fetters and took him to Babylon. He also removed to Babylon some of the vessels of the house of the LORD and put them into his own palace there. The other events of Jehoiakim's reign, including the abominations he committed, and everything of which he was held guilty, are recorded in the annals of the kings of Israel and Judah. He was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin.
- 9<sup>p</sup> Jehoiachin was eight years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months and ten days. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD. At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, together with the choicest vessels of the house of the LORD, and made his father's brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.
- 11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD his God; he did not defer to the guidance of the prophet Jeremiah, the spokesman of the LORD. He also
- rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had laid on him a solemn oath of allegiance. He was obstinate and stubborn and refused to return to the LORD the God of Israel. All the chiefs of Judah and the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the abominable practices of the other nations; and they defiled the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. The LORD God of their fathers had warned them betimes through his messengers, for he took pity on his people and on his dwelling-place; but they never ceased to deride his messengers, scorn his words and scoff at his prophets, until the anger of the LORD burst out against his people and could not be appeased. So he brought against them the king of the Chaldaeans, who put their young men to the sword in the sanctuary and spared neither young man nor maiden, neither the old nor the weak; God gave them all into his power. And he brought all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king and his officers—all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt down the house of God, razed the city wall of Jerusalem and burnt down all its stately mansions and all their precious possessions until everything was destroyed. Those who escaped the sword he took captive to Babylon, and they became slaves to him and his sons until the sovereignty passed to the Persians, while the land of Israel ran the full term of its sabbaths. All the time that it lay desolate it kept the sabbath rest, to complete seventy years in fulfilment of the word of the LORD by the prophet Jeremiah.

p Verses 9, 10: cp. 2 Kgs. 24. 8–17.

q Verses 17–20: cp. 2 Kgs. 25. 1–17.

condensed; see 2 Kgs.23.30–34. *Jehoiakim*: see 2 Kgs.23.36–24.6. 6: *Jehoiakim* actually died before the Babylonian king could capture and exile him; compare 2 Kgs.24.1–6. 7: This has been added by the Chronicler, see v. 10. 9–10: *Jehoiachin*: again condensation (of 2 Kgs. 24.8–17) is present. 9: *Eight*: The correct number is eighteen, as in 2 Kgs.24.8. 11–13: *Zedekiah*: This is much changed from 2 Kgs.24.18–20, with the names of his mother and grandfather omitted. 12: See 35.25 n. On the reference here to *Jeremiah*, see Jer.32.1–5; 37.1–10; 38.28. 14: In the source, the blame for the end of the monarchy was placed on the wicked kings, not, as here, on *chiefs, priests, and the people*. Note that the Levites go unmentioned here. 15–16: The ignoring of the prophets appears repeatedly, e.g. 12.5–8; 15.1–8; 19.1–3; and elsewhere. 17–21: The account of the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Exile is greatly abridged from 2 Kgs.25.1–21. 21: On *the sabbath rest*, see Lev.26.33–45 and Jer.25.11–12.

22<sup>r</sup> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, so that the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the heart of Cyrus king of Persia; and he issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing, to this effect:

Persia: The LORD the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. To every man of his people now among you I say, the LORD his God be<sup>s</sup> with him, and let him go up.

23 This is the word of Cyrus king of

<sup>r</sup> Verses 22, 23: *cp. Ezra 1. 1-3.*  
<sup>s</sup> *be: prob. rdg., cp. Ezra 1. 3: Heb. om.*

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22-23: These verses appear also in Ezra 1.1-3, an indication that the single book, Ezra-Neh., was the continuation of Chr. Apparently the verses were first written, but later repeated and incorporated here to abstain from an ending so negative as v. 21. In the MT, 2 Chr. is the last book; it was characteristic of later rabbinic thought that even passages of doom must end in hope.

# THE BOOK OF EZRA

The books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah were originally a single unit which came to be separated (see Introduction to 1 Chronicles). The Book of Ezra deals with several episodes of the return to Zion by Judeans after the Babylonian Exile (587–539 B.C.); these episodes took place in both the sixth and the fifth centuries, and focus on Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra (who made two trips), and Nehemiah (who made two trips).

The book poses a number of historical and literary problems, the chief of which is that of sources and the sequence of materials. Two main sources used by the author, usually called the Chronicler, are the "Memoirs of Ezra" and the "Memoirs of Nehemiah" (narratives using first person forms). But some of the Nehemiah material appears in the Book of Ezra and some of the Ezra material is in the Book of Nehemiah, suggesting that materials were dislocated in the course of their transmission.

As a consequence, uncertainty attends the effort to determine whether Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries. If they were not, then problems arise as to whose career came first. In the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Ezra precedes the Book of Nehemiah, and the general impression suggests that priority belonged to Ezra. But serious doubts have been raised; for example, if Ezra came first, why does Nehemiah seem to ignore him? (See also 10.6 n.) Hence, a frequent view adopted here concludes that Nehemiah preceded Ezra. Accordingly, the king of 7.1 is likely Artaxerxes II (404–359 B.C.); the king at the time of Nehemiah was Artaxerxes I (464–424 B.C.).

On the date of composition, probably the fourth pre-Christian century is to be adopted; see Introduction to 1 Chronicles.

Chapters 1–6 are not about Ezra but deal with a return from Babylonia led by Sheshbazzar (about 538 B.C.), and with further events of the time of Zerubbabel (about 516 B.C.); some scholars term these early chapters "The Book of Zerubbabel."

The material on Ezra himself is in Ezra chs. 7–10 and Neh. chs. 8–9.

Despite the problems, the prevailing interest in the book is clear. The returned exiles represent to the author the remnant of Israel who must exhibit fullest fidelity to, and conformity with, the Law of Moses. Hence, the community needed to reconstruct Jerusalem and the Temple, and to maintain its sanctity in the midst of foreign peoples.

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## *The return of the exiles to Jerusalem*

1 **N**OW IN THE FIRST YEAR OF CYRUS king of Persia, so that the word of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the heart of Cyrus king of Persia; and he issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom, both by word of mouth and in writing, to this effect:

2 This is the word of Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he himself has charged

me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. To every man of his people<sup>3</sup> now among you I say, God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD the God of Israel, the God<sup>4</sup> whose city is Jerusalem. And every remaining Jew, wherever he may be living, may claim aid from his neighbours in that place, silver and gold, goods<sup>a</sup> and cattle, in addition to the voluntary offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.

*a Or pack-animals.*

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1.1–11: **The return of the exiles to Jerusalem under Sheshbazzar.** 1–3: These verses duplicate 2 Chr. 36.22–23; see annotation there. 1: *The first year of Cyrus* was 538 B.C. Cyrus II's rule over Persia actually began in 557 B.C.; 538 is the date from the perspective of the Babylonians. *The word of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah*: what to the Persians was undoubtedly an act of political expediency was to the Jews the fulfillment of God's promise as taught by Jeremiah (see Jer. 25.11–14; 29.10; compare Isa. 44.28; 45.1). Notices in *writing* were posted in public places. 2–4: Compare the decree of Cyrus in vv. 2–4, which is in Heb., with the Aram. parallel in 6.3–5. The somewhat different versions both conform with what is known of the diplomatic policies of the early Persian Achaemenid kings (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.). 4: *Remaining*:

5 Thereupon the heads of families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, answered the summons, all whom God had moved to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. Their neighbours all assisted them with gifts of every kind, silver<sup>b</sup> and gold, goods<sup>a</sup> and cattle and valuable gifts in abundance,<sup>c</sup> in addition to any voluntary service. Moreover, Cyrus king of Persia produced the vessels of the house of the LORD which Nebuchadnezzar had removed from Jerusalem and placed in the temple of his god; and he handed them over into the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who made an inventory of them for Sheshbazzar the ruler of Judah. This was the list: thirty gold basins, a thousand silver basins, twenty-nine vessels of various kinds, thirty golden bowls, four hundred and ten silver bowls of various types, and a thousand other vessels. The vessels of gold and silver amounted in all to five thousand four hundred; and Sheshbazzar took them all up to Jerusalem, when the exiles were brought back from Babylon.

21<sup>d</sup> Of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile in Babylon, these were the people of the province who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city, led by Zerubbabel, Jeshua,<sup>e</sup> Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah.

The roll of the men of the people of Israel: the family of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; the family of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; the family of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; the family of Pahath-moab, namely the families of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve; the family of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;

the family of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; the family of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; the family of Bani, six hundred and forty-two; the family of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; the family of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; the family of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; the family of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; the family of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; the family of Ater, namely that of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; the family of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; the family of Jorah, one hundred and twelve; the family of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; the family of Gibbar, ninety-five. The men<sup>g</sup> of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; the men of Netophah, fifty-six; the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; the men of Beth-azmoth,<sup>h</sup> forty-two; the men of Kiriath-jearim,<sup>i</sup> Kephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; the men<sup>j</sup> of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; the men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; the men<sup>k</sup> of Nebo, fifty-two; the men of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six; the men of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; the men of Harim, three hundred and twenty; the men of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; the men of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; the men of Senaah, three thousand six hundred and thirty.

Priests: the family of Jedaiah, of the

<sup>a</sup> Or pack-animals.

<sup>b</sup> with gifts . . . silver: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 2. 9; Heb. with vessels of silver.

<sup>c</sup> in abundance: prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras. 2. 9; Heb. apart.

<sup>d</sup> Verses 1-70: cp. Neh. 7. 6-73.

<sup>e</sup> Or Joshua (cp. Hag. 1. 1).

<sup>f</sup> and: prob. rdg., cp. Neh. 7. 11; Heb. om.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. Neh. 7. 26; Heb. family.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. Neh. 7. 28; Heb. the family of Azmoth.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. Neh. 7. 29; Heb. the family of Kiriath-arim.

<sup>j</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. Neh. 7. 30; Heb. family.

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. family (also in verses 30-35).

surviving (2 Chr. 36. 20). **8:** *Mithredath*: Cyrus' treasurer. *Sheshbazzar* may be identical with a son of Jeconiah whose name in 1 Chr. 3. 18 is given as Shenazzar and elsewhere as Shenabasar or Sheshbazzar. *Ruler*: leader. **11:** *In all*: see 1 Esd. 2. 13-15.

**2.1-70:** The census of returnees, paralleled in Neh. 7. 6-73. **2:** Possibly a composite list of men who at different times led groups of exiles home. **3-67:** Enumeration of the heads of families of Israel (Judah and Benjamin, see 1.5), various Temple officials (vv. 36-63) and servants, and animals (vv. 64-67). Some returnees are listed according to the name of the father, others accord-

line of Jeshua, nine hundred and  
 37 seventy-three; the family of Immer,  
 38 one thousand and fifty-two: the family  
 of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred  
 39 and forty-seven; the family of Harim,  
 one thousand and seventeen.

40 Levites: the families of Jeshua and  
 Kadmiel, of the line of Hodaviah,  
 41 seventy-four. Singers: the family of  
 Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight.  
 42 The guild of door-keepers: the family  
 of Shallum, the family of Ater, the  
 family of Talmon, the family of Akkub,  
 the family of Hatita, and the family of  
 Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine  
 in all.

43 Temple-servitors: the family of Ziha,  
 the family of Hasupha, the family of  
 44 Tabbaoth, the family of Keros, the  
 family of Siaha, the family of Padon,  
 45 the family of Lebanah, the family of  
 Hagabah, the family of Akkub, the  
 46 family of Hagab, the family of Shamlai,<sup>l</sup>  
 47 the family of Hanan, the family of  
 Giddel, the family of Gahar, the family  
 48 of Reaiah, the family of Rezin, the  
 family of Nekoda, the family of  
 49 Gazzam, the family of Uzza, the family  
 50 of Paseah, the family of Besai, the  
 family of Asnah, the family of the  
 51 Meunim,<sup>m</sup> the family of the Nephu-  
 52 sim,<sup>n</sup> the family of Bakbuk, the family  
 of Hakupha, the family of Harhur, the  
 53 family of Bazluth, the family of  
 Mehida, the family of Harsha, the  
 54 family of Barkos, the family of Sisera,  
 the family of Temah, the family of  
 Neziah, and the family of Hatipha.

55 Descendants of Solomon's servants:  
 the family of Sotai, the family of  
 Hassophereth, the family of Peruda,  
 56 the family of Jaalah, the family of  
 57 Darkon, the family of Giddel, the  
 family of Shephatiah, the family of  
 Hattil, the family of Pochereth-  
 hazzebaim, and the family of Ami.

58 The temple-servitors and the descen-  
 dants of Solomon's servants amounted

to three hundred and ninety-two in all.

The following were those who  
 59 returned from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha,  
 Kerub, Addan, and Immer, but could  
 not establish their father's family nor  
 whether by descent they belonged to  
 60 Israel: the family of Delaiah, the  
 family of Tobiah, and the family of  
 Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two.  
 Also of the priests: the family of  
 61 Hobaiah, the family of Hakkoz, and  
 the family of Barzillai who had  
 married a daughter of Barzillai the  
 Gileadite and went by his<sup>o</sup> name.  
 These searched for their names among  
 62 those enrolled in the genealogies, but  
 they could not be found; they were  
 disqualified for the priesthood as  
 unclean, and the governor forbade  
 63 them to partake of the most sacred  
 food until there should be a priest able  
 to consult the Urim and the Thummim.

The whole assembled people num-  
 64 bered forty-two thousand three hun-  
 dred and sixty, apart from their slaves,  
 65 male and female, of whom there were  
 seven thousand three hundred and  
 thirty-seven; and they had two hundred  
 singers, men and women. Their horses  
 66 numbered seven hundred and thirty-  
 six, their mules two hundred and forty-  
 five, their camels four hundred and  
 67 thirty-five, and their asses six thousand  
 seven hundred and twenty.

When they came to the house of the  
 68 LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads  
 of families volunteered to rebuild the  
 house of God on its original site.  
 According to their resources they gave  
 69 for the fabric fund a total of sixty-one  
 thousand drachmas of gold, five thous-  
 and minas of silver, and one hundred  
 priestly robes.

The priests, the Levites, and some  
 70 of the people lived in Jerusalem and its

<sup>l</sup> Or Shalmal (cp. Neh. 7. 48).

<sup>m</sup> Or Meunim.

<sup>n</sup> Or Nephisim.

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 5. 38; Heb. their.

ing to place of origin. 41-42: Singers and door-keepers: functionaries among the Levites. 43: Servitors: Heb. *nethinim*. 63: Governor: Sheshbazzar (1.8). The statement *until there should be a priest able to consult the Urim and the Thummim* (see 1 Sam.14.41) refers ostensibly to the future when the use of the sacred lot would be reinstated, but the author apparently knew that that ancient practice was never reintroduced, as is clear from later rabbinic sources. 64: The figure for the whole assembled people apparently included those from tribes not specified above. 65: The two hundred were not the Temple singers of v. 41, but entertainers (see 2 Sam.19.35 or 2 Chr.35.25), here morale boosters for the long journey. 69: Fabric fund: a reserve fund for building maintenance and repair. For contrast see Neh.7.70-71.



suburbs;<sup>p</sup> the singers, the door-keepers, and temple-servitors,<sup>q</sup> and all other Israelites, lived in their own towns.

*Worship restored and the temple rebuilt*

3 WHEN THE SEVENTH MONTH CAME, THE Israelites now being settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem. Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow-priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his kinsmen, set to work and built the altar of the God of Israel, in order to offer upon it whole-offerings as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. 3 They put the altar in place first, because they lived in fear of the foreign population; and they offered upon it whole-offerings to the LORD, both morning and evening offerings. They kept the pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles<sup>r</sup> as ordained, and offered whole-offerings every day in the number prescribed for each day, and, in addition to these, the regular whole-offerings and the offerings for sabbaths,<sup>s</sup> for new moons and for all the sacred seasons appointed by the LORD, and all voluntary offerings brought to the LORD. The offering of whole-offerings began from the first day of the seventh month, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not yet been laid. They gave money for the masons and carpenters, and food and drink and oil for the Sidonians and the Tyrians to fetch cedar-wood from the Lebanon to the roadstead at Joppa, by licence from Cyrus king of Persia. 8 In the second year after their return to the house of God in Jerusalem, and in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak started work, aided by all their fellow-

Israelites, the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from captivity to Jerusalem. They appointed Levites from the age of twenty years and upwards to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. Jeshua with his sons and his kinsmen, Kadmiel, Binnui, and Hodaviah,<sup>t</sup> together assumed control of those responsible for the work on the house of God.<sup>u</sup>

When the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their robes took their places with their trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with their cymbals, to praise the LORD in the manner prescribed by David king of Israel; and they chanted praises and thanksgiving to the LORD, singing, 'It is good to give thanks to the LORD,<sup>v</sup> for his love towards Israel endures for ever.' All the people raised a great shout of praise to the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD had been laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, who were old enough to have seen the former house, wept and wailed aloud when they saw the foundation of this house laid, while many others shouted for joy at the top of their voice. The people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from that of the weeping and wailing, so great was the shout which the people were raising, and the sound could be heard a long way off.

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles

p in Jerusalem and its suburbs: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras. 5. 46; Heb. om.*

q *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* in their towns.

r Or Booths.

s for sabbaths: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 5. 52; Heb. om.*

t Binnui, and Hodaviah: *prob. rdg.; Heb. and his sons*

the family of Judah.

u *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* the family of Henadad, their

family and their kinsmen the Levites.

v to give thanks to the LORD: *prob. rdg., cp. Ps. 106. 1; Heb. om.*

3.1-13: **Worship restored and the Temple rebuilt.** 1: *The seventh month:* Tishri (September-October); the date is regarded by some as 538 B.C., the first year of Cyrus (see 1.1 n.), but by others as 520, the second year of Darius. 3: *After they put the altar in place,* the sacrifices for the sacred days could be offered (vv. 3-6). 7: *Sidonians and Tyrians:* Phoenicians. Compare the account of Solomon's building of the Temple in 2 Chr.2.1-16. 8: *The second month:* Iyyar (April-May). 11: *Prescribed by David:* see 2 Chr.29.25-30.

4.1-6.22: **Opposition to the efforts to rebuild.** 4.1-5 record opposition to rebuilding the temple, but vv. 6-23 to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. 4.1-5 reflect the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses (not mentioned in the book), and Darius I (though only the beginning), that is, the period 538-520 B.C. 4.6-23, however, reflect the reign of Artaxerxes, namely, 464-424, and intrude into and interrupt the account in 4.1-6.22. 1: *Enemies:* the Samaritans. 2: See 2 Kgs.17.24-28 on

were building a temple to the LORD  
 2 the God of Israel, they approached  
 Zerubbabel and Jeshua<sup>w</sup> and the heads  
 of families and said to them, 'Let us  
 join you in building, for like you we  
 seek your God, and we have been  
 sacrificing to him ever since the days  
 of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who  
 3 brought us here.' But Zerubbabel and  
 Jeshua and the rest of the heads of  
 families in Israel said to them. 'The  
 house which we are building for our  
 God is no concern of yours. We alone  
 will build it for the LORD the God of  
 Israel, as his majesty Cyrus king of  
 Persia commanded us.'

4 Then the people of the land caused  
 the Jews to lose heart and made them  
 5 afraid to continue building; and in  
 order to defeat their purpose they  
 bribed officials at court to act against  
 them. This continued throughout the  
 reign of Cyrus and into the reign of  
 Darius king of Persia.

6 At the beginning of the reign of  
 Ahasuerus, the people of the land  
 brought a charge in writing against the  
 inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes king  
 of Persia, with the agreement of  
 Mithredath, Tabeel and all his col-  
 leagues wrote to him; the letter was  
 written in Aramaic and read aloud in  
 Aramaic.

8<sup>z</sup> Rehum the high commissioner and  
 Shimshai the secretary wrote a letter to  
 King Artaxerxes concerning Jerusalem  
 in the following terms:

9 From Rehum the high com-  
 missioner, Shimshai the secretary,  
 and all their colleagues, the judges,  
 the commissioners, the overseers, and  
 chief officers, the men of Erech and  
 Babylon, and the Elamites in Susa,  
 10 and the other peoples whom the

great and renowned Asnappar<sup>y</sup> de-  
 ported and settled in the city of  
 Samaria and in the rest of the  
 province of Beyond-Euphrates.

Here follows the text of their letter: 11

To King Artaxerxes from his  
 servants, the men of the province of  
 Beyond-Euphrates:

Be it known to Your Majesty that 12  
 the Jews who left you and came to  
 these parts have reached Jerusalem  
 and are rebuilding that wicked and  
 rebellious city; they have surveyed<sup>z</sup>  
 the foundations and are completing  
 the walls. Be it known to Your 13  
 Majesty that, if their city is rebuilt  
 and the walls are completed, they  
 will pay neither general levy, nor  
 poll-tax, nor land-tax, and in the  
 end<sup>a</sup> they will harm the monarchy.  
 Now, because we eat the king's salt 14  
 and it is not right that we should  
 witness the king's dishonour, there-  
 fore we have sent to inform Your  
 Majesty, in order that search may be 15  
 made in the annals of your pred-  
 ecessors. You will discover by search-  
 ing through the annals that this has  
 been a rebellious city, harmful to the  
 monarchy and its provinces, and  
 that sedition has long been rife  
 within its walls, That is why the city  
 was laid waste. We submit to Your 16  
 Majesty that, if it is rebuilt and its  
 walls are completed, the result will  
 be that you will have no more  
 footing in the province of Beyond-  
 Euphrates.

The king sent this answer: 17

<sup>w</sup> and Jeshua: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 5. 68; Heb. om.*  
<sup>x</sup> *From 4. 8 to 6. 18 the text is in Aramaic.*  
<sup>y</sup> *Or Osnappar.*  
<sup>z</sup> *have surveyed: prob. rdg.; Aram. are surveying.*  
<sup>a</sup> *in the end: or certainly.*

the non-Jewish origin of the Samaritans. 6: *Ahasuerus*: Xerxes I (485–465). The verse, not part of vv. 7–23, seems out of place, but where it may belong is uncertain. 7–23: The section appears to be misplaced, but it is no longer possible to determine its proper location. 7: *Mithredath*: not to be confused with the man mentioned in 1.8. *With the agreement of*: Heb. *bishlam*, regarded by some as a proper name of a man to be associated with Mithredath and Tabeel. *Written . . . and read aloud in Aramaic*: probably the meaning is that the letter was both in the Aramaic language and also written in the Aramaic script (rather than in another alphabet). 9: The terms *judges, commissioners, overseers, and chief officers* translate words of uncertain meaning; they may be names of local peoples (such as *Erech and Babylon*) rather than official titles. 10: *Asnappar*: probably Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.). 11–22: The complaint (vv. 11–16) and the royal reply (vv. 17–22). 23: The cessation of building.

To Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the secretary, and all your colleagues resident in Samaria and in the rest of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, greeting. The letter which you sent to me has now been read clearly in my presence. I have given orders and search has been made, and it has been found that the city in question has a long history of revolt against the monarchy, and that rebellion and sedition have been rife in it. Powerful kings have ruled in Jerusalem, exercising authority over the whole province of Beyond-Euphrates, and general levy, poll-tax, and land-tax have been paid to them. Therefore, issue orders that these men must desist. This city is not to be rebuilt until a decree to that effect is issued by me. See that you do not neglect your duty in this matter, lest more damage and harm be done to the monarchy.

When the text of the letter from King Artaxerxes was read before Rehum the high commissioner, Shimshai the secretary, and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem and forcibly compelled the Jews to stop work. From then onwards the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped; and it remained at a standstill till the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

But the prophets Haggai<sup>b</sup> and Zechariah grandson of Iddo upbraided the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem, prophesying in the name of the God of Israel. Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak at once began to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them and supported them. Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues promptly came to them and said, 'Who issued a decree permitting you to rebuild this house and complete

its furnishings?' They also asked them for the names of the men engaged in the building. But the elders of the Jews were under God's watchful eye, and they were not prevented from continuing the work, until such time as a report should reach Darius and a royal letter should be received in answer.

Here follows the text of the letter sent by Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and his colleagues, the inspectors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, to King Darius. This is the written report that they sent:

To King Darius, all greetings. Be it known to Your Majesty that we went to the province of Judah and found the house of the great God being rebuilt by the Jewish elders,<sup>c</sup> with massive stones and timbers laid in the walls. The work was being done thoroughly and was making good progress under their direction. We asked these elders who had issued a decree for the rebuilding of this house and the completion of the furnishings. We also asked them for their names, so that we might make a list of the leaders for your information. This was their reply: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house originally built many years ago; a great king of Israel built it and completed it. But because our forefathers provoked the anger of the God of heaven, he put them into the power of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldaean, king of Babylon, who pulled down this house and carried the people captive to Babylon. However, Cyrus king of Babylon in the first year of his reign issued a decree that this house of God should be rebuilt. Moreover, there were gold and silver vessels of the house of God,

<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 *Esdras* 6, 1; *Aram. adds* the prophet.  
<sup>c</sup> by . . . elders: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 *Esdras* 6, 8; *Aram. om.*

4.24-5.17: The resumption of rebuilding. 24: See 4.1-6.22 n. 5.1: *Haggai and Zechariah*: prophets whose books are preserved in Scripture. 8-17: The report to the king seeks to ascertain whether proper channels have been consulted and proper authorization obtained. We are in the realm of bureaucracy, not hostility. 11: *Great king*: Solomon. 12-14: The conduct of the Chaldeans, who had destroyed the Temple, and the Persian Achaemenids, who allowed its rebuilding, is skillfully contrasted.

which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and put in the temple in Babylon; and these King Cyrus took out of the temple in Babylon. He gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar whom he had appointed governor, and said to him, "Take these vessels; go and restore them to the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God there be rebuilt on its original site." Then this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from that time until now the rebuilding has continued, but it is not yet finished.<sup>f</sup> Now, therefore, if it please Your Majesty, let search be made in the royal archives in Babylon, to discover whether a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his wishes in the matter.

6 Then King Darius issued an order, and search was made in the archives where the treasures were deposited in Babylon. But it was in Ecbatana, in the royal residence in the province of Media, that a scroll was found, on which was written the following memorandum:

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued this decree concerning the house of God in Jerusalem: Let the house be rebuilt as a place where sacrifices are offered and fire-offerings brought. Its height shall be sixty cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, with three courses of massive stones and one<sup>d</sup> course of timber, the cost to be defrayed from the royal treasury. Also the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, shall be restored; they shall all be taken back to the temple in Jerusalem, and restored each to its place in the house of God.

6 Then King Darius issued this order:<sup>e</sup>

Now, Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and your colleagues, the inspectors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, you are to keep away from the place, and to leave the governor of the Jews and their elders free to rebuild this house of God; let them rebuild it on its original site. I also issue an order prescribing what you are to do for these elders of the Jews, so that the said house of God may be rebuilt. Their expenses are to be defrayed in full from the royal funds accruing from the taxes of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, so that the work may not be brought to a standstill. And let them have daily without fail whatever they want, young bulls, rams, or lambs as whole-offerings for the God of heaven, or wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem demand, so that they may offer soothing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. Furthermore, I decree that, if any man tampers with this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of his house and he shall be fastened erect to it and flogged; and, in addition, his house shall be forfeit.<sup>f</sup> And may the God who made that place a dwelling for his Name overthrow any king or people that shall presume to tamper with this edict or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I Darius have issued a decree; it is to be carried out to the letter.

Then Tattenai, governor of the province of Beyond-Euphrates, Shethar-bozenai, and their colleagues carried out to the letter the instructions which King Darius had sent them, and the elders of the Jews went on with the rebuilding. As a result of the prophecies

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 6. 25; Aram. a new.*

<sup>e</sup> Then . . . order: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 6. 27; Aram. om.*

<sup>f</sup> Or made into a dunghill (*mng. of Aram. word uncertain*).

6.1–22: Completion of the Temple and celebration of Passover. 2: *Ecbatana*, modern Hamadan, was the summer residence of the Persian kings. 4: *Stones . . . timber*: such construction was usual. 7: *Governor*: possibly Zerubbabel (see Hag.2.21). 14: Artaxerxes (see Tfn. *g*) is mentioned in error, for he ruled after Darius I, and hence subsequent to the completion of

*Ezra's mission to Jerusalem*

of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah grandson of Iddo they had good success and finished the rebuilding as commanded by the God of Israel and according to the decrees of Cyrus and Darius;<sup>g</sup> and the house was completed on the twenty-third<sup>h</sup> day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of King Darius.

Then the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites and all the other exiles who had returned, celebrated the dedication of the house of God with great rejoicing. For its dedication they offered one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, and as a sin-offering for all Israel twelve he-goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they re-established the priests in their groups and the Levites in their divisions for the service of God in Jerusalem, as prescribed in the book of Moses.

On the fourteenth day of the first month the exiles who had returned kept the Passover. The priests and the Levites, one and all, had purified themselves; all of them were ritually clean, and they killed the passover lamb for all the exiles who had returned, for their fellow-priests and for themselves. It was eaten by the Israelites who had come back from exile and by all who had separated themselves from the peoples of the land and their uncleanness and sought the LORD the God of Israel. And they kept the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with rejoicing; for the LORD had given them cause for joy by changing the disposition of the king of Assyria towards them, so that he encouraged them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

NOW AFTER THESE EVENTS, IN THE REIGN 7 of Artaxerxes king of Persia, there came up from Babylon one Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, 2 son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son<sup>i</sup> of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of 3 Azariah, son of Meraioth, son of 4 Zerariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son 5 of Eleazar, son of Aaron the chief priest. He was a scribe<sup>j</sup> learned in the 6 law of Moses which the LORD the God of Israel had given them; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was upon him. In the seventh year of King 7 Artaxerxes, other Israelites, priests, Levites, singers, door-keepers, and temple-servitors went up with him to Jerusalem; and they reached Jerusalem 8 in the fifth month, in the seventh year of the king. On the first day of the first 9 month Ezra fixed the day for departure from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he arrived at Jerusalem, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had devoted him- 10 self to the study and observance of the law of the LORD and to teaching statute and ordinance in Israel.

This is a copy of the royal letter 11 which King Artaxerxes had given to Ezra the priest and scribe, a scribe versed in questions concerning the commandments and the statutes of the LORD laid upon Israel:

Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra 12<sup>k</sup>

*g* Prob. rdg.: *Aram. adds* and Artaxerxes king of Persia.  
*h* Prob. rdg., cp. 1 *Esdra*s 7: 5; *Aram.* third.  
*i* Or grandson. *j* Or doctor of the law.  
*k* The text of verses 12-26 is in Aramaic.

the Temple. 15: The date (see Tfn. *h*) corresponds to late March, 516 B.C. 16-18: Compare 1 Kgs. ch. 8. 18: No provision exists in the Pentateuch for the priests in their groups and Levites in their divisions. 19: *First month*: Nisan, corresponding to March-April. Passover (the fourteenth of Nisan) falls three weeks after the twenty-third of Adar mentioned in v. 15. 22: The end of "The Book of Zerubbabel"; see Introduction. *King of Assyria* is anachronistic, for Assyria had fallen in 612 B.C., about a hundred years earlier; but the phrase may simply mean a distant emperor ruling over what had been Assyria.

7.1-10.16: *Ezra's mission to Jerusalem*. "The Memoir of Ezra" seems extracted from the personal diaries of Ezra himself; see Introduction. The entire biblical book received its name from these chapters. It is likely that this section belongs chronologically after Neh. chs. 1-7; the "Memoir" continues (still in the first person) in Neh. chs. 8-10. 1: *Artaxerxes*: see Introduction. 6: *Scribe*: see Tfn. *j*. It means teacher, rather than copyist. 9: *The first month* was Nisan (March-April); *the fifth month* was Ab (July-August).

7.11-26: *Artaxerxes' letter*. Scholars disagree as to the precise nature and extent of Ezra's authority here granted, whether it was restricted to religious matters pertaining only to the

the priest and scribe learned in the law of the God of heaven:

13 This is my decision. I hereby issue a decree that any of the people of Israel or of its priests or Levites in my kingdom who volunteer to go to  
14 Jerusalem may go with you. You are sent by the king and his seven counsellors to find out how things stand in Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the law of your God with which  
15 you are entrusted. You are also to convey the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, together  
16 with any silver and gold that you may find throughout the province of Babylon, and the voluntary offerings of the people and of the priests which they freely offer for the house of their  
17 God in Jerusalem. In pursuance of this decree you shall use the money solely for the purchase of bulls, rams, and lambs, and the proper grain-offerings and drink-offerings, to be offered on the altar in the house of  
18 your God in Jerusalem. Further, should any silver and gold be left over, you and your colleagues may use it at your discretion according to the will of your God. The vessels  
19 which have been given you for the service of the house of your God you shall hand over to the God of Jerusalem; and if anything else should be required for the house of your God, which it may fall to you to provide, you may provide it out of the king's treasury.

21 And I, King Artaxerxes, issue an order to all treasurers in the province of Beyond-Euphrates that whatever is demanded of you by Ezra the priest, a scribe learned in the law of the God of heaven, is to be supplied exactly, up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred kor of wheat, a hundred bath of wine, a hundred bath of oil, and salt without reckoning. Whatever is demanded by the  
23 God of heaven, let it be diligently

carried out for the house of the God of heaven; otherwise wrath may fall upon the realm of the king and his sons. We also make known to you  
24 that you have no authority to impose general levy, poll-tax, or land-tax on any of the priests, Levites, musicians, door-keepers, temple-servitors, or other servants of this house of God.

And you, Ezra, in accordance with  
25 the wisdom of your God with which you are entrusted, are to appoint arbitrators and judges to judge all your people in the province of Beyond-Euphrates, all who acknowledge the laws of your God,<sup>l</sup> and you and they are to instruct those who do not acknowledge them. Whoever will not obey the law of  
26 your God and the law of the king, let judgement be rigorously executed upon him, be it death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.

Then Ezra said,<sup>m</sup> 'Blessed be the  
27 LORD the God of our fathers who has prompted the king thus to add glory to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and has made the king and his  
28 counsellors and all his high officers well disposed towards me!'

So, knowing that the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, I took courage and assembled leading men out of Israel to go up with me.

These are the heads of families, as  
8 registered, family by family, of those who went up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes: of the  
2 family of Phinehas, Gershom; of the family of Ithamar, Daniel; of the family of David, Hattush son of<sup>n</sup>  
3 Shecaniah; of the family of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him a hundred and fifty males in the register; of the  
4 family of Pahath-moab, Elihoenai son

<sup>l</sup> to judge . . . your God: or all of them versed in the laws of your God, to judge all the people in the province of Beyond-Euphrates.

<sup>m</sup> Then Ezra said: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 Esdras 8. 25; *Heb. om.*  
<sup>n</sup> son of: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* of the family of.

returnees, or whether it included broad political powers over the entire province. 24: The tax exemption of Temple functionaries. 25: *Laws of your God* hearkens back to vv. 6 and 14.

7.27-28: Ezra's thanksgiving prayer.

8.1-14: A list of returnees is given here, just as one is also given in ch. 2 for earlier returnees.

of Zerariah, and with him two hundred  
 5 males; of the family of Zattu,<sup>o</sup> Sheca-  
 niah son of Jahaziel, and with him  
 6 three hundred males; of the family of  
 Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with  
 7 him fifty males; of the family of Elam,  
 Isaiah son of Athaliah, and with him  
 8 seventy males; of the family of She-  
 phatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and  
 9 with him eighty males; of the family of  
 Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and  
 with him two hundred and eighteen  
 10 males; of the family of Bani,<sup>p</sup> Shelo-  
 mith son of Josiphiah, and with him a  
 11 hundred and sixty males; of the family  
 of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and  
 12 with him twenty-eight males; of the  
 family of Azgad, Johanan son of  
 Hakkatan, and with him a hundred  
 13 and ten males. The last were the family  
 of Adonikam, and these were their  
 names: Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah,  
 14 and with them sixty males; and the  
 family of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud,  
 and with them seventy males.  
 15 I assembled them by the river which  
 flows toward Ahava; and we encamped  
 there three days. When I reviewed the  
 people and the priests, I found no  
 16 Levite there. So I sent Eliezer, Ariel,  
 Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan,  
 Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam,  
 prominent men, and Joiarib and  
 17 Elnathan, men of discretion, with  
 instructions to go to Iddo, the chief  
 man of the settlement at Casiphia; and  
 I gave them a message for him and his  
 kinsmen, the temple-servitors there,  
 asking for servitors for the house of  
 18 our God to be sent to us. And, because  
 the gracious hand of our God was  
 upon us, they let us have Sherebiah, a  
 man of discretion, of the family of  
 Mahli son of Levi, son of Israel,  
 together with his sons and kinsmen,  
 19 eighteen men; also Hashabiah, together  
 with Isaiah of the family of Merari, his  
 kinsmen and their sons, twenty men;

besides two hundred and twenty 20  
 temple-servitors (this was an order  
 instituted by David and his officers to  
 assist the Levites). These were all indi-  
 cated by name.

Then I proclaimed a fast there by the 21  
 river Ahava, so that we might mortify  
 ourselves before our God and ask from  
 him a safe journey for ourselves, our  
 dependants, and all our possessions.  
 For I was ashamed to ask the king for 22  
 an escort of soldiers and horsemen to  
 help us against enemies on the way,  
 because we had said to the king, 'The  
 hand of our God is upon all who seek  
 him, working their good; but his fierce  
 anger is on all who forsake him.' So 23  
 we fasted and asked our God for a safe  
 journey, and he answered our prayer.

Then I separated twelve of the chiefs 24  
 of the priests, together with<sup>q</sup> Sherebiah  
 and Hashabiah and ten of their kins-  
 men, and handed over to them the silver 25  
 and gold and the vessels which had  
 been set aside by the king, his counsellors  
 and his officers and all the  
 Israelites who were present, as their  
 contribution to the house of our God.  
 I handed over to them six hundred and 26  
 fifty talents of silver, a hundred silver  
 vessels weighing two talents, a hundred  
 talents of gold, twenty golden bowls 27  
 worth a thousand drachmas, and two  
 vessels of a fine red copper,<sup>r</sup> precious  
 as gold. And I said to the men, 'You 28  
 are dedicated to the LORD, and the  
 vessels too are sacred, the silver and  
 gold are a voluntary offering to the  
 LORD the God of your fathers. Watch 29  
 over them and guard them, until you  
 hand them over in the presence of the  
 chiefs of the priests and the Levites and  
 the heads of families of Israel in Jeru-  
 salem, in the rooms of the house of  
 the LORD.'

<sup>o</sup> of Zattu: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 Esdras 8. 32; *Heb. om.*

<sup>p</sup> of Bani: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 Esdras 8. 36; *Heb. om.*

<sup>q</sup> together with: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 1 Esdras 8. 54; *Heb. om.*

<sup>r</sup> red copper: or orichalc.

8.15-20: **Recruitment of Levites.** The locations of the canal/river and Ahava cannot be ascertained. 15: *No Levite*: in the list of earlier returnees the Levites (2.40) appear to have been few. 16: There may be an erroneous duplication of the same names; Elnathan surprisingly occurs three times. 17: *Casiphia*: its location is unknown.

8.21-36: **The preparation for leaving** (vv. 21-30); the journey (31-32); the arrival in Jerusalem (33-36). 21-23: The *fast* and prayer were usual devotional preparations for a new venture. 22: *Ashamed to ask*: Ezra, a priest, believed that God would protect his people, without need of soldiers; Nehemiah, designated the governor (Neh.12.26), went to Jerusalem with an escort of army officers with cavalry (Neh.2.9). 26-27: The amounts here are regarded as exaggerated.

30 So the priests and Levites received the consignment of silver and gold and vessels, to be taken to the house of our  
 31 God in Jerusalem; and on the twelfth day of the first month we left the river Ahava bound for Jerusalem. The hand of our God was upon us, and he saved us from enemy attack and from  
 32 ambush on the way. When we arrived at Jerusalem, we rested for three days.  
 33 And on the fourth day the silver and gold and the vessels were deposited in the house of our God in the charge of Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, who had with him Eleazar son of Phinehas, and they had with them the Levites Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui. Everything  
 34 was checked as it was handed over, and at the same time a written record was made of the whole consignment.  
 35 Then those who had come home from captivity, the exiles who had returned, offered as whole-offerings to the God of Israel twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams and seventy-two<sup>5</sup> lambs, with twelve he-goats as a sin-offering; all these were offered as a whole-offering  
 36 to the LORD. They also delivered the king's commission to the royal satraps and governors in the province of Beyond-Euphrates; and these gave support to the people and the house of God.

9 When all this had been done, some of the leaders approached me and said, 'The people of Israel, including priests and Levites, have not kept themselves apart from the foreign population and from the abominable practices of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the  
 2 Amorites. They have taken women of these nations as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy race has become mixed with the foreign population; and the leaders and magistrates have been the chief offenders.'

When I heard this news, I rent my robe and mantle, and tore my hair and my beard, and I sat dumbfounded; and all  
 4 who went in fear of the words of the God of Israel rallied to me because of the offence of these exiles. I sat there dumbfounded till the evening sacrifice.

Then, at the evening sacrifice, I rose  
 5 from my humiliation and, in my rent robe and mantle, I knelt down and spread out my hands to the LORD my God and said, 'O my God, I am  
 6 humiliated, I am ashamed to lift my face to thee, my God; for we are sunk in our iniquities, and our guilt is so great that it reaches high heaven. From  
 7 the days of our fathers down to this present day our guilt has been great. For our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been subject to death, captivity, pillage, and shameful humiliation at the hands of foreign kings, and such is our present plight. But now, for a brief  
 8 moment, the LORD our God has been gracious to us, leaving us some survivors and giving us a foothold in his holy place. He has brought light to our eyes again and given us some chance to renew our lives in our slavery. For slaves we are; nevertheless, our  
 9 God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has made the kings of Persia so well disposed towards us as to give us the means of renewal, so that we may repair the house of our God and rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall of defence in<sup>6</sup> Judah and Jerusalem. Now, O our God, what are we to say  
 10 after this? For we have neglected the commands which thou gavest through  
 11 thy servants the prophets, when thou saidst, "The land which you are entering and will possess is a polluted land, polluted by the foreign population with their abominable practices, which have made it unclean from end to end. Therefore, do not give your daughters  
 12

<sup>5</sup> Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 8. 65; Heb. seventy-seven.

<sup>6</sup> Or thereby giving us a wall of defence for . . .

31-32: See 7.9; the journey took four months. 36: *The king's commission* presumably spelled out to the local rulers the precise extent of Ezra's authority.

9.1-15: *Mixed marriages*. 2: *Holy race*: see v. 11-12.

9.10-15: *Ezra's prayer for forgiveness*. 11-12: *When thou saidst*: an exact quotation from Scripture is expected, but does not appear, as is the case too in Neh. 1.8-9; only an echo of general ideas (e.g. Lev. 18.24-30 or Deut. 7.1-3) is given. 11: The Heb. word for *polluted* is used in Lev. ch. 15 (and elsewhere) for sexual impurity, a result of the *abominable practices* indulged in by the natives.



in marriage to their sons, and do not marry your sons to their daughters, and never seek their welfare or prosperity. Thus you will be strong and enjoy the good things of the land, and pass it on to your children as an everlasting possession." Now, after all that we have suffered for our evil deeds and for our great guilt—although thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved and hast allowed us to survive as now we do—shall we again disobey thy commands and join in marriage with peoples who indulge in such abominable practices? Would not thy anger against us be unrelenting, until no remnant, no survivor was left? O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous; now as before, we are only a remnant that has survived. Look upon us, guilty as we are in thy sight; for because of our guilt none of us can stand in thy presence.'

10 While Ezra was praying and making confession, prostrate in tears before the house of God, a very great crowd of Israelites assembled round him, men, women, and children, and they all wept bitterly. Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the family of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, 'We have committed an offence against our God in marrying foreign wives, daughters of the foreign population. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. Now, therefore, let us pledge ourselves to our God to dismiss all these women and their brood, according to your advice, my lord, and the advice of those who go in fear of the command of our God; and let us act as the law prescribes. Up now, the task is yours, and we will support you. Take courage and act.'

5 Ezra stood up and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all the Israelites swear to do as had been said; and they took the oath. Then Ezra left his place in front of the house of God and went to the room of Jehohanan

grandson of Eliashib and lodged<sup>u</sup> there; he neither ate bread nor drank water, for he was mourning for the offence committed by the exiles who had returned. Next, there was issued throughout Judah and Jerusalem a proclamation that all the exiles should assemble in Jerusalem, and that if anyone did not arrive within three days, it should be within the discretion of the chief officers and the elders to confiscate all his property and to exclude him from the community of the exiles. So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within the three days; and on the twentieth day of the ninth month the people all sat in the forecourt of the house of God, trembling with apprehension and shivering in the heavy rain. Ezra the priest stood up and said, 'You have committed an offence in marrying foreign wives and have added to Israel's guilt. Make your confession now to the LORD the God of your fathers and do his will, and separate yourselves from the foreign population and from your foreign wives.' Then all the assembled people shouted in reply, 'Yes; we must do what you say. But there is a great crowd of us here, and it is the rainy season; we cannot go on standing out here in the open. Besides, this business will not be finished in one day or even two, because we have committed so grave an offence in this matter. Let our leading men act for the whole assembly, and let all in our cities who have married foreign women present themselves at appointed times, each man with the elders and judges of his own city, until God's anger against us on this account is averted.' Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah, supported by Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, opposed this. So the exiles acted as agreed, and

<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 9. 2; Heb. went.*

10.1–44: The divorce of Gentile wives. The drastic step was deemed necessary to preserve the Hebrew faith unadulterated (compare also 1 Kgs. 11.1–14). 3: *The law prescribes*: see Deut. 7.3. 6: The Heb. *ben* can mean grandson as well as son. Despite some uncertainties, it would seem from Neh. 13.28 that Jehohanan was the grandson of Eliashib and son of Jehoiaada. In Neh. 3.1, Eliashib is identified as contemporaneous with Nehemiah. Here the grandson is contemporaneous with Ezra. 9: *The ninth month* was Kislev (November–December), a rainy period. 15: These opponents (*Jonathan, Jahzeiah, Meshullam, Shabbethai*) are not otherwise identified.

- Ezra the priest selected<sup>v</sup> certain men, heads of households representing their families, all of them designated by name. They began their formal inquiry into the matter on the first day of the
- 17 tenth month, and by the first day of the first month they had finished their inquiry into all the marriages with foreign women.
- 18 Among the members of priestly families who had married foreign women were found Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah of the family of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers.
- 19 They pledged themselves to dismiss their wives, and they brought a ram from the flock as a guilt-offering for their sins. Of the family of Immer:
- 20 Hanani and Zebadiah. Of the family of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel and Uziah. Of the family of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad and Elasa.
- 23 Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (that is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah and Eliezer. Of the singers: Eliashib. Of the door-keepers: Shallum, Telem and Uri.
- 25 And of Israel: of the family of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchiah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchiah and Benaiah. Of the family of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi,
- 27 Jeremoth and Elijah. Of the family of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad and Aziza. Of the 28 family of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai and Athlai. Of the family of 29 Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal and Jeremoth. Of the 30 family of Pahath-moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui and Manasseh. Of the 31 family of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Simeon, Benjamin, Malluch and Shemariah. Of the 32 family of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh and Shimei. Of the family of Bani: 34 Maadai, Amram and Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah and Keluhi, Vaniah, Mere-moth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai 37 and Jaasau. Of the family of<sup>w</sup> Binnui: Shimei, Shelemiah, Nathan and 39 Adaiah, Maknadebai, Shashai and Sharai, Azareel, Shelemiah and Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah and Joseph. 42 Of the family of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel and Benaiah. All these had married foreign 44 women, and they dismissed them, together with their children.<sup>x</sup>

<sup>v</sup> and Ezra the priest selected: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 9.16; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>w</sup> Of the family of: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 9.34; Heb. and Bani and.*

<sup>x</sup> and they . . . children: *prob. rdg., cp. 1 Esdras 9.36; Heb. and some of them were women; and they had borne sons.*

16: *Tenth month*: Tebeth (December–January). 17: *The first month* was Nisan (March–April). 18–43: The list numbers over one hundred offenders, a fraction of the total populace. Perhaps only the names of the prominent persons are given, but others too were implicated. 19: *A guilt-offering* is not specifically prescribed in Scripture for marriage to a non-Israelite spouse; it could have been an ad hoc decision by the leaders of v. 16. 44: *Children*: see Tfn. x.

# THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are part of the same writing; the Introduction to Ezra treats literary and chronological problems of Nehemiah too.

The events described in the Book of Nehemiah (except chs. 8–9) took place during the reign of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I (464–424 B.C.). Nehemiah, who lived in Susa, the Persian capital, made two visits to Jerusalem. The first was in 445/444 B.C. (1.1; 2.1), and lasted for twelve years (until 433/432); see 5.14. The second visit was some time after this, but before the death of Artaxerxes I (13.6–7).

The material here, like that in Ezra, consists of several distinct genres. Nehemiah's memoirs provide personal reflections on the events of the day, a number of prayers, and accounts of his determination to ameliorate the position of the downtrodden Judeans. In addition, there are census lists, a psalm of confession and repentance, and a record of rededication to the service of God.

## *Nehemiah's commission*

### 1 THE NARRATIVE OF NEHEMIAH SON OF HACHALIAH.

2 In the month Kislev in the twentieth year, when I was in Susa the capital city, it happened that one of my brothers, Hanani, arrived with some others from Judah; and I asked them about Jerusalem and about the Jews, the families still remaining of those who survived the captivity. They told me that those still remaining in the province who had survived the captivity were facing great trouble and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and the gates had been destroyed by fire. When I heard this news, I sat down and wept; I mourned for some days, fasting and praying to the God of heaven. This was my prayer: 'O LORD God of heaven, O great and terrible God who faithfully keepest covenant with those who love thee and observe thy commandments,

let thy ear be attentive and thine eyes open, to hear my humble prayer which I make to thee day and night on behalf of thy servants the sons of Israel. I confess the sins which we Israelites have all committed against thee, and of which I and my father's house are also guilty. We have wronged thee and have not observed the commandments, statutes, and rules which thou didst enjoin upon thy servant Moses. Remember what thou didst impress upon him in these words: "If you are unfaithful, I will disperse you among the nations; but if you return to me and observe my commandments and fulfil them, I will gather your children who have been scattered to the ends of the earth and will bring them home to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name." They are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy great might and thy strong hand. O Lord, let thy ear be attentive to my humble prayer, and to

1.1–2.10: *Nehemiah's commission*: Susa was the winter residence of the Persian kings after 521 B.C. Nehemiah, the royal cupbearer (2.1 here, but 1.11 in the MT), was an influential court figure. 1: *Kislev*: (November–December) *the twentieth year* alludes to the reign of Artaxerxes I (mentioned in 2.1) and would be 445/444 B.C. Nisan (March–April), is described as still "in the twentieth year" in 2.1, where we would expect the twenty-first, for the Babylonian year ran from spring to spring. But possibly the years here are reckoned from Tishri (September–October) and are regnal years, differing from ordinary calendar years. 2: While *brothers* can mean friends or colleagues, 7.2 suggests that Hanani was a real brother. *The families still remaining* had continued in Jerusalem when substantial parts of the population went into exile after 587 B.C. 3: *Broken down . . . destroyed*: this seems to allude to an obscure disaster after the time of Cyrus (538–529 B.C.); Nehemiah has had no prior knowledge of it. 5–11: The structure of Nehemiah's prayer is praise, supplication, confession, supplication. 8–9: An exact quotation from the Pentateuch is expected but does not appear; perhaps Deut.30.1–5 is being echoed. 11: *Let thy ear be attentive* is not a needless repetition of the same phrase in v. 6, but, rather, climaxes Nehemiah's prayer. *This man's heart* refers to Artaxerxes I. See 2.1.

bourhood of Jerusalem did the repairs.  
 23 Next Benjamin and Hasshub did the repairs opposite their own house; and next Azariah son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, did the repairs beside his house.  
 24 After him Binnui son of Henadad repaired a second section, from the house of Azariah as far as the escarpment and the corner. Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the escarpment and the upper tower which projects from the king's house and belongs to the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh<sup>f</sup> worked as far as a point on the east opposite the Water Gate and the projecting tower. Next the men of Tekoa repaired a second section, from a point opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel.

28 Above the Horse Gate the priests did the repairs opposite their own houses. After them Zadok son of Immer did the repairs opposite his own house; after him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, did the repairs. After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun, sixth son of Zalaph, repaired a second section. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah did the repairs opposite his room.  
 31 After him Malchiah, a goldsmith, did the repairs as far as the house of the temple-servitors and the merchants, opposite the Mustering Gate, as far as the roof-chamber at the corner. Between the roof-chamber at the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants did the repairs.

4 WHEN SANBALLAT HEARD THAT WE were rebuilding the wall, he was very indignant; in his anger he jeered at the Jews and said in front of his companions and of the garrison in Samaria, 'What do these feeble Jews think they are doing? Do they mean to reconstruct the place? Do they hope to offer sacrifice and finish the work in a day? Can they make stones again out of heaps of rubble, and burnt at that?' Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside him, said, 'Whatever it is they are building,

if a fox climbs up their stone walls, it will break them down.'

Hear us, our God, for they treat us with contempt. Turn back their reproach upon their own heads and let them become objects of contempt in a land of captivity. Do not condone their guilt or let their sin be struck off the record, for they have openly provoked the builders.

We built up the wall until it was continuous all round up to half its height; and the people worked with a will. But when Sanballat and Tobiah, the Arabs and Ammonites and Ashdodites, heard that the new work on the walls of Jerusalem had made progress and that the filling of the breaches had begun, they were very angry; and they all banded together to come and attack Jerusalem and to create confusion. So we prayed to our God, and posted a guard day and night against them.

But the men of Judah said, 'The labourers' strength has failed, and there is too much rubble; we shall never be able to rebuild the wall by ourselves.' And our adversaries said, 'Before they know it or see anything, we shall be upon them and kill them, and so put an end to the work.' When the Jews who lived among them came in to the city, they warned us many times that they would gather from every place where they lived to attack us, and that they would station themselves on the lowest levels below the wall, on patches of open ground. Accordingly I posted my people by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows. Then I surveyed the position and at once addressed the nobles, the magistrates, and all the people. 'Do not be afraid of them', I said. 'Remember the Lord, great and terrible, and fight for your brothers, your sons and daughters, your wives and your homes.' Our enemies heard that everything was known to us, and that God

<sup>f</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and the temple-servitors lodged on Ophel (cp. 11. 21).

4.1-23: The attempts to impede. 4-5: The narrative is interrupted by a curse pronounced against the enemies. 10-15: Even some Jews join against the builders. 16-23: The protection

had frustrated their plans; and we all returned to our work on the wall.

16 From that day forward half the men under me were engaged in the actual building, while the other half stood by holding their spears, shields, and bows, and wearing coats of mail; and officers supervised all the people of Judah  
17 who were engaged on the wall. The porters carrying the loads had one hand on the load and a weapon in the  
18 other. The builders had their swords attached to their belts as they built;  
19 the trumpeter was beside me. I addressed the nobles, the magistrates, and all the people: 'The work is great and covers much ground', I said. 'We are isolated on the wall, each man at some distance from his neighbour.  
20 Wherever the trumpet sounds, rally to us there, and our God will fight for us.' So we continued with the work, half the men holding the spears, from  
22 daybreak until the stars came out. At the same time I had said to the people, 'Let every man and his servant pass the night in Jerusalem, to act as a guard for us by night and a working  
23 party by day.' So neither I nor my kinsmen nor the men under me nor my bodyguard ever took off our clothes, each keeping his right hand on<sup>g</sup> his weapon.

5 THERE CAME A TIME WHEN THE COMMON people, both men and women, raised a great outcry against their fellow-Jews.  
2 Some complained that they were giving their sons and daughters as pledges<sup>h</sup> for food to keep themselves alive;  
3 others that they were mortgaging their fields, vineyards, and houses to buy  
4 corn in the famine; others again that they were borrowing money on their fields and vineyards to pay the king's  
5 tax. 'But', they said, 'our bodily needs are the same as other people's, our children are as good as theirs; yet here we are, forcing our sons and daughters

to become slaves. Some of our daughters are already enslaved, and there is nothing we can do, because our fields and vineyards now belong to others.' I  
6 was very angry when I heard their outcry and the story they told. I mastered my  
7 feelings and reasoned with the nobles and the magistrates. I said to them, 'You are holding your fellow-Jews as pledges for debt.' I rebuked them  
8 severely and said, 'As far as we have been able, we have bought back our fellow-Jews who had been sold to other nations; but you are now selling your own fellow-countrymen, and they will have to be bought back by us!' They were silent and had not a word to say.  
9 I went on, 'What you are doing is wrong. You ought to live so much in the fear of God that you are above reproach in the eyes of the nations who are our enemies. Speaking for  
10 myself, I and my kinsmen and the men under me are advancing them money and corn. Let us give up this taking  
11 of persons as pledges for debt. Give back today to your debtors their fields and vineyards, their olive-groves and  
12 houses, as well as the income<sup>i</sup> in money, and in corn, new wine, and oil.' 'We will give them back', they promised, 'and exact nothing more. We will do what you say.' So, summoning the priests, I put the offenders on oath  
13 to do as they had promised. Then I shook out the fold of my robe and said, 'So may God shake out from his house and from his property every man who does not fulfil this promise. May he be shaken out like this and emptied!'  
14 And all the assembled people said 'Amen' and praised the LORD. And they did as they had promised.

Moreover, from the time when I was appointed governor in the land of

<sup>g</sup> keeping his right hand on: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>h</sup> that they . . . as pledges: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* that they, their sons and daughters were many.  
<sup>i</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* hundredth.

of the workers. 18: *The trumpeter was beside me*: presumably others were also stationed around the wall to give the alarm from any quarter.

5.1-13: **The plight of the poor.** The chapter seems out of place and not directly connected with the building of the wall, which it interrupts. 1-5: The exploitation of the poor by the rich. 6-13: Nehemiah's response. 7-10: The charging of interest is prohibited in Deut.23.20. 13: *Shook out*: a symbolic gesture meant to reinforce the oath of the offenders.

5.14-19: **Nehemiah defends his governorship.** The section emphasizes his concern not to harass the poor through personal demands. The occasion for the apology is not known.

Judah, from the twentieth to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, a period of twelve years, neither I nor my kinsmen drew the governor's allowance of food. Former governors had laid a heavy burden on the people, exacting from them a daily toll<sup>j</sup> of bread and wine to the value of forty shekels of silver. Further, the men under them had tyrannized over the people; but, for fear of God, I did not behave like this. I also put all my energy into the work on this wall, and I acquired no land; and all my men were gathered there for the work. Also I had as guests at my table a hundred and fifty Jews, including the magistrates, as well as men who came to us from the surrounding nations. The provision which had to be made each day was an ox and six prime sheep; fowls also were prepared for me, and every ten days skins of wine in abundance. Yet, in spite of all this, I did not draw the governor's allowance, because the people were so heavily burdened. Remember for my good, O God, all that I have done for this people.

6 When the news came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies, that I had rebuilt the wall and that not a single breach remained in it, although I had not yet set up the doors in the gates, Sanballat and Geshem sent me an invitation to come and confer with them at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono; this was a ruse on their part to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them with this reply: 'I have important work on my hands at the moment; I cannot come down. Why should the work be brought to a standstill while I leave it and come down to you?' They sent me a similar invitation four times, and each time I gave them the same answer. On a fifth occasion Sanballat made a similar approach, but this time his messenger

came with an open letter. It ran as follows: 'It is reported among the nations—and Gashmu<sup>k</sup> confirms it—that you and the Jews are plotting rebellion, and it is for this reason that you are rebuilding the wall, and—so the report goes—that you yourself want to be king. You are also said to have put up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem that Judah has a king, meaning yourself. The king will certainly hear of this. So come at once and let us talk the matter over.' Here is the reply I sent: 'No such thing as you allege has taken place; you have made up the whole story.' They were all trying to intimidate us, in the hope that we should then relax our efforts and that the work would never be finished. So I applied myself to it with greater energy.

One day I went to the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, for he was confined to his house. He said, 'Let us meet in the house of God, within the sanctuary, and let us shut the doors, for they are coming to kill you—they are coming to kill you by night.' But I said, 'Should a man like me run away? And can a man like me go into the sanctuary and survive?<sup>l</sup> I will not go in.' Then it dawned on me: God had not sent him. His prophecy aimed at harming me, and Tobiah and Sanballat had bribed him to utter it. He had been bribed to frighten me into compliance and into committing sin; then they could give me a bad name and discredit me. Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O God, for what they have done, and also the prophetess Noadiah and all the other prophets who have tried to intimidate me.

On the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul the wall was finished; it had taken fifty-two days. When our enemies heard of it, and all the surrounding

<sup>j</sup> a daily toll: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>k</sup> Geshem in 2. 19 and 6. 1, 2.

<sup>l</sup> and survive: or to save his life.

6.1–19: The plots of the enemy. 2: *Hakkephirim* is an unknown village; *the plain of Ono* is located near the seacoast, some distance from Jerusalem. 5–9: Accusation of rebellion. 5: The *open letter*, if recorded on a clay tablet, had no clay envelope; if on papyrus or parchment, it was not folded or sealed. In either case, the senders obviously intended no secrecy. Compare Jer.32.14. 10–14: *Shemaiah* plots against Nehemiah. 11: *A man like me*: a political leader must neither show cowardice nor commit sacrilege (see Num.3.10; 18.7). 15–19: Completion of the wall. 15: *Elul*: August-September, 444 B.C. 16: The verse reflects understandable exaggeration.

nations saw it,<sup>m</sup> they thought it a very wonderful achievement,<sup>n</sup> and they recognized that this work had been accomplished by the help of our God.

17 All this time the nobles in Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and receiving replies from him. For many in Judah were in league with him, because he was a son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married a daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. They were always praising<sup>o</sup> him in my presence and repeating to him what I said. Tobiah also wrote to me to intimidate me.

7 NOW WHEN THE WALL HAD BEEN rebuilt, and I had set the doors in place and the gate-keepers<sup>p</sup> had been appointed, I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and to Hananiah, the governor of the citadel, for he was trustworthy and God-fearing above other men. And I said to them, 'The entrances to Jerusalem are not to be left open during the heat of the day; the gates must be kept shut and barred while the gate-keepers are standing at ease. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some on sentry-duty and others posted in front of their own homes.'

4 The city was large and spacious; there were few people in it and no houses had yet been rebuilt. Then God prompted me to assemble the nobles, the magistrates, and the people, to be enrolled family by family. And I found the book of the genealogies of those who had been the first to come back.

6<sup>q</sup> This is what I found written in it: Of the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile, these are the people of the province who have returned to Jerusalem and

7 Judah, each to his own town, led by Zerubbabel, Jeshua,<sup>r</sup> Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah.

The roll of the men of the people of Israel: the family of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; the family of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; the family of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two; the family of Pahath-moab, namely the families of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and eighteen; the family of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; the family of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five; the family of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; the family of Binnui, six hundred and forty-eight; the family of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight; the family of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two; the family of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven; the family of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven; the family of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five; the family of Ater, namely that of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; the family of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight; the family of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four; the family of Harif, one hundred and twelve; the family of Gibeon, ninety-five. The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight; the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; the men of Beth-azmoth, forty-two; the men of Kiriath-jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; the men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; the men of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and twenty-three; the men of<sup>s</sup> Nebo, fifty-two; the men<sup>t</sup> of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; the men of Harim, three hundred and twenty; the men of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; the men of Lod, Hadid and Ono, seven hundred

*m* Or were afraid.

*n* they thought . . . achievement: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* they fell very much in their own eyes.

*o* Or repeating rumours about . . .

*p* *Prob. rdg.*: *Heb. adds* the singers and the Levites.

*q* Verses 6-73: *cp. Ezra 2. 1-70.*

*r* Or Joshua (*cp. Hag. 1. 1*).

*s* *Prob. rdg.*, *cp. Ezra 2. 29*; *Heb. adds* the other.

*t* *Prob. rdg.*: *Heb. family (also in verses 35-38).*

17-19: For further data on Tobiah and his Jewish connections—his chamber in the temple—see 13.4-9.

7.1-73a: Guards and patrols. 2: Hanani: see 1.2 n. Citadel: mentioned in 2.8, 4-5: The taking of a census. 6-73a: This list of returning Judeans duplicates, with slight variations, that of Ezra 2.1-70.

38 and twenty-one; the men of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

39 Priests: the family of Jedaiah, of the line of Jeshua, nine hundred and 62  
40 seventy-three; the family of Immer, 63  
41 one thousand and fifty-two; the family of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred  
42 and forty-seven; the family of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

43 Levites: the families of Jeshua and<sup>u</sup> Kadmiel, of the line of Hodvah, 64  
44 seventy-four. Singers: the family of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight.  
45 Door-keepers: the family of Shallum, the family of Ater, the family of Talmon, the family of Akkub, the family of Hatita, and the family of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight in all.

46 Temple-servitors: the family of Ziha, 66  
47 the family of Hasupha, the family of Tabbaoth, the family of Keros, the 67  
48 family of Sia, the family of Padon, the family of Lebanah, the family of 68  
49 Hagabah, the family of Shalmai, the family of Hanan, the family of Giddel, 69  
50 the family of Gahar, the family of Reaiah, the family of Rezin, the family of Nekoda, the family of Gazzam, the family of Uzza, the family of Paseah, 70  
52 the family of Besai, the family of the Meunim, the family of the Nephishesim,<sup>v</sup> the family of Bakbuk, the family of Hakhupha, the family of Harhur, 71  
54 the family of Bazlith,<sup>w</sup> the family of Mehida, the family of Harsha, the 72  
55 family of Barkos, the family of Sisera, the family of Temah, the family of Nezhiah, and the family of Hatipha.

57 Descendants of Solomons' servants: 73  
58 the family of Sotai, the family of Sophereth, the family of Perida, the 74  
59 family of Jaalah, the family of Darkon, the family of Giddel, the family of Shephatiah, the family of Hattil, the family of Pochereth-hazzebaim, and the family of Amon.

60 The temple-servitors and the descendants of Solomon's servants amounted to three hundred and ninety-two in all.

61 The following were those who returned from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha,

Kerub, Addon, and Immer, but could not establish their father's family nor whether by descent they belonged to Israel: the family of Delaiah, the 62  
family of Tobiah, the family of Nekoda, 63  
six hundred and forty-two. Also of the 64  
priests: the family of Hobaiah, the family of Hakkoz, and the family of Barzillai who had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite and went by his<sup>x</sup> name. These searched for their 65  
names among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they could not be found; they were disqualified for the priesthood as unclean, and the gover- 66  
nor forbade them to partake of the most sacred food until there should be a priest able to consult the Urim and the Thummim.

The whole assembled people num- 66  
bered forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, apart from their slaves, 67  
male and female, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred and forty-five singers, men and women. Their horses numbered seven hundred 68  
and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, their camels four hundred 69  
and thirty-five, and their asses six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

Some of the heads of families gave 70  
contributions for the work. The governor gave to the treasury a thousand drachmas of gold, fifty tossing-bowls, and five hundred and thirty priestly robes. Some of the heads of families 71  
gave for the fabric fund twenty thousand drachmas of gold and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. What 72  
the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand drachmas of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priestly robes.

The priests, the Levites, and some of 73  
the people lived in Jerusalem and its suburbs;<sup>y</sup> the door-keepers, the singers, the temple-servitors, and all other Israelites, lived in their own towns.

<sup>u</sup> and: *prob. rdg.*; *cp. Ezra 2. 40*; *Heb. to.*

<sup>v</sup> Or Nephushesim.

<sup>w</sup> Or Bazluth (*cp. Ezra 2. 52*).

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, *cp. 1 Esdras 5. 38*; *Heb. their.*

<sup>y</sup> in Jerusalem and its suburbs: *prob. rdg.*, *cp. 1 Esdras 5. 46*; *Heb. om.*

7.73b-8.12: The law read by Ezra and the covenant renewed. The section 7.73b-9.37 is misplaced (see Introduction to Ezra); it is about Ezra. Perhaps it should follow directly after



*The law read by Ezra and  
the covenant renewed*

8 WHEN THE SEVENTH MONTH CAME, AND the Israelites were now settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in the square in front of the Water Gate, and Ezra the scribe<sup>z</sup> was asked to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had enjoined upon 2 Israel. On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, every man and woman, and all who were capable of understanding what they heard.<sup>a</sup> He read from it, facing the square in front of the Water Gate, from early morning till noon, in the presence of the men and the women, and those who could understand;<sup>b</sup> all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform made for the purpose,<sup>c</sup> and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and on his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchiah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above them; and when he 6 opened it, they all stood. Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen, Amen'; and they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves humbly before the LORD. Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabab, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites,<sup>d</sup> expounded the law to the people while 8 they remained in their places. They read from the book of the law of God clearly, made its sense plain and gave instruction in what was read. 9 Then Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the

Levites who instructed the people, said to them all, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people had been weeping while they listened to the words of the law. Then he said to them, 'You may go now; refresh yourselves with rich food and sweet drinks, and send a share to all who cannot provide for themselves; for this day is holy to our Lord. Let there be no sadness, for joy in the LORD is your strength.' The 11 Levites silenced the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; let there be no sadness.' So all the people went 12 away to eat and to drink, to send shares to others and to celebrate the day with great rejoicing, because they had understood what had been explained to them.

On the second day the heads of 13 families of the whole people, with the priests and the Levites, assembled before Ezra the scribe to study the law. And they found written in the law that 14 the LORD had given commandment through Moses that the Israelites should live in arbours<sup>e</sup> during the feast of the seventh month, and that 15 they should make proclamation throughout all their cities and in Jerusalem: 'Go out into the hills and fetch branches of olive and wild olive, myrtle and palm, and other leafy boughs to make arbours, as prescribed.' So the people went out and fetched 16 them and made arbours for themselves, each on his own roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and the square at the Ephraim Gate. And the whole community of 17 those who had returned from the captivity made arbours and lived in

<sup>z</sup> Or doctor of the law.

<sup>a</sup> were capable . . . heard: or would teach them to understand.

<sup>b</sup> could understand: or were to instruct.

<sup>c</sup> Or for the address. <sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. and the Levites.

<sup>e</sup> Or tabernacles or booths.

Ezra chs. 9-10. 8.1: *The book of the law of Moses*: not the entire Pentateuch as we now know it, but selections from it. 2: *The first day of the seventh month*: Tishri (September-October); compare Lev.23.24 and Num.29.1. The first day of Tishri is observed by Jews as the new year day, a term rare in the OT. 7-8: The law was in Heb.; the language of the Judeans after the sixth century B.C. was Aram. Hence the Levites, after reading in Heb., *expounded* in the Aram., *giving instruction in what was read*.

8.13-18: *Renewal of the celebration of the Festival of Booths*. 14: *Arbour*: see Tfn. *e*; compare Lev.23.33-43. 15: Five species of plants are prescribed here; Lev.23.40 prescribes four species; only two species are common; the differences seem due to varying practices concerning this pilgrim feast. Both family and community booths seem described.

them, a thing that the Israelites had not done from the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day; and there was very  
 18 great rejoicing. And day by day, from the first day to the last, the book of the law of God was read. They kept the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day there was a closing ceremony, according to the rule.

9 ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THIS month the Israelites assembled for a fast, clothed in sackcloth and with  
 2 earth on their heads. Those who were of Israelite descent separated themselves from all the foreigners; they took their places and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their forefathers.  
 3 Then they stood up in their places, and the book of the law of the LORD their God was read for one fourth of the day, and for another fourth they confessed and did obeisance to the LORD their  
 4 God. Upon the steps assigned to the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani, and they cried aloud to  
 5 the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, 'Stand up and bless the LORD your God, saying: From everlasting to everlasting thy glorious name is blessed<sup>f</sup> and exalted above all  
 6 blessing and praise. Thou alone art the LORD; thou hast made heaven, the highest heaven with all its host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. Thou preservest all  
 7 of them, and the host of heaven worships thee. Thou art the LORD, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees and named  
 8 him Abraham. Thou didst find him faithful to thee and didst make a covenant with him to give to him and to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the

Girgashites; and thou didst fulfil thy promise, for thou art just.

'And thou didst see the misery of 9 our forefathers in Egypt and didst hear their cry for help at the Red Sea,<sup>g</sup> and 10 didst work signs and portents against Pharaoh, all his courtiers and all the people of his land, knowing how arrogantly they treated our forefathers, and thou didst win for thyself a name that lives on to this day. Thou didst 11 tear the sea apart before them so that they went through the middle of it on dry ground; but thou didst cast their pursuers into the depths, like a stone 12 cast into turbulent waters. Thou didst guide them by a pillar of cloud in the day-time and by a pillar of fire at night to give them light on the road by which they travelled. Thou didst descend upon 13 Mount Sinai and speak with them from heaven, and give them right judgements and true laws, and statutes and commandments which were good, and thou 14 didst make known to them thy holy sabbath and give them commandments, statutes, and laws through thy servant Moses. Thou gavest them bread from 15 heaven to stay their hunger and thou broughtest water out from a rock for them to quench their thirst, and thou didst bid them enter and take possession of the land which thou hadst solemnly sworn to give them. But they, our fore- 16 fathers, were arrogant and stubborn, and disobeyed thy commandments. They refused to obey and did not 17 remember the miracles which thou didst accomplish among them; they remained stubborn, and they appointed a man to lead them back to slavery in Egypt. But thou art a forgiving god, gracious and compassionate, long- 18 suffering and ever constant, and thou didst not forsake them. Even when they made the image of a bull-calf in metal and said, "This is your god who

<sup>f</sup> thy glorious name is blessed: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and let them bless thy glorious name.  
<sup>g</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

9.1-5: A day of fasting. This cannot be the Day of Atonement, which fell on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev.23.26-32; Num.29.7-9). Indeed, the Day of Atonement is not mentioned; some speculate that its introduction came at a later time.

9.6-37: The confession and prayer, a skillfully designed tapestry of historical reminiscence, an acknowledgment of backsliding, and an appeal to God's compassion, was probably once an independent psalm. 6: The Gk. has the words, "And Ezra said," before the opening line of the prayer, *Thou . . . the LORD.*

brought you up from Egypt", and were  
 19 guilty of great blasphemies, thou in  
 thy great compassion didst not forsake  
 them in the wilderness. The pillar of  
 cloud did not fail to guide them on  
 their journey by day nor the pillar  
 of fire by night to give them light on  
 20 the road by which they travelled. Thou  
 gavest thy good spirit to instruct them;  
 thy manna thou didst not withhold  
 from them, and thou gavest them water  
 21 to quench their thirst. Forty years long  
 thou didst sustain them in the wilder-  
 ness, and they lacked nothing; their  
 clothes did not wear out and their feet  
 were not swollen.

22 'Thou gavest them kingdoms and  
 peoples, allotting these to them as  
 spoils of war. Thus they took possession  
 of the land of Sihon king of Heshbon  
 and the land of Og king of Bashan.

23 Thou didst multiply their descendants  
 so that they became countless as the  
 stars in the sky, bringing them into the  
 land which thou didst promise to give  
 to their forefathers as their possession.

24 When their descendants entered the  
 land and took possession of it, thou  
 didst subdue before them the Canaan-  
 ites who inhabited it and gavest these,  
 kings and peoples alike, into their  
 hands to do with them whatever they  
 25 wished. They captured fortified cities  
 and a fertile land and took possession  
 of houses full of all good things, rock-  
 hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive-trees,  
 and fruit-trees in abundance; so they  
 ate and were satisfied and grew fat and  
 found delight in thy great goodness.

26 But they were defiant and rebelled  
 against thee; they turned their backs  
 on thy law and killed thy prophets,  
 who solemnly warned them to return  
 to thee, and they were guilty of great

27 blasphemies. Because of this thou  
 didst hand them over to their enemies  
 who oppressed them. But when in the  
 time of their oppression, they cried to  
 thee for help, thou heardest them from  
 heaven and in thy great compassion  
 didst send them saviours to save them

28 from their enemies. But when they had  
 had a respite, they once more did what

was wrong in thine eyes; and thou didst  
 abandon them to their enemies who  
 held them in subjection. But again they  
 cried to thee for help, and many times  
 over thou heardest them from heaven  
 and in thy compassion didst save them.  
 Thou didst solemnly warn them to  
 29 return to thy law, but they grew  
 arrogant and did not heed thy com-  
 mandments; they sinned against thy  
 ordinances, which bring life to him  
 who keeps them. Stubbornly they  
 turned away in mulish obstinacy and  
 would not obey. Many years thou wast  
 30 patient with them and didst warn them  
 by thy spirit through thy prophets;  
 but they would not listen. Therefore  
 thou didst hand them over to foreign  
 peoples. Yet in thy great compassion  
 31 thou didst not make an end of them  
 nor forsake them; for thou art a gra-  
 cious and compassionate god.

'Now therefore, our God, thou great  
 32 and mighty and terrible God, who  
 faithfully keepest covenant, do not  
 make light of the hardships that have  
 befallen us—our kings, our princes,  
 our priests, our prophets, our fore-  
 fathers, and all thy people—from the  
 days of the kings of Assyria to this day.  
 In all that has befallen us thou hast been  
 33 just, thou hast kept faith, but we have  
 done wrong. Our kings, our princes,  
 34 our priests, and our forefathers did not  
 keep thy law nor heed thy command-  
 ments and the warnings which thou  
 gavest them. Even under their own  
 35 kings, while they were enjoying the  
 great prosperity which thou gavest  
 them and the broad and fertile land  
 which thou didst bestow upon them,  
 they did not serve thee; they did not  
 abandon their evil ways. Today we are  
 36 slaves, slaves here in the land which  
 thou gavest to our forefathers so that  
 they might eat its fruits and enjoy its  
 good things. All its produce now goes  
 37 to the kings whom thou hast set over  
 us because of our sins. They have power  
 over our bodies, and they do as they  
 please with our beasts, while we are in  
 dire distress.

'Because of all this we make a 38

**9.38–10.39: Renewal of the covenant, and its obligations.** The structure resembles that of similar stipulations of loyalty found in clay tablets: writing and sealing, list of witnesses, oath, and enumeration of particulars. The stress against intermarriage in this "covenant renewal"

binding declaration in writing, and our princes, our Levites, and our priests witness the sealing.

10 'Those who witness the sealing are Nehemiah the governor, son of Hachaliah, Zedekiah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashhur, Amariah, Malchiah, 2 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, Harim, 3,4,5 Meremoth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, Meshullam, Abiah, Mijamin, Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah; 6 these are the priests. The Levites: 7 Jeshua<sup>h</sup> son of Azaniah, Binnui of the 8 family of Henadad, Kadmiel; and their 9 brethren, Shebaniah, Hodiah,<sup>i</sup> Kelita, 10 Pelaiiah, Hanan, Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah, Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, 11,12 Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. The chiefs of 13,14 the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, 15 Elam, Zattu, Bani, Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, 16,17 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai, 18 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,<sup>j</sup> Magpiash, 19,20 Meshullam, Hezir, Meshezabel, Zadok, 21 Jaddua, Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiiah, Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, Hallohesh, 22,23 Pilha, Shobek, Rehum, Hashabnah, 24 Maaseiah, Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, Mal- 25,26,27 luch, Harim, Baanah.

28 'The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the door-keepers, the singers, the temple-servitors, with their wives, their sons, and their daughters, all who are capable of understanding, all who for the sake of the law of God have kept themselves apart from the 29 foreign population, join with the leading brethren,<sup>k</sup> when the oath is put to them, in swearing to obey God's law given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and fulfil all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, his rules and his statutes.

30 'We will not give our daughters in marriage to the foreign population or 31 take their daughters for our sons. If on the sabbath these people bring in merchandise, especially corn, for sale,

we will not buy from them on the sabbath or on any holy day. We will forgo the crops of the seventh year and release every person still held as a pledge for debt.

'We hereby undertake the duty of 32 giving yearly the third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God, for the Bread of the Presence, the regular grain-offering and whole- 33 offering, the sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed seasons, the holy-gifts, and the sin-offerings to make expiation on behalf of Israel, and for all else that has to be done in the house of our God. We, the priests, the Levites, and the 34 people, have cast lots for the wood-offering, so that it may be brought into the house of our God by each family in turn, at appointed times, year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as prescribed in the law. We 35 undertake to bring the firstfruits of our land and the firstfruits of every fruit-tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD; also to bring to the house of 36 our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the first-born of our sons and of our cattle, as prescribed in the law, and the first-born of 37 our herds and of our flocks; and to bring to the priests the first kneading of our dough, and the first of the fruit of every tree, of the new wine and of the oil, to the store-rooms in the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our land, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our farming villages. The Aaronite priest 38 shall be with the Levites when they collect the tithes; and the Levites shall bring up one tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the appropriate rooms in the storehouse. For the 39 Israelites and the Levites shall bring

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. and Jeshua.

<sup>i</sup> Or, with Ezra 2. 40, Hodaviah.

<sup>j</sup> Or Nobai.

<sup>k</sup> the leading brethren: prob. rdg.: Heb. their brethren, their leading men.

(it is mentioned first) should be seen against the background of the surrounding nations and the pressing security needs of the small Jerusalem community. Later ages introduced proselytizing. 10.30-31: For the prohibition of intermarriage, see Deut.7.3; of work on the Sabbath day, see Exod.20.8-11; of planting during the release year, see Exod.23.10-11; for the release of pledges, Deut.15.2. 32: The offering of *the third of a shekel* for the Temple seems voluntary; the legislation of Exod.30.13 stipulated a compulsory half shekel, to which the voluntary was added. 34: On *wood for the altar*, see Lev.6.13, which does not mention the casting of lots found here. 35-37: *Firstfruits*: see Exod.23.19. *First-born*: see Exod.13.13. *Tithes*, see Lev.27.30-33 and Num.18.25-32.

the contribution of corn, new wine, and oil to the rooms where the vessels of the sanctuary are kept, and where the ministering priests, the door-keepers, and the singers are lodged. We will not neglect the house of our God.'

- 11 THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE SETTLED IN Jerusalem; and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one in every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine lived in other towns. And the people were grateful to all those who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.
- 2 These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but, in the towns of Judah, other Israelites, priests, Levites, temple-servitors, and descendants of Solomon's servants lived on their own property, in their own towns.
- 3 Some members of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. Of Judah: Athaiah son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel of the family of Perez, all of whose family, to the number of four hundred and sixty-eight men of substance, lived in Jerusalem; and Maaseiah son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adajiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah of the Shelanite family.
- 4 These were the Benjamites: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Isaiah, and his kinsmen Gabbai and Sallai, nine hundred and twenty-eight in all.
- 5 Joel son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second over the city.<sup>l</sup>
- 6 Of the priests: Jedaiah son of Joiarib, son of<sup>m</sup> Seraiah, son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, supervisor of the house of God, and his<sup>n</sup> brethren responsible for the work in the temple, eight hundred and twenty-two in all; and Adajiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah,

son of Pashhur, son of Malchiah, and his brethren, heads of fathers' houses, two hundred and forty-two in all; and Amasai<sup>o</sup> son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, and his brethren, men of substance, a hundred and twenty-eight in all; their overseer was Zabdiel son of Haggedolim.

And of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; and Shabbe-thai and Jozabad of the chiefs of the Levites, who had charge of the external business of the house of God; and Mattaniah son of Micah, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who as precentor led the prayer of thanksgiving, and Bakkukiah who held the second place among his brethren; and Abda son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. The number of Levites in the holy city was two hundred and eighty-four in all.

The gate-keepers who kept guard at the gates were Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren, a hundred and seventy-two. The rest of the Israelites<sup>p</sup> were in all the towns of Judah, each man on his own inherited property. But the temple-servitors lodged on Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the family of Asaph the singers, for the supervision of the business of the house of God. For they were under the king's orders, and there was obligatory duty for the singers every day. Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, of the family of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's adviser on all matters affecting the people.

As for the hamlets with their surrounding fields: some of the men of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its

<sup>l</sup> second over the city: or over the second quarter of the city.

<sup>m</sup> son of: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>n</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. their.

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Amashsai.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the levitical priests.

11.1-24: Repopulation of Jerusalem. A parallel list, 1 Chr. ch. 9, provides a similar order: chiefs, priests, Levites, and people with other functions. Some scholars connect this chapter with Neh. 7.5a as continuing the "Memoirs of Nehemiah."

11.25-36: Population of the surrounding Judean area. The borders of Judea extend to Beersheba in the south, and Lachish and Ziklag, towns closer to the coast in the southwest.

villages, in Dibon and its villages, and  
 26 in Jekabzeel and its hamlets, in Jeshua,  
 27 Moladah, and Bethpelet, in Hazar-  
 shual, and in Beersheba and its villages,  
 28 in Ziklag and in Meconah and its  
 29 villages, in Enrimmon, Zorah, and  
 30 Jarmuth, in Zanoah, Adullam, and  
 their hamlets, in Lachish and its fields  
 and Azekah and its villages. Thus they  
 occupied the country from Beersheba  
 to the Valley of Hinnom.

31 The men of Benjamin lived in<sup>q</sup> Geba,  
 Michmash, Aiah, and Bethel with its  
 32 villages, in Anathoth, Nob, and Ana-  
 33 niah, in Hazor, Ramah, and Gittaim,  
 34,35 in Hadid, Zeboim, and Neballat, in  
 36 Lod, Ono, and<sup>r</sup> Ge-harashim.<sup>s</sup> And  
 certain divisions of the Levites in Judah  
 were attached to Benjamin.

12 These are the priests and the Levites  
 who came back with Zerubbabel son  
 of Shealtiel, and Jeshua:<sup>t</sup> Seraiah,  
 2 Jeremiah, Ezra, Amariah, Malluch,  
 3 Hattush, Shecaniah, Rehum, Mere-  
 4,5 moth, Iddo, Ginnethon, Abiah, Mi-  
 jamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, Shemaiah,  
 7 Joiarib, Jedaiah, Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah,  
 Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the  
 priests and of their brethren in the days  
 of Jeshua.

8 And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui,  
 Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Matta-  
 niah, who with his brethren was in  
 charge of the songs of thanksgiving.

9 And Bakbukiah and Unni their brethren  
 stood opposite them in the service.

10 And Jeshua was the father of Joiakim,  
 Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib  
 11 of Joiada, Joiada the father of Jon-  
 athan, and Jonathan the father of

12 Jaddua. And in the days of Joiakim the  
 priests who were heads of families were:  
 of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Han-  
 13 aniah; of Ezra, Meshullam; of Ama-  
 14 riah, Jehohanan; of Malluch,<sup>u</sup> Jon-  
 15 athan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; of Harim,  
 16 Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; of Iddo,  
 Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;

17 of Abiah, Zichri; of Miniamin<sup>v</sup>; of

Moaddiah, Piltai; of Bilgah, Shammua; 18  
 of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; of Joiarib, 19  
 Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; of Sallu,<sup>w</sup> 20  
 Kallai; of Amok, Eber; of Hilkiah, 21  
 Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.

<sup>x</sup>The heads of the priestly families<sup>y</sup> 22  
 in the days of Eliashib, Joiada,  
 Johanan, and Jaddua were recorded  
 down to the reign of Darius the Persian.  
 The heads of the levitical families were 23  
 recorded in the annals only down to  
 the days of Johanan the grandson of  
 Eliashib. And the chiefs of the Levites: 24  
 Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua, Binnui,<sup>z</sup>  
 Kadmiel, with their brethren in the  
 other turn of duty, to praise and to  
 give thanks, according to the com-  
 mandment of David the man of God,  
 turn by turn. Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, 25  
 Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and  
 Akkub were gate-keepers standing  
 guard at the gatehouses. This was the 26  
 arrangement in the days of Joiakim  
 son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak, and in  
 the days of Nehemiah the governor and  
 of Ezra the priest and scribe.

At the dedication of the wall of 27  
 Jerusalem they sought out the Levites  
 in all their settlements, and brought  
 them to Jerusalem to celebrate the  
 dedication with<sup>a</sup> rejoicing, with thanks-  
 giving and song, to the accompaniment  
 of cymbals, lutes, and harps. And the 28  
 Levites,<sup>b</sup> the singers, were assembled  
 from the district round Jerusalem and  
 from the hamlets of the Netophathites;  
 also from Beth-gilgal and from the 29  
 region of Geba and Beth-azmoth;<sup>c</sup> for  
 the singers had built themselves hamlets  
 in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

q Prob. rdg.; Heb. from. r and; prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
 s Or and the Valley of Woods or and the Valley of  
 Craftsmen.

t Or Joshua.

u Prob. rdg.; Heb. Malluchi, or Melichu.

v A name is missing here.

w Prob. rdg., cp. verse 7; Heb. Sallai.

x Prob. rdg.; Heb. prefixes The Levites.

y heads . . . families; prob. rdg.; Heb. heads of the

families and the priests.

z Jeshua, Binnui; prob. rdg.; Heb. and Jeshua son of.

a Prob. rdg.; Heb. and.

b the Levites; prob. rdg.; Heb. the sons of.

c Beth-azmoth; prob. rdg., cp. 7. 28; Heb. Azmoth.

11.31-36: The towns of Benjamin. These are located north and west of Jerusalem; the farthest of these (Ono) was about thirty miles away.

12.1-26: List of priests and Levites. A later hand has appended this additional list. 10-11: The genealogy of high priests. Jonathan is often regarded as an error for Jehohanan; see Ezra 10.6 n. 22: The historian Josephus tells that Jaddua was high priest in 332, in the time of the conquest by Alexander the Great. Darius may be Darius III who ruled 335-331 B.C.

12.27-43: Dedication of the walls. 33: The mentions of Ezra here and in v. 36 are regarded as interpolations; see Introduction to Ezra on dislocations of materials.

30 The priests and the Levites purified themselves; and they purified the  
 31 people, the gates, and the wall. Then I brought the leading men of Judah up on to the city wall, and appointed two great choirs to give thanks. One went in procession<sup>d</sup> to the right, going along the wall to the Dung Gate; and after it went Hoshaiah with half the leading  
 32 men of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, Judah, Benjamin, She-  
 33 maiah, and Jeremiah; and certain of the priests with trumpets: Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of  
 34 Zaccur, son of Asaph, and his kinsmen, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David led them. They went past the Fountain  
 35 Gate and thence straight forward by the steps up to the City of David, by the ascent to the city wall, past the house of David, and on to the Water Gate on  
 36 the east. The other thanksgiving choir went to the left,<sup>e</sup> and I followed it with half the leading men of<sup>f</sup> the people, continuing along the wall, past the Tower of the Ovens<sup>g</sup> to the Broad Wall,  
 37 and past the Ephraim Gate, and over the Jeshanah Gate,<sup>h</sup> and over the Fish Gate, taking in the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they halted at  
 38 the Gate of the Guardhouse. So the two thanksgiving choirs took their place in the house of God, and I and half the magistrates with me; and the  
 39 priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and  
 40 Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchiah, Elam, and Ezer. The singers, led by Izrahiah, raised their  
 41 voices. A great sacrifice was celebrated that day, and they all rejoiced because God had given them great cause for  
 42 rejoicing; the women and children rejoiced with them. And the rejoicing

in Jerusalem was heard a long way off.

On that day men were appointed to  
 43 take charge of the store-rooms for the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather in the portions required by the law for the priests and Levites according to the extent of the farmlands round the towns; for all Judah was full of rejoicing at the ministry of the priests and Levites. And they performed the service of their  
 44 God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the door-keepers, according to the rules laid down by David and his son Solomon. For it was  
 45 in the days of David that Asaph took the lead as chief of the singers and director<sup>i</sup> of praise and thanksgiving to God. And in the days of Zerubbabel  
 46 and of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the door-keepers as each day required; and they set apart the portion for the Levites, and the Levites set apart the portion for the Aaronites.

#### *Nehemiah's reforms*

ON THAT DAY AT THE PUBLIC READING 13  
 from the book of Moses, it was found to be laid down that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, because they did not meet the  
 2 Israelites with food and water but hired Balaam to curse them, though our God turned the curse into a blessing. When the people heard the law, they  
 3 separated from Israel all who were of mixed blood.

But before this, Eliashib the priest, 4  
 who was appointed over the store-rooms of the house of our God, and who was connected by marriage with Tobiah, had provided for his use a  
 5 large room where formerly they had

<sup>d</sup> One . . . procession: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Processions.

<sup>e</sup> to the left: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* to the front.

<sup>f</sup> the leading men of: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>g</sup> Or Furnaces.

<sup>h</sup> the Jeshanah Gate: or the gate of the Old City.

<sup>i</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. song.*

12.44-47: The admirable functioning of the cult. 45: See also 2 Chr.8.14, dependent on 1 Chr. chs. 23-26. 47: The mention of Zerubbabel instead of Ezra has influenced scholars to conclude that Ezra was not contemporaneous with Nehemiah. See Introduction to Ezra.

13.1-31: Nehemiah's reforms. 1-3: These verses connect the chapter with 8.18. 1: See Deut.23.3-5. 2: *Balaam*: see Num. chs. 22-24. 4-9: The expulsion of *Tobiah* the Ammonite (2.10) is important to the author, so that the community could maintain an unadulterated

kept the grain-offering, the incense, the temple vessels, the tithes of corn, new wine, and oil prescribed for the Levites, singers, and door-keepers, and the contributions for the priests. All this time I was not in Jerusalem because, in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon, I had gone to the king. Some time later, I asked permission from him and returned to Jerusalem. There I discovered the wicked thing that Eliashib had done for Tobiah's sake in providing him with a room in the courts of the house of God. I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's belongings out of the room. Then I gave orders that the room should be purified, and that the vessels of the house of God, with the grain-offering and incense, should be put back into it. I also learnt that the Levites had not been given their portions; both they and the singers, who were responsible for their respective duties, had made off to their farms. So I remonstrated with the magistrates and said, 'Why is the house of God deserted?' And I recalled the men and restored them to their places. Then all Judah brought the tithes of corn, new wine, and oil into the storehouses; and I put in charge of them Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the accountant, and Pedaiah a Levite, with Hanan son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, as their assistant, for they were considered trustworthy men; their duty was the distribution of their shares to their brethren. Remember this, O God, to my credit, and do not wipe out of thy memory the devotion which I have shown in the house of my God and in his service. In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the sabbath, collecting quantities of produce and piling it on asses—wine, grapes, figs, and every kind of load, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath; and I protested to them about selling food on that day. Tyrians living in

Jerusalem also brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath to the people of Judah, even in Jerusalem. Then I complained to the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'How dare you profane the sabbath in this wicked way? Is not this just what your fathers did, so that our God has brought all this evil on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.' When the entrances to Jerusalem had been cleared in preparation for the sabbath, I gave orders that the gates should be shut and not opened until after the sabbath. And I appointed some of the men under me to have charge of the gates so that no load might enter on the sabbath. Then on one or two occasions the merchants and all kinds of traders camped just outside Jerusalem, but I cautioned them. 'Why are you camping in front of the city wall?' I asked. 'If you do it again, I will take action against you.' After that they did not come on the sabbath again. And I commanded the Levites who were to purify themselves and take up duty as guards at the gates, to ensure that the sabbath was kept holy. Remember this also to my credit, O God, and spare me in thy great love. In those days also I saw that some Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Half their children spoke the language of Ashdod or of the other peoples and could not speak the language of the Jews. I argued with them and reviled them, I beat them and tore out their hair; and I made them swear in the name of God: 'We will not marry our daughters to their sons, or take any of their daughters in marriage for our sons or for ourselves.' 'Was it not for such women', I said, 'that King Solomon of Israel sinned? Among all the nations there was no king like him; he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless even he was led by foreign women into sin.

worship of God. **6:** *Some time later:* Nehemiah was in Susa from 433 to 424. The king is Artaxerxes I, 464-424/3. **10-14:** The *tithes:* contrast 12.47, where tithes seem given freely. **15-22:** *The sabbath:* disregard for the Sabbath law was considered to be the cause for exile and enslavement to foreign kings. Compare Jer.17.19-27, possibly hearkened back to in v. 18. **23-29:** On mixed marriages, see 10.30 and Ezra 9.1-5; 10.2. **26:** *Solomon:* see 1 Kgs.11.1-8.



- 27 Are we then to follow your example and commit this grave offence, breaking faith with our God by marrying foreign women?"
- 28 Now one of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him out of my presence. Remember, O God, to their shame that they have defiled the
- priesthood and the covenant of the priests<sup>j</sup> and the Levites.
- Thus I purified them from every-<sup>30</sup> thing foreign, and I made the Levites and the priests resume the duties of their office; I also made provision for<sup>31</sup> the wood-offering, at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me for my good, O God.
- j Or* priesthood.

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**28:** *Sanballat* was a personal foe; see 2.10; 4.1-2,7-8; 6.1-14. **30-31:** Closing verses and prayer.

# ESTHER

This book tells how Esther, a young Jewish girl, delivers the Jews in Persia when they are threatened with extermination by Haman, the chief minister of the Persian king. Esther, who has become queen, acts on the advice of her cousin, Mordecai, the principal object of Haman's anger. A complete reversal of positions results; Haman is hanged, Mordecai assumes his office, and the Jews massacre their enemies. To commemorate this victory, the annual feast of Purim is instituted.

Esther is often considered to have been written in the Persian period (538–333 B.C.), though some view it as much later, perhaps even in the Maccabean period. Although Persian customs are familiar to the author and details about the city of Susa and the palace are confirmed by archaeology, it is impossible to find historical confirmation of the events recounted. However, an official at Susa under King Xerxes I is named Marduka, which is close to Mordecai. In the Hebrew Bible, Esther is the last of the five Megilloth, or Scrolls, for reading at the great festivals; it is read on Purim.

Although God's name is not mentioned, there is an obvious implicit trust in his guidance, as 4.13–17 makes clear. Because religious themes are not explicitly stressed, some ancient rabbis opposed the book's reception into Scripture. In the Greek some additions are found which modify the secular tone of the Hebrew; see "The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther" in the Apocrypha.

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*Esther chosen as queen  
by the Persian king*

1 **T**HE EVENTS HERE RELATED HAPPENED IN THE DAYS OF AHASUERUS, THE AHASUERUS WHO RULED FROM INDIA TO ETHIOPIA, A HUNDRED AND 2 TWENTY-SEVEN PROVINCES. AT THIS TIME HE SAT ON HIS ROYAL THRONE IN SUSA THE 3 CAPITAL CITY. IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HIS REIGN HE GAVE A BANQUET FOR ALL HIS OFFICERS AND HIS COURTIERS; AND WHEN HIS ARMY OF PERSIAN AND MEDES, WITH HIS NOBLES AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, WERE 4 IN ATTENDANCE, HE DISPLAYED THE WEALTH OF HIS KINGDOM AND THE POMP AND SPLENDOR OF HIS MAJESTY FOR MANY DAYS, 5 A HUNDRED AND EIGHTY IN ALL. WHEN THESE DAYS WERE OVER, THE KING GAVE A BANQUET FOR ALL THE PEOPLE PRESENT IN SUSA THE CAPITAL CITY, BOTH HIGH AND LOW; IT WAS HELD IN THE GARDEN COURT OF THE ROYAL PAVILION AND LASTED SEVEN DAYS. 6 THERE WERE WHITE CURTAINS AND VIOLET HANGINGS FASTENED TO SILVER RINGS WITH BANDS OF FINE LINEN AND PURPLE;<sup>a</sup> THERE WERE ALABASTER PILLARS AND COUCHES OF GOLD AND SILVER SET ON A MOSAIC PAVE-

ment of malachite and alabaster, of mother-of-pearl and turquoise. Wine 7 was served in golden cups of various patterns: the king's wine flowed freely 8 as befitted a king, and the law of the drinking was that there should be no 9 compulsion, for the king had laid it down that all the stewards of his palace should respect each man's wishes. In 10 addition, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal apartments of King Ahasuerus.

On the seventh day, when he was 11 merry with wine, the king ordered Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who were in attendance 12 on the king's person, to bring Queen Vashti before him wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and the officers; for she was indeed a beautiful woman. But 13 Queen Vashti refused to come in answer to the royal command conveyed by the eunuchs. This greatly incensed the king, and he grew hot with anger.

Then the king conferred with his wise 13

<sup>a</sup> bands . . . purple: or white and purple cords.

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1.1–9: Ahasuerus' banquet. 1: *Ahasuerus* (see Ezra 4.6; Dan.9.1) seems to be Xerxes I (485–464 B.C.), whose empire extended from *India* to *Ethiopia*, and included some twenty satrapies, subdivided into *provinces*. 2: *Susa*, in Elam, was the king's winter residence; Persepolis was the capital of Persia. 3: Greek authors mention the great banquets given by Persian kings. 5: Archaeologists have uncovered such a *court* at Susa. 9: Xerxes' queen was Amestris; *Vashti* was perhaps a royal concubine. No mention of Vashti or Esther is to be found outside this book.

1.10–2.4: Vashti deposed. 13: The *wise men* are possibly his seven counselors (Ezra 7.14).

men versed in misdemeanours;<sup>b</sup> for it was his royal custom to consult all who were versed in law and religion, those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king and held first place in the kingdom. He asked them, "What does the law require to be done with Queen Vashti for disobeying the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?" Then Memucan made answer before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not to the king alone, but also to all the officers and to all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. Every woman will come to know what the queen has done, and this will make them treat their husbands with contempt; they will say, "King Ahasuerus ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him and she did not come." The great ladies of Persia and Media, who have heard of the queen's conduct, will tell all the king's officers about this day, and there will be endless disrespect and insolence! If it please your majesty, let a royal decree go out from you and let it be inscribed in the laws of the Persians and Medes, never to be revoked, that Vashti shall not again appear before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her place as queen to another woman who is more worthy of it than she. Thus when this royal edict is heard through the length and breadth of the kingdom, all women will give honour to their husbands, high and low alike." Memucan's advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as he had proposed. Letters were sent to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in their own language, in order that each man might be master in his

own house and control all his own womenfolk.<sup>c</sup>

Later, when the anger of King 2 Ahasuerus had died down, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. So the king's attendants 2 said, 'Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for your majesty; and let 3 your majesty appoint commissioners in all the provinces of your kingdom to bring all these beautiful young virgins into the women's quarters in Susa the capital city. Let them be committed to the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and let cosmetics be provided for them; and let the one who is most acceptable 4 to the king become queen in place of Vashti.' This idea pleased the king and he acted on it.

Now there was in Susa the capital 5 city a Jew named Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite; he had been carried into exile 6 from Jerusalem among those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah. He had a foster-child Hadassah, 7 that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, who had neither father nor mother. She was a beautiful and charming girl, and after the death of her father and mother Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. When the king's 8 order and his edict were published, and many girls were brought to Susa the capital city to be committed to the care of Hegai, Esther too was taken to the king's palace to be entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the women. She attracted his notice and received 9 his special favour: he readily provided her with her cosmetics and her allow-

<sup>b</sup> Or times.

<sup>c</sup> and control . . . womenfolk: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and speak in his own language.

19: Reference to laws *never to be revoked* is also made in 8.8 and in Dan.6.8,12,15. There may be some irony in the allusion that in both Esther and Dan, the irrevocable decrees against the Jews are ineffective. 22: The verse seems to be a humorous exaggeration.

2.5-23: **The selection of Esther.** Mordecai and Esther have names derived from the Babylonian deities Marduk and Ishtar, who also were cousins. That Mordecai, like Saul, was a Benjamite is stressed to foreshadow the enmity of Haman, an Amalekite of the Agag family, Saul's enemy, 1 Sam.15.1-9. 5: On these remote ancestors see 2 Sam.16.5-8, *Shimei*; and 1 Sam.9.1-2, *Kish*, the father of Saul. 6: *Jeconiah* is also known as Jehoiachin (2 Kgs.24.6). Modern critics regard the author as unconcerned with precise chronology, for Mordecai's age here would appear to be at least one hundred and fifteen years. 7: *Hadassah* is a Heb. word meaning

ance of food, and also with seven picked maids from the king's palace, and he gave her and her maids privileges in the women's quarters.

- 10 Esther had not disclosed her race or her family, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day  
11 Mordecai passed along by the forecourt of the women's quarters to learn how Esther was faring and what was happening to her.

- 12 The full period of preparation prescribed for the women was twelve months, six months with oil and myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics. When the period was complete, each girl's turn came to go to  
13 King Ahasuerus, and she was allowed to take with her whatever she asked, when she went from the women's  
14 quarters to the king's palace. She went into the palace in the evening and returned in the morning to another part of the women's quarters, to be under the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch in charge of the concubines. She did not again go to the king unless he expressed a wish for her; then she was summoned by name.

- 15 When the turn came for Esther, daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai her adoptive father, to go to the king, she asked for nothing to take with her except what was advised by Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women; and Esther charmed all  
16 who saw her. When she was taken to King Ahasuerus in the royal palace, in the seventh year of his reign, in the tenth month, that is the month Tebeth, the king loved her more than any of his other women and treated her with greater favour and kindness than the rest of the virgins. He put a royal crown on her head and made her queen in  
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throughout the provinces and distributed gifts worthy of a king.

Mordecai was in attendance at court; on his instructions Esther had not disclosed her family or her race, she had done what Mordecai told her, as she did when she was his ward. One day when Mordecai was in attendance at court, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, keepers of the threshold, who were disaffected, were plotting to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. This became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther; and she told the king, mentioning Mordecai by name. The affair was investigated and the report confirmed; the two men were hanged on the gallows. All this was recorded in the royal chronicle in the presence of the king.

### *Haman's plot against the Jews*

AFTER THIS, KING AHASUERUS PROMOTED Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, advancing him and giving him precedence above all his fellow-officers. So the king's attendants at court all bowed down to Haman and did obeisance, for so the king had commanded; but Mordecai did not bow down to him or do obeisance. Then the attendants at court said to Mordecai, "Why do you flout his majesty's command?" Day by day they challenged him, but he refused to listen to them; so they informed Haman, in order to discover if Mordecai's refusal would be tolerated, for he had told them that he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai was not bowing down to him or doing obeisance, he was infuriated. On learning who Mordecai's people were, he scorned to lay hands on him alone, and looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, Mordecai and all his race.

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3.1-5.14: *Haman's plot against the Jews*. 3.1: The identification of Haman as an Agagite

7 In the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, in the first month, Nisan, they cast lots, Pur as it is called, in the presence of Haman, taking day by day and month by month, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,<sup>e</sup> the month Adar. Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain people, dispersed among the many peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, who keep themselves apart. Their laws are different from those of every other people; they do not keep your majesty's laws. It does not befit your majesty to tolerate them.

9 If it please your majesty, let an order be made in writing for their destruction; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to your majesty's officials, to be deposited in the royal treasury.' So the king took the signet-ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews; and he said to him, 'The money and the people are yours; deal with them as you wish.'

12 On the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were summoned and, in accordance with Haman's instructions, a writ was issued to the king's satraps and the governor of every province, and to the officers over each separate people: for each province in its own script and for each people in their own language. It was drawn up in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet.

13 Thus letters were sent by courier to all the king's provinces with orders to destroy, slay, and exterminate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions. A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and to be published to all the peoples, so that they might be ready for that day. The couriers were dispatched post-haste at the king's

command, and the decree was issued in Susa the capital city. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

When Mordecai learnt all that had been done, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city crying loudly and bitterly. He came within sight of the palace gate, because no one clothed with sackcloth was allowed to pass through the gate. In every province reached by the royal command and decree there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and beating of the breast. Most of them made their beds of sackcloth and ashes. When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was distraught, and sent garments for Mordecai, so that they might take off the sackcloth and clothe him with them; but he would not accept them. Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed to wait upon her, and ordered him to find out from Mordecai what the trouble was and what it meant. Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him and how much money Haman had offered to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the writ for their destruction issued in Susa, so that he might show it to Esther and tell her about it, bidding her go to the king to plead for his favour and entreat him for her people. Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said, and she sent him back with this message: 'All the king's courtiers and the people of the provinces are aware that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court unbidden, there is one law only: that person shall be put to

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(see 2.5–23 n.) subtly emphasizes the hostility between Mordecai and Haman. 7: *Pur* is a Babylonian word meaning *lot*. The lot was to determine the best day for the pogrom. *Adar* is in March–April. 9: Experts think that the amount of *silver* here would represent almost two-thirds of the annual income of the Persian Empire. 10: The *signet-ring* sealed official documents; it gave Haman unlimited power. 11: The king apparently accepts the bribe. 12: The *writ* was issued on the thirteenth of Nisan, the day before Passover. 15: The *couriers* belonged to the famous Persian post service; see 8.10 n.

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death, unless the king stretches out to him the golden sceptre; then and then only shall he live. It is now thirty days since I myself was called to go to the king.' But when they told Mordecai what Esther had said, he bade them go back to her and say, 'Do not imagine that you alone of all the Jews will escape because you are in the royal palace. If you remain silent at such a time as this, relief and deliverance for the Jews will appear from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows whether it is not for such a time as this that you have come to royal estate?' Esther gave them this answer to take back to Mordecai: 'Go and assemble all the Jews to be found in Susa and fast for me; take neither food nor drink for three days, night or day, and I and my maids will fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, although it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.' So Mordecai went away and did exactly as Esther had bidden him.

5 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, facing the palace itself; the king was seated on his royal throne in the palace, facing the entrance. When the king caught sight of Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favour and he stretched out to her the golden sceptre which he was holding. Thereupon Esther approached and touched the head of the sceptre. 3 Then the king said to her, 'What is it, Queen Esther? Whatever you ask of me, up to half my kingdom, shall be given to you.' 'If it please your majesty,' said Esther, 'will you come today, sire, and Haman with you, to a banquet which I have made ready for you?' 5 The king gave orders that Haman

should be fetched quickly, so that Esther's wish might be fulfilled; and the king and Haman went to the banquet which she had prepared. Over the wine the king said to Esther, 'Whatever you ask of me shall be given to you. Whatever you request of me, up to half my kingdom, it shall be done.' Esther said in answer, 'What I ask and request of you is this. If I have won your majesty's favour, and if it please you, sire, to give me what I ask and to grant my request, will your majesty and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet which I shall prepare for you both? Tomorrow I will do as your majesty has said.'

So Haman went away that day in good spirits and well pleased with himself. But when he saw Mordecai in attendance at court and how he did not rise nor defer to him, he was filled with rage; but he kept control of himself and went home. Then he sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh and held forth to them about the splendour of his wealth and his many sons, and how the king had promoted him and advanced him above the other officers and courtiers. 'That is not all,' said Haman; 'Queen Esther invited no one but myself to accompany the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and she has invited me again tomorrow with the king. Yet all this means nothing to me so long as I see that Jew Mordecai in attendance at court.' Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, 'Let a gallows seventy-five feet high be set up, and recommend to the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go with the king to the banquet in good spirits.' Haman thought this an excellent plan, and he set up the gallows.

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for security reasons. 14: *Another quarter* seems to be a veiled allusion to God. The question "*Who knows whether . . . ?*" implies that Esther's position is providential. See The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther in the Apocrypha. 16: To *fast* has long been regarded as a pious act which wins divine favor.

5.1-8: *Esther before the king*. 2: The gesture of stretching out to her the golden sceptre is explained in 4.11. 3: *Up to half my kingdom* is gross exaggeration. 4-8: The early banquets with Haman the only guest, and Esther passing up two opportunities to intercede for her people, are literary devices necessary for working out the plot of the story. 8: For additional details, see 6.14; 7.3; 8.5.

5.9-14: *Haman's gallows*. 14: The height of the *gallows* seems exaggerated, unless it was on a high building or hill for all to see. *Haman . . . set up the gallows*, all the while gleefully thinking it was intended for *Mordecai*.



*Haman's downfall and  
Mordecai's triumph*

6 THAT NIGHT SLEEP ELUDED THE KING, so he ordered the chronicle of daily events to be brought; and it was read to him. Therein was recorded that Mordecai had given information about Bigthana and Teresh, the two royal eunuchs among the keepers of the threshold who had plotted to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. Whereupon the king said, 'What honour or dignity has been conferred on Mordecai for this?' The king's courtiers who were in attendance told him that nothing had been done for Mordecai. The king asked, 'Who is that in the court?' Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to recommend to the king that Mordecai should be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for him. The king's servants answered, 'It is Haman standing there'; and the king bade him enter. He came in, and the king said to him, 'What should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour?' Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?' And he said to the king, 'For the man whom the king wishes to honour, let there be brought royal robes which the king himself wears, and a horse which the king rides, with a royal crown upon its head. And let the robes and the horse be delivered to one of the king's most honourable officers, and let him attire the man whom the king wishes to honour and lead him mounted on the horse through the city square, calling out as he goes: "See what is done for the man whom the king wishes to honour."' Then the king said to Haman, 'Fetch the robes and the horse at once, as you have said, and do all this for Mordecai the Jew who is in attendance at court. Leave nothing undone of all that you have said.' So

Haman took the robes and the horse, attired Mordecai, and led him mounted through the city square, calling out as he went: 'See what is done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.'

Then Mordecai returned to court and Haman hurried off home mourning, with head uncovered. He told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. And this was the reply of his friends and his wife Zeresh: 'If Mordecai, in face of whom your fortunes begin to fall, belongs to the Jewish race, you will not get the better of him; he will see your utter downfall.'

While they were still talking with Haman, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried him away to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. Again on that second day, over the wine, the king said, 'Whatever you ask of me will be given to you, Queen Esther. Whatever you request of me, up to half my kingdom, it shall be done.' Queen Esther answered, 'If I have found favour with your majesty, and if it please your majesty, my request and petition is that my own life and the lives of my people may be spared. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated. If it had been a matter of selling us, men and women alike, into slavery, I should have kept silence; for then our plight would not be such as to injure the king's interests.' Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do such a thing as this?' 'An adversary and an enemy,' said Esther, 'this wicked Haman.' At that Haman was dumb-founded in the presence of the king and the queen. The king rose from the banquet in a rage and went to the garden of the pavilion, while Haman remained where he was, to plead for

6.1-14: **Haman's downfall and Mordecai's triumph.** 1: The insomnia of kings, a common theme in eastern literature, is here treated comically. 5: That *Haman was standing there* (during the night!) is a necessity of the plot. 8: The bestowal of *royal robes* was common in ancient times; see Gen.41.42. Horses wearing royal crowns are pictured on Persian monuments. 13: The *reply* to Haman here is another reference to Providence; see 4.14 n. 14: It was Oriental custom for the guests to be escorted.

7.1-10: **Haman's end.** 4: *Sold*: a reference to the bribe (3.9-10); Esther could tolerate *slavery*

his life with Queen Esther; for he saw that in the king's mind his fate was determined. When the king returned from the garden to the banqueting hall, Haman had flung himself across the couch on which Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, 'Will he even assault the queen here in my presence?' No sooner had the words left the king's mouth than Haman hid his face in despair.<sup>f</sup> Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, 'At Haman's house stands the gallows, seventy-five feet high, which he himself has prepared for Mordecai, who once served the king well.' 'Hang Haman on it', said the king. So they hanged him on the gallows that he himself had prepared for Mordecai. After that the king's rage abated.

On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, enemy of the Jews; and Mordecai came into the king's presence, for Esther had told him how he was related to her. Then the king took off his signet-ring, which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's house.

Once again Esther spoke before the king, falling at his feet in tears and pleading with him to avert the calamity planned by Haman the Agagite and to frustrate his plot against the Jews. The king stretched out the golden sceptre to Esther, and she rose and stood before the king, and said, 'May it please your majesty: if I have found favour with you, and if the proposal seems right to your majesty and I have won your approval, let a writ be issued to recall the letters which Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite wrote in pursuance of his plan to destroy the Jews in all the royal provinces. For how can I bear to see the calamity which is coming upon

my race? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my family?' Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'I have given Haman's house to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows, because he threatened the lives of the Jews. Now you shall issue a writ concerning the Jews in my name, in whatever terms you think fit, and seal it with the royal signet; for an order written in the name of the king and sealed with the royal signet cannot be revoked.'

And so, on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month Sivan, the king's secretaries were summoned; and a writ was issued to the Jews, exactly as Mordecai directed, and to the satraps, the governors, and the officers in the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, for each province in its own script and for each people in their own language, and also for the Jews in their own script and language. The writ was drawn up in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet, and letters were sent by mounted couriers riding on horses from the royal stables. By these letters the king granted permission to the Jews in every city to unite and defend themselves, and to destroy, slay, and exterminate the whole strength of any people or province which might attack them, women and children too, and to plunder their possessions, throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready for that day, the day of vengeance on their enemies. So the couriers,

<sup>f</sup> Haman . . . despair: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they covered Haman's face.

occasioned by the bribe, but to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated was intolerable. 9: *Mordecai, who once served the king well*: Haman has tried to kill a benefactor of the king, and hence all the more merits hanging.

8.1-17: The calamity averted. 2: The transfer of the *signet-ring* gives Mordecai the same powers as Haman had; see 3.10 n. 5: Esther emphasizes that the edict against the Jews was from Haman, not the king. 8-17: Note the general similarity of this passage to 3.9-4.3. The wording in 9-14 is very similar to 3.12-15; the main difference is that it is aimed at the enemies of the Jews. A Persian king would hardly have allowed such a slaughter of his people; this section is not history but theology, legend, emphasizing retributive justice. 9: *Sivan* is May-June. 10: Greek writers mention the *horses* of the Persian postal system. 12: The date is given precisely

mounted on their royal horses, were dispatched post-haste at the king's urgent command; and the decree was issued also in Susa the capital city.

15 Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes of violet and white, wearing a great golden crown and a cloak of fine linen and purple, and all the city  
16 of Susa shouted for joy. For the Jews there was light and joy, gladness and  
17 honour. In every province and every city reached by the royal command and decree, there was joy and gladness for the Jews, feasting and holiday. And many of the peoples of the land professed themselves Jews, because fear of the Jews had seized them.

9 ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE twelfth month, the month Adar, the time came for the king's command and his edict to be carried out. The very day on which the enemies of the Jews had hoped to gain the upper hand over them was to become the day when the Jews should gain the upper hand over those who hated them. On that day the Jews united in their cities in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to fall upon those who had planned their ruin. No one could resist them, because fear  
3 of them had seized all peoples. All the officers of the provinces, the satraps and the governors, and all the royal officials, aided the Jews, because fear  
4 of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai had become a great personage in the royal palace; his fame had spread throughout all the provinces as the power of the man grew steadily greater.  
5 So the Jews put their enemies to the sword, with great slaughter and destruction; they worked their will on  
6 those who hated them. In Susa, the capital city, the Jews killed five hundred  
7 men and destroyed them; and they killed also Parshandatha, Dalphon and

Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia and Ari-  
datha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and  
9 Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews; but they did not touch the plunder.

That day when the number of those  
11 killed in Susa the capital city came to the notice of the king, he said to Queen  
12 Esther, 'In Susa, the capital city, the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Whatever you ask further will be given to you; whatever more you seek shall be done.' Esther answered him, 'If it please your  
13 majesty, let tomorrow be granted to the Jews in Susa to do according to the edict for today; and let the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hung up on the gallows.' The king gave orders for this  
14 to be done; the edict was issued in Susa and Haman's ten sons were hung up on the gallows. The Jews in Susa  
15 united again on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa; but they did not touch the plunder.

The rest of the Jews in the king's  
16 provinces had united to defend themselves; they took vengeance on<sup>g</sup> their enemies by killing seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they did not touch the plunder. This was on the  
17 thirteenth day of the month Adar, and they rested on the fourteenth day and made that a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa had united on  
18 the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month, and rested on the fifteenth day and made that a day of feasting and joy. This is why isolated Jews who  
19 live in remote villages keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar in joy and feasting, as a holiday on which they send presents of food to one another.

<sup>g</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. got respite from.*

since it helps date the Purim festival. 15: The *crown* is the turban of the vizier. 17: Some interpret the verse to mean conversion to Judaism; some think not conversion, but only association with the Jews took place; see 9.27. Still others regard the verse as just a literary enhancement of the story.

9.1-32: The inauguration of the feast of Purim. 7: In MT manuscripts the names of Haman's sons are written in a column one under the other, a peculiar arrangement (similar to Josh. 12.9-23); the reason is unknown, but may reflect triumphalism. 10: The emphasis here and in vv. 15-16 that *they did not touch the plunder*, despite the permission of 8.11, seems to be a deliberate echo of, and dissent from, 1 Sam.15.9-35, the Agag story, in which Israel took plunder, to their harm. 15-19: These verses explain different customs in the observance of

20 Then Mordecai set these things on record and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, far and near, binding them to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar, year by year, as the days on which the Jews obtained relief from their enemies and as the month which was changed for them from sorrow into joy, from a time of mourning to a holiday. They were to keep them as days of feasting and joy, days for sending presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews undertook to continue the practice that they had begun in accordance with Mordecai's letter. 24 This they did because Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews and had cast lots, Pur as it is called, with intent to crush and destroy them. But when the matter came before the king, he issued written orders that the wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should recoil on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore, these days were named Purim after the word Pur. Accordingly, because of all that was written in this letter, because of all they had seen and 27 experienced in this affair, the Jews resolved and undertook, on behalf of themselves, their descendants, and all who should join them, that they would without fail keep these two days as a yearly festival in the prescribed manner and at the appointed time; that these

days should be remembered and kept, generation after generation, in every family, province, and city, that the days of Purim should always be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should never cease among their descendants.

Queen Esther daughter of Abihail 29 gave full authority in writing to<sup>h</sup> Mordecai the Jew, to confirm this second letter about Purim. Letters 30 wishing peace and security were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of King Ahasuerus, making the observance of these 31 days of Purim at their appointed time binding on them, as Mordecai the Jew<sup>i</sup> had prescribed. In the same way they had prescribed regulations for fasts and lamentations for themselves and their descendants. The command of Esther 32 confirmed these regulations for Purim, and the record is preserved in writing.

King Ahasuerus imposed forced 10 labour on the land and the coasts and islands. All the king's acts of authority 2 and power, and the dignities which he conferred on Mordecai, are written in the annals of the kings of Media and Persia. For Mordecai the Jew was 3 second only to King Ahasuerus; he was a great man among the Jews and was popular with the mass of his countrymen, for he sought the good of his people and promoted the welfare of all their descendants.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. and.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and Queen Esther.

<sup>j</sup> Or and was in friendly relations with all his race.

Purim, city Jews having a two-day celebration but village Jews only one day. 20-32: This summary of how Purim became part of the Jewish religious calendar seems to be an addition to the book. It is comprised of Mordecai's letter (vv. 20-22), the deliberate resolve of the Jews (vv. 23-28), and the confirmatory letter of Esther and Mordecai (vv. 29-32). 31: *Fasts*: the date is not specified here, but the thirteenth of Adar, set by Haman for the pogrom (3.13), naturally suggests itself; this date is known in the Jewish calendar as "the fast of Esther."

10.1-3: *Conclusion*. These verses, also an addition (see 9.20-32 n.), exalt the power of Xerxes and his high elevation of Mordecai.

# THE BOOK OF JOB

In the Book of Job, a gifted poet and theologian examines the problem of a just God allowing the innocent to suffer. While the literary form may be modeled after the Babylonian "discussion literature"—rather than after Greek tragedy, as is sometimes suggested—the story itself possibly derives from an ancient Edomite folktale. External similarities to the Mesopotamian literary works, "The Babylonian Theodicy," "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," and "Man and His God," are worthy of notice, but Job surpasses them in theological depth, human insight, and literary skill.

The structure of the book is as follows: (1) Introduction: a mythological presentation of a meeting in the heavenly court between God and the angels, among whom is Satan (chs. 1–2); (2) Poetic dialogue: the central poem containing three cycles of speeches (chs. 3–31). Into this core have been inserted later additions, namely a hymn on the inaccessibility of Wisdom (ch. 28) and speeches by an extraneous character, Elihu, a spokesman for a later orthodoxy that found the arguments of Job blasphemous (chs. 32–37); (3) Divine resolution (chs. 38–42), including an epilogue (ch. 42).

The poet boldly challenges the Deuteronomist theology that the good man is rewarded with material prosperity and the wicked man punished with temporal suffering. While the merit of this position is acknowledged, the poet creates a dialogue in which Job maintains that man's integrity in the face of disaster must not be sacrificed to social convention, nor even to its established concepts of the deity as upheld by his friends. In the end, Job discovers that his own God as well as that of his friends is too small. Nevertheless, because of his integrity, Job is exonerated and stands before God as intercessor for his friends. And perhaps the key to the book is the view that the suffering righteous man stands in the presence of God.

The date of the writing is most uncertain. The core dialogue (chs. 3.1–31.40; 38.1–42.6) was possibly recorded from older material in the sixth or fifth century B.C. The Elihu material (32.1–37.24) is often viewed as a later addition, and the present prologue (chs. 1–2) regarded as recorded even later.

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## Prologue

1 **T**HERE LIVED IN THE LAND OF UZ A man of blameless and upright life named Job, who feared God and

2 set his face against wrongdoing. He had seven sons and three daughters;

3 and he owned seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred asses, with a large number of slaves. Thus Job was the greatest man in all the East.

4 Now his sons used to foregather and

give, each in turn, a feast in his own house; and they used to send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. Then, when a round of feasts

5 was finished, Job sent for his children and sanctified them, rising early in the morning and sacrificing a whole-offering for each of them; for he thought that they might somehow have sinned against God and committed blasphemy in their hearts. This he always did.

The day came when the members of

6 the court of heaven took their places

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1.1–2.13: The prologue. Job, a devout and prosperous man, is tested for his integrity by calamity and disaster. 1: *Uz* probably means Edom, although northern Transjordan is possible (see Gen.36.28 and Jer.25.20 for the former and Gen.10.23; 22.21, and 1 Chr.1.17 for the latter). *Blameless*: lit. whole; the import is not sinless perfection. The etymology of the name Job can be "inveterate foe" or else the "penitent one," thus indicating the role of Job and the content of the book. 2: A family consisting of *seven sons and three daughters* (see Ruth 4.15) was deemed ideal. 3: The wealth described is that of a seminomadic sheikh (note the absence of such items as precious stones or metal). 4: *The feast* is possibly to be understood as an annual festival celebration. 5: *Sanctified*: ceremonial removal of ritual uncleanness in preparation for worship; see Exod.19.15; Lev.11.39–47; Num.11.18. 6: For the ancients, human events were decided in divine councils; see 1 Kgs.22.19–22; Isa.6.8. *Satan*, lit. "adversary," or "accuser," is apparently a legal term (Ps.109.6), and not yet the proper name for an evil being it was to become later. This title and function possibly derive from the Persian secret police and his duties would compare to those of a district attorney in the United States. He is

in the presence of the LORD, and  
 7 Satan<sup>a</sup> was there among them. The  
 LORD asked him where he had been.  
 'Ranging over the earth', he said, 'from  
 8 end to end.' Then the LORD asked  
 Satan, 'Have you considered my servant  
 Job? You will find no one like him on  
 earth, a man of blameless and upright  
 life, who fears God and sets his face  
 9 against wrongdoing.' Satan answered  
 the LORD, 'Has not Job good reason  
 10 to be God-fearing? Have you not  
 hedged him round on every side with  
 your protection, him and his family  
 and all his possessions? Whatever he  
 does you have blessed, and his herds  
 11 have increased beyond measure. But  
 stretch out your hand and touch all  
 that he has, and then he will curse you  
 12 to your face.' Then the LORD said to  
 Satan, 'So be it. All that he has is in  
 your hands; only Job himself you must  
 not touch.' And Satan left the LORD's  
 presence.

13 When the day came that Job's sons  
 and daughters were eating and drinking  
 14 in the eldest brother's house, a mes-  
 senger came running to Job and said,  
 'The oxen were ploughing and the  
 15 asses were grazing near them, when the  
 Sabaeans swooped down and carried  
 them off, after putting the herdsmen  
 to the sword; and I am the only one to  
 16 escape and tell the tale.' While he was  
 still speaking, another messenger  
 arrived and said, 'God's fire flashed  
 from heaven. It struck the sheep and  
 the shepherds and burnt them up; and  
 I am the only one to escape and tell  
 17 the tale.' While he was still speaking,  
 another arrived and said, 'The Chal-  
 daeans, three bands of them, have made  
 a raid on the camels and carried them  
 off, after putting the drivers to the  
 sword; and I am the only one to escape  
 18 and tell the tale.' While this man was  
 speaking, yet another arrived and said,  
 'Your sons and daughters were eating

and drinking in the eldest brother's  
 house, when suddenly a whirlwind 19  
 swept across from the desert and struck  
 the four corners of the house, and it  
 fell on the young people and killed  
 them; and I am the only one to escape  
 and tell the tale.' At this Job stood up 20  
 and rent his cloak; then he shaved his  
 head and fell prostrate on the ground,  
 saying: 21

Naked I came from the womb,  
 naked I shall return whence I came.  
 The LORD gives and the LORD takes  
 away;  
 blessed be the name of the LORD.

Throughout all this Job did not sin; 22  
 he did not charge God with unreason.

Once again the day came when the 2  
 members of the court of heaven took  
 their places in the presence of the LORD,  
 and Satan was there among them. The 2  
 LORD asked him where he had been.  
 'Ranging over the earth', he said, 'from  
 end to end.' Then the LORD asked 3  
 Satan, 'Have you considered my servant  
 Job? You will find no one like him on  
 earth, a man of blameless and upright  
 life, who fears God and sets his face  
 against wrongdoing. You incited me to  
 ruin him without a cause, but his  
 integrity is still unshaken.' Satan 4  
 answered the LORD, 'Skin for skin!  
 There is nothing the man will grudge  
 to save himself. But stretch out your 5  
 hand and touch his bone and his flesh,  
 and see if he will not curse you to your  
 face.'

Then the LORD said to Satan, 'So be 6  
 it. He is in your hands; but spare his  
 life.' And Satan left the LORD's 7  
 presence, and he smote Job with run-  
 ning sores from head to foot, so that 8  
 he took a piece of a broken pot to  
 scratch himself as he sat among the  
 ashes. Then his wife said to him, 'Are 9

<sup>a</sup> Or the adversary.

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the enemy of man, not of God. 10: *Hedged him round*: the barrier of thorns would keep adversity away from Job's territory (see Hos.2.6 for the figure). 15: *Sabaeans*: nomads from Arabia. 16: The author makes skillful use of a refrain, "*I am the only one . . .*" here and in the following verses. *God's fire*: lightning. 17: *Chaldaeans*: the biblical word for Babylonians. The import here is wandering marauders, not invaders. 19: *Whirlwind*: a wind much more violent than the sirocco (*hamsin*). 21: *The womb* is likened to mother earth. 2.4: *Skin for skin*: a proverbial expression meaning "value for value." 7: It is impossible to determine the illness; some sort of skin boil is suggested. 9: Death was not an immediate result of cursing God: the

- you still unshaken in your integrity? Cursed be it by those whose magic binds even the monster of the deep, who are ready to tame Leviathan himself with spells. May no star shine out in its twilight; may it wait for a dawn that never comes, nor ever see the eyelids of the morning, because it did not shut the doors of the womb that bore me and keep trouble away from my sight. Why was I not still-born, why did I not die when I came out of the womb? Why was I ever laid on my mother's knees or put to suck at her breasts? Why was I not hidden like an untimely birth, like an infant that has not lived to see the light? For then I should be lying in the quiet grave, asleep in death, at rest, with kings and their ministers who built themselves palaces, with princes rich in gold who filled their houses with silver. There the wicked man chafes no more, there the tired labourer rests; the captive too finds peace there and hears no taskmaster's voice; high and low are there, even the slave, free from his master. Why should the sufferer be born to see the light? Why is life given to men who find it so bitter? They wait for death but it does not come,

*Job's complaint to God*

- 3<sup>1-2</sup> After this Job broke silence and cursed the day of his birth:
- 3 Perish the day when I was born and the night which said, 'A man is conceived'!
- 4 May that day turn to darkness; may God above not look for it, nor light of dawn shine on it.
- 5 May blackness sully it, and murk and gloom, cloud smother that day, swift darkness eclipse its sun.
- 6 Blind darkness swallow up that night; count it not among the days of the year, reckon it not in the cycle of the months.
- 7 That night, may it be barren for ever, no cry of joy be heard in it.

*b Verse 16 transposed to follow verse 12.*

hope here is that death may soon follow. **11:** *Teman*: see Jer.49.7 n. *Shuah*: perhaps Edom or Arabia (see Gen.25.2; 1 Chr.1.32). *Naamah*: an unknown place (but see Josh.15.41).

**3.1-26:** *Job's complaint to God*. Two subtle links unite the poetry with the folk narrative, namely the curse (which is against Job's day of birth rather than God) and an ironic reference to God's hedging in of Job on all sides (1.10), now no longer a sign of favor (v. 23). **1:** Compare Jer.20.14-18. **8:** Astrologers and magicians were reputed to have dominance, by means of incantations, over the dragon of chaos, *Leviathan*; the mythological monster, mentioned frequently in Canaanite literature, plays a prominent role in Israelite poetry as the embodiment of disorder (Job 7.12; 9.13 n.; 26.13; Pss.74.13-14; 104.26; Isa.27.1, etc.). In the Babylonian creation story, the god Marduk slays the monster. **12:** The repeated *why* (vv. 12,16,20,23) shows Job confused over the meaning of his suffering but not questioning the justice of God. His friends raise that issue (4.7-9). **13:** The positive attitude toward Sheol (see 7.9 n.) as pro-

they seek it more eagerly than<sup>c</sup>  
 hidden treasure.  
 22 They are glad when they reach the  
 tomb,  
 and when they come to the grave  
 they exult.  
 23 Why should a man be born to  
 wander blindly,  
 hedged in by God on every side?  
 24 My sighing is all my food,  
 and groans pour from me in a  
 torrent.  
 25 Every terror that haunted me has  
 caught up with me,  
 and all that I feared has come upon  
 me.  
 26 There is no peace of mind nor quiet  
 for me;  
 I chafe in torment and have no rest.

*First cycle of speeches*

4 Then Eliphaz the Temanite began:

2 If one ventures to speak with you,  
 will you lose patience?  
 For who could hold his tongue any  
 longer?  
 3 Think how once you encouraged  
 those who faltered,  
 how you braced feeble arms,  
 4 how a word from you upheld the  
 stumblers  
 and put strength into weak knees.  
 5 But now that adversity comes upon  
 you, you lose patience;  
 it touches you, and you are unmanned.  
 6 Is your religion no comfort to you?  
 Does your blameless life give you no  
 hope?  
 7 For consider, what innocent man has  
 ever perished?

Where have you seen the upright  
 destroyed?  
 This I know, that those who plough 8  
 mischief and sow trouble  
 reap as they have sown;  
 they perish at the blast of God 9  
 and are shrivelled by the breath of  
 his nostrils.  
 The roar of the lion, the whimpering 10  
 of his cubs, fall silent;  
 the teeth of the young lions are  
 broken;  
 the lion perishes for lack of prey 11  
 and the whelps of the lioness are  
 abandoned.  
 A word stole into my ears, 12  
 and they caught the whisper of it;  
 in the anxious visions of the night, 13  
 when a man sinks into deepest sleep,  
 terror seized me and shuddering; 14  
 the trembling of my body frightened  
 me.  
 A wind brushed my face 15  
 and made the hairs bristle on my  
 flesh;  
 and a figure stood there whose shape 16  
 I could not discern,  
 an apparition loomed before me,  
 and I heard the sound of a low  
 voice:  
 'Can mortal man be more righteous 17  
 than God,  
 or the creature purer than his Maker?  
 If God mistrusts his own servants 18  
 and finds his messengers at fault,  
 how much more those that dwell in 19  
 houses whose walls are clay,  
 whose foundations are dust,  
 which can be crushed like a bird's  
 nest

*c Or seek it among . . .*

viding anticipated rest is in contrast to the Semite's usual fear of the underworld and underlines Job's present misery. 23: *Hedged in*: see 3.1–26 n.

4.1–14.22: *First cycle of speeches*.

4.1–5.27: *Eliphaz's first speech*. Gently Eliphaz broaches the central ideas that will recur throughout the friends' speeches: man cannot be more righteous than God, and even celestial beings have no claim to purity in God's sight. 2: Note the courtesy here. "The Babylonian Theodicy," a somewhat similar work, is replete with politeness, even while the argument is vehement. Eliphaz is not above harsh innuendo (vv. 5–7) and even open attack (vv. 8–9). 7: The view expressed that the righteous do not suffer is an implied slur, a vicious one, and Job is later (12.4) portrayed responding to it. (See the similar formulations in Ps.37.25, Prov. 12.22, Eccles.2.10, etc.) 12–21: The appeal to subjective *visions of the night* is a subtle admission that the Wisdom tradition which drew its conclusions from empirical evidence had no cogent answer to suffering. The *visions* are in the tradition of professional prophecy which was at this time in disrepute. See Ezek.13.6–16. 18: *Messengers*: angels. 19: *Houses*: the human body. In later literature, e.g. Wis.9.15, there is development of the idea in this verse, there influenced by



20	or torn down between dawn and dark, how much more shall such men perish outright and unheeded,	In the daylight they run into darkness, and grope at midday as though it were night.	14
21	<sup>d</sup> die, without ever finding wisdom?	He saves the destitute from their greed, and the needy from the grip of the strong;	15
5	Call if you will; is there any to answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?	so the poor hope again, and the unjust are sickened.	16
2	The fool is destroyed by his own angry passions, and the end of childish resentment is death.	Happy the man whom God rebukes! therefore do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.	17
3	I have seen it for myself: a fool uprooted, his home in sudden ruin about him, <sup>e</sup>	For, though he wounds, he will bind up; the hands that smite will heal.	18
4	his children past help, browbeaten in court with none to save them.	You may meet disaster six times, and he will save you;	19
5	<sup>f</sup> Their rich possessions are snatched from them; what they have harvested others hungrily devour;	seven times, and no harm shall touch you. In time of famine he will save you from death,	20
6	the stronger man seizes it from the panniers, panting, thirsting for their wealth.	in battle from the sword. You will be shielded from the lash of slander, <sup>h</sup>	21
6	Mischief does not grow out of the soil nor trouble spring from the earth;	and when violence comes you need not fear.	22
7	man is born to trouble, as surely as birds fly <sup>g</sup> upwards.	You will laugh at violence and starvation and have no need to fear wild beasts;	23
8	For my part, I would make my petition to God and lay my cause before him, who does great and unsearchable things, marvels without number.	for you have a covenant with the stones to spare your fields, and the weeds have been constrained to leave you at peace.	24
10	He gives rain to the earth and sends water on the fields;	You will know that all is well with your household, you will look round your home and find nothing amiss;	25
11	he raises the lowly to the heights, the mourners are uplifted by victory;	you will know, too, that your descendants will be many and your offspring like grass, thick upon the earth.	26
12	he frustrates the plots of the crafty, and they win no success,	You will come in sturdy old age to the grave	26
13	he traps the cunning in their craftiness, and the schemers' plans are thrown into confusion.		

<sup>d</sup> Prob. rds.: transposing Their rich possessions are  
snatched from them to follow 5. 4.

<sup>e</sup> ruin about him: prob. rds.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>f</sup> Line transposed from 4. 21. g Or as sparks shoot.

<sup>h</sup> from . . . slander: or when slander is rife.

strands of Greek thought in which anything material was devalued. 5.1: *Holy ones*: members of the heavenly court; see 1.6 n. 2: This verse quotes or paraphrases a proverb like 29.11. 4: The word translated *court* means "gates"; justice was administered at the gates of the city. 17: Divine *discipline* of man, *musar* in Heb., is emphasized by Elihu in 33.14–30; 36.7–15. 18: The theme of discipline as a means of education and correction is frequent in Wisdom literature; see Ecclus.4.17; 32.14. The *Almighty* himself will heal Job if he does *not reject* his suffering as a correction for his evil-doing. 19: *Six . . . seven*: a frequent numerical device meaning "totality." It originates from the pattern of poetic parallelism. 23: Job's acceptance of correction will insure a *covenant*, i.e. harmony, with the *stones* and *weeds* since they too obey God. Stones

	as sheaves come in due season to the threshing-floor.	Is my strength the strength of stone, or is my flesh bronze? Oh how shall I find help within myself?	12 13
27	We have inquired into all this, and so it is; this we have heard, and you may know it for the truth.	The power to aid myself is put out of my reach.	
6	Then Job answered:	Devotion is due from his friends to one who despairs and loses faith in the Almighty;	14
2	O that the grounds for my resentment might be weighed, and my misfortunes set with them on the scales!	but my brothers have been treacherous as a mountain stream, like the channels of streams that run dry,	15
3	For they would outweigh the sands of the sea: what wonder if my words are wild? <sup>i</sup>	which turn dark with ice or are hidden with piled-up snow; or they vanish the moment they are in spate,	16 17
4	The arrows of the Almighty find their mark in me, and their poison soaks into my spirit; God's onslaughts wear me away.	dwindle in the heat and are gone. Then the caravans, winding hither and thither,	18
5	Does the wild ass bray when he has grass or the ox low when he has fodder?	go up into the wilderness and perish; <sup>k</sup>	
6	Can a man eat tasteless food unseasoned with salt, or find any flavour in the juice of mallows?	the caravans of Tema look for their waters, travelling merchants of Sheba hope for them;	19
7	Food that should nourish me sticks in my throat, and my bowels rumble with an echoing sound.	but they are disappointed, for all their confidence, they reach them only to be balked. So treacherous have you now been to me: <sup>l</sup>	20 21
8	O that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for:	you felt dismay and were afraid. Did I ever say, 'Give me this or that; open your purses to save my life; rescue me from my enemy;	22 23
9	that he would be pleased to crush me, to snatch me away with his hand and cut me off!	ransom me out of the hands of ruthless men'?	
10	For that would bring me relief, and in the face of unsparing anguish I would leap for joy. <sup>j</sup>	Tell me plainly, and I will listen in silence;	24
11	Have I the strength to wait? What end have I to expect, that I should be patient?		

<sup>i</sup> what . . . wild?: or therefore words fail me.

<sup>j</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

<sup>k</sup> Or and are lost.

<sup>l</sup> So . . . to me: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

are the bane of the Palestinian fields whose soil is very shallow. 27: Eliphaz here reinforces his earlier mention of God's way and discipline (12–17) by an appeal to what he has learned from experience.

6.1–7.21: Job's answer. His distress has come from God, unjustly. He will not abstain from expressing his bitterness. 3–12: Job's *wild words* are as involuntary and physical as the lowing of an ox when hungry, for his flesh is not *bronze*. 4: While fire *arrows* were used in the Ancient Near East, there is no OT evidence of poison arrows outside this verse. The metaphor of God as an archer occurs frequently (Deut.32.23; Ezek.5.16; Ps.7.13). 15–20: Streams in Palestine rush into the plain filled with water from *mountain* rain and *snow* but quickly lose themselves as they *run dry* in the *heat* and sand of the desert. One who follows their banks in security suddenly finds himself without water. 22–23: Job does not ask his friend to take any risks to

	show me where I have erred.	Thou wilt behold me no more with a	8
25	How harsh are the words of the upright man!	seeing eye;	
	What do the arguments of wise men <sup>m</sup> prove?	under thy very eyes I shall disappear.	
		As clouds break up and disperse,	9
26	Do you mean to argue about words or to sift the utterance of a man past hope?	so he that goes down to Sheol never comes back;	
		he never returns home again,	10
		and his place will know him no more. <sup>r</sup>	
27	Would you assail an orphan <sup>n</sup> ? Would you hurl yourselves on a friend?	But I will not hold my peace;	11
		I will speak out in the distress of my mind	
28	So now, I beg you, turn and look at me:	and complain in the bitterness of my soul.	
	am I likely to lie to your faces?	Am I the monster of the deep, am I	12
29	Think again, let me have no more injustice;	the sea-serpent,	
	think again, for my integrity is in question.	that thou settest a watch over me?	
		When I think that my bed will	13
30	Do I ever give voice to injustice? Does my sense not warn me when my words are wild?	comfort me,	
		that sleep will relieve my complaining,	
		thou dost terrify me with dreams	14
7	Has not man hard service on earth, and are not his days like those of a hired labourer,	and affright me with visions.	
	2 like those of a slave longing for the shade	I would rather be choked outright;	15
	or a servant kept waiting for his wages?	I would prefer death to all my sufferings.	
		I am in despair, I would not go on	16
3	So months of futility are my portion, troubled nights are my lot.	living;	
		leave me alone, for my life is but a vapour.	
4	When I lie down, I think, 'When will it be day that I may rise?'	What is man that thou makest much	17
	When the evening grows long and I lie down,	of him	
	I do nothing but toss till morning twilight.	and turnest thy thoughts towards him,	
		only to punish him morning by	18
5	My body is infested with worms, and scabs cover my skin. <sup>o</sup>	morning	
		or to test him every hour of the day?	
6	My days are swifter than a shuttle <sup>p</sup> and come to an end as the thread runs out. <sup>q</sup>	Wilt thou not look away from me for	19
		an instant?	
		Wilt thou not let me be while I swallow my spittle?	
		If I have sinned, how do I injure	20
		thee,	
7	Remember, my life is but a breath of wind;		
	I shall never again see good days.		

*m* wise men: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

*n* Or a blameless man.

*o* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds it is cracked and discharging.*

*p* Or a fleeting odour. *q* as . . . out: or without hope.

*r* Or and he will not be noticed any more in his place.

*save his life*, he asks only for compassion. 26–27: Job accuses his friends of being heartless with a man in despair and of a power play against an *orphan*, a helpless *friend*. 7.1–6: Job universalizes his experience. 1: *Service*: the image seems to derive from military duty. 6: As a shuttle runs out of thread, so Job's life is being emptied of hope. 9: *Sheol*: the netherworld. 12: Job, here addressing God, in effect is saying: "Am I a threat to divine order like the chaos *monster* (see 3.8 n) who requires constant surveillance?" 17–18: The traditional sublime celebration of God's concern for man (see Ps.8) here becomes a parody, for Job wishes God to abstain from taking thought of him; beneficent providence has been replaced by divine harassment. 19–21: Job finds even God's gaze oppressive. He declares that it is unworthy of God to punish a fragile being like man, even though he be guilty, since he does not *injure* God. 20: *Watcher of the hearts of men* is meant as a rebuke, not as adoration.

	thou watcher of the hearts of men? Why hast thou made me thy butt, and why have I become thy target?	While they are still in flower and not ready to cut, <sup>s</sup> they wither earlier than <sup>t</sup> any green plant.	12
21	Why dost thou not pardon my offence and take away my guilt? But now I shall lie down in the grave; seek me, and I shall not be.	Such is the fate of all who forget God; the godless man's life-thread breaks off; his confidence is gossamer, and the ground of his trust a spider's web.	13
8	Then Bildad the Shuhite began:	He leans against his house but it does not stand; he clutches at it but it does not hold firm.	14
2	How long will you say such things, the long-winded ramblings of an old man?	His is the lush growth of a plant in the sun, pushing out shoots over the garden; but its roots become entangled in a stony patch	15
3	Does God pervert judgement? Does the Almighty pervert justice?	and run against a bed of rock.	16
4	Your sons sinned against him, so he left them to be victims of their own iniquity.	Then someone uproots it from its place, which <sup>u</sup> disowns it and says, 'I have never known you.'	17
5	If only you will seek God betimes and plead for the favour of the Almighty,	That is how its life withers away, and other plants spring up from the earth.	18
6	if you are innocent and upright, then indeed will he watch over you and see your just intent fulfilled.		19
7	Then, though your beginnings were humble, your end will be great.	Be sure, God will not spurn the blameless man, nor will he grasp the hand of the wrongdoer.	20
8	Inquire now of older generations and consider the experience of their fathers;	He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and shouts of joy will be on your lips;	21
9	for we ourselves are of yesterday and are transient; our days on earth are a shadow.	your enemies shall be wrapped in confusion, and the tents of the wicked shall vanish away.	22
10	Will not they speak to you and teach you and pour out the wisdom of their hearts?		
11	Can rushes grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish without water?		

<sup>s</sup> and . . . cut: or they are surely cut.

<sup>t</sup> Or wither like . . .

<sup>u</sup> Or and.

**8.1-22: Bildad's first speech**, an appeal not to his own experience, but to that of the race of man. **4:** Compare the accusation against Job's children with their innocence in 1.4-5. **5-7:** Picking up Job's mention of God's watchfulness (7.19), Bildad assures Job that innocence coupled with repentance will lead to restoration. **8-10:** Lessons, distilled from experience, that have stood the test of time and the scrutiny of the ancients are more worthy to be considered *wisdom* than the subjective experience that is still in flux like a *shadow*. **8-9:** See 8.1-22 n. Lessons derived from experience are preserved by the wise. **11-13:** The law of retribution is as certain as the order of nature. **14-19:** Neither the root nor the fruit, i.e. house, of a wicked man's life has sufficient substance to give security. **17:** The metaphor of plants growing in stony ground is also used in Mk.4.3-9. **20:** To *grasp the hand* is a symbol of divine election to a favored position and of support in it; see Isa.42.6; 51.18. **21-22:** God will fill your mouth with laughter . . . and the tents of the wicked shall vanish away. Thus, after his earlier harsh criticism of Job, Bildad softens his tone and assures him that God will be just after all if he, Job, will change his attitude.

- 9 Then Job answered:
- 2 Indeed this I know for the truth,  
that no man can win his case against  
God.
- 3 If a man chooses to argue with him,  
God will not answer one question  
in a thousand.<sup>v</sup>
- 4 He is wise, he is powerful;  
what man has stubbornly resisted him  
and survived?
- 5 It is God who moves mountains,  
giving them no rest,  
turning them over in his wrath;  
6 who makes the earth start from its  
place  
so that its pillars are convulsed;  
7 who commands the sun's orb not to  
rise  
and shuts up the stars under his seal;  
8 who by himself spread out the  
heavens  
and trod on the sea-monster's back;<sup>w</sup>  
9 who made Aldebaran and Orion,  
the Pleiades and the circle of the  
southern stars;  
10 who does great and unsearchable  
things,  
marvels without number.
- 11 He passes by me, and I do not see  
him;<sup>x</sup>  
he moves on his way undiscerned by  
me;  
12 if he hurries on, who can bring him  
back?  
Who will ask him what he does?  
13 God does not turn back his wrath;  
the partisans of Rahab lie prostrate  
at his feet.
- 14 How much less can I answer him  
or find words to dispute with him?  
Though I am right, I get no answer, 15  
though I plead with my accuser for  
mercy.  
If I summoned him to court and he 16  
responded,  
I do not believe that he would listen  
to my plea—  
for he bears hard upon me for a 17  
trifle  
and rains blows on me without  
cause;  
he leaves me no respite to recover 18  
my breath  
but fills me with bitter thoughts.  
If the appeal is to force, see how 19  
strong he is;  
if to justice, who can compel him to  
give me a hearing?  
Though I am right, he condemns me 20  
out of my own mouth;  
though I am blameless, he twists my  
words.  
Blameless, I say; of myself 21  
I reckon nothing, I hold my life cheap.  
But it is all one; therefore I say, 22  
'He destroys blameless and wicked  
alike.'  
When a sudden flood brings death, 23  
he mocks the plight of the innocent.  
The land is given over to the power 24  
of the wicked,  
and the eyes of its judges are  
blindfold.<sup>x</sup>
- My days have been swifter than a 25  
runner,

<sup>v</sup> If a man . . . thousand: or If God is pleased to argue with him, man cannot answer one question in a thousand.

<sup>w</sup> Or on the crests of the waves.

<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds if not he, then who?

9.1–10.22: Job's response. The praise of God's majesty (5–10) gives way (9.11–10.22) to an accusation of divine malice of intent; Job feels the necessity (9.33–35) of calling in an arbitrator between himself and God. 3: The phrase "one in a thousand" is a hyperbole; see also Eccles. 7.28. 5–10: The so-called "doxologies" in Amos 4.13; 5.8–9; 9.5–6 are strikingly similar to this hymn. 5: *Move mountains*: earthquake. These are often described as accompanying a theophany, e.g. Judg.5.4. 6: *Pillars*: the seven columns supporting the cosmic house (see Prov.9.1). 7: The *sun's orb* does *not* rise and the *stars* are *under a seal* at God's command in an overcast sky. 8: Note Tfn. w, "crests of the waves." 9: The precise identity of these constellations is uncertain. 10: See 5.9. Job's praise of God's grandeur here seems to surpass that of Eliphaz in a similar hymn in 5.9–16. 11–12: God cannot be accosted or called into question in any way. 13: *Rahab*: in folklore the mythological ocean-chaos monster, elsewhere called Leviathan or Tannin, slain by the deity (compare 26.12; Isa.51.9; Ps.89.10). In Isa.30.7 and Ps.87.4 Rahab and Egypt are identified. 14–20: An imaginary courtroom, with God pictured as judge and prosecuting attorney. 15: *Right*: innocent. That is, even when the verdict of innocence is pronounced, Job must beg for mercy. 19: Here the crucial point is made that God is a law unto himself (Jer.12.1). 20–24: These bitter verses indict God's governing of the universe as callous indifference, if not malevolence. Job here abandons the basic premise of all ancient wisdom, namely, an order sustained by the Creator. 20: Job, despite his innocence,

	they have slipped away and seen no prosperity;	or dost thou see as mortal man sees?	
26	they have raced by like reed-built skiffs,	Are thy days as those of a mortal	5
	swift as vultures swooping on carrion.	or thy years as the life of a man,	
27	If I think, 'I will forget my griefs,	that thou lookest for guilt in me	6
	I will show a cheerful face and smile',	and dost seek in me for sin,	
28	I tremble in every nerve; <sup>y</sup>	though thou knowest that I am	7
	I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.	guiltless	
29	If I am to be accounted guilty,	and have none to save me from thee?	
	why do I labour in vain?	'Thy hands gave me shape and made	8
30	Though I wash myself with soap	me;	
	or cleanse my hands with lye,	and dost thou at once turn and	
31	thou wilt thrust me into the mud	destroy me?	
	and my clothes will make me loathsome.	Remember that thou didst knead me	9
		like clay;	
		and wouldst thou turn me back into	
		dust?	
32	He is not a man as I am, that I can answer him	Didst thou not pour me out like milk	10
	or that we can confront one another in court.	and curdle me like cheese,	
		clothe me with skin and flesh	11
		and knit me together with bones and sinews?	
33	If only there were one to arbitrate between us	Thou hast given me life and	12
	and impose his authority on us both,	continuing favour,	
34	so that God might take his rod from my back,	and thy providence has watched over my spirit.	
	and terror of him might not come on me suddenly.	Yet this was the secret purpose of	13
35	I would then speak without fear of him;	thy heart,	
	for I know I am not what I am thought to be.	and I know that this was thy intent:	
		that, if I sinned, thou wouldst be	14
		watching me	
		and wouldst not acquit me of my guilt.	
		If I indeed am wicked, the worse for	15
10	I am sickened of life;	me!	
	I will give free rein to my griefs,	If I am righteous, even so I may lift	
	I will speak out in bitterness of soul.	up my head; <sup>z</sup>	
2	I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me,	if I am proud as a lion, thou dost	16
	but tell me the ground of thy complaint against me.	hunt me down	
3	Dost thou find any advantage in oppression,	and dost confront me again with	
	in spurning the fruit of all thy labour	marvellous power;	
	and smiling on the policy of wicked men?	thou dost renew thy onslaught upon	17
4	Hast thou eyes of flesh	me,	
		and with mounting anger against me	
		bringest fresh forces to the attack.	

<sup>y</sup> Or I am afraid of all that I must suffer.

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds filled with shame and steeped in my affliction.

has no defense against God's power. 30–31: The image of sin as filth is frequent, e.g. Zech.3.3–5. 32–35: Job pleads that he be allowed to present his case as a man without being compared to God and without having to deal with his awesome might and holiness which he acknowledges. An arbitrator could bring this about and Job will call for him again; see 16.21. 34: The divine rod is here no comfort; contrast Ps.23.4. 10.2: *Complaint*: that is, a lawsuit. This figure of speech is common, especially in prophetic literature. 4–7: For God to hunt for sin in Job is to act like another man who sees only the externals without understanding the depths of human life. God should try to understand man's limitations and predicaments. 13–22: God, in granting man life, constantly scrutinizes him for his guilt or innocence. So relentlessly does he punish man that it seems better for man not to have been born—unless he has some respite.

- |    |   |   |          |
|----|---|---|----------|
| 18 | Why didst thou bring me out of the womb?<br>O that I had ended there and no eye had seen me,  | Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.<br>If he passes by, he may keep secret his passing;  | 9<br>10  |
| 19 | that I had been carried from the womb to the grave<br>and were as though I had not been born.   | if he proclaims it, who can turn him back?<br>He surely knows which men are false, and when he sees iniquity, does he not take note of it? <sup>c</sup>                                 | 11       |
| 20 | Is not my life short and fleeting?<br>Let me be, that I may be happy for a moment,  | Can a fool grow wise?<br>can a wild ass's foal be born a man?   | 12       |
| 21 | before I depart to a land of gloom,<br>a land of deep darkness, never to return,  | If only you had directed your heart rightly<br>and spread out your hands to pray to him!  | 13       |
| 22 | a land of gathering shadows, of deepening darkness,<br>lit by no ray of light, <sup>a</sup> dark <sup>b</sup> upon dark.'   | If you have wrongdoing in hand,<br>thrust it away;<br>let no iniquity make its home with you.   | 14       |
| 11 | Then Zophar the Naamathite began:   | Then you could hold up your head without fault,<br>a man of iron, knowing no fear.<br>Then you will forget your trouble;<br>you will remember it only as flood-waters that have passed; | 15<br>16 |
| 2  | Should this spate of words not be answered?<br>Must a man of ready tongue be always right?  | life will be lasting, bright as noonday,<br>and darkness will be turned to morning.   | 17       |
| 3  | Is your endless talk to reduce men to silence?<br>Are you to talk nonsense and no one rebuke you?   | You will be confident, because there is hope;<br>sure of protection, you will lie down in confidence; <sup>d</sup>  | 18       |
| 4  | You claim that your opinions are sound;<br>you say to God, 'I am spotless in thy sight.'  | great men will seek your favour.<br>Blindness will fall on the wicked;<br>the ways of escape are closed to them,<br>and their hope is despair.  | 19<br>20 |
| 5  | But if only he would speak<br>and open his lips to talk with you,<br>and expound to you the secrets of wisdom,<br>for wonderful are its effects!<br>[Know then that God exacts from you less than your sin deserves.] | Then Job answered:  | 12       |
| 7  | Can you fathom the mystery of God,<br>can you fathom the perfection of the Almighty?  | No doubt you are perfect men <sup>e</sup><br>and absolute wisdom is yours!<br>But I have sense as well as you;<br>in nothing do I fall short of you;                                    | 2<br>3   |
| 8  | It is higher than heaven; you can do nothing.<br>It is deeper than Sheol; you can know nothing.   |   |          |

<sup>a</sup> lit. . . light; or a place of disorder.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>c</sup> does . . . of it? or he does not stand aloof.

<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and you will lie down unafraid.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. No doubt you are people.

**11.1-20: Zophar's first speech.** He rebukes Job for presuming to understand God's unfathomable character, and exhorts Job to repent. **11:** In Exod.32.32 and Mal.3.16-18 the mention of divine record keeping is quite explicit. Late Judaism embellished this idea. **12:** Apparently a popular proverb. Some scholars suggest a change of MT, altering *born a man* to "come to learn." **13-20:** The rewards for repentance are great; hence, Job should repent for his sins.

**12.1-14.22: Job's response.** He is no less wise than his friends, for even dumb animals understand shallow matters. To lie on behalf of God is wrong, and will be punished no less. Let God directly confront Job and let Job speak. Man is frail and has only one life to live; why, then, is God so severe? **2: Perfect men and absolute wisdom:** the words are sarcastic. See also 13.2.

	what gifts indeed have you that others have not?	He makes counsellors behave like idiots	17
4	Yet I am a laughing-stock to my friend—	and drives judges mad;	
	a laughing-stock, though I am innocent and blameless, one that called upon God, and he answered. <sup>f</sup>	he looses the bonds imposed by kings	18
		and removes the girdle of office from their waists;	
5	Prosperity and ease look down on misfortune,	he makes priests behave like idiots and overthrows men long in office;	19
	on the blow that fells the man who is already reeling,	those who are trusted he strikes dumb,	20
6	while the marauders' tents are left undisturbed	he takes away the judgement of old men;	
	and those who provoke God live safe and sound. <sup>g</sup>	he heaps scorn on princes	21
		and abates the arrogance of nobles.	
		He leads peoples astray and destroys them,	23 <sup>f</sup>
7	Go and ask the cattle,	he lays them low, and there they lie.	
	ask the birds of the air to inform you,	He takes away their wisdom from the rulers of the nations	24
8	or tell the creatures that crawl to teach you,	and leaves them wandering in a pathless wilderness;	
	and the fishes of the sea to give you instruction.	they grope in the darkness without light	25
9	Who cannot learn from all these that the LORD's own hand has done this?	and are left to wander like a drunkard.	
11 <sup>h</sup>	(Does not the ear test what is spoken	He uncovers mysteries deep in obscurity	22
	as the palate savours food?	and into thick darkness he brings light.	
12	There is wisdom, remember, in age, and long life brings understanding.)		
10	In God's hand are the souls of all that live,	All this I have seen with my own eyes, with my own ears I have heard it, and understood it.	13
	the spirits of all human kind.	What you know, I also know;	2
13	Wisdom and might are his, with him are firmness and understanding.	in nothing do I fall short of you.	
14	If he pulls down, there is no rebuilding;	But for my part I would speak with the Almighty	3
	if he imprisons, there is no release.	and am ready to argue with God,	
15	If he holds up the waters, there is drought;	while you like fools are smearing truth with your falsehoods,	4
	if he lets them go, they turn the land upside down.	stitching a patchwork of lies, one and all.	
16	Strength and success belong to him, deceived and deceiver are his to use.	Ah, if you would only be silent and let silence be your wisdom!	5

<sup>f</sup> Or and he afflicted me.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds He brings it in full measure to whom he will (cp. 21. 17).

<sup>h</sup> Verse 10 transposed to follow verse 12.

<sup>i</sup> Verse 22 transposed to follow verse 25.

4-6: As in society everywhere it is much easier to make a scapegoat of a helpless person for some trivial fault than to confront a powerful person for a serious wrong, 7-9: Job observes that such profound knowledge as his visitors have shown is known to the lowest creatures. 9: LORD: Nowhere else in Job (except at 28.28) does the poetry use the divine name Yahweh, whereas the prose prologue and epilogue employ it regularly. *Hand has done this*: compare Isa.41.20. 12: Some interpreters regard this not as a statement but as an ironic question: "Is there wisdom in old age, and does long life bring understanding?" 10,13-25: The fate which God decrees for man or nations is not subject to alteration, and his causality is all-pervasive. 13.5: In Egyptian



- 6 Now listen to my arguments  
and attend while I put my case.
- 7 Is it on God's behalf that you speak  
so wickedly,  
or in his defence that you allege what  
is false?
- 8 Must you take God's part,  
or put his case for him?
- 9 Will all be well when he examines  
you?  
Will you quibble with him as you  
quibble with a man?
- 10 He will most surely expose you  
if you take his part by falsely accusing  
me.
- 11 Will not God's majesty strike you  
with dread,  
and terror of him overwhelm you?  
Your pompous talk is dust and ashes,  
your defences will crumble like clay.
- 13 Be silent, leave me to speak my mind,  
and let what may come upon me!  
I will put my neck in the noose  
and take my life in my hands.
- 15 If he would slay me, I should not  
hesitate;  
I should still argue my cause to his  
face.
- 16 This at least assures my success,  
that no godless man may appear  
before him.
- 17 Listen then, listen to my words,  
and give a hearing to my exposition.
- 18 Be sure of this: once I have stated my  
case  
I know that I shall be acquitted.
- 19 Who is there that can argue so  
forcibly with me  
that he could reduce me straightway  
to silence and death?
- 20 Grant me these two conditions only,  
and then I will not hide myself out  
of thy sight:
- 21 take thy heavy hand clean away  
from me  
and let not the fear of thee strike me  
with dread.
- 22 Then summon me, and I will answer;  
or I will speak first, and do thou  
answer me.
- How many iniquities and sins are  
laid to my charge?  
let me know my offences and my sin.  
Why dost thou hide thy face  
and treat me as thy enemy?  
Wilt thou chase a driven leaf,  
wilt thou pursue dry chaff,  
prescribing punishment for me  
and making me heir to the iniquities  
of my youth,  
putting my feet in the stocks<sup>j</sup>  
and setting a slave-mark on the  
arches of my feet?<sup>k</sup>
- Man born of woman is short-lived **14**  
and full of disquiet.  
He blossoms like a flower and then **2**  
he withers;  
he slips away like a shadow and does  
not stay;  
<sup>l</sup>he is like a wine-skin that perishes  
or a garment that moths have eaten.  
Dost thou fix thine eyes on such a **3**  
creature,  
and wilt thou bring him into court  
to confront thee?<sup>m</sup>  
The days of his life are determined, **5**  
and the number of his months is  
known to thee;  
thou hast laid down a limit, which  
he cannot pass.  
Look away from him therefore and **6**  
leave him alone  
counting the hours day by day like  
a hired labourer.
- If a tree is cut down, **7**  
there is hope that it will sprout again  
and fresh shoots will not fail.  
Though its roots grow old in the **8**  
earth.  
and its stump is dying in the ground,

<sup>j</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* keeping a close watch on all I do.

<sup>k</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds verse 28*, he is like . . . have eaten, now transposed to follow 14: 2.

<sup>l</sup> he is like . . . have eaten: 13: 28 transposed here.

<sup>m</sup> *So one Heb. MS.*; others add (4) Who can produce pure out of unclean? No one.

Wisdom literature "the silent one" is an epithet for the sage, as over against "the passionate one." 7-12: Job's friends are accused of defending God with lies. 10: Job here argues on the basis of a just God, an idea he has previously rejected. 15: An older (and traditional) translation incorrectly renders the verse as expressive of unflagging trust in God: "Though he slay me, I shall wait for him." 15-16: Some interpreters view this passage as the key to the book, namely, confidence that no sinner can stand before God; since God later appears to him, Job is vindicated. 27: For purposes of tracking a runaway slave, *marks* were cut on the bottoms of his feet. 14.1-22: Man's

- 9 if it scents water it may break into  
bud  
and make new growth like a young  
plant.  
10 But a man dies, and he disappears;<sup>n</sup>  
man comes to his end, and where is  
he?  
11 As the waters of a lake dwindle,  
or as a river shrinks and runs dry,  
12 so mortal man lies down, never to  
rise  
until the very sky splits open.  
If a man dies, can he live again?<sup>o</sup>  
He shall never be roused from his  
sleep.

- 13 If only thou wouldst hide me in  
Sheol  
and conceal me till thy anger turns  
aside,  
if thou wouldst fix a limit for my time  
there, and then remember me!  
14 <sup>n</sup>Then I would not lose hope,  
however long my service,  
waiting for my relief to come.  
15 Thou wouldst summon me, and I  
would answer thee;  
thou wouldst long to see the  
creature thou hast made.  
16 But now thou dost count every step  
I take,  
watching all my course.  
17 Every offence of mine is stored in  
thy bag;  
thou dost keep my iniquity under  
seal.  
18 Yet as a falling mountain-side is  
swept away,  
and a rock is dislodged from its  
place,  
19 as water wears away stones,  
and a rain-storm scours the soil from  
the land,

- so thou hast wiped out the hope of  
frail man;  
thou dost overpower him finally, and 20  
he is gone;  
his face is changed, and he is  
banished from thy sight.  
His flesh upon him becomes black, 22<sup>q</sup>  
and his life-blood dries up within  
him.<sup>r</sup>  
His sons rise to honour, and he sees 21  
nothing of it;  
they sink into obscurity, and he  
knows it not.

## Second cycle of speeches

- Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered: 15
- Would a man of sense give vent to 2  
such foolish notions  
and answer with a bellyful of wind?  
Would he bandy useless words 3  
and arguments so unprofitable?  
Why! you even banish the fear of 4  
God from your mind,  
usurping the sole right to speak in  
his presence;  
your iniquity dictates what you say, 5  
and deceit is the language of your  
choice.  
You are condemned out of your own 6  
mouth, not by me;  
your own lips give evidence against  
you.  
Were you born first of mankind? 7  
were you brought forth before the  
hills?

<sup>n</sup> Or and is powerless.

<sup>o</sup> Line transposed from beginning of verse 14.

<sup>p</sup> See note on verse 12. <sup>q</sup> Verses 21 and 22 transposed.

<sup>r</sup> His flesh . . . within him: or His own kin, maybe, regret him, and his slaves mourn his loss.

life is limited and his death is his end. 12: *Until the sky splits open* is here a symbol of the hopelessness of a person ever returning from Sheol. It is not an apocalyptic symbol for the end of the world and the resurrection from the dead. 13: Job sees his plight as a temporary *anger* on God's part which would abate if he could but escape God's sight. Since in Israelite belief God was absent from Sheol, Job asks to be hidden there for a fixed time, rather than in death from which he can *never be roused*. 15: Job recognizes that God could love him since he could long to see him, *his creature*; therefore the underlying principle of the relationship to God is not justice but love. 17: *Bag*: tiny stones may have been used for counting sheep; the bag, then, connotes tabulation and recording (see 11.11 n.). 20: A person's *face is changed* either in anger, fear, or consternation; compare Dan.5.6,9,10. 22: *Flesh turned black* is a sign of catastrophe and great mourning; see 30.30; Lam.5.10.

## 15.1-21.34: Second cycle of speeches.

15.1-35: Eliphaz's second speech. Offended by Job's contentions, Eliphaz asserts that the apparent prosperity of the wicked is only temporary, and then disaster strikes them. Job is accused of despising the three basic institutions of Israel's religious life: wisdom (vv. 2-3), piety (vv. 4-5), and prophecy (v. 11). 4: There is no Heb. term for "religion." *Fear of God*

8	Do you listen in God's secret council or usurp all wisdom for yourself alone?	he cannot hope to escape from dark death;	22
9	What do you know that we do not know? What insight have you that we do not share?	he is marked down for the sword; he is flung out as food for vultures; such a man knows that his destruction is certain.	23
10	We have age and white hairs in our company, men older than your father.	Suddenly a black day comes upon him,	24
11	Does not the consolation of God suffice you, a word whispered quietly in your ear?	distress and anxiety overwhelm him [like a king ready for battle]; for he has lifted his hand against God and is pitting himself against the Almighty,	25
12	What makes you so bold at heart, and why do your eyes flash,	charging him head down, with the full weight of his bossed shield.	26
13	that you vent your anger on God and pour out such a torrent of words?		
14	What is frail man that he should be innocent, or any child of woman that he should be justified?	Heavy though his jowl is and gross, and though his sides bulge with fat, the city where he lives will lie in ruins,	27
15	If God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not innocent in his sight,	his house will be deserted; it will soon become a heap of rubble. He will no longer be rich, his wealth will not last,	28
16	how much less so is man, who is loathsome and rotten and laps up evil like water!	and he will strike no root in the earth; <sup>s</sup> scorching heat will shrivel his shoots, and his blossom will be shaken off by the wind.	29
17	I will tell you, if only you will listen, and I will describe what I have seen	He deceives himself, trusting in his high rank,	30
18	[what has been handed down by wise men and was not concealed from them by their fathers;	for all his dealings will come to nothing.	31
19	to them alone the land was given, and no foreigner settled among them];	His palm-trees will wither unseasonably,	32
20	the wicked are racked with anxiety all their days, the ruthless man for all the years in store for him.	and his branches will not spread; he will be like a vine that sheds its unripe grapes,	33
21	The noise of the hunter's scare rings in his ears, and in time of peace the raider falls on him;	like an olive-tree that drops its blossom. For the goddess, one and all, are barren, and their homes, enriched by bribery, are destroyed by fire;	34

<sup>s</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds he will not escape from darkness.*

is a near equivalent. **8:** *Council:* see 1.6 n. **10:** Job is apparently younger than his visitors; he has not reached the age of a grandfather. **11:** Suffering is seen as an occasion for a mystical experience of a message from God, bringing its own *consolation*. **14:** This verse is not directly related to the later doctrine of original sin but maintains that man is already subject to sin at birth. **16:** Perhaps this is a proverb describing man's evil propensity. **18:** In the Egyptian book "Instructions" also much is made of the necessity of handing down the teachings of the wise from one generation to another. **20-24:** Pangs of conscience and fear of *dark death* were considered to be the hidden punishments of the wicked who seemed to prosper. **29-34:** The traditional teaching held that the wicked who seemed to prosper would *strike no root in the earth* either by being *barren* or through losing their children by sudden death, like *blossoms shaken off by the wind*; see Ps.109.12-13.

- 35 they conceive mischief and give birth  
to trouble,  
and the child of their womb is deceit.
- 16 Then Job answered:
- 2 I have heard such things often before,  
you who make trouble, all of you,  
with every breath,  
saying, 'Will this windbag never have  
done?'  
3 What makes him so stubborn in  
argument?  
4 If you and I were to change places,  
I could talk like you;  
how I could harangue you  
and wag my head at you!  
5 But no, I would speak words of  
encouragement,  
and then my condolences would flow  
in streams.  
6 If I speak, my pain is not eased;  
if I am silent, it does not leave me.  
7 Meanwhile, my friend wearies me  
with false sympathy;  
8 they tear me to pieces, he and his<sup>t</sup>  
fellows.  
He has come forward to give  
evidence against me;  
the liar testifies against me to my  
face,  
9 in his wrath he wears me down, his  
hatred is plain to see;  
he grinds his teeth at me.
- My enemies look daggers at me,  
10 they bare their teeth to rend me,  
they slash my cheeks with knives;  
they are all in league against me.  
11 God has left me at the mercy of  
malefactors  
and cast me into the clutches of  
wicked men.  
12 I was at ease, but he set upon me  
and mauled me,  
seized me by the neck and worried me.  
He set me up as his target;  
13 his arrows rained upon me from  
every side;
- pitiless, he cut deep into my vitals,  
he spilt my gall on the ground.  
He made breach after breach in my  
defences;  
he fell upon me like a fighting man.
- I stitched sackcloth together to  
cover my body  
and I buried my forelock in the dust;  
my cheeks were flushed with weeping  
and dark shadows were round my  
eyes,  
yet my hands were free from violence  
and my prayer was sincere.
- O earth, cover not my blood  
and let my cry for justice find no  
rest!  
For look! my witness is in heaven;  
there is one on high ready to answer  
for me.  
My appeal will come before God,  
while my eyes turn again and again  
to him.  
If only there were one to arbitrate  
between man and God,  
as between a man and his neighbour!  
For there are but few years to come  
before I take the road from which I  
shall not return.
- My mind is distraught, my days are  
numbered,  
and the grave is waiting for me.  
Wherever I turn, men taunt me,  
and my day is darkened by their  
sneers.  
Be thou my surety with thyself,  
for who else can pledge himself for  
me?  
Thou wilt not let those men triumph,  
whose minds thou hast sunk in  
ignorance;  
if such a man denounces his friends  
to their ruin,  
his sons' eyes shall grow dim.
- I am held up as a byword in every  
land,

<sup>t</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. my.*

16.1-17.16: Job's answer laments the lack of sympathy and understanding in his friends and repeats that his disaster has come from God. 4: To *wag the head* was a sign of gloating over the misfortune of another; see Mt.27.39-40. 9: *Grinds his teeth*: a sign of scornful hatred and hostility; see Lam.2.16; Pss.35.16; 37.12. 15: *Sackcloth . . . and dust*: signs of grief and mourning; see Ezek.27.30-31. 18: According to Gen.4.10-11 spilled *blood* of an innocent victim cries out to the Lord of Justice (see also Jonah 1.14). 17.3: This is a key sentence in which Job shows

- a portent for all to see;  
 7 my eyes are dim with grief,  
 my limbs wasted to a shadow.  
 8 Honest men are bewildered at this,  
 and the innocent are indignant at my  
 plight.  
 9 In spite of all, the righteous man  
 maintains his course,  
 and he whose hands are clean grows  
 strong again.  
 10 But come on, one and all, try again!  
 I shall not find a wise man among  
 you.  
 11 My days die away like an echo;  
 my heart-strings<sup>u</sup> are snapped.  
 12 Day is turned into night,  
 and morning<sup>v</sup> light is darkened  
 before me.  
 13 If I measure Sheol for my house,  
 if I spread my couch in the darkness,  
 14 if I call the grave my father  
 and the worm my mother or my  
 sister,  
 15 where, then, will my hope be,  
 and who will take account of my  
 piety?  
 16 I cannot take them down to Sheol  
 with me,  
 nor can they descend with me into  
 the earth.  
**18** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:  
 2 How soon will you bridle<sup>w</sup> your  
 tongue?  
 Do but think, and then we will talk.  
 3 What do you mean by treating us as  
 cattle?  
 Are we nothing but brute beasts to  
 you?<sup>x</sup>  
 4 Is the earth to be deserted to prove  
 you right,  
 or the rocks to be moved from their  
 place?  
 No, it is the wicked whose light is 5  
 extinguished,  
 from whose fire no flame will rekindle; 6  
 the light fades in his tent,  
 and his lamp dies down and fails him. 7  
 In his iniquity his steps totter,  
 and his disobedience trips him up; 8  
 he rushes headlong into a net  
 and steps through the hurdle that  
 covers a pit;  
 his heel is caught in a snare, 9  
 the noose grips him tight;  
 a cord lies hidden in the ground for 10  
 him  
 and a trap in the path.  
 The terrors of death suddenly beset 11  
 him  
 and make him piss over his feet.  
 For all his vigour he is paralysed 12  
 with fear;  
 strong as he is, disaster awaits him.  
 Disease eats away his skin,  
 Death's eldest child devours his 13  
 limbs.  
 He is torn from the safety of his 14  
 home,  
 and Death's terrors escort him to  
 their king.<sup>y</sup>  
 Magic herbs lie strewn about his tent, 15  
 and his home is sprinkled with  
 sulphur to protect it.  
 His roots beneath dry up, 16  
 and above, his branches wither.  
 His memory vanishes from the face 17  
 of the earth  
 and he leaves no name in the world.  
 He is driven from light into darkness 18  
 and banished from the land of the  
 living.

*u* *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* the desires of my heart.

*v* *morning: prob. rdg.; Heb.* near.

*w* *bridle: prob. rdg.; Heb.* unintelligible.

*x* *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* adds rending himself in his anger.

*y* *Or* and you conduct him to the king of terrors.

his faith by asking God to be Job's pledge with the deity, as he had stated in 16.19–20. 9: Some interpreters view this verse as a later pious addition, others as a sarcastic quotation of his friends' view. 15–16: A bitter comment that both hope and piety disappear at a man's death.

18.1–21: Bildad's second speech. The sinner, dying horribly, leaves neither positive memory nor progeny. 2: The *you* is plural in the MT, as if the author is addressing the wicked in general. 4: The allegation is that Job seeks an alteration in the order of nature just to vindicate him. 5–6: *Light* here is a figure for the life-force in man (see also Prov. 13.9; 20.20; 24.20). 13–14: Far from being a place of rest and even solace, Sheol can be a constant terror; see 26.5–6. *Death's eldest child*: this seems to reflect mythology and to allude to Mot, the Canaanite god of death. Perhaps, though, *eldest child* is a fatal illness, or the fear of dying. 15: Such practices, to cure diseases, or restore ritual purity, are familiar from Canaanite and Mesopotamian texts. The verse seems to harken back to v. 13.

- 19 He leaves no issue or offspring  
among his people,  
no survivor in his earthly home;  
20 in the west men hear of his doom  
and are appalled;  
in the east they shudder with horror.  
21 Such is the fate of the dwellings of  
evildoers,  
and of the homes of those who care  
nothing for God.
- 19 Then Job answered:
- 2 How long will you exhaust me  
and pulverize me with words?  
3 Time and time again you have  
insulted me  
and shamelessly done me wrong.  
4 If in fact I had erred,  
the error would still be mine.  
5 But if indeed you lord it over me  
and try to justify the reproaches  
levelled at me,  
6 I tell you, God himself has put me  
in the wrong,  
he has drawn the net round me.  
7 If I cry 'Murder!' no one answers;  
if I appeal for help, I get no justice.  
8 He has walled in my path so that I  
cannot break away,  
and he has hedged in the road before  
me.  
9 He has stripped me of all honour  
and has taken the crown from my  
head.  
10 On every side he beats me down and  
I am gone;  
he has pulled up my tent-rope<sup>z</sup> like  
a tree.  
11 His anger is hot against me  
and he counts me his enemy.  
12 His raiders gather in force<sup>a</sup>  
and encamp about my tent.  
13 My brothers hold aloof from me,  
my friends are utterly estranged from  
me;
- my kinsmen and intimates fall away, 14-15  
my retainers have forgotten me;  
my slave-girls treat me as a stranger,  
I have become an alien in their eyes.  
I summon my slave, but he does not 16  
answer,  
though I entreat him as a favour.  
My breath is noisome to my wife, 17  
and I stink in the nostrils of my own  
family.  
Mere children despise me 18  
and, when I rise, turn their backs on  
me;  
my intimate companions loathe me, 19  
and those whom I love have turned  
against me.  
My bones stick out through my 20  
skin,<sup>b</sup>  
and I gnaw my under-lip with my  
teeth.  
Pity me, pity me, you that are my 21  
friends;  
for the hand of God has touched me.  
Why do you pursue me as God 22  
pursues me?  
Have you not had your teeth in me  
long enough?  
O that my words might be inscribed, 23  
O that they might be engraved in an  
inscription,  
cut with an iron tool and filled with 24  
lead  
to be a witness<sup>c</sup> in hard rock!  
But in my heart I know that my 25  
vindicator lives  
and that he will rise last to speak in  
court;  
and I shall discern my witness 26  
standing at my side<sup>d</sup>  
and see my defending counsel, even  
God himself,  
whom I shall see with my own eyes, 27  
I myself and no other.

<sup>z</sup> Or he has uprooted my hope.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds they raise an earthwork against me.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and my flesh.

<sup>c</sup> to . . . witness: or for ever.

<sup>d</sup> my witness . . . side: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

19.1-29: Job's reply. He describes eloquently the wrongs done him by God (1-23), yet a vindicator will emerge to defend him: God himself. 3: *Time and time*: "ten times" in Heb. 17: The allusion to family, if taken literally, stands in tension with the earlier passage (1.18-19) reporting the death of his children. 23-24: Job wants his words to be *engraved on a rock* so that his case may be judged by others who are more honest than his friends. For *inscription filled with lead*, compare Behistun stone. 25: In ancient *court* trials the witness for the defense stood at the accused person's right *side* and the accuser stood at his left; compare Ps.109.31. The rendering here, *in court*, is an interpretation of the MT "on the dust." 26-27: These verses are so poorly preserved that it is impossible to discern the exact meaning. It is

<p>28 My heart failed me when you said, 'What a train of disaster he has brought on himself! The root of the trouble lies in him.'</p> <p>29 Beware of the sword that points at you, the sword that sweeps away all iniquity; then you will know that there is a judge.<sup>e</sup></p> <p>20 Then Zophar the Naamathite an- swered:</p> <p>2 My distress of mind forces me to reply, and this is why<sup>f</sup> I hasten to speak:</p> <p>3 I have heard arguments that are a reproach to me, a spirit beyond my understanding gives me the answers.</p> <p>4 Surely you know that this has been so since time began, since man was first set on the earth:</p> <p>5 the triumph of the wicked is short- lived, the glee of the godless lasts but a moment?</p> <p>6 Though he stands high as heaven, and his head touches the clouds,</p> <p>7 he will be swept utterly away like his own dung, and all that saw him will say, 'Where is he?'</p> <p>8 He will fly away like a dream and be lost, driven off like a vision of the night;</p> <p>9 the eye which glimpsed him shall do so no more and shall never again see him in his place.</p> <p>11<sup>g</sup> The youth and strength which filled his bones shall lie with him in the dust.</p> <p>10 His sons will pay court to the poor, and their<sup>h</sup> hands will give back his wealth.</p>	<p>Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth, and he savours it, rolling it round his tongue, though he lingers over it and will not let it go, and holds it back on his palate, yet his food turns in his stomach, changing to asps' venom within him. He gulps down wealth, then vomits it up, or God makes him discharge it. He sucks the poison of asps, and the tongue of the viper kills him. Not for him to swill down rivers of cream<sup>i</sup> or torrents of honey and curds; he must give back his gains without swallowing them, and spew up his profit undigested; for he has hounded and harassed the poor, he has seized houses which he did not build. Because his appetite gave him no rest, and he cannot escape his own desires, nothing is left for him to eat, and so his well-being does not last; with every need satisfied his troubles begin, and the full force of hardship strikes him. God vents his anger upon him and rains on him cruel blows. He is wounded by weapons of iron and pierced by a bronze-tipped arrow; out at his back the point comes, the gleaming tip from his gall-bladder. Darkness unrelieved awaits him, a fire that needs no fanning will consume him.</p> <p>[Woe betide any survivor in his tent!] The heavens will lay bare his guilt,</p>	<p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p>
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<sup>e</sup> Or judgement.

<sup>f</sup> this is why: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>g</sup> Verses 10 and 11 transposed.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. his.

<sup>i</sup> rivers of cream: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

clear, however, that Job expresses his certainty that somehow and somewhere he will be shown to have been innocent. 28-29: His friends will in time be punished for their false accusations. See 42.7.

20.1-29: Zophar's second speech. The bad fate of the wicked is certain, with short-lived triumph giving way to extreme punishment. 2-3: *Beyond my understanding*: not human experience or that of the race (5.27 and 8.8-10), but a supernatural *spirit* is said to guide his words. 16: *Poison*: a figure of speech. 26: For a similar threat on *darkness*, see 18.18. On a punishing fire, see Pss.21.9 and 140.10. 27: Compare Deut.31.28.

and earth will rise up to condemn  
him.  
28 A flood will sweep away his house,  
rushing waters on the day of wrath.  
29 Such is God's reward for the wicked  
man  
and the lot appointed for the rebel<sup>j</sup>  
by God.

21 Then Job answered:

2 Listen to me, do but listen,  
and let that be the comfort you offer  
me.  
3 Bear with me while I have my say;  
when I have finished, you may mock.  
4 May not I too voice<sup>k</sup> my thoughts?  
Have not I as good cause to be  
impatient?  
5 Look at my plight, and be aghast;  
clap your hand to your mouth.  
6 When I stop to think, I am filled  
with horror,  
and my whole body is convulsed.  
7 Why do the wicked enjoy long life,  
hale in old age, and great and  
powerful?  
8 They live to see their children settled,  
their kinsfolk and descendants  
flourishing;  
9 their families are secure and safe;  
the rod of God's justice does not  
reach them.  
10 Their bull mounts and fails not of  
its purpose;  
their cow calves and does not  
miscarry.  
11 Their children like lambs run out to  
play,  
and their little ones skip and dance;  
12 they rejoice with tambourine and  
harp  
and make merry to the sound of the  
flute.  
13 Their lives close in prosperity,  
and they go down to Sheol in peace.  
14 To God they say, 'Leave us alone;  
we do not want to know your ways.

What is the Almighty that we should 15  
worship him,  
or what should we gain by seeking  
his favour?'

Is not the prosperity of the wicked 16  
in their own hands?  
Are not their purposes very  
different from God's<sup>l</sup>?

How often is the lamp of the wicked 17  
snuffed out,  
and how often does their ruin come  
upon them?

How often does God in his anger deal  
out suffering,  
bringing it in full measure to whom  
he will?<sup>m</sup>

How often is that man like a wisp of 18  
straw before the wind,  
like chaff which the storm-wind  
whirls away?

You say, 'The trouble he has earned, 19  
God will keep for his sons';  
no, let him be paid for it in full and  
be punished.

Let his own eyes see damnation come 20  
upon him,  
and the wrath of the Almighty be the  
cup he drinks.

What joy shall he have in his 21  
children after him,  
if his very months and days are  
numbered?

Can any man teach God, 22  
God who judges even those in heaven  
above?

One man, I tell you, dies crowned 23  
with success,  
lapped in security and comfort,  
his loins full of vigour 24

and the marrow juicy in his bones;  
another dies in bitterness of soul 25  
and never tastes prosperity;  
side by side they are laid in earth, 26  
and worms are the shroud of both.

*j* the rebel: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his word.

*k* May . . . voice: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.

*l* God's: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* mine.

*m* Line transposed from 12. 6.

21.1–34: Job's answer. Against his friends' arguments, Job asserts that the wicked do prosper, and only rarely undergo misfortune. 14–15: The wicked presume to scorn God. 16: Job appears to quote his friends' words (e.g. 18.5–21) only to refute them. 19–20: Against Zophar's argument (20.10, echoing Exod.34.7) that the punishment of the wicked is visited on *his sons*, Job demands a justice in which the wicked *drinks* the *cup* of his own punishment; see Jer.31.29; Ezek.18.2–4. 22: Perhaps this verse is a gloss, or else irony. It could, however, be an expression of despair



27	I know well what you are thinking and the arguments you are marshalling against me;	No: it is because you are a very wicked man, and your depravity passes all bounds.	5
28	I know you will ask, 'Where is the great man's home now, what has become of the home of the wicked?'	Without due cause you take a brother in pledge, you strip men of their clothes and leave them naked.	6
29	Have you never questioned travellers? Can you not learn from the signs they offer,	When a man is weary, you give him no water to drink and you refuse bread to the hungry.	7
30	that the wicked is spared when disaster comes and conveyed to safety before the day of wrath?	Is the earth, then, the preserve of the strong and a domain for the favoured few?	8
31	No one denounces his conduct to his face, no one requites him for what he has done.	Widows you have sent away empty- handed, orphans you have struck defenceless. No wonder that there are pitfalls in your path,	9 10
32-33	When he is carried to the grave, all the world escorts him, before and behind; the dust of earth is sweet to him, and thousands keep watch at his tomb.	that scares are set to fill you with sudden fear. The light is turned into darkness, and you cannot see; the flood-waters cover you.	11
34	How futile, then, is the comfort you offer me! How false your answers ring!	Surely God is at the zenith of the heavens and looks down on all the stars, high as they are. But you say, 'What does God know? Can he see through thick darkness to judge? His eyes cannot pierce the curtain of the clouds as he walks to and fro on the vault of heaven.'	12 13
<i>Third cycle of speeches</i>			
22	Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:	Consider the course of the wicked man, the path the miscreant treads: see how they are carried off before their time, their very foundation flowing away like a river;	14 15 16
2	Can man be any benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him?		
3	Is it an asset to the Almighty if you are righteous? Does he gain if your conduct is perfect?		
4	Do not think that he reproves you because you are pious, that on this count he brings you to trial.		

over the necessity to instruct God in elementary human justice. 27-34: *Arguments*: their syllogism is that God is pleased with goodness; he favors the good man; therefore, the good man fares well. The broadest human experience refutes such arguments, so that their comfort of him (v. 34) is futile. 28: See 2.21; 8.22. 30: Contrast 20.28; Prov.16.4; Rom.2.5.

22.1-27.23: *Third cycle of speeches*.

22.1-30: *Eliphaz's third speech*. He insists that Job has definitely trespassed, perhaps in mistreating widows and orphans (vv. 5-7) and has thought that a thick cloud shielded him from God's eyes (12-14). Hence Job must repent (21-30). 2-3: God has no need of any man, even the *wise* or the *righteous* (see 35.7), and hence can have no ulterior motive for punishing Job. 6: *Clothes*: a poor man's outer garment taken in pledge had to be returned by nightfall, since it was his protection from the cold (Exod.22.26; Deut.24.10-13). 9: *Widows* and *orphans* are frequently linked together in the OT; their cause is also championed in the Hammurabi code, Canaanite texts, Egyptian wisdom literature (Amen-em-ope). 14: The *vault of heaven* was

17	these men said to God, 'Leave us alone; what can the Almighty do to us?'	Then Job answered:	23
18	Yet it was he that filled their houses with good things, although their purposes and his were very different.	My thoughts today are resentful, for God's hand is heavy on me in my trouble.	2
19	The righteous see their fate and exult, the innocent make game of them;	If only I knew how to find him, how to enter his court, I would state my case before him and set out my arguments in full;	3 4
20	for their riches are swept away, and the profusion of their wealth is destroyed by fire.	then I should learn what answer he would give and find out what he had to say. Would he exert his great power to browbeat me?	5 6
21	Come to terms with God and you will prosper; that is the way to mend your fortune.	No; God himself would never bring a charge against me.	7
22	Take instruction from his mouth and store his words in your heart.	There the upright are vindicated before him, and I shall win from my judge an absolute discharge.	7
23	If you come back to the Almighty in true sincerity, if you banish wrongdoing from your home,	If I go forward, <sup>r</sup> he is not there; if backward, <sup>s</sup> I cannot find him; when I turn <sup>t</sup> left, <sup>u</sup> I do not descry him;	8 9
24	if you treat your precious metal as dust <sup>n</sup> and the gold of Ophir as stones from the river-bed,	I face right, <sup>v</sup> but I see him not. But he knows me in action or at rest; when he tests me, I prove to be gold. My feet have kept to the path he has set me,	10 11
25	then the Almighty himself will be your precious metal; he will be your silver in double measure.	I have followed his way and not turned from it.	12
26	Then, with sure trust in <sup>o</sup> the Almighty, you will raise your face to God;	I do not ignore the commands that come from his lips, I have stored in my heart what he says.	12
27	you will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will have cause to fulfil your vows.	He decides, <sup>w</sup> and who can turn him from his purpose? He does what his own heart desires. What he determines, that he carries out;	13 14
28	In all your designs you will succeed, and light will shine on your path;	his mind is full of plans like these. Therefore I am fearful of meeting him;	15
29	but God brings down the pride of the haughty <sup>p</sup> and keeps safe the man of modest looks.		
30	He will deliver the innocent, <sup>q</sup> and you will be delivered, because your hands are clean.		

*n* *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* if you put your precious metal on dust.

*o* with . . . in: *or* delighting in.

*p* but . . . haughty: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

*q* *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* the not innocent.

*r* *Or east. s Or west.*

*t* *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* he turns.

*u* *Or north. e Or south.*

*w* He decides: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* He in one.

regarded as if it were solid; see Ezek.1.22 n.; Gen.1.6. **21:** *Come to terms:* be reconciled. **24:** *Ophir:* the proverbial source of *gold*, identified differently as India, south Arabia, or South Africa.

**23.1-24.25:** *Job's answer.* If only it were possible to encounter God in a court of law, Job would emerge vindicated by God himself, for he is innocent; in a true court of law, the wicked are convicted. **2:** *God's hand* was thought *heavy* when a person was struck with disease or other tragedy; see 1 Sam.5.6-7; Ps.32.3-4. **3-6:** The view that God is hidden or is hiding is a frequent

- when I think about him,<sup>x</sup> I am afraid;  
 16 it is God who makes me faint-hearted  
 and the Almighty who fills me with  
 fear,  
 17 yet I am not reduced to silence by  
 the darkness  
 nor<sup>y</sup> by the mystery which hides him.
- 24 <sup>z</sup>The day of reckoning is no secret to  
 the Almighty,  
 though those who know him have no  
 hint of its date.  
 2 Wicked men move boundary-stones  
 and carry away flocks and their  
 shepherds.  
 6<sup>a</sup> In the field they reap what is not  
 theirs,  
 and filch the late grapes from the  
 rich<sup>b</sup> man's vineyard.  
 3 They drive off the orphan's ass  
 and lead away the widow's ox with  
 a rope.  
 9 They snatch the fatherless infant from  
 the breast  
 and take the poor man's child in  
 pledge.  
 4 They jostle the poor out of the way;  
 the destitute huddle together, hiding  
 from them.  
 5 The poor rise early like the wild ass,  
 when it scours the wilderness for  
 food;  
 but though they work till nightfall,<sup>c</sup>  
 their children go hungry.<sup>d</sup>  
 7 Naked and bare they pass the night;  
 in the cold they have nothing to cover  
 them.  
 8 They are drenched by rain-storms  
 from the hills  
 and hug the rock, their only shelter.  
 10 Naked and bare they go about their  
 work,  
 and hungry they carry the sheaves;  
 11 they press the oil in the shade where  
 two walls meet,  
 they tread the winepress but  
 themselves go thirsty.  
 12 Far from the city, they groan like  
 dying men,  
 and like wounded men they cry out;
- but God pays no heed to their prayer.  
 Some there are who rebel against the 13  
 light of day,  
 who know nothing of its ways  
 and do not linger in the paths of  
 light.  
 The murderer rises before daylight 14  
 to kill some miserable wretch.<sup>e</sup>  
 The seducer watches eagerly for 15  
 twilight,  
 thinking, 'No eye will catch sight of  
 me.'  
 The thief prowls<sup>f</sup> by night,<sup>g</sup>  
 his face covered with a mask,  
 and in the darkness breaks into 16  
 houses  
 which he has marked down in the  
 day.  
 One and all,<sup>h</sup> they are strangers to  
 the daylight,  
 but dark night is morning to them; 17  
 and in the welter of night they are at  
 home.  
 Such men are scum on the surface of 18  
 the water;  
 their fields have a bad name  
 throughout the land,  
 and no labourer will go near their  
 vineyards.  
 As drought and heat make away with 19  
 snow,  
 so the waters of Sheol<sup>i</sup> make away  
 with the sinner.  
 The womb forgets him, the worm 20  
 sucks him dry;  
 he will not be remembered ever  
 after.<sup>j</sup>  
 He may have wronged the barren 21  
 childless woman  
 and been no help to the widow;

x when . . . him: or I stand aloof.

y yet I am not . . . nor: or indeed I am . . . and . . .

z Prob. rdg.; Heb. prefixes Why.

a Verses 3-9 re-arranged to restore the natural order.

b Or wicked.

c Prob. rdg.; Heb. Arabah.

d go hungry; prob. rdg.; Heb. to it food.

e See note on verse 15.

f The thief prowls: prob. rdg.; Heb. Let him be like a thief.

g Line transposed from end of verse 14.

h One and all: transposed from after but in next verse.

i snow . . . Sheol: prob. rdg.; Heb. snow-water, Sheol.

j Prob. rdg.; Heb. here adds iniquity is snapped like a stick (see note on verse 24).

theme in the OT; see, e.g. Isa.6.11-64.2 and Ps.22.1-2. 17: *Mystery*: lit. thick darkness. 24.1-17: The misdeeds of the wicked. 24.1: Only God knows when the *day of reckoning*, that is, the death, of each individual is to come. 13: *Light of day* is a sign of uprightness having a real connection with it; see Ps.97.11; Prov.4.18-19. 18-25: Some interpreters believe these verses belong with 27.11-23; see 27.11-23 n. The third cycle of speeches is apparently preserved in great disorder. 21: *Barren, childless*: see the similar repetition intoned in Isa.54.1, this to

- 22 yet God in his strength carries off  
even the mighty;  
they may rise, but they have no firm  
hope of life.
- 23 He lulls them into security and  
confidence;  
but his eyes are fixed on their ways.
- 24 For a moment they rise to the  
heights, but are soon gone;  
iniquity is snapped like a stick.<sup>k</sup>  
They are laid low and wilt like a  
mallow-flower;  
they droop like an ear of corn on the  
stalk.
- 25 If this is not so, who will prove me  
wrong  
and make nonsense of my argument?
- 25** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
- 2 Authority and awe rest with him  
who has established peace in his realm  
on high.
- 3 His squadrons are without number;  
at whom will they not spring from  
ambush?
- 4 How then can a man be justified in  
God's sight,  
or one born of woman be innocent?
- 5 If the circling moon is found wanting,  
and the stars are not innocent in his  
eyes,
- 6 much more so man who is but a  
maggot,  
mortal man who is only a worm.
- 26** Then Job answered:
- 2 What help you have given to the man  
without resource,  
what deliverance you have brought  
to the powerless!
- 3 What counsel you offer to a man at  
his wit's end,
- what sound advice to the foolish!  
Who has prompted you to say such  
things,  
and whose spirit is expressed in your  
speech?
- In the underworld the shades writhe  
in fear,  
the waters and all that live in them  
are struck with terror.<sup>l</sup>  
Sheol is laid bare,  
and Abaddon uncovered before  
him.
- God spreads the canopy of the sky  
over chaos  
and suspends earth in the void.  
He keeps the waters penned in dense  
cloud-masses,  
and the clouds do not burst open  
under their weight.  
He covers the face of the full  
moon,<sup>m</sup>  
unrolling his clouds across it.  
He has fixed the horizon on the  
surface of the waters  
at the farthest limit of light and  
darkness.
- The pillars of heaven quake  
and are aghast at his rebuke.  
With his strong arm he cleft the sea-  
monster,  
and struck down the Rahab by his  
skill.
- At his breath the skies are  
clear,  
and his hand breaks the twisting<sup>n</sup>  
sea-serpent.
- These are but the fringe of his  
power;  
and how faint the whisper that we  
hear of him!  
[Who could fathom the thunder of  
his might?]

<sup>k</sup> Line transposed from end of verse 20.

<sup>l</sup> are struck with terror: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>m</sup> Or He overlays the surface of his throne.

<sup>n</sup> Or primeval.

intensify the poetic effect of the passage. **23**: God is often pictured as seducing men into mistaken confidence in themselves (compare Jer.20.7; Isa.6.9–10), especially through false prophets (Ezek.14.9).

**25.1–6**: Bildad's third speech. So brief is this speech, and so little new is in it, that some interpreters believe that a part of it has been lost, or that 26.5–14 continues it. **3**: *Squadrons*: of angels.

**26.1–27.10**: Job's reply. Anger moves Job to wish upon his friends the fate of the wicked; again he reminds them that a sinner would never challenge God to a trial. **2–4**: The irony here is remarkably bitter. **5–14**: Perhaps Bildad's speech. See 25.1–6 n. **6**: *Abaddon*: another name for Sheol, meaning place of "destruction" (see Prov.15.11). **7**: *Canopy*: lit. *zaphon*, i.e. the north, the mythological dwelling of heavenly beings, especially those hostile to Israel; compare

27 Then Job resumed his discourse:

2 I swear by God, who has denied me justice,  
and by the Almighty, who has filled me with bitterness:  
3 so long as there is any life left in me and God's breath is in my nostrils,  
4 no untrue word shall pass my lips and my tongue shall utter no falsehood.  
5 God forbid that I should allow you to be right;  
till death, I will not abandon my claim to innocence.  
6 I will maintain the rightness of my cause, I will never give up;  
so long as I live, I will not change.  
7 May my enemy meet the fate of the wicked,  
and my antagonist the doom of the wrongdoer!  
8 What hope has a godless man, when he is cut off,<sup>o</sup>  
when God takes away his life?  
9 Will God listen to his cry when trouble overtakes him?  
10 Will he trust himself to the Almighty and call upon God at all times?

11 I will teach you what is in God's power,  
I will not conceal the purpose of the Almighty.  
12 If all of you have seen these things, why then do you talk such empty nonsense?  
13 This is the lot prescribed by God for the wicked,  
and the ruthless man's reward from the Almighty.  
14 He may have many sons, but they will fall by the sword,

and his offspring will go hungry;  
the survivors will be brought to the grave by pestilence,  
and no widows will weep for them.  
He may heap up silver like dirt  
and get himself piles of clothes;  
he may get them, but the righteous will wear them,  
and his silver will be shared among the innocent.  
The house he builds is flimsy as a bird's nest  
or a shelter put up by a watchman.  
He may lie down rich one day, but never again;  
he opens his eyes and all is gone.  
Disaster overtakes him like a flood,  
and a storm snatches him away in the night;  
the east wind lifts him up and he is gone;  
it whirls him far from home;  
it flings itself on him without mercy,  
and he is battered and buffeted by its force;  
it snaps its fingers at him  
and whistles over him wherever he may be.

*God's unfathomable wisdom*

There are mines for silver  
and places where men refine gold;  
where iron is won from the earth  
and copper smelted from the ore;  
the end of the seam lies in darkness,  
and it is followed to its farthest limit.<sup>p</sup>  
Strangers cut the galleries;<sup>q</sup>  
they are forgotten as they drive forward far from men.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>o</sup> Or What is a godless man's thread of life when it is cut . . .  
<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds stones of darkness and deep darkness.  
<sup>q</sup> Strangers . . . galleries; prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds languishing without foothold.

Isa.14.13; Ezek.39.2. **27.1:** *Resumed:* only here is a speech interrupted. Perhaps this verse is a consequence of the disorder in the third cycle of speeches and is a copyist's note identifying what ensues as a continuation of 26.1-14. **2:** Despite his accusations, Job swears by the accused deity.

**27.11-23:** *The lot of the wicked.* Some interpreters believe that this is part, or all of Zophar's third speech; if not, then strangely there is no third speech by Zophar. Note that ch. 28 is almost universally regarded as an interpolation into the book, indicative of disorder in the text. The description of the fate of the wicked comes very close to Job's own situation. **20:** *Flood* (Heb. *kamayim*): a slight change in the Heb. would substitute *yōmān*, "by day," yielding a better parallel for *in the night*.

**28.1-28:** *God's unfathomable wisdom.* This poem is probably a later addition; it marvels at man's ingenuity in extracting precious ore hidden in the heart of the earth but his inability

<p>5 While corn is springing from the earth above, what lies beneath is raked over like a fire, 6 and out of its rocks comes lapis lazuli, dusted with flecks of gold. 7 No bird of prey knows the way there, and the falcon's keen eye cannot descry it; 8 proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no serpent comes that way. 9 Man sets his hand to the granite rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains; 10 he cuts galleries in the rocks, and gems of every kind meet his eye; 11 he dams up the sources of the streams and brings the hidden riches of the earth to light. 12 But where can wisdom be found? And where is the source of understanding? 13 No man knows the way to it; it is not found in the land of living men. 14 The depths of ocean say, 'It is not in us', and the sea says, 'It is not with me.' 15 Red gold cannot buy it, nor can its price be weighed out in silver; 16 it cannot be set in the scales against gold of Ophir, against precious cornelian or lapis lazuli; 17 gold and crystal are not to be matched with it, no work in fine gold can be bartered for it; 18 black coral and alabaster are not worth mention, and a parcel of wisdom fetches more than red coral; 19 topaz<sup>s</sup> from Ethiopia is not to be matched with it, it cannot be set in the scales against pure gold. 20 Where then does wisdom come from,</p>	<p>and where is the source of understanding? No creature on earth can see it, 21 and it is hidden from the birds of the air. Destruction and death say, 22 'We know of it only by report.' But God understands the way to it, 23 he alone knows its source; for he can see to the ends of the earth 24 and he surveys everything under heaven. When he made a counterpoise for the wind 25 and measured out the waters in proportion, when he laid down a limit for the rain 26 and a path for the thunderstorm, even then he saw wisdom and took 27 stock of it, he considered it and fathomed its very depths. And he said to man: 28 The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to turn from evil is understanding.</p>
	<p><i>Job's final survey of his case</i></p>
	<p>Then Job resumed his discourse: 29</p> <p>If I could only go back to the old 2 days, to the time when God was watching over me, when his lamp shone above my head, 3 and by its light I walked through the darkness! If I could be as in the days of my 4 prime, when God protected my home, while the Almighty was still there at 5 my side, and my servants stood round me, while my path flowed with milk, 6 and the rocks streamed oil!</p>

<sup>s</sup> Or chrysolite.

to find even a trace of wisdom. 12: This refrain recurs in v. 20 in slightly different form. 28: The verse is a sort of motto; compare Prov.1.7. It probably postdates the poem itself. LORD: Heb., *adonai*, not Yahweh; only here is this form used in Job.

29.1-31.40: *Job's final survey of his case*. Remembering his gratifying life before God's blow fell (ch. 29), Job describes the contrast of his decline and the attendant scorn (30.1-19). Piteously he pleads with God (30.20-31; 31.2-4) and sets forth his past ethical conduct (31.5,1,6-37). 4: *Prime*: lit. "autumn days." The meaning is clearly the prime period of fruitful harvest, not

- 7 If I went through the gate out of  
the town  
to take my seat in the public square,  
8 young men saw me and kept out of  
sight;  
old men rose to their feet,  
9 men in authority broke off their talk  
and put their hands to their lips;  
10 the voices of the nobles died away,  
and every man held his tongue.  
21<sup>f</sup> They listened to me expectantly  
and waited in silence for my opinion.  
22 When I had spoken, no one spoke  
again;  
my words fell gently on them;  
23 they waited for them as for rain  
and drank them in like showers in  
spring.  
24 When I smiled on them, they took  
heart;  
when my face lit up, they lost their  
gloomy looks.  
25 I presided over them, planning their  
course,  
like a king encamped with his  
troops.<sup>u</sup>
- 11 Whoever heard of me spoke in my  
favour,  
and those who saw me bore witness  
to my merit,  
12 how I saved the poor man when he  
called for help  
and the orphan who had no protector.  
13 The man threatened with ruin blessed  
me,  
and I made the widow's heart sing for  
joy.  
14 I put on righteousness as a garment  
and it clothed me;  
justice, like a cloak or a turban,  
wrapped me round.  
15 I was eyes to the blind  
and feet to the lame;  
16 I was a father to the needy,  
and I took up the stranger's cause.  
17 I broke the fangs of the miscreant  
and rescued the prey from his teeth.  
18 I thought, 'I shall die with my  
powers unimpaired  
and my days uncounted as the  
grains of sand,<sup>v</sup>
- with my roots spreading out to the 19  
water  
and the dew lying on my branches,  
with the bow always new in my grasp 20  
and the arrow ever ready to my  
hand.'<sup>w</sup>
- But now I am laughed to scorn 30  
by men of a younger generation,  
men whose fathers I would have  
disdained  
to put with the dogs who kept my  
flock.  
What use were their strong arms to 2  
me,  
since their sturdy vigour had wasted  
away?  
They gnawed roots<sup>x</sup> in the desert, 3  
gaunt with want and hunger,<sup>y</sup>  
they plucked saltwort and 4  
wormwood  
and root of broom<sup>z</sup> for their food.  
Driven out from the society of men,<sup>a</sup> 5  
pursued like thieves with hue and cry,  
they lived in gullies and ravines, 6  
holes in the earth and rocky clefts;  
they howled like beasts among the 7  
bushes,  
huddled together beneath the scrub,  
vile base-born wretches, 8  
hounded from the haunts of men.  
Now I have become the target of 9  
their taunts,  
my name is a byword among them.  
They loathe me, they shrink from me, 10  
they dare to spit in my face.  
They run wild and savage<sup>b</sup> me; 11  
at sight of me they throw off all  
restraint.  
On my right flank they attack in a 12  
mob;<sup>c</sup>  
they raise their siege-ramps against  
me,

<sup>f</sup> Verses 21–25 transposed to this point.

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds as when one comforts mourners.

<sup>v</sup> Or as those of the phoenix.

<sup>w</sup> Verses 21–25 transposed to follow verse 10.

<sup>x</sup> roots: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds yesterday waste and derelict land.

<sup>z</sup> root of broom: probably fungus on broom root.

<sup>a</sup> the society of men: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>b</sup> They run . . . savage: prob. rdg.; Heb. He runs . . . savages.

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds they let loose my feet.

man's fading years. 7–10, 21–25, 11–20: The erstwhile prestige of Job described here surpasses that of the prologue, 1.1–3. The translators' rearrangement should be noted. 11–17: The good deeds Job claims here contradict the accusations made by Eliphaz in 22.5–9. 18: The fabled phoenix (see Tfn. <sup>v</sup>) arose to new life from the ashes of its funeral pyre. 20: The bow and arrow

13	they tear down my crumbling defences to my undoing, and scramble up against me unhindered;	Evil has come though I expected good;	26
14	they burst in through the gaping breach;	I looked for light but there came darkness.	
	at the moment of the crash they come rolling in.	My bowels are in ferment and know no peace;	27
15	Terror upon terror overwhelms me, it sweeps away my resolution like the wind,	days of misery stretch out before me.	
	and my hope of victory vanishes like a cloud.	I go about dejected and friendless;	28
16	So now my soul is in turmoil within me,	I rise in the assembly, only to appeal for help.	
	and misery has me daily in its grip.	The wolf is now my brother,	29
17	By night pain pierces my very bones, and there is ceaseless throbbing in my veins;	the owls of the desert have become my companions.	
18	my garments are all bespattered with my phlegm,	My blackened skin peels off,	30
	which chokes me like the collar of a shirt.	and my body is scorched by the heat.	
19	God himself <sup>d</sup> has flung me down in the mud,	My harp has been tuned for a dirge,	31
	no better than dust or ashes.	my flute to the voice of those who weep.	
20	I call for thy help, but thou dost not answer;	What is the lot prescribed by God above,	31 <sup>d</sup>
	I stand up to plead, but thou sittest aloof;	the reward from the Almighty on high?	
21	thou hast turned cruelly against me and with thy strong hand pursuest me in hatred;	Is not ruin prescribed for the miscreant	3
22	thou dost snatch me up and set me astride the wind,	and calamity for the wrongdoer?	
	and the tempest <sup>e</sup> tosses me up and down.	Yet does not God himself see my ways	4
23	I know that thou wilt hand me over to death,	and count my every step?	
	to the place appointed for all mortal men.	I swear I have had no dealings with falsehood	5
24	Yet no beggar held out his hand but was relieved <sup>f</sup> by me in his distress.	and have not embarked on a course of deceit.	
25	Did I not weep for the man whose life was hard?	I have come to terms with my eyes, never to take notice of a girl.	1
	Did not my heart grieve for the poor?	Let God weigh me in the scales of justice,	6
		and he will know that I am innocent!	
		If my steps have wandered from the way,	7
		if my heart has followed my eyes, or any dirt stuck to my hands,	
		may another eat what I sow,	8
		and may my crops be pulled up by the roots!	

*d* God himself: *prob. rdg.: Heb. om.*  
*e* the tempest: *prob. rdg.: Heb. unintelligible.*  
*f* was relieved: *prob. rdg.: Heb. unintelligible.*  
*g* Verse 1 transposed to follow verse 5.

may here and in Ecclus.26.12 have overtones of sexual potency. 30.22: Irony is intended, Job being punished by being put *astride* the wind, a role elsewhere deemed the great prerogative of the LORD (see Ps.18.9-10) and also of the Canaanite Baal. 24-28: Job's claim is that no needy person was ever refused help by him, yet now no one, not even God, listens to his *appeal for help*; thereby God is less compassionate than Job. Compare 32.2-3. 31.1-37: Job's record of ethical conduct. 1: See also Ecclus.9.5. It might be useful to compare Mt.5.27-28 to note that the NT is not the sole repository of interior ethics, as is sometimes claimed. 7: *Dirt*:



- 9 If my heart has been enticed by a woman  
or I have lain in wait at my neighbour's door,  
10 may my wife be another man's slave,  
and may other men enjoy her.  
11 [But that is a wicked act, an offence  
before the law;  
12 it would be a consuming and destructive fire,  
raging<sup>b</sup> among my crops.]  
13 If I have ever rejected the plea of my slave  
or of my slave-girl, when they brought  
their complaint to me,  
14 what shall I do if God appears?  
What shall I answer if he intervenes?  
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them?  
Did not the same God create us in the belly?  
16 If I have withheld their needs from the poor  
or let the widow's eye grow dim with tears,  
17 if I have eaten my crust alone,  
and the orphan has not shared it with me—  
18 the orphan who from boyhood honoured me like a father,  
whom I guided from the day of his<sup>d</sup> birth—  
19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,  
or a poor man with nothing to cover him,  
20 if his body had no cause to bless me,  
because he was not kept warm with a fleece from my flock,  
21 if I have raised<sup>j</sup> my hand against the innocent,<sup>k</sup>  
knowing that men would side with me in court,  
22 then may my shoulder-blade be torn from my shoulder,  
my arm be wrenched out of its socket!  
23 But the terror of God was heavy upon me,<sup>l</sup>  
and for fear of his majesty I could do none of these things.  
24 If I have put my faith in gold  
and my trust in the gold of Nubia,  
25 if I have rejoiced in my great wealth
- and in the increase of riches;  
if I ever looked on the sun in splendour  
or the moon moving in her glory,  
and was led astray in my secret heart  
and raised my hand in homage;  
this would have been an offence  
before the law,  
for I should have been unfaithful to God on high.  
If my land has cried out in reproach  
at me,  
and its furrows have joined in weeping,  
if I have eaten its produce without payment  
and have disappointed my creditors,  
may thistles spring up instead of wheat,  
and weeds instead of barley!
- Have I rejoiced at the ruin of the man  
that hated me  
or been filled with malice when trouble overtook him,  
even though I did not allow my tongue to sin  
by demanding his life with a curse?  
Have the men of my household never  
said,  
'Let none of us speak ill of him!  
No stranger has spent the night in the street?'  
For I have kept open house for the traveller.  
Have I ever concealed my misdeeds  
as men do,  
keeping my guilt to myself,  
because I feared the gossip of the town  
or dreaded the scorn of my fellow-citizens?  
Let me but call a witness in my defence!  
Let the Almighty state his case against me!  
If my accuser had written out his indictment,  
I would not keep silence and remain indoors.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. uprooting. <sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. my.  
<sup>j</sup> Or waved. <sup>k</sup> Or orphan.

<sup>l</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. A fear towards me is a disaster from God.

<sup>m</sup> Verses 38-40 transposed (but see note p, page 558).

<sup>n</sup> Line transposed from verse 34.

perhaps an allusion to land-grabbing practices (see Amos 2.7). 11-12: The verses are probably a gloss to reject the content of vv. 9-10. 18: See Tfn. i. 24: Nubia: Ethiopia. 38: Land has cried out: see Gen.4.10.

36 No! I would flaunt it on my shoulder  
and wear it like a crown on my head;  
37 I would plead the whole record of  
my life  
and present that in court as my  
defence.<sup>o</sup>

Job's speeches are finished.<sup>p</sup>

*Speeches of Elihu*

32 So these three men gave up answering  
Job; for he continued to think himself  
2 righteous. Then Elihu son of Barakel  
the Buzite, of the family of Ram, grew  
angry; angry because Job had made  
himself out more righteous than God,<sup>q</sup>  
3 and angry with the three friends because  
they had found no answer to Job and  
4 had let God appear wrong.<sup>r</sup> Now  
Elihu had hung back while they were  
talking with Job because they were  
5 older than he; but, when he saw that the  
three had no answer, he could no longer  
6 contain his anger. So Elihu son of  
Barakel the Buzite began to speak:

I am young in years,  
and you are old;  
that is why I held back and shrank  
from displaying my knowledge in  
front of you.

7 I said to myself, 'Let age speak,  
and length of years expound wisdom.'  
8 But the spirit of God himself is in man,  
and the breath of the Almighty gives  
him understanding;  
9 it is not only the old who are wise  
or the aged who understand what is  
right.  
10 Therefore I say: Listen to me;

I too will display my knowledge.  
Look, I have been waiting upon your 11  
words,  
listening for the conclusions of your  
thoughts,  
while you sought for phrases;  
I have been giving thought to your 12  
conclusions,  
but not one of you refutes Job or  
answers his arguments.  
Take care then not to claim that you 13  
have found wisdom;  
God will rebut him, not man.  
I will not string<sup>s</sup> words together like 14  
you<sup>t</sup>  
or answer him as you have done.

If these men are confounded and no 15  
longer answer,  
if words fail them,  
am I to wait because they do not 16  
speak,  
because they stand there and no  
longer answer?  
I, too, have a furrow to plough; 17  
I will express my opinion;  
for I am bursting with words,  
18 a bellyful of wind gripes me.  
My stomach is distended as if with 19  
wine,  
bulging like a blacksmith's bellows;  
I must speak to find relief,  
20 I must open my mouth and answer;  
I will show no favour to anyone,  
21 I will flatter no one, God or man;<sup>u</sup>  
for I cannot use flattering titles, 22

*o Verses 38–40 transposed to follow verse 28 (but see note p).*

*p The last line of verse 40 retained here.*

*q Or had justified himself with God.*

*r Prob. original rdg., altered in Heb. to and had not proved Job wrong.*

*s Prob. rdg.; Heb. He has not strung.*

*t Prob. rdg.; Heb. towards me.*

*u Prob. rdg.; Heb. I will not flatter man.*

**32.1–37.24: The speeches of Elihu.** These chapters interrupt the context, introduce a new character unmentioned elsewhere, and repeat many of the friends' arguments, while addressing themselves more directly to Job's objections. Probably a later addition to the poetic text, they emphasize the disciplinary nature of suffering and life as divine gift.

**32.1–6a: Prose introduction. 1:** The three had earlier been called "friends," but here *men*, suggesting a different author. **2:** *Elihu* means "he is my God." *Barakel* means "God has blessed," a frequent name in Akkadian texts, possibly indicating some connection with Babylonian literature. *Buzite*: perhaps a clan living on the Persian gulf (Gen.22.21). *Ram*: see Ruth 4.19; 1 Chr.2.9,25,27. It is usual in OT narrative patterns to record the father's name and that of the clan. **3:** *God*: see Tfn. *q*. The substitution of *Job* for God in the MT is one of the eighteen recorded alterations by ancient Jewish scribes.

**32.6b–37.24: The poems of Elihu. 6b–22:** Elihu feels that he must speak in order to make up for the ineffectiveness of the friends. The tone here appears to be comic. **10:** The imperative *listen* is in the singular as if addressed to Job alone as in 33.1, but the friends are addressed in the plural in *your words* and in *not one of you* in v. 12 and other instances. **22:** "The Babylonian Theodicy" makes generous use of *flattering titles*, though it has sharp verbal retorts.

	or my Maker would soon do away with me.	and his correction strikes them with terror.
33	Come now, Job, listen to my words and attend carefully to everything I say.	To turn a man from reckless conduct, <sup>17</sup> to check the pride <sup>w</sup> of mortal man, at the edge of the pit he holds him back alive
2	Look, I am ready to answer; the words are on the tip of my tongue.	and stops him from crossing the river of death.
3	My heart assures me that I speak with knowledge, and that my lips speak with sincerity.	Or again, man learns his lesson on a bed of pain, <sup>19</sup> tormented by a ceaseless ague in his bones;
4	For the spirit of God made me, and the breath of the Almighty gave me life.	he turns from his food with loathing and has no relish for the choicest meats; <sup>20</sup>
5	Answer me if you can, marshal your arguments and confront me.	his flesh hangs loose upon him, his bones are loosened and out of joint,
6	In God's sight <sup>v</sup> I am just what you are; I too am only a handful of clay.	his soul draws near to the pit, his life to the ministers of death.
7	Fear of me need not abash you, nor any pressure from me overawe you.	Yet if an angel, one of thousands, stands by him, <sup>23</sup> a mediator between him and God, to expound what he has done right and to secure mortal man his due; <sup>z</sup>
8	You have said your say and I heard you; I have listened to the sound of your words:	if he speaks in the man's favour and says, 'Reprieve him, <sup>24</sup> let him not go down to the pit, I have the price of his release';
9	'I am innocent', you said, 'and free from offence, blameless and without guilt.	then that man will grow sturdier <sup>y</sup> than he was in youth, <sup>25</sup> he will return to the days of his prime.
10	Yet God finds occasions to put me in the wrong and counts me his enemy;	If he entreats God to show him favour, <sup>26</sup> to let him see his face and shout for joy; <sup>z</sup>
11	he puts my feet in the stocks and keeps a close watch on all I do.'	if he declares before all men, 'I have sinned, turned right into wrong and thought nothing of it';
12	Well, this is my answer: You are wrong. God is greater than man;	then he saves himself from going down to the pit, he lives and sees the light.
13	why then plead your case with him? for no one can answer his arguments.	All these things God may do to a man, <sup>29</sup>
14	Indeed, once God has spoken he does not speak a second time to confirm it.	
15	In dreams, in visions of the night, when deepest sleep falls upon men, while they sleep on their beds, God makes them listen,	
16		

v In God's sight; or In strength.  
w the pride: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
x Line transposed from verse 26.  
y will grow sturdier; prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.  
z See note on verse 23.

**33.1–35.16: A reply to Job.** The passage cites Job's assertions (vv. 9–11) in a context of refuting him. **1:** The three friends never addressed Job by name as Elihu does here and in v. 31. **7:** Pointedly, Elihu asserts that, unlike God, he cannot *overawe* Job. **12:** Elihu's argument is: "If you admit that *God is greater than man* (which Job has admitted, 9.1–12; 12.13–25), then how can you bring a law *case* against him." **15:** This verse cites the words of Eliphaz in 4.13; Elihu often quotes portions of earlier speeches. **22–28:** Angels as *ministers of death* appear early in Israelite literature; see 2 Sam.24.16. Angels as mediators who *expound* God's will and intercede also

30	again and yet again, bringing him back from the pit to enjoy the full light of life.	14
31	Listen, Job, and attend to me; be silent, and I myself will speak.	15
32	If you have any arguments, answer me; speak, and I would gladly find you proved right;	16
33	but if you have none, listen to me: keep silence, and I will teach you wisdom.	17
34	Then Elihu went on to say;	18
2	Mark my words, you wise men; you men of long experience, listen to me;	19
3	for the ear tests what is spoken as the palate savours food.	20
4	Let us then examine for ourselves what is right; let us together establish the true good.	21
5	Job has said, 'I am innocent, but God has deprived me of justice, he has falsified my case; my state is desperate, yet I have done no wrong.'	22
6	Was there ever a man like Job with his thirst for irreverent talk, choosing bad company to share his journeys, a fellow-traveller with wicked men?	23
7	For he says that it brings a man no profit to find favour with God.	24
8	But listen to me, you men of good sense. Far be it from God to do evil or the Almighty to play false!	25
9	For he pays a man according to his work and sees that he gets what his conduct deserves.	26 <sup>a</sup>
10	The truth is, God does no wrong, the Almighty does not pervert justice.	27
11	Who committed the earth to his keeping? Who but he established the whole world?	28
12		14
13		15
14		16
15		17
16		18
17		19
18		20
19		21
20		22
21		23
22		24
23		25
24		26 <sup>a</sup>
25		27
26		28

<sup>a</sup> Verse 25 transposed to follow verse 22.

<sup>b</sup> he strikes them down: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>c</sup> Or and chastises them where people see.

appear; see Josh.5.13–14; Dan.8.15–17. 34.1–37: Job is wrong in imputing injustice to God. 3: Repeats 12.11 almost verbatim. 5–6: These verses echo 27.2 and 33.9. 21: See 24.23 and 31.4. 23–25: Since God observes everything under the sun, he does not need to go through a legal process such as Job demands, i.e. *inquiry* or *appointed days* . . . for judgement in court, but his

<p>29-30 and he hears the cry of the distressed. [Even if he is silent, who can condemn him? If he looks away, who can find fault? What though he makes a godless man king over a stubborn nation and all its people?]</p> <p>31 But suppose you were to say to God, 'I have overstepped the mark; I will do no more<sup>d</sup> mischief.</p> <p>32 Vile wretch that I am, be thou my guide; whatever wrong I have done, I will do wrong no more.'</p> <p>33 Will he, at these words, condone your rejection of him? It is for you to decide, not me: but what can you answer?</p> <p>34 Men of good sense will say, any intelligent hearer will tell me, 35 'Job talks with no knowledge, and there is no sense in what he says.</p> <p>36 If only Job could be put to the test once and for all for answers that are meant to make mischief!</p> <p>37 He is a sinner and a rebel as well<sup>e</sup> with his endless ranting against God.'</p> <p>35 Then Elihu went on to say:</p> <p>2 Do you think that this is a sound plea or maintain that you are in the right against God?—</p> <p>3 if you say, 'What would be the advantage to me? how much should I gain from sinning?'</p> <p>4 I will bring arguments myself against you, you and your three friends.</p> <p>5 Look up at the sky and then consider, observe the rain-clouds towering above you.</p> <p>6 How does it touch him if you have sinned? However many your misdeeds, what</p>	<p>does it mean to him? If you do right, what good do you bring him, or what does he gain from you? Your wickedness touches only men, such as you are; the right that you do affects none but mortal man.</p> <p>Men will cry out beneath the burdens of oppression and call for help against the power of the great; but none of them asks, 'Where is God my Maker who gives protection by night, who grants us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?'</p> <p>So, when they cry out, he does not answer, because they are self-willed and proud. All to no purpose! God does not listen, the Almighty does not see.</p> <p>The worse for you when you say, 'He does not see me!' Humble yourself<sup>f</sup> in his presence and wait for his word.</p> <p>But now, because God does not grow angry and punish and because he lets folly pass unheeded, Job gives vent to windy nonsense and makes a parade of empty words.</p> <p>Then Elihu went on to say:</p> <p>Be patient a little longer, and let me enlighten you; there is still something more to be said on God's side.</p> <p>I will search far and wide to support my conclusions, as I defend the justice of my Maker.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>36</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>
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<sup>d</sup> more: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds between us it is enough.  
<sup>f</sup> Humble yourself: prob. rdg.; Heb. Judge.

sentence is sudden, out of the night. 31-37: Elihu states that Job's violent language is a ranting rejection of God that will merit further punishment even if he were now to repent of it. Job will repent (42.6) but the punishment does not follow, which may be a key to the whole story. 35.4: Elihu attacks the three friends not because they agree with Job, but because their arguments against him are so feeble. 9-16: This passage replies to Job's contention that God does not reply to Job's challenge to come to a trial (13.20-24; 30.20-21). In due time God responds to man.

36.1-19,21: God does not allow the wicked to prosper forever. Those who learn from suffering

4	There are no flaws in my reasoning; before you stands one whose conclusions are sound.	Will that wealth of yours, however great, avail you, or all the resources of your high position?	19
5	God, <sup>g</sup> I say, repudiates the high and <sup>h</sup> mighty	Take care not to turn to mischief; for that is why you are tried by affliction.	21 <sup>n</sup>
6	and does not let the wicked prosper, but allows the just claims of the poor and suffering;	Have no fear if in the breathless terrors of the night	20
7	he does not deprive the sufferer of his due. <sup>i</sup> Look at kings on their thrones: when God gives them sovereign power, they grow arrogant.	you see nations vanish where they stand. God towers in majesty above us; who wields such sovereign power as he?	22
8	Next you may see them loaded with fetters, held fast in captives' chains:	Who has prescribed his course for him?	23
9	he denounces their conduct to them, showing how insolence and tyranny was their offence;	Who has said to him, 'Thou hast done wrong'?	24
10	his warnings sound in their ears and summon them to turn back from their evil courses.	Remember then to sing the praises of his work, as men have always sung them.	25
11	If they listen to him, they spend <sup>j</sup> their days in prosperity and their years in comfort.	All men stand back from <sup>o</sup> him; the race of mortals look on from afar. Consider; God is so great that we cannot know him;	26
12	But, if they do not listen, they die, their lesson unlearned, and cross the river of death.	the number of his years is beyond reckoning.	27
13	Proud men rage against him and do not cry to him for help when caught in his toils;	He draws up drops of water from the sea <sup>p</sup> and distils rain from the mist he has made;	28
14	so they die in their prime, like male prostitutes, <sup>k</sup> worn out. <sup>l</sup>	the rain-clouds pour down in torrents, <sup>q</sup> they descend in showers on mankind; thus he sustains the nations and gives them food in plenty.	29
15	Those who suffer he rescues through suffering and teaches them by the discipline of affliction.	Can any man read the secret of the sailing clouds, spread like a carpet under <sup>r</sup> his pavilion?	30
16	Beware, if you are tempted to exchange hardship for comfort, <sup>m</sup> for unlimited plenty spread before you, and a generous table;	See how he unrolls the mist across the waters, and its streamers <sup>s</sup> cover the sea.	31
17	if you eat your fill of a rich man's fare when you are occupied with the business of the law,		
18	do not be led astray by lavish gifts of wine and do not let bribery warp your judgement.		

*g* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds a mighty one and not.

*h* and: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

*i* deprive . . . due: or withdraw his gaze from the righteous.

*j* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds they end. *k* Cp. Deut. 23. 17.

*l* worn out: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

*m* for comfort: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

*n* Verses 20 and 21 transposed. *o* Or gaze at.

*p* from the sea: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

*q* in torrents: prob. rdg.; Heb. which.

*r* spread . . . under: prob. rdg.; Heb. crashing noises.

*s* its streamers: prob. rdg.; Heb. the roots of.

attain contentment. 14: *Male prostitutes* had a role in the fertility rites of pagan temples. In times of religious decline they were attached to the Israelite temple and shrines; see Tin. k and l; also 2 Kgs. 23.7. The orgiastic excesses of male prostitutes led to an early death.

36.20,22–37.24: *God's power over nature* is such that mere man cannot truly understand him;

<p>32<sup>t</sup> He charges the thunderbolts with flame and launches them straight<sup>u</sup> at the mark; 33 in his anger he calls up the tempest, and the thunder is the herald of its coming.<sup>v</sup> 37 This too makes my heart beat wildly and start from its place. 2 Listen, listen to the thunder of God's voice and the rumbling of his utterance. 3 Under the vault of heaven he lets it roll, and his lightning reaches the ends of the earth; 4 there follows a sound of roaring as he thunders with the voice of majesty.<sup>w</sup> 5 God's voice is marvellous in its working;<sup>x</sup> he does great deeds that pass our knowledge. 6 For he says to the snow, 'Fall to earth', and to the rainstorms, 'Be fierce.' And when his voice is heard, the floods of rain pour down unchecked.<sup>y</sup> 7 He shuts every man fast indoors,<sup>z</sup> and all men whom he has made must stand idle; 8 the beasts withdraw into their lairs and take refuge in their dens. 9 The hurricane bursts from its prison, and the rain-winds bring bitter cold; 10 at the breath of God the ice-sheet is formed, and the wide waters are frozen hard as iron. 11 He gives the dense clouds their load of moisture, and the clouds spread his mist abroad, 12 as they travel round in their courses, steered by his guiding hand to do his bidding all over the habitable world.<sup>a</sup> 14 Listen, Job, to this argument; stand still, and consider God's wonderful works.</p>	<p>Do you know how God assigns them 15 their tasks, how he sends light flashing from his clouds? Do you know why the clouds hang 16 poised overhead, a wonderful work of his consummate skill, sweating there in your stifling 17 clothes, when the earth lies sultry under the south wind? Can you beat out the vault of the 18 skies, as he does, hard as a mirror of cast metal? Teach us then what to say to him; 19 for all is dark, and we cannot marshal our thoughts. Can any man dictate to God when 20 he is<sup>b</sup> to speak? or command him to make proclamation? At one moment the light is not seen, 21 it is overcast with clouds and rain; then the wind passes by and clears them away, and a golden glow comes from the 22 north.<sup>c</sup> But the Almighty we cannot find; 23 his power is beyond our ken, and his righteousness not slow to do justice. Therefore mortal men pay him 24 reverence, and all who are wise look to him.</p>
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*God's answer and Job's submission*

Then the LORD answered Job out of 38  
the tempest:

*t* Verse 31 transposed to follow verse 28.  
*u* and . . . straight: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and gives orders concerning it.  
*v* in his anger . . . coming: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.  
*w* See note on verse 6.  
*x* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* thundering.  
*y* And when . . . unchecked: *prob. rdg.*; some words in these lines transposed from verse 4.  
*z* indoors: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.  
*a* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds (13) whether he makes him attain the rod, or his earth, or constant love.  
*b* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* I am.  
*c* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds this refers to God, terrible in majesty.

man can only marvel at God's greatness. (Note transposition of vv. 20 and 21.) 37.22: *North*: *Heb.*, *zaphon*, the mountain habitation of the gods (see 26.7 n.).

**38.1–40.2: God's answer and Job's submission.**

**38.1–40.2: God's answer from the whirlwind.** God's argument seems to be that in the beauty, majesty, power, and wonder of the world, Job's situation cannot be the one thing out of joint. Surely Job cannot deny that his condition must fit into the mysteries of the universe which Job

- 2 Who is this whose ignorant words  
cloud my design in darkness?
- 3 Brace yourself and stand up like a  
man;  
I will ask questions, and you shall  
answer.
- 4 Where were you when I laid the  
earth's foundations?  
Tell me, if you know and understand.
- 5 Who settled its dimensions? Surely  
you should know.  
Who stretched his measuring-line over  
it?
- 6 On what do its supporting pillars  
rest?  
Who set its corner-stone in place,  
7 when the morning stars sang  
together  
and all the sons of God shouted  
aloud?
- 8 Who watched over the birth of the  
sea,<sup>d</sup>  
when it burst in flood from the  
womb?—
- 9 when I wrapped it in a blanket of  
cloud  
and cradled it in fog,  
10 when I established its bounds,  
fixing its doors and bars in place,  
11 and said, 'Thus far shall you come  
and no farther,  
and here your surging waves shall  
halt.'<sup>e</sup>
- 12 In all your life have you ever called  
up the dawn  
or shown the morning its place?
- 13 Have you taught it to grasp the  
fringes of the earth  
and shake the Dog-star from its  
place;
- 14 to bring up the horizon in relief as  
clay under a seal,  
until all things stand out like the  
folds of a cloak,
- 15 when the light of the Dog-star is  
dimmed
- and the stars of the Navigator's Line  
go out one by one?
- Have you descended to the springs of 16  
the sea  
or walked in the unfathomable deep?  
Have the gates of death been revealed 17  
to you?  
Have you ever seen the door-keepers  
of the place of darkness?  
Have you comprehended the vast 18  
expanse of the world?  
Come, tell me all this, if you know.  
Which is the way to the home of 19  
light  
and where does darkness dwell?  
And can you then take each to its 20  
appointed bound  
and escort it on its homeward path?  
Doubtless you know all this; for you 21  
were born already,  
so long is the span of your life!
- Have you visited the storehouse of 22  
the snow  
or seen the arsenal where hail is  
stored,  
which I have kept ready for the day 23  
of calamity,  
for war and for the hour of battle?  
By what paths is the heat spread 24  
abroad  
or the east wind carried far and wide  
over the earth?
- Who has cut channels for the 25  
downpour  
and cleared a passage for the thunder-  
storm,  
for rain to fall on land where no man 26  
lives  
and on the deserted wilderness,  
clothing lands waste and derelict with 27  
green

<sup>d</sup> Who . . . sea: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* And he held back the sea with two doors.

<sup>e</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* here one shall set on your surging waves.

cannot penetrate and yet cannot blame God for making them incomprehensible. The form of the passage is derived from nature wisdom, encyclopedic data under the care of the sages (in Egypt especially). The passage ignores the accusations made against God, and focuses on Job's inevitable, human ignorance. 1: Whereas *the tempest* had brought Job's calamity in the beginning (1.19, *whirlwind*), it is now the occasion for his vindication. The passage ensues directly on 31.37, abstaining from comment on the Elihu speeches (see 32.1–37.24 n.). 3: *Brace*: the word means to prepare for warfare, and may derive from belt wrestling. 7: Light is a symbol of rejoicing; compare Ps.97.11–12. Because of their brilliance in the surrounding darkness, the heavenly bodies are often personified as rejoicing and praising God; see Pss.18.1–6; 148.3–4. 21: Further irony: Job may be comparing himself to Wisdom, which existed in the beginning with God (see Prov.8.22 n.). 22–23: *Hail*: compare Josh.10.11 and Ecclus.46.6. 30: *Expanse of*



	and making grass grow on thirsty ground <sup>f</sup> ?	and bring their offspring to the birth,	
28	Has the rain a father?	when the fawns grow and thrive in the open forest,	4
	Whose womb gave birth to the ice, and who was the mother of the frost from heaven,	and go forth and do not return? Who has let the wild ass of Syria range at will	5
30	which lays a stony cover over the waters and freezes the expanse of ocean?	and given the wild ass of Arabia its freedom?—	
31	Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose Orion's belt?	whose home I have made in the wilderness	6
32	Can you bring out the signs of the zodiac in their season or guide Aldebaran and its train?	and its lair in the saltings; it disdains the noise of the city and is deaf to the driver's shouting; it roams the hills as its pasture and searches for anything green.	7 8
33	Did you proclaim the rules that govern the heavens, or determine the laws of nature on earth?	Does the wild ox consent to serve you, does it spend the night in your stall? Can you harness its strength <sup>l</sup> with ropes,	9 10
34	Can you command the dense clouds to cover you with their weight of waters?	or will it harrow the furrows <sup>i</sup> after you?	
35	If you bid lightning speed on its way, will it say to you, 'I am ready'?	Can you depend on it, strong as it is, or leave your labour to it? Do you trust it to come back	11 12
36	Who put wisdom in depths of darkness and veiled understanding in secrecy <sup>g</sup> ?	and bring home your grain to the threshing-floor?	
37	Who is wise enough to marshal the rain-clouds and empty the cisterns of heaven, when the dusty soil sets hard as iron,	The wings of the ostrich are stunted; <sup>j</sup> her pinions and plumage are so scanty <sup>l</sup>	13
38	and the clods of earth cling together?	that she abandons her eggs to the ground,	14
39	Do you hunt her prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of young lions, as they crouch in the lair or lie in wait in the covert?	letting them be kept warm by the sand. She forgets that a foot may crush them,	15
40	Who provides the raven with its quarry when its fledglings croak <sup>h</sup> for lack of food?	or a wild beast trample on them; she treats her chicks heartlessly as if they were not hers,	16
39	Do you know when the mountain-goats are born or attend the wild doe when she is in labour?	not caring if her labour is wasted (for God has denied her wisdom and left her without sense), while like a cock she struts over the uplands,	17 18
2	Do you count the months that they carry their young or know the time of their delivery,	scorning both horse and rider.	
3	when they crouch down to open their wombs		

*f* thirsty ground: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. source.*  
*g* secrecy: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. word unknown.*  
*h* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds they cry to God.*  
*i* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. transposes strength and furrows.*  
*j* are stunted: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*  
*k* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. prefixes if.*  
*l* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. godly or stork.*

*ocean*: lit. the surface of the deep, i.e. any deep body of water such as the Sea of Galilee. **32**: This verse seems to allude to the Great Bear and Little Bear. **36**: The text is disturbed here. Perhaps the meaning is that even *darkness* of which the Israelite was afraid had a purpose. **39.13–18**: Perhaps this means that God could be no less compassionate to Job than to the

19	Did you give the horse his strength? Did you clothe his neck with a mane?	or keep it on a string like a song- bird for your maidens?	
20	Do you make him quiver like a locust's wings, when his shrill neighing strikes terror?	Do trading-partners haggle over it or merchants share it out?	6
21	He shows his mettle as he paws and prances; he charges the armoured line with all his might.	Then the LORD said to Job:	40
22	He scorns alarms and knows no dismay; he does not flinch before the sword.	Is it for a man who disputes with the Almighty to be stubborn? Should he that argues with God answer back?	2
23	The quiver rattles at his side, the spear and sabre flash.	And Job answered the LORD:	3
24	Trembling with eagerness, he devours the ground and cannot be held in when he hears the horn;	What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight? I put my finger to my lips. I have spoken once and now will not answer again:	4 5
25	at the blast of the horn he cries 'Aha!' and from afar he scents the battle. <sup>m</sup>	twice have I spoken, and I will do so no more.	
26	Does your skill teach the hawk to use its pinions and spread its wings towards the south?	Then the LORD answered Job out of the tempest:	6
27	Do you instruct the vulture to fly high and build its nest aloft?	Brace yourself and stand up like a man; I will ask questions, and you shall answer.	7
28	It dwells among the rocks and there it lodges; its station is a crevice in the rock;	Dare you deny that I am just or put me in the wrong that you may be right?	8
29	from there it searches for food, keenly scanning the distance,	Have you an arm like God's arm, can you thunder with a voice like his?	9
30	that its brood may be gorged with blood; and where the slain are, there the vulture is.	Deck yourself out, if you can, in pride and dignity, array yourself in pomp and splendour; unleash the fury of your wrath, look upon the proud man and humble him;	10 11
41 <sup>n</sup>	Can you pull out the whale <sup>o</sup> with a gaff or can you slip a noose round its tongue?	look upon every proud man and bring him low,	12
2	Can you pass a cord through its nose or put a hook through its jaw?		
3	Will it plead with you for mercy or beg its life with soft words?		
4	Will it enter into an agreement with you to become your slave for life?		
5	Will you toy with it as with a bird		

<sup>m</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds the thunder of the captains and the shouting.  
<sup>n</sup> 41. 1-6 (in Heb. 40. 25-30) transposed to this point.  
<sup>o</sup> Or Leviathan.

*ostrich.* 19-25: The horse was considered extremely valuable in warfare, as Canaanite texts indicate. 40.2: Two interpretations of the text are possible, namely, (a) that for Job to answer back would be further impudence; or (b) an invitation to Job to answer God if he can.

40.3-5: Job's reply is that he is moved to silence.

40.6-41.34: God's second speech. In addition to man's ignorance, man is unable to humble the proud man or to master the crocodile and whale as God has done. The subdued animal is to be understood both literally and as recalling the primeval sea monster of mythology (3.8 and 26.12-13; compare Ps.74.14). 6: See 38.1. 7: See 38.1 n. and 38.3 n. 15: In Tfn. *p.* Behemoth in

	throw down the wicked where they stand;	I will not pass over in silence his limbs,	12
13	hide them in the dust together, and shroud them in an unknown grave.	his prowess and the grace of his proportions.	
14	Then I in my turn will acknowledge that your own right hand can save you.	Who has ever undone his outer garment	13
15	Consider the chief of the beasts, the crocodile, <sup>p</sup> who devours cattle as if they were grass: <sup>q</sup>	or penetrated his doublet of hide? Who has ever opened the portals of his face?	14
16	what strength is in his loins! what power in the muscles of his belly!	for there is terror in his arching teeth. His back <sup>r</sup> is row upon row of shields, enclosed in a wall <sup>s</sup> of flints; one presses so close on the other that air cannot pass between them, each so firmly clamped to its neighbour	15
17	His tail is rigid as <sup>r</sup> a cedar, the sinews of his flanks are closely knit,	that they hold and cannot spring apart. His sneezing sends out sprays of light,	17
18	his bones are tubes of bronze, and his limbs like bars of iron.	and his eyes gleam like the shimmer of dawn.	18
19	He is the chief of God's works, made to be a tyrant over his peers; <sup>s</sup>	Firebrands shoot from his mouth, and sparks come streaming out;	19
20	for he takes <sup>t</sup> the cattle of the hills for his prey and in his jaws he crunches all wild beasts.	like a cauldron on a fire blown to full heat.	20
21	There under the thorny lotus he lies, hidden in the reeds and the marsh;	His breath sets burning coals ablaze, and flames flash from his mouth.	21
22	the lotus conceals him in its shadow, the poplars of the stream surround him.	Strength is lodged in his neck, and untiring energy dances ahead of him.	22
23	If the river is in spate, he is not scared, he sprawls at his ease though the stream is in flood.	Close knit is his underbelly, no pressure will make it yield. His heart is firm as a rock, firm as the nether millstone.	23
24	Can a man blind <sup>u</sup> his eyes and take him or pierce his nose with the teeth of a trap?	When he raises himself, strong men <sup>a</sup> take fright,	25
41 <sup>v</sup>	Can you fill his skin with harpoons or his head with fish-hooks?	bewildered at the lashings of his tail. Sword or spear, dagger or javelin, if they touch him, they have no effect.	26
8	If ever you lift your hand against him, think of the struggle that awaits you, and let be.	Iron he counts as straw, and bronze as rotting wood. No arrow can pierce him, and for him sling-stones are turned into chaff;	27
9	No, such a man is in desperate case, hurled headlong at the very sight of him.		28
10	How fierce he is when he is roused! Who is there to stand up to him?		
11	Who has ever attacked him <sup>w</sup> unscathed? Not a man <sup>x</sup> under the wide heaven.		

*p* chief . . . crocodile: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* beasts (behe-moth) which I have made with you.  
*q* cattle . . . grass: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* grass like cattle.  
*r* Or He bends his tail like . . .  
*s* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his sword.  
*t* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they take.  
*u* Can a man blind: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.  
*v* Verses 1-6 transposed to follow 39, 30.  
*w* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. me.* *x* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* He is mine.  
*y* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* pride. *z* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* seal.  
*a* strong men: or leaders or gods.

*Heb.* is an intensive plural for majesty, but denotes a singular, as in older translations. 17: The reference to *his tail* suggests a crocodile, rather than the hippopotamus found in some older commentaries.

- 29 to him a club is a mere reed,  
and he laughs at the swish of the  
sabre.
- 30 Armoured beneath with jagged sherds,  
he sprawls on the mud like a  
threshing-sledge.
- 31 He makes the deep water boil like  
a cauldron,  
he whips up the lake like ointment in  
a mixing-bowl.
- 32 He leaves a shining trail behind him,  
and the great river is like white hair  
in his wake.
- 33 He has no equal on earth;  
for he is made quite without fear.
- 34 He looks down on all creatures,  
even the highest;  
he is king over all proud beasts.

#### 42 Then Job answered the LORD:

- 2 I know that thou canst do all things  
and that no purpose is beyond thee.
- 3 But I have spoken of great things  
which I have not understood,  
things too wonderful for me to  
know.<sup>b</sup>
- 5 I knew of thee then only by report  
but now I see thee with my own eyes.
- 6 Therefore I melted away;<sup>c</sup>  
I repent in dust and ashes.

#### Epilogue

- 7 When the LORD had finished speaking  
to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite,  
'I am angry with you and your two  
friends, because you have not spoken  
as you ought about me, as my servant  
8 Job has done. So now take seven bulls

and seven rams, go to my servant Job  
and offer a whole-offering for your-  
selves, and he will intercede for you;  
I will surely show him favour by not  
being harsh with you because you have  
not spoken as you ought about me, as  
he has done.' Then Eliphaz the Temanite <sup>9</sup>  
and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the  
Naamathite went and carried out the  
LORD's command, and the LORD  
showed favour to Job when he had  
interceded for his friends. So the LORD <sup>10</sup>  
restored Job's fortunes and doubled all  
his possessions.

Then all Job's brothers and sisters <sup>11</sup>  
and his former acquaintance came and  
feasted with him in his home, and they  
consoled and comforted him for all the  
misfortunes which the LORD had  
brought on him; and each of them  
gave him a sheep<sup>d</sup> and a gold ring.  
Furthermore, the LORD blessed the end <sup>12</sup>  
of Job's life more than the beginning;  
and he had fourteen thousand head of  
small cattle and six thousand camels, a  
thousand yoke of oxen and as many  
she-asses. He had seven<sup>e</sup> sons and three <sup>13</sup>  
daughters; and he named his eldest <sup>14</sup>  
daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah  
and the third Keren-happuch. There <sup>15</sup>  
were no women in all the world so  
beautiful as Job's daughters; and their  
father gave them an inheritance with  
their brothers.

Thereafter Job lived another hundred <sup>16</sup>  
and forty years, he saw his sons and his  
grandsons to four generations, and <sup>17</sup>  
died at a very great age.

*b* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds (4) O listen, and let me speak;

*c* I will ask questions, and you shall answer.

*d* Or despise myself.

*e* Or piece of money.

*f* Or fourteen.

**42.1-6: Job's repentance.** Job's silence (40.3-5) now gives way to the immediacy of God's presence and brings him to repentance. 3-4: See Tfn. *b*. Job quotes from God's initial speech (38.2-3) to admit the validity of the divine charge. 5-6: Job's knowledge of God was a conceptual one acquired from tradition *by report*; now he has a vivid personal encounter. As a consequence he recognizes not only his limitations in understanding but comes to acknowledge that God's actions in ordering the universe go beyond a system of justice as men know it. Job experienced God as bounty (38.41-39.12), beauty (38.12-15), freedom (38.5-6), and grace (41.9-31).

**42.7-17: Epilogue.** Job is restored to his former glory. The epilogue, like the prologue (chs. 1-2), is in prose. 9: The suffering righteous man stands before God as intercessor. 11: The *gold ring* was for the ear or the nose. 13: More than three daughters would have been a liability. See Ecclus.26.10-12; 42.9-11. Several manuscripts read fourteen sons (Tfn. *e*), in line with the doubling of his property. 14: *Jemimah*: dove (S. of S.2.14). *Keziah*: cinnamon (Prov.7.17). *Keren-happuch*: horn of eye cosmetics. 15: The specific mention of daughters receiving an inheritance is unique in the OT, but see Num.26.33; 27.1-8; 36.1-12. 16-17: Job's life span becomes double the usual expectation (Ps.90.10). *Four generations*: compare Ps.128.6. The language here is reminiscent of descriptions of the patriarchs in Gen.25.8; 35.29; 50.23.

# PSALMS

In the psalms there are many voices, from various times and places, from Joshua to Ezra, and from Jerusalem to Babylon. Gathered by unknown men, often called "the sages of Israel," the psalms were used in ancient worship as they have continued to live in both synagogue and church.

When Israel came to Canaan she encountered and absorbed a living poetic tradition; hence many psalms reveal much that Israel had in common with her predecessors and neighbors. At times, however, some of Israel's poets skillfully shaped the language with intuitive insight greater even than the very language itself; these are the occasions which are always exciting for the student who is interested in the singular thrust of Israel's creative literary achievement. But the historian must also recognize that the less striking aspects, the common elements themselves, could be of great significance too in the late biblical age.

Some of the poetic voices seem muffled by our own world view, yet others break through such barriers, for in many passages the Hebrew poets sang of a reality which is only on the horizon of our comprehension.

The Book of Psalms is divided into five books. In the Hebrew Masoretic Text, there is a superscription or heading for many psalms. In the present translation, as is noted in the Introduction to the Old Testament (p. xxi), "The headings of the Psalms . . . have been omitted; they are almost certainly not original." In the annotations it has at times been useful to refer to these omitted superscriptions. Two recurrent words, "Selah" and "Amen," have also been omitted (e.g. from 3.2,4). These words appear to be instructions inserted when the psalms were used liturgically. Perhaps Selah, whose meaning is unclear, was a signal for an instrumental interlude. Amen (e.g. 41.13), likewise uncertain in its original use, seems to instruct the participants in the liturgy to assent to the passage read to them.

The classification of each psalm is to be regarded as summary, and meant to be useful rather than complete. Thus, the "Laments" are not here classified into subcategories such as "individual" and "group" Laments. The procedure in the notes is to designate the following types: Lament, Thanksgiving, Hymn, Enthronement Hymn, Royal Psalm, Wisdom Psalm, Prophetic Judgment, Vow, Liturgy, and Benediction. Some psalms are really only fragments of known types and others are impossible to classify at all.

A Lament, the most abundant type, was sung in time of great trouble. It usually contains a statement of the poet's distress, a word of trust, an appeal to God, a declaration about the poet's obedience, and his vow to sing a Thanksgiving (see Pss. 22 and 26; also compare 56.8,12; 107.22). A Thanksgiving Psalm thanks God for what he had done in specific historical circumstances to save an individual or the nation. A Hymn praises God for what he is accustomed to do in nature or history for the welfare of mankind. An Enthronement Hymn was used to celebrate the kingship of God. Royal Psalms dealt with the human king; many were used at the time of his coronation and one is a Wedding Song. The Wisdom Psalms reflect the teaching of the sages of Israel. Other types are rather rare, and are explained in the notes.

Tradition ascribes the book of Psalms to David (2 Sam.23.1); about half are so ascribed in the superscriptions. Modern scholarship rejects a view held three generations ago which supposed that no psalms were as early as David; indeed, some were written even before his time. The Psalter is a collection, indeed, probably a collection of collections, of poems from all periods of Israel's history. It has, with justice, been called "The Prayer Book of the Second Temple," for in that later period (after 520 B.C.) the psalms were used in the liturgy.

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## BOOK 1

### 1

1 Happy is the man  
who does not take the wicked for  
his guide

nor walk the road that sinners tread  
nor take his seat among the scornful;  
the law of the LORD is his delight, 2  
the law his meditation night and day.  
He is like a tree 3  
planted beside a watercourse,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and its leaf never withers:

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**Ps. 1: The LORD watches over the way of the righteous.** This Wisdom Psalm (see Introduction) contrasts the two ways open to man—good and evil—and their consequences—happiness and misery. Thus, it is a summary of the moral teaching of the Psalter; hence, its place at the beginning of the Psalms. 1–3: *Happy is the man*: a common Wisdom phrase; see Ps.41.1 and the

in all that he does he prospers.  
 4 Wicked men are not like this;  
 they are like chaff driven by the  
 wind.  
 5 So when judgement comes the  
 wicked shall not stand firm,  
 nor shall sinners stand in the  
 assembly of the righteous.  
 6 The LORD watches over the way of  
 the righteous,  
 but the way of the wicked is doomed.

## 2

1 Why are the nations in turmoil?  
 Why do the peoples hatch their  
 futile plots?  
 2 The kings of the earth stand  
 ready,  
 and the rulers conspire together  
 against the LORD and his anointed  
 king.  
 3 'Let us break their fetters,' they cry,  
 'let us throw off their chains!'  
 4 The Lord who sits enthroned in  
 heaven  
 laughs them to scorn;  
 5 then he rebukes them in anger,  
 he threatens them in his wrath.  
 6 Of me he says, 'I have enthroned  
 my king  
 on Zion my holy mountain.'  
 7 I will repeat the LORD's decree:  
 'You are my son,' he said;  
 'this day I become your father.'  
 8 Ask of me what you will:

I will give you nations as your  
 inheritance,  
 the ends of the earth as your  
 possession.  
 You shall break them with a rod of  
 iron,  
 you shall shatter them like a clay  
 pot.'  
 Be mindful then, you kings;  
 learn your lesson, rulers of the  
 earth:  
 worship the LORD with reverence;  
 tremble, and kiss the king,<sup>a</sup>  
 lest the LORD be angry and you are  
 struck down in mid course;  
 for his anger flares up in a moment.  
 Happy are all who find refuge in  
 him.

## 3

LORD, how my enemies have  
 multiplied!  
 Many rise up against me,  
 many there are who say of me,  
 'God will not bring him victory.'  
 But thou, LORD, art a shield to  
 cover me:  
 thou art my glory, and thou dost  
 raise my head high.  
 I cry aloud to the LORD,  
 and he answers me from his  
 holy mountain.  
 I lie down and sleep,

<sup>a</sup> tremble . . . king: *prob. rdg.*; *lit.* tremble and kiss the mighty one; *Heb. obscure.*

beatitudes of Jesus (Mt.5.1-12). See also Jer.17.7-8. *A tree . . . beside a watercourse* is a symbol of the fullness of life in arid Palestine where trees are generally dwarfed for lack of moisture; compare Ezek.47.1-12; Ecclus.24.14-31. 6: The confident assertion that the *LORD watches over the way of the righteous* is found in many psalms, especially Wisdom Psalms. Even though in the Laments the psalmist recognizes the paradox of the just man suffering, he trusts that deliverance always comes; see Ps.22.

**Ps. 2: I have enthroned my king on Zion.** A Royal Psalm used at the time of coronation. For comparable psalms see Pss.72, 101, 110, and 132. 1-2: The accession of a new emperor was the time usually picked by subject *kings* to revolt. Because the emperor-king was considered chosen by God, for subjects to *conspire* against him was to conspire against the LORD. The word *king* is not found here in the Heb. The Heb. word for *anointed* is *messiah*. This word, in later Jewish tradition, came to stand for the ideal king who would accomplish God's purposes and Israel's destiny. Perhaps because of this connotation this psalm is placed here at the head of the Psalter. The passage is cited in Acts 4.25-29. 7: *You are my son*: a formula apparently used at the time of the coronation (see 2 Sam.7.14; Ps.89.26-27). For Christian interpretation, see Lk.3.22 and, more explicitly, Acts 13.33.

**Ps. 3: I cry aloud to the LORD.** A Lament, this psalm has characteristics usually found in all psalms of this category: (a) a cry to God (v. 1); (b) narration of his trouble (vv.1-2); (c) expression of trust in God (vv. 3-6); (d) a plea for God's help (vv. 7-8). The superscription (see Introduction) ascribes this psalm to David when he fled from his rebellious son Absalom (2 Sam.15.13-15). Pss.3-41 are all ascribed to, or are about, David. 4: *Holy mountain*: Mount Zion, the place of the Temple, symbolic of God's heavenly abode.

- and I wake again, for the LORD  
upholds me.
- 6 I will not fear the nations in their  
myriads  
who set on me from all sides.
- 7 Rise up, LORD; save me, O my God.  
Thou dost strike all my foes across  
the face  
and breakest the teeth of the  
wicked.
- 8 Thine is the victory, O LORD,  
and may<sup>b</sup> thy blessing rest upon  
thy people.
- 4
- 1 Answer me when I call, O God,  
maintainer of my right,  
I was hard pressed, and thou didst  
set me at large;  
be gracious to me now and hear  
my prayer.
- 2 Mortal men, how long will you pay  
me not honour but dishonour,  
or set your heart on trifles and run  
after lies?
- 3 Know that the LORD has shown me<sup>c</sup>  
his marvellous love;  
the LORD hears when I call to him.
- 4 However angry your hearts, do not  
do wrong;  
though you lie abed resentful,<sup>d</sup> do  
not break silence:
- 5 pay your due of sacrifice, and trust in  
the LORD.
- 6 There are many who say, 'If only we  
might be prosperous again!  
But the light of thy presence has fled  
from us, O LORD.'
- 7 Yet in my heart thou hast put more  
happiness  
than they enjoyed when there was  
corn and wine in plenty.
- Now I will lie down in peace, and 8  
sleep;  
for thou alone, O LORD, makest me  
live unafraid.
- 5
- Listen to my words, O LORD, 1  
consider my inmost thoughts;  
heed my cry for help, my king and 2  
my God.  
In the morning, when I say my 3  
prayers,  
thou wilt hear me.  
I set out my morning sacrifice<sup>e</sup>  
and watch for thee, O LORD.  
For thou art not a God who 4  
welcomes wickedness;  
evil can be no guest of thine.<sup>f</sup>  
There is no place for arrogance 5  
before thee;  
thou hatest evildoers,  
thou makest an end of all liars. 6
- The LORD detests traitors and men  
of blood.  
But I, through thy great love, may 7  
come into thy house,  
and bow low toward thy holy  
temple in awe of thee.  
Lead me, LORD, in thy 8  
righteousness,  
because my enemies are on the  
watch;  
give me a straight path to follow.  
There is no trusting what they say, 9  
they are nothing but wind.  
Their throats are an open<sup>g</sup>  
sepulchre;  
smooth talk runs off their tongues.

<sup>b</sup> Thine . . . and may: or O LORD of salvation, may . . .

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. him.

<sup>d</sup> lie abed resentful: prob. rdg.: Heb. say on your beds.

<sup>e</sup> Or plea.

<sup>f</sup> who welcomes . . . thine: or who protects a wicked

man; an evil man cannot be thy guest.

<sup>g</sup> Or inscribed.

**Ps. 4: Answer me when I call, O God.** Partly a Lament, and partly exultation on delivery from distress. 4-5: The virtue of obedience. Note the mention of sacrifices; the obedience advised is ritual as well as ethical. 6: *Presence*: lit. "face," an idiom, originally royal, often applied to God. A king could show pleasure by allowing his subjects to "seek his face," or by making his face shine on someone; as used of God see Pss.31.16; 67.1 and Num.6.25.

**Ps. 5: Listen to my words, O LORD.** A Lament. 1-2: In asking God to *consider his inmost thoughts* the poet acknowledges his guilt (which is amplified in vv. 4-6) and asks God's *help* for uprightness in the future (see v. 8 for elaboration). 3: A *sacrifice* was prescribed for various sins (see Lev.3.1-17; 4.27-6.7), here possibly after a vigil in the Temple. To *watch for* . . . LORD meant to look for signs of God's forgiveness and approval in the events of life. 7: The psalmist acknowledges that he does not meet the conditions to enter the *house* of the LORD, the Temple;

10	Bring ruin on them, O God; let them fall by their own devices. Cast them out, after all their rebellions, for they have defied thee.	The LORD has heard my entreaty; the LORD will accept my prayer. All my enemies shall be confounded and dismayed; they shall turn away in sudden confusion.	9 10
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11	But let all who take refuge in thee rejoice, let them for ever break into shouts of joy; shelter those who love thy name, that they may exult in thee.
12	For thou, O LORD, wilt bless the righteous; thou wilt hedge him round with favour as with a shield.

7

6

1	O LORD, do not condemn me in thy anger, do not punish me in thy fury.
2	Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am weak; heal me, my very bones are shaken; my soul quivers in dismay.
3	And thou, O LORD—how long?
4	Come back, O LORD; set my soul free, deliver me for thy love's sake.
5	None talk of thee among the dead; who praises thee in Sheol?
6	I am wearied with groaning; all night long my pillow is wet with tears, I soak my bed with weeping.
7	Grief dims my eyes; they are worn out with all my woes.
8	Away from me, all you evildoers, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.

O LORD my God, in thee I find refuge; save me, rescue me from my pursuers, before they tear at my throat like a lion and carry me off beyond hope of rescue.	1 2
O LORD my God, if I have done any of these things— if I have stained my hands with guilt, if I have repaid a friend evil for good or set free an enemy who attacked me without cause, may my adversary come after me and overtake me, trample my life to the ground and lay my honour in the dust!	3 4 5
Arise, O LORD, in thy anger, rouse thyself in wrath against my foes. Awake, my God who hast ordered that justice be done; let the peoples assemble around thee, and take thou thy seat on high above them.	6 7
O LORD, thou who dost pass sentence on the nations,	8

see Ps.15 for conditions. God's love experienced as an *awe of the holy* and therefore a forgiveness, makes such entry possible; compare Isa.6.5-7. 11-12: Transition from cries of sorrow to *shouts of joy* is a sign of God's love and favour.

**Ps. 6: Be merciful to me, O LORD. A Lament** (see Introduction), seemingly to be uttered in the time of a severe illness (vv. 2-7). 1-3: *Bones are shaken* . . . *soul quivers*: probably chills and shivering resulting from a fever. Illness was considered a sign of God's anger and a punishment for sin; compare Jn.9.2-3. 4: *Soul* is the Heb. *nephesh*, meaning the totality of life which is enslaved by illness. 5: The motive for God's healing is that death would mean the end of praising God, for there is no worship of God in *Sheol*, the place of the dead. 9-10: The psalm ends with a usual note of confidence. The *enemies* may be sickness, rather than men.

**Ps. 7: Rescue me from my pursuers. A Lament** (see Introduction). The background seems that of a prisoner awaiting trial, or of an innocent man pleading with God for justice. 5: The crime of which the psalmist is accused seems to demand payment with *life. Lay honour in the dust*: to die in dishonor; compare Isa.53.9-12. 6-9: This section has the flavor of the Book of Job. 6: Compare 44.23 n. In the face of manifest injustice, God is seen as one who needs to *awake* from sleep. 7-8: God here is asked to vindicate the psalmist's innocence before the peoples.



- O LORD, judge me as my  
righteousness deserves,  
for I am clearly innocent.
- 9 Let wicked men do no more harm,  
establish the reign of righteousness,<sup>h</sup>  
thou who examinest both heart and  
mind,  
thou righteous God.
- 10 God, the High God, is my shield  
who saves men of honest heart.
- 11 God is a just judge,  
every day he requites the raging  
enemy.
- 12 He sharpens his sword,  
strings his bow and makes it ready.
- 13 He has prepared his deadly shafts  
and tipped his arrows with fire.
- 14 But the enemy is in labour with  
iniquity;  
he conceives mischief, and his brood  
is lies.
- 15 He has made a pit and dug it deep,  
and he himself shall fall into the  
hole that he has made.
- 16 His mischief shall recoil upon  
himself,  
and his violence fall on his own  
head.
- 17 I will praise the LORD for his  
righteousness  
and sing a psalm to the name of  
the LORD Most High.

## 8

- 1 O LORD our sovereign,  
how glorious is thy name in all the  
earth!  
Thy majesty is praised high as the  
heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouths of babes, of

- infants at the breast,  
thou hast rebuked<sup>i</sup> the mighty,  
silencing enmity and vengeance to  
teach thy foes a lesson.
- When I look up at thy heavens, the 3  
work of thy fingers,  
the moon and the stars set in their  
place by thee,  
what is man that thou shouldst 4  
remember him,  
mortal man that thou shouldst  
care for him?  
Yet thou hast made him little less 5  
than a god,  
crowning him with glory and  
honour.
- Thou makest him master over all 6  
thy creatures;  
thou hast put everything under his  
feet:  
all sheep and oxen, all the wild 7  
beasts,  
the birds in the air and the fish 8  
in the sea,  
and all that moves along the  
paths of ocean.
- O LORD our sovereign, 9  
how glorious is thy name in all the  
earth!

## 9-10

- I will praise thee, O LORD, with all 1  
my heart,  
I will tell the story of thy  
marvellous acts.
- I will rejoice and exult in thee, 2  
I will praise thy name in psalms, O  
thou Most High,
- when my enemies turn back, 3  
when they fall headlong and  
perish at thy appearing;
- <sup>h</sup> the reign of righteousness: or the cause of the right-  
<sup>eous.</sup>  
<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. founded.

15: The theme of a wicked man falling into the *pit* he has *dug* is frequent in Wisdom literature. 17: Many Laments end with a vow to praise or thank the LORD for what he will surely do.

Ps. 8: How glorious is thy name in all the earth. This Hymn, drawing its inspiration from the beauties of the night, glorifies God's majesty and power (v. 3). 1: God's name is glorious when his power is manifest and acknowledged. 4-5: The poet is here affirmative about man; elsewhere (144.3-4) the mood is one of discouragement about man and his estate; compare Job 7.17-19. 6-8: The verses echo the idea in Gen.1.26-29. 9: The repetition of v. 1 is the literary device known as "Inclusion," designed to extend the idea of God's glory to all that is between the two statements.

Pss. 9-10: Have pity on me, O LORD. A Lament (see Introduction). Most scholars take these two psalms as a single poem, as in the Sept. It is an alphabetic acrostic, though not perfectly so preserved; see Ps.111 n. The nations (9.5,15-19; 10.16) are possibly best interpreted as personal enemies. The vow (9.1-2) and expression of confidence (vv. 3-12), normally in the midst of

4	for thou hast upheld my right and my cause, seated on thy throne, thou righteous judge.	Now the LORD makes himself known. Justice is done: the wicked man is trapped in his own devices.	16
5	Thou hast rebuked the nations and overwhelmed the ungodly, thou hast blotted out their name for all time.	They rush blindly down to Sheol, the wicked, all the nations who are heedless of God.	17
6	The strongholds of the enemy are thrown down for evermore; thou hast laid their cities in ruins, all memory of them is lost.	But the poor shall not always be unheeded nor the hope of the destitute be always vain.	18
7	The LORD thunders, <sup>j</sup> he sits enthroned for ever: he has set up his throne, his judgement-seat.	Arise, LORD, give man no chance to boast his strength; summon the nations before thee for judgement.	19
8	He it is who will judge the world with justice and try the cause of the peoples fairly.	Strike them with fear, O LORD, let the nations know that they are but men.	20
9	So may the LORD be a tower of strength for the oppressed, a tower of strength in time of need,	Why stand so far off, LORD, hiding thyself in time of need? The wicked man in his pride hunts down the poor:	10 2
10	that those who acknowledge thy name may trust in thee; for thou, LORD, dost not forsake those who seek thee.	may his crafty schemes be his own undoing!	3
11	Sing psalms to the LORD who dwells in Zion, proclaim his deeds among the nations.	The wicked man is obsessed with his own desires, and in his greed gives wickedness his blessing;	4
12	For the Avenger of blood has remembered men's desire, and has not forgotten the cry of the poor.	arrogant as he is, he scorns the LORD and leaves no place for God in all his schemes.	5
13	Have pity on me, O LORD; look upon my affliction, thou who hast lifted me up <sup>k</sup> and caught me back from the gates of death,	His ways are always devious; thy judgements are beyond his grasp, <sup>l</sup> and he scoffs at all restraint.	6
14	that I may repeat all thy praise and exult at this deliverance in the gates of Zion's city.	He says to himself, 'I shall never be shaken; no misfortune can check my course.' <sup>m</sup>	7
15	The nations have plunged into a pit of their own making; their own feet are entangled in the net which they hid.	His mouth is full of lies and violence; mischief and trouble lurk under his tongue. He lies in ambush in the villages	8

<sup>j</sup> thunders: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>k</sup> thou . . . me up: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. from those who hate me.*

<sup>l</sup> beyond his grasp: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. on high before him.*

<sup>m</sup> my course: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. which.*

Laments, are here at the beginning. 4: The LORD's kingship is stressed in 9.7 and 10.16; in 9.11 "dwells" means enthroned. 7-9: God is enthroned to vindicate the rights of the oppressed. 12: The duty of avenging a murdered or wronged person fell upon the nearest relative. God is the *Avenger of the blood . . . of the poor*; compare Gen.4.10; Num.35.23-29. 13: *Gates of death*: Sheol, the place of the dead, under the image of a fortified city; compare Mt.16.18. 15-16: See 7.15. 10.2-6: The meaning of life is totally beyond the *grasp* of the wicked. 4: *Place for God*: not atheists, but those who deny all moral force or scrutiny. See v. 13; 14.1 n.

and murders innocent men by stealth.  
 He is watching<sup>n</sup> intently for some  
 poor wretch;  
 9 he seizes him and drags him away  
 in his net;  
 he crouches stealthily, like a lion in  
 its lair  
 crouching to seize its victim;  
 10 the good man<sup>o</sup> is struck down and  
 sinks to the ground,  
 and poor wretches fall into his toils.  
 11 He says to himself, 'God has  
 forgotten;  
 he has hidden his face and has seen  
 nothing.'  
 12 Arise, LORD, set<sup>p</sup> thy hand to the  
 task;  
 do not forget the poor, O God.  
 13 Why, O God, has the wicked man  
 rejected thee  
 and said to himself that thou dost  
 not care?  
 14 Thou seest that mischief and trouble  
 are his companions,  
 thou takest the matter into thy own  
 hands.  
 The poor victim commits himself to  
 thee;  
 fatherless, he finds in thee his helper.  
 15 Break the power of wickedness and  
 wrong;  
 hunt out all wickedness until thou  
 canst find no more.  
 16 The LORD is king for ever and ever;  
 the nations have vanished from his  
 land.  
 17 Thou hast heard the lament of the  
 humble, O LORD,  
 and art attentive to their heart's  
 desire,  
 18 bringing justice to the orphan and  
 the downtrodden  
 that fear may never drive men from  
 their homes again.

## 11

In the LORD I have found my 1  
 refuge; why do you say to me,  
 'Flee to the mountains like a bird;  
 see how the wicked string their bows 2  
 and fit the arrow to the string,  
 to shoot down honest men out of  
 the darkness?'  
 When foundations are undermined, 3  
 what can the good man do?  
 The LORD is in his holy temple, 4  
 the LORD's throne is in heaven.  
 His eye is upon mankind, he takes  
 their measure at a glance.  
 The LORD weighs just and unjust 5  
 and hates with all his soul the lover  
 of violence.  
 He shall rain down red-hot coals 6  
 upon the wicked;  
 brimstone and scorching winds shall  
 be the cup they drink.  
 For the LORD is just and loves just 7  
 dealing;  
 his face is turned towards the  
 upright man.

## 12

Help, LORD, for loyalty is no more; 1  
 good faith between man and man  
 is over.  
 One man lies to another: 2  
 they talk with smooth lip and  
 double heart.  
 May the LORD make an end of 3  
 such smooth lips  
 and the tongue that talks so  
 boastfully!  
 They said, 'Our tongue can win 4  
 the day.  
 Words are our ally; who can master  
 us?'

*n* Prob. rdg.; Heb. storing up.  
*o* the good man: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
*p* Or who setteth.

**11:** Here the *face of God* is *hidden* in order not to see; see 4.6 n. and 11.7 for another meaning.

**Ps. 11:** The LORD is just. Some scholars classify this poem as a Song of Trust; it is kindred to the statement of confidence contained in most Laments (see Introduction). **1:** The mountains are often considered a place of refuge in calamity; see Gen.19.17; Mk.13.14. **4:** *In his holy temple . . . throne in heaven:* not a contradiction to the psalmist. That God is in Zion (9.11), the site of the Jerusalem Temple, does not exclude his domain in heaven from whence he can look upon mankind. **6:** *Scorching winds* brought death from the desert, considered a punishment from God; see Hos.13.15. *Cup* is a figure for destiny, generally unpleasant; compare Jer.25.15.

**Ps. 12:** Help, LORD, for man is unreliable. A Lament (see Introduction). This psalm may have been spoken in drama form in the Temple liturgy. **1-3:** Possibly spoken by a chorus. **2:** *Double heart:* two-faced. **4:** *They said:* possibly a cue, to bring on another group of voices.

5 'For the ruin of the poor, for the groans of the needy, now I will arise,' says the LORD, 'I will place him in the safety for which he longs.'

My heart shall rejoice, for thou hast set me free.  
I will sing to the LORD, who has granted all my desire.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words:  
silver refined in a crucible, gold<sup>q</sup> seven times purified.  
7 Do thou, LORD, protect us and guard us from a profligate and evil generation.<sup>r</sup>  
8 The wicked flaunt themselves on every side, while profligacy stands high among mankind.

## 14

The impious fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'  
How vile men are, how depraved and loathsome;  
not one does anything good!  
The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if any act wisely, if any seek out God.  
But all are disloyal, all are rotten to the core;  
not one does anything good, no, not even one.

## 13

1 How long, O LORD, wilt thou quite forget me?  
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?  
2 How long must I suffer anguish in my soul, grief in my heart, day and night? How long shall my enemy lord it over me?  
3 Look now and answer me, O LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
4 lest my adversary say, 'I have overthrown him', and my enemies rejoice at my downfall.  
5 But for my part I trust in thy true love.

Shall they not rue it, all evildoers who devour my people as men devour bread, and never call upon the LORD? There they were in dire alarm; for God was in the brotherhood of the godly.  
The resistance of their victim was too much for them, because the LORD was his refuge.  
If only Israel's deliverance might come out of Zion!  
When the LORD restores his people's fortunes, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

<sup>q</sup> gold: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* to the earth.

<sup>r</sup> a profligate and evil generation: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the generation which is for ever.

<sup>s</sup> Verses 1-7: *cp. Ps. 53. 1-6.*

5: *I will arise*: this expression, and others like it, is found repeatedly to depict the action of the LORD, as in Num.10.35; see Ps.44.23 n. *Says the LORD*: could be spoken by a priest. 6-8: Another chorus, indicated by the word *us*. 6: *Pure words*: in contrast to man's *smooth lip* (v. 2).

Ps. 13: *How long, O LORD?* A very typical Lament (see Introduction) with distress (vv. 1-2), request (vv. 3-4), trust (v. 5), and vow (v. 6). Note the force of the repetition of *How long*. 1: *Hide thy face*: compare 10.11 n.

Ps. 14: *If only deliverance might come from God*. This Lament (see Introduction) is almost identical with Ps.53. The poet says in despair (v. 13) that all men are vile; yet he speaks in v. 5 of *the brotherhood of the godly*. 1: *Impious fool*: a single word in Heb. In biblical language *the fool* is the sinner. *Says in his heart*: decides in his conscience to act as if there is *no God*; he is not an atheist. See 10.4 n. 2-6: God's help enables the godly man to resist the wicked. 2: *To seek God* is to *act wisely*: a theme of Wisdom literature; see Wis.1.1. 4: *Devour my people*: to exploit them; see Ezek.34.9-10. *Call upon the LORD*: worship God. 7: *Zion*: Mount Zion, the location of the Temple; hence it means deliverance from God. *Jacob . . . Israel*: the two names of the ancestor of the Jews are each applied to the nation; see Gen.32.27-28.

Ps. 15: *Who may dwell on thy holy mountain?* This psalm, difficult to classify (see Introduction), is best considered a Wisdom poem on purity as a requirement for participating in the Temple worship. 1: *Who . . . who*: possibly this was connected with the liturgy of entrance into the Temple, the questions being asked by pilgrims and the answer given by a priest. *Lodge . . .*

## 15

		the lines fall for me in pleasant places,	6
1	O LORD, who may lodge in thy tabernacle?	indeed I am well content with my inheritance.	
	Who may dwell on thy holy mountain?	I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel:	7
2	The man of blameless life, who does what is right and speaks the truth from his heart;	in the night-time wisdom comes to me in my inward parts.	
3	who has no malice on his tongue, who never wrongs a friend and tells no tales against his neighbour;	I have set the LORD continually before me:	8
4	the man who shows his scorn for the worthless and honours all who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not retract;	with him <sup>v</sup> at my right hand I cannot be shaken.	
5	who does not put his money out to usury and takes no bribe against an innocent man.	Therefore my heart exults and my spirit rejoices, my body too rests unafraid;	9
	He who does these things shall never be brought low.	for thou wilt not abandon me to Sheol nor suffer thy faithful servant to see the pit.	10
		Thou wilt show me the path of life;	11
		in thy presence is the fullness of joy, in thy right hand pleasures for evermore.	

## 16

1	Keep me, O God, for in thee have I found refuge.
2	I have said to the LORD, 'Thou, Lord, art my felicity.'
3	The gods whom earth holds sacred are all worthless, and cursed are all who make them their delight; <sup>t</sup>
4	those who run after them <sup>u</sup> find trouble without end. I will not offer them libations of blood nor take their names upon my lips.
5	Thou, LORD, my allotted portion, thou my cup, thou dost enlarge my boundaries:

## 17

	Hear, LORD, my plea for justice, give my cry a hearing, listen to my prayer, for it is innocent of all deceit.	1
	Let judgement in my cause issue from thy lips, let thine eyes be fixed on justice.	2
	Thou hast tested my heart and watched me all night long; thou hast assayed me and found in me no mind to evil.	3
	I will not speak of the deeds of men; I have taken good note of all thy sayings.	4

*t* are all worthless . . . delight: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
*u* after them: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
*v* with him: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

*dwell*: the words are to be taken as hyperbole, not literally. 2-5: The descriptive statements number ten; hence, they are often regarded as related in some way to the Ten Commandments.

**Ps. 16: Keep me, O God.** This psalm is difficult to classify (see Introduction). 3-4: A curse on idolators. 4: *Blood* of animals was poured upon the altar as part of sacrificial ritual. To *take* the name of a god on the *lips* meant to call on him in worship; see Gen. 13.4. 5: *My cup*: destiny, here in an infrequent pleasant sense. *Enlarge my boundaries*: a figure of speech for abundant blessings. 6-11: The blessedness of the faithful. 6: *Lines*: a surveyor's measure. 7: *Inward parts*: lit. the loins, considered the center of emotions and feelings. 8: In a trial the defendants of an accused person stood at his *right hand*; here it is God. *Cannot be shaken*: the *Heb.* is the same as 15.5, there rendered "be brought low." 10: *Sheol* and *pit* are synonymous; they refer to the place of the dead.

**Ps. 17: Listen to my prayer.** A Lament (see Introduction). 1-5: In courtroom language the

- 5 I have not strayed from the course  
of duty;  
I have followed thy path and  
never stumbled.
- 6 I call upon thee, O God, for thou  
wilt answer me.  
Bend down thy ear to me, listen to  
my words.
- 7 Show me how marvellous thy  
true love can be,  
who with thy hand dost save  
all who seek sanctuary from  
their enemies.
- 8 Keep me like the apple of thine eye;  
hide me in the shadow of thy  
wings
- 9 from the wicked who obstruct me,  
from deadly foes who throng round  
me.
- 10 They have stifled all compassion;  
their mouths are full of pride;
- 11 they press me hard,<sup>w</sup> now they hem  
me in,  
on the watch to bring me to the  
ground.
- 12 The enemy is like a lion eager for  
prey,  
like a young lion crouching in  
ambush.
- 13 Arise, LORD, meet him face to face  
and bring him down.  
Save my life from the wicked;
- 14 make an end of them<sup>x</sup> with thy  
sword.  
With thy hand, O LORD, make an  
end of them;<sup>x</sup>  
thrust them out of this world in  
the prime of their life,  
gorged as they are with thy good  
things,  
blest with many sons  
and leaving their children wealth in  
plenty.
- 15 But my plea is just: I shall see thy  
face,
- and be blest with a vision of thee  
when I awake.
- 18
- I love thee, O LORD my strength. 1  
The LORD is my stronghold, my 2<sup>y</sup>  
fortress and my champion,  
my God, my rock where I find safety,  
my shield, my mountain refuge, my  
strong tower.
- I will call on the LORD to whom all 3  
praise is due,  
and I shall be delivered from my  
enemies.
- When the bonds of death held me 4  
fast,  
destructive torrents overtook me,  
the bonds of Sheol tightened round 5  
me,  
the snares of death were set to  
catch me;  
then in anguish of heart I cried to 6  
the LORD,  
I called for help to my God;  
he heard me from his temple,  
and my cry reached his ears.  
The earth heaved and quaked, 7  
the foundations of the mountains  
shook;  
they heaved, because he was angry.  
Smoke rose from his nostrils, 8  
devouring fire came out of his  
mouth,  
glowing coals and searing heat.  
He swept the skies aside as he 9  
descended,  
thick darkness lay under his feet.  
He rode on a cherub, he flew 10  
through the air;  
he swooped on the wings of the  
wind.

<sup>w</sup> they press me hard: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* our footsteps.  
<sup>x</sup> make an end of them: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* unintelligible.  
<sup>y</sup> Verses 2–50: *cp.* 2 Sam. 22, 2–51.

psalmist proclaims his innocence in calling on the LORD for justice and help. 8: *Apple*: lit. the pupil, the most essential part of the eye. *Shadow of thy wings*: the image is of an eagle hovering over its young, with a reference to God's protection of Israel in the Exodus; compare Deut. 32.10–11. 15: Darkness is viewed as a time of trial, when evil is on the loose and God is absent; the dawn brings a new *vision* of God and his presence.

Ps. 18: The LORD keeps faith with his king. A Thanksgiving. This psalm is also found in 2 Sam. ch. 22. There, and in the superscription (see Introduction), it is said that David sang this psalm when the LORD delivered him from all his enemies and from Saul. 1–3: The poem begins by praising the LORD. 4–6: Next, as in such psalms, the poet refers to troubles which were his. 4: *Bonds of death* is a synonymous parallelism for *bonds of Sheol*, i.e. some mortal danger. 7–19: God appears in response. The description of the appearance of the Deity reflects words and terms of Canaanite mythological language. 9–14: The LORD is viewed as the storm god; see also Ps. 29. 10: *He rode on a cherub*: compare 68.4 n. and 104.3, where God rides on the

- 11 He made darkness around him his  
hiding-place  
and dense<sup>z</sup> vapour his canopy.<sup>a</sup>
- 12 Thick clouds came out of the  
radiance before him,  
hailstones and glowing coals.
- 13 The LORD thundered from the  
heavens  
and the voice of the Most High  
spoke out.<sup>b</sup>
- 14 He loosed his arrows, he sped them  
far and wide,  
he shot forth lightning shafts and  
sent them echoing.
- 15 The channels of the sea-bed were  
revealed,  
the foundations of earth laid bare  
at the LORD's rebuke,  
at the blast of the breath of his<sup>c</sup>  
nostrils.
- 16 He reached down from the height  
and took me,  
he drew me out of mighty waters,  
17 he rescued me from my enemies,  
strong as they were,  
from my foes when they grew too  
powerful for me.
- 18 They confronted me in the hour of  
my peril,  
but the LORD was my buttress.
- 19 He brought me out into an open  
place,  
he rescued me because he delighted  
in me.
- 20 The LORD rewarded me as my  
righteousness deserved;  
my hands were clean, and he requited  
me.
- 21 For I have followed the ways of the  
LORD  
and have not turned wickedly from  
my God;  
22 all his laws are before my eyes,  
I have not failed to follow his decrees.
- 23 In his sight I was blameless  
and kept myself from wilful sin;  
24 the LORD requited me as my  
righteousness deserved  
and the purity of my life in his eyes.
- 25 With the loyal thou showest thyself  
loyal
- and with the blameless man  
blameless.
- With the savage man thou showest 26  
thyself savage,  
and<sup>d</sup> tortuous with the perverse.  
Thou deliverest humble folk, 27  
and bringest proud looks down to  
earth.
- Thou, LORD, dost make my lamp 28  
burn bright,  
and my God will lighten my darkness.  
With thy help I leap over a bank, 29  
by God's aid I spring over a wall.
- The way of God is perfect, 30  
the LORD's word has stood the test;  
he is the shield of all who take refuge  
in him.
- What god is there but the LORD? 31  
What rock but our God?—  
the God who girds me with strength 32  
and makes my way blameless,  
who makes me swift as a hind 33  
and sets me secure on the  
mountains;  
who trains my hands for battle, 34  
and my arms aim an arrow tipped  
with bronze.
- Thou hast given me the shield of thy 35  
salvation,  
thy hand sustains me, thy providence  
makes me great.
- Thou givest me room for my steps, 36  
my feet have not faltered.  
I pursue my enemies and overtake 37  
them,  
I do not return until I have made an  
end of them.
- I strike them down and they will 38  
never rise again;  
they fall beneath my feet.
- Thou dost arm me with strength for 39  
the battle  
and dost subdue my foes before me.  
Thou settest my foot on my enemies' 40  
necks,

*z* Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Sam. 22. 12; Heb. dark.

*a* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds thick clouds.

*b* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds hailstones and glowing coals.

*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. thy.

*d* With the savage . . . savage, and; or With the pure  
thou showest thyself pure, but . . .

clouds. 13–19: In mythology thunder and lightning are the symbols of the storm god's power over the forces of chaos which he subdues when he becomes the Creator-King. Israelite poets borrowed such motifs (see Introduction). The LORD defeats the powers of chaos, delivering the man in distress. 20–29: The deliverance was merited because God is just. 30–45: God is

	and I bring to nothing those that hate me.	One day speaks to another, night with night shares its knowledge, and this without speech or language or sound of any voice.	2
41	They cry out and there is no one to help them, they cry to the LORD and he does not answer.	Their music goes out through all the earth, their words reach to the end of the world.	3
42	I will pound them fine as dust before the wind, like mud in the streets will I trample them. <sup>e</sup>	In them a tent is fixed for the sun, who comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, rejoicing like a strong man to run his race.	4
43	Thou dost deliver me from the clamour of the people, and makest me master of the nations. A people I never knew shall be my subjects;	His rising is at one end of the heavens, his circuit touches their farthest ends; and nothing is hidden from his heat.	5
44	as soon as they hear tell of me, they shall obey me, and foreigners shall come cringing to me.		6
45	Foreigners shall be brought captive to me, and emerge from their strongholds.	The law of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul. The LORD's instruction never fails, and makes the simple wise.	7
46	The LORD lives, blessed is my rock, high above all is God who saves me.	The precepts of the LORD are right and rejoice the heart.	8
47	O God, who grantest me vengeance, who layest nations prostrate at my feet,	The commandment of the LORD shines clear and gives light to the eyes.	
48	who dost rescue me from my foes and set me over my enemies, thou dost deliver me from violent men.	The fear of the LORD is pure and abides for ever.	9
49	Therefore, LORD, I will praise thee among the nations and sing psalms to thy name,	The LORD's decrees are true and righteous every one, more to be desired than gold, pure gold in plenty, sweeter than syrup or honey from the comb.	10
50	to one who gives his king great victories and in all his acts keeps faith with his anointed king, with David and his descendants for ever.	It is these that give thy servant warning, and he who keeps them wins a great reward.	11
		Who is aware of his unwitting sins? Cleanse me of any secret fault. Hold back thy servant also from	12
1	The heavens tell out the glory of God, the vault of heaven reveals his handiwork.		13

<sup>e</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. 2 Sam. 22. 43; Heb. will I empty them out.*

invincible in battle. 46-50: This is an additional praise and vow. 50: *His anointed king is David.*

**Ps. 19: The glory of God.** A Hymn. All creation reveals God's handiwork. Indeed, nature, law, history, and the personal problems of the individual must be combined in terms of God's kingdom. 4: In Wisdom literature the *sun* is a symbol of justice and of wisdom itself; see Wis.5.6; 7.29. 7-11: The *law* is wisdom itself; and these *give* (v. 11) a more important *light* (v. 8) than the sun. 12-14: Man, even when inspired and guided, may still sin. Hence, the worshiper asks forgiveness of God.



sins of self-will,  
lest they get the better of me.  
Then I shall be blameless  
and innocent of any great  
transgression.

- 14 May all that I say and think be  
acceptable to thee,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer!

## 20

- 1 May the LORD answer you in the  
hour of trouble!  
The name of Jacob's God be your  
tower of strength,  
2 give you help from the sanctuary  
and send you support from Zion!  
3 May he remember all your  
offerings  
and look with favour on your  
rich sacrifices,  
4 give you your heart's desire  
and grant success to all your  
plans!  
5 Let us sing aloud in praise of  
your victory,  
let us do homage to the name of  
our God!  
The LORD grant all you ask!
- 6 Now I know  
that the LORD has given victory to  
his anointed king;  
he will answer him from his holy  
heaven  
with the victorious might of his  
right hand.
- 7 Some boast of chariots and some of  
horses,  
but our boast is the name of the  
LORD our God.
- 8 They totter and fall,  
but we rise up and are full of  
courage.
- 9 O LORD, save the king,  
and answer us in the hour of our  
calling.

## 21

- The king rejoices in thy might, O LORD:  
1 well may he exult in thy victory,  
for thou hast given him his heart's  
2 desire  
and hast not refused him what  
he asked.  
Thou dost welcome him with  
3 blessings and prosperity  
and set a crown of fine gold upon  
his head.  
He asked of thee life, and thou didst  
4 give it him,  
length of days for ever and ever.  
Thy salvation has brought him  
5 great glory;  
thou dost invest him with majesty  
and honour,  
6 for thou bestowest blessings on  
him for evermore  
and dost make him glad with joy  
in thy presence.  
The king puts his trust in the LORD;  
7 the loving care of the Most High  
holds him unshaken.
- Your hand shall reach all your  
8 enemies:  
your right hand shall reach those  
who hate you;  
9 at your coming you shall plunge  
them into a fiery furnace;  
the LORD in his anger will strike  
them down,  
and fire shall consume them.  
It will exterminate their offspring  
10 from the earth  
and rid mankind of their  
posterity.  
For they have aimed wicked blows  
11 at you,  
they have plotted mischief but  
could not prevail;  
but you will catch them round the  
12 shoulders  
and will aim with your bow-strings  
at their faces.

Ps. 20: O LORD, save the king. A psalm, possibly Royal, of public supplication used in the Temple liturgy before a battle. 1-5: A prayer for God's support of the king. 2: *The sanctuary* and *Zion* are synonymous. 5: Choral response to the petitions. 6: Possibly an oracle pronounced by a priest or cult prophet. 7-9: Choral response.

Ps. 21: The LORD gives life. A Royal Psalm of thanksgiving, as if in gratitude for the victory prayed for in Ps.20. It is very similar in structure and content to Ps.18, though much briefer. 1-7: Motives for thanksgiving. 8-12: Perhaps an oracle by a priest or a cultic prophet.

13 Be exalted, O LORD, in thy might;  
we will sing a psalm of praise to  
thy power.

22

1 My God, my God, why hast thou  
forsaken me  
and art so far from saving me,  
from heeding my groans?  
2 O my God, I cry in the day-time  
but thou dost not answer,  
in the night I cry but get no respite.  
3 And yet thou art enthroned in  
holiness,  
thou art he whose praises Israel  
sings.  
4 In thee our fathers put their trust;  
they trusted, and thou didst  
rescue them.  
5 Unto thee they cried and were  
delivered;  
in thee they trusted and were not  
put to shame.  
6 But I am a worm, not a man,  
abused by all men, scorned by  
the people.  
7 All who see me jeer at me,  
make mouths at me and wag their  
heads:  
8 'He threw himself on the LORD for  
rescue;  
let the LORD deliver him, for he  
holds him dear!'  
9 But thou art he who drew me from  
the womb,  
who laid me at my mother's  
breast.  
10 Upon thee was I cast at birth;  
from my mother's womb thou hast  
been my God.  
11 Be not far from me,  
for trouble is near, and I have no  
helper.  
12 A herd of bulls surrounds me,

great bulls of Bashan beset me.  
Ravening and roaring lions 13  
open their mouths wide against me.  
My strength drains away like 14  
water  
and all my bones are loose.  
My heart has turned to wax and  
melts within me.  
My mouth<sup>f</sup> is dry as a potsherd, 15  
and my tongue sticks to my jaw;  
I am laid<sup>g</sup> low in the dust of  
death.  
The huntsmen are all about me; 16  
a band of ruffians rings me round,  
and they have hacked off<sup>h</sup> my hands  
and my feet.  
I tell my tale of misery, 17  
while they look on and gloat.  
They share out my garments among 18  
them  
and cast lots for my clothes.  
But do not remain so far away, O 19  
LORD;  
O my help, hasten to my aid.  
Deliver my very self from the sword, 20  
my precious life from the axe.  
Save me from the lion's mouth, 21  
my poor body<sup>i</sup> from the horns of  
the wild ox.  
I will declare thy fame to my 22  
brethren;  
I will praise thee in the midst of  
the assembly.  
Praise him, you who fear the 23  
LORD;  
all you sons of Jacob, do him  
honour;  
stand in awe of him, all sons of  
Israel.  
For he has not scorned the 24  
downtrodden,

<sup>f</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. My strength.

<sup>g</sup> I am laid; prob. rdg.; Heb. thou wilt lay me.

<sup>h</sup> and they have hacked off; prob. rdg.; Heb. like a lion.

<sup>i</sup> my poor body; prob. rdg.; Heb. thou hast answered me.

13: Antiphonal acclamation by the bystanders. For such recurring expressions, see Ps.57.5,11. Ps. 22: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The classic example of a Lament. 1: Introduction: invocation of the divine name; see Mk.15.34. 2-19: Motives for deliverance, apparently from serious illness: (a) God's deliverance of ancestors (vv. 2-5); (b) the poet's present abject and helpless state. 3: God was considered enthroned above the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple; see Isa.6.1-3. 7: Wag their heads: sign of derision. 8: The poet's enemies deride his call for God's help since illness was considered a punishment from God for sin. 12: Bashan: grazing area south of Damascus noted for its large cattle. 14-15: Symptoms of an illness accompanied by a severe fever are evident. 18: Assured of his death, the poet's enemies divide his possessions. 22-27: A hymn of praise anticipating the healing and the fulfillment of a vow (v. 25). 29: See 6.5 n.

- nor shrunk in loathing from his  
plight,  
nor hidden his face from him,  
but gave heed to him when he cried  
out.
- 25 Thou dost inspire my praise in the  
full assembly;  
and I will pay my vows before all  
who fear thee.
- 26 Let the humble eat and be satisfied.  
Let those who seek the LORD  
praise him  
and be in good heart for ever.
- 27 Let all the ends of the earth remember  
and turn again to the LORD;  
let all the families of the nations  
bow down before him.
- 28 For kingly power belongs to the  
LORD,  
and dominion over the nations  
is his.
- 29 How can those buried in the earth  
do him homage,  
how can those who go down to the  
grave bow before him?  
But I shall live for his sake,  
my posterity<sup>j</sup> shall serve him.
- 30 This shall be told of the Lord to  
future generations;  
and they shall justify him,  
declaring to a people yet unborn  
that this was his doing.
- 23
- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall  
want nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green  
pastures,  
and leads me beside the waters of  
peace;
- he renews life within me, 3  
and for his name's sake guides me  
in the right path.
- Even though I walk through a 4  
valley dark as death  
I fear no evil, for thou art with me,  
thy staff and thy crook are my  
comfort.
- Thou spreadest a table for me in the 5  
sight of my enemies;  
thou hast richly bathed my head  
with oil,  
and my cup runs over.
- Goodness and love unfailing, these 6  
will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of  
the LORD  
my whole life long.
- 24
- The earth is the LORD's and all 1  
that is in it,  
the world and those who dwell  
therein.
- For it was he who founded it upon 2  
the seas  
and planted it firm upon the  
waters beneath.
- Who may go up the mountain of 3  
the LORD?  
And who may stand in his holy  
place?  
He who has clean hands and a 4  
pure heart,  
who has not set his mind on  
falsehood,

*j* But I . . . posterity: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

**Ps. 23: The LORD is my shepherd and host.** A Hymn, or possibly psalm of pilgrimage to the Temple. 1: God is often considered a *shepherd*; see Ezek. ch. 34. *Want*: lack. 2: *Green pastures* are scarce in Palestine. *Waters of peace*: pools of calm water fed by a spring and not the dangerous, turbulent streams formed by a downpour of rain. 3: *Name's sake*: the "name" gives the nature of a person or a god. 4: *Dark* reflects deep ravines of Judean hills. A Palestinian shepherd sometimes has a *staff*, a cudgel, to ward off wild animals, as well as a *crook* for guiding sheep. 5: *The table* was probably where a sacrifice was eaten in the Temple in the *sight of . . . enemies*. *Cup runs over*: abundant blessing and joy. The head of an honored guest was anointed with oil in the Near East; see Lk.7.46. 6: The joy and *goodness* experienced in the Temple will carry over into daily *life*. The poet will continue to *dwell* in the Temple in desire and in worship.

**Ps. 24: The LORD is Creator-King.** A Liturgy used in the Temple worship. 1-2: As the pilgrims go through the countryside they observe that the LORD is the possessor and creator of the earth. Myth in the Ancient Near East viewed God as defeating the sea, or chaos, in order to build the earth on the sea. *Waters beneath*: underground reservoir of water from which springs arise; compare Gen.7.11. 3: As pilgrims approach the Temple they ask who is worthy to *stand in the holy place*. 4: Conditions for entry are moral rather than ritual cleanliness.

- and has not committed perjury.  
 5 He shall receive a blessing from  
     the LORD,  
     and justice from God his saviour.  
 6 Such is the fortune of those who  
     seek him,  
     who seek the face of the God of  
     Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, you gates,  
     lift yourselves up, you everlasting  
     doors,  
     that the king of glory may come in.  
 8 Who is the king of glory?  
     The LORD strong and mighty,  
     the LORD mighty in battle.  
 9 Lift up your heads, you gates,  
     lift them up, you everlasting  
     doors,  
     that the king of glory may come  
     in.  
 10 Who then is the king of glory?  
     The king of glory is the LORD of  
     Hosts.

## 25

- 1 Unto thee, O LORD my God, I lift  
     up my heart.  
 2 In thee I trust: do not put me to  
     shame,  
     let not my enemies exult over me.  
 3 No man who hopes in thee is put  
     to shame;  
     but shame comes to all who break  
     faith without cause.  
 4 Make thy paths known to me,  
     O LORD;  
     teach me thy ways.  
 5 Lead me in thy truth and teach me;  
     thou art God my saviour.  
     For thee I have waited all the day  
     long,  
     for the coming of thy goodness,  
     LORD.<sup>k</sup>
- Remember, LORD, thy tender care 6  
     and thy love unfailing,  
     shown from ages past.  
 Do not remember the sins and 7  
     offences of my youth,  
     but remember me in thy unfailing  
     love.  
 The LORD is good and upright; 8  
 therefore he teaches sinners the way  
     they should go.  
 He guides the humble man in doing 9  
     right,  
     he teaches the humble his ways.  
 All the ways of the LORD are loving 10  
     and sure  
     to men who keep his covenant  
     and his charge.  
 For the honour of thy name, 11  
     O LORD,  
     forgive my wickedness, great as it is.  
 If there is any man who fears the 12  
     LORD,  
     he shall be shown the path that he  
     should choose;  
     he shall enjoy lasting prosperity, 13  
     and his children after him shall  
     inherit the land.  
 The LORD confides his purposes 14  
     to those who fear him,  
     and his covenant is theirs to know.  
 My eyes are ever on the LORD, 15  
 who alone can free my feet from  
     the net.
- Turn to me and show me thy favour, 16  
 for I am lonely and oppressed.  
 Relieve the sorrows of my heart 17  
     and bring me out of my distress.  
 Look at my misery and my trouble 18  
     and forgive me every sin.  
 Look at my enemies, see how many 19  
     they are  
     and how violent their hatred for  
     me.

<sup>k</sup> for the coming . . . LORD: transposed from end of  
 verse 7.

5: *Seek the face of . . . God*: visit the Temple. 7–10: This seems to reflect a processional liturgy with the Ark of the Covenant, in which antiphonal singing takes place. 7: The procession with the Ark stops in front of the closed doors of the Temple; hence the dramatic request, *Lift*. 8a: This question comes from within. 8b–9: The answer comes from those bearing the Ark. 10: Question and answer repeated.

Ps. 25: *Defend me and deliver me*. A Lament (see Introduction); an alphabetical acrostic, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Heb. alphabet (see Ps. 111 n.). 1–3: The poet's distress. 4–14: He prays for God's guidance and help as in the past (4–9) for those faithful to his covenant (10–14). 13–14: To *inherit the land* was a sign of God's blessing, especially after the return from the Babylonian Exile of 587, and was a reward for keeping the *covenant*. 15–22: He pleads for deliverance from his sorrows.

- 20 Defend me and deliver me,  
do not put me to shame when I  
take refuge in thee.
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness  
protect me,  
for I have waited for thee, O  
LORD.
- 22 O God, redeem Israel from all his  
sorrows.

## 26

- 1 Give me justice, O LORD,  
for I have lived my life without  
reproach,  
and put unfaltering trust in the  
LORD.
- 2 Test me, O LORD, and try me;  
put my heart and mind to the  
proof.
- 3 For thy constant love is before my  
eyes,  
and I live in thy truth.
- 4 I have not sat among worthless  
men,  
nor do I mix with hypocrites;
- 5 I hate the company of evildoers  
and will not sit among the  
ungodly.
- 6 I wash my hands in innocence  
to join in procession round thy  
altar, O LORD,
- 7 singing of thy marvellous acts,  
recounting them all with thankful  
voice.
- 8 O LORD, I love the beauty of thy  
house,  
the place where thy glory dwells.
- 9 Do not sweep me away with sinners,  
nor cast me out with men who  
thirst for blood,  
whose fingers are active in  
mischief,  
and their hands are full of bribes.
- 11 But I live my life without reproach;  
redeem me, O LORD, and show me  
thy favour.

- When once my feet are planted on 12  
firm ground,  
I will bless the LORD in the full  
assembly.

## 27

- The LORD is my light and my 1  
salvation;  
whom should I fear?  
The LORD is the refuge of my life;  
of whom then should I go in  
dread?
- When evildoers close in on me to 2  
devour me,  
it is my enemies, my assailants,  
who stumble and fall.
- If an army should encamp against 3  
me,  
my heart would feel no fear;  
if armed men should fall upon me,  
even then I should be undismayed.
- One thing I ask of the LORD, 4  
one thing I seek:  
that I may be constant in the  
house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the  
LORD  
and to seek him<sup>1</sup> in his temple.
- For he will keep me safe beneath 5  
his roof  
in the day of misfortune;  
he will hide me under the cover of  
his tent;  
he will raise me beyond reach of  
distress.
- Now I can raise my head high 6  
above the enemy all about me;  
so will I acclaim him with sacrifice  
before his tent  
and sing a psalm of praise to the  
LORD.
- Hear, O LORD, when I call aloud; 7  
show me favour and answer me.

<sup>1</sup> Or and to pay my morning worship.

**Ps. 26: Redeem me, O LORD.** A Lament (see Introduction). 1-3: A cry for justice. 4-7: A protestation of innocence. 5: To *sit among the ungodly*: to be identified with their values. 6-7: To *wash the hands* was a dramatic protestation of innocence, possibly a condition for joining a Temple procession; compare Deut.21.6. 9: *Thy glory*: the sense of God's majesty. 12: The usual vow.

**Ps. 27: Hear, O LORD, when I call aloud.** The classification of this psalm is difficult; perhaps it is a Lament or Hymn (see Introduction). 1-6: Such a statement of trust could be a part of either a Lament or a Thanksgiving. 5: *Tent*: poetic word for Temple alluding to the Tabernacle used for worship in the desert; see Lam.2.6; also v. 6. 7-14: A plea to God. The tone is more

8 'Come,' my heart has said,  
 'seek his face.'<sup>m</sup>  
 I will seek thy face, O LORD;  
 9 do not hide it from me,  
 nor in thy anger turn away thy  
 servant,  
 whose help thou hast been;  
 do not cast me off or forsake me,  
 O God my saviour.  
 10 Though my father and my mother  
 forsake me,  
 the LORD will take me into his  
 care.  
 11-12 Teach me thy way, O LORD;  
 do not give me up to the greed of  
 my enemies;  
 lead me by a level path  
 to escape my watchful foes;  
 liars stand up to give evidence  
 against me,  
 breathing malice.  
 13 Well I know that I shall see the  
 goodness of the LORD  
 in the land of the living.  
 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong, take  
 courage,  
 and wait for the LORD.

28

1 To thee, O LORD, I call;  
 O my Rock, be not deaf to my cry,  
 lest, if thou answer me with  
 silence,  
 I become like those who go down  
 to the abyss.  
 2 Hear my cry for mercy  
 when I call to thee for help,  
 when I lift my hands to thy holy  
 shrine.  
 3 Do not drag me away with the  
 ungodly, with evildoers,  
 who speak civilly to neighbours,  
 with malice in their hearts.

Reward them for their works, their 4  
 evil deeds;  
 reward them for what their hands  
 have done;  
 give them their deserts.  
 Because they pay no heed to the 5  
 works of the LORD  
 or to what his hands have done,  
 may he tear them down and  
 never build them up!  
 Blessed be the LORD, 6  
 for he has heard my cry for mercy.  
 The LORD is my strength, my shield, 7  
 in him my heart trusts;  
 so I am sustained, and my heart  
 leaps for joy,  
 and I praise him with my whole  
 body.<sup>n</sup>  
 The LORD is strength to his people, 8  
 a safe refuge for his anointed king.  
 O save thy people and bless thy own, 9  
 shepherd them, carry them for ever.

29

Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, 1  
 ascribe to the LORD glory and might.  
 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due 2  
 to his name;  
 bow down to the LORD in the  
 splendour of holiness.<sup>o</sup>  
 The God of glory thunders: 3  
 the voice of the LORD echoes  
 over the waters,  
 the LORD is over the mighty  
 waters.  
 The voice of the LORD is power. 4  
 The voice of the LORD is majesty.  
 The voice of the LORD breaks the 5  
 cedars,

*m* seek his face: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* seek ye my face.  
*n* with my whole body: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from my song.  
*o* the splendour of holiness: *or* holy vestments.

typical of the Lament than of the Hymn. 8: To seek the LORD's face originally meant to consult him by means of an oracle; see 2 Sam.21.1. Later it meant to seek him by faithful service and hence to seek his favor. See 4.6 n.

Ps. 28: Hear my cry for mercy. A Lament (see Introduction), including Thanksgiving to be sung when the LORD has heard the cry of the psalmist. 1-3: The appeal to God. 4-5: Let God punish the wicked. 6-9: The Thanksgiving.

Ps. 29: The God of glory thunders. This hymn describes an awesome storm as it rises over the Mediterranean, crosses the Lebanon mountains in Phoenicia, the Anti-Lebanon in Syria, and spends itself in the desert. This poem is often viewed by modern students as an ancient Canaanite poem written originally to the storm god, Baal, and adapted by Israel with the necessary change in the divine name and other alterations. 3: *Mighty waters*: Mediterranean Sea. 4: *Voice of*

- the LORD splinters the cedars of  
Lebanon.
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD makes flames  
of fire burst forth,
- 8 the voice of the LORD makes the  
wilderness writhe in travail;  
the LORD makes the wilderness of  
Kadesh writhe.
- 9 The voice of the LORD makes the  
hinds calve  
and brings kids early to birth;  
and in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
- 10 The LORD is king above<sup>p</sup> the flood,  
the LORD has taken his royal seat as  
king for ever.
- 11 The LORD will give strength to his  
people;  
the LORD will bless his people with  
peace.
- my mountain refuge;  
thou didst hide thy face, and I was  
struck with dismay.  
I called unto thee, O LORD,  
and I pleaded with thee, Lord,  
for mercy:  
'What profit in my death if I go down  
into the pit?  
Can the dust confess thee or  
proclaim thy truth?  
Hear, O LORD, and be gracious  
to me;  
LORD, be my helper.'  
Thou hast turned my laments into  
dancing;  
thou hast stripped off my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy,  
that my spirit may sing psalms to  
thee and never cease.  
I will confess thee for ever, O LORD  
my God.

## 30

- 1 I will exalt thee, O LORD;  
thou hast lifted me up  
and hast not let my enemies make  
merry over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried to thee and  
thou didst heal me.
- 3 O LORD, thou hast brought me up  
from Sheol  
and saved my life as I was  
sinking into the abyss.<sup>q</sup>
- 4 Sing a psalm to the LORD, all you  
his loyal servants,  
and give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 In his anger is disquiet, in his favour  
there is life.  
Tears may linger at nightfall,  
but joy comes in the morning.
- 6 Carefree as I was, I had said,  
'I can never be shaken.'
- 7 But, LORD, it was thy will to shake

## 31

- With thee, O LORD, I have sought  
shelter,  
let me never be put to shame.  
Deliver me in thy righteousness;  
bow down and hear me,  
come quickly to my rescue;  
be thou my rock of refuge,  
a stronghold to keep me safe.  
Thou art to me both rock and  
stronghold;  
lead me and guide me for the  
honour of thy name.  
Set me free from the net men have  
hidden for me;  
thou art my refuge,  
into thy keeping I commit my spirit.  
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD  
thou God of truth.

<sup>p</sup> Or since.

<sup>q</sup> and saved . . . abyss: or and rescued me alive from among those who go down to the abyss.

*the LORD*: thunder. 6: *Sirion*: Mount Hermon in Syria. *Skip like a calf*: reverberation of the thunder. 8: *Kadesh*: the desert east of the Syrian city of Kadesh. 9: *The hinds calve* prematurely from fright. 10: *Above the flood*: the reservoir of waters above the vault of heaven from which, according to Semitic thought, the rains came; see Gen.1.6-7; 7.12.

Ps. 30: *Thou hast turned my laments into dancing*. A Thanksgiving, or a "declarative" Hymn of praise. Perhaps it reflects recovery from serious illness. 3: The entrance to *Sheol* was viewed as an opening to a well into which the poet was already falling when pulled out by God. 11: The transition from sickness to health is expressed in a change from *sackcloth*, the clothing of penance and grief, to festive garments of *joy*.

Ps. 31: *Be gracious to me, O LORD*. A Lament, or, indeed, two separate Laments, the one vv. 1-8, and the other vv. 9-24. Each Lament (see Introduction) contains Thanksgivings to ensue after God has delivered the distressed man (vv. 5-8 and 21-24). 2: *Solid rock* is the only secure foothold on the shallow and pebbly or sandy soil of Palestine; compare Mt.7.24.

<p>6 Thou hatest all who worship useless idols, but I put my trust in the LORD. 7 I will rejoice and be glad in thy unfailing love; for thou hast seen my affliction and hast cared for me in my distress. 8 Thou hast not abandoned me to the power of the enemy but hast set me free to range at will. 9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress, and my eyes are dimmed with grief.<sup>r</sup> 10 My life is worn away with sorrow and my years with sighing; strong as I am, I stumble under my load of misery; there is disease in all my bones. 11 I have such enemies that all men scorn me;<sup>s</sup> my neighbours find me a burden, my friends shudder at me; when they see me in the street they turn quickly away. 12 I am forgotten, like a dead man out of mind; I have come to be like something lost. 13 For I hear many men whispering threats from every side, in league against me as they are and plotting to take my life. 14 But, LORD, I put my trust in thee; I say, 'Thou art my God.' 15 My fortunes are in thy hand; rescue me from my enemies and those who persecute me. 16 Make thy face shine upon thy servant; save me in thy unfailing love. 17 O LORD, do not put me to shame when I call upon thee; let the wicked be ashamed, let them sink into Sheol. 18 Strike dumb the lying lips which speak with contempt against</p>	<p>the righteous in pride and arrogance. How great is thy goodness, 19 stored up for those who fear thee, made manifest before the eyes of men for all who turn to thee for shelter. Thou wilt hide them under the 20 cover of thy presence from men in league together; thou keepest them beneath thy roof, safe from contentious men. Blessed be the LORD, 21 who worked a miracle of unfailing love for me when I was in sore straits.<sup>t</sup> In sudden alarm I said, 22 'I am shut out from thy sight.' But thou didst hear my cry for mercy when I called to thee for help. Love the LORD, all you his loyal 23 servants. The LORD protects the faithful but pays the arrogant in full. Be strong and take courage, 24 all you whose hope is in the LORD.</p>
<p>32</p>	
<p>14 But, LORD, I put my trust in thee; I say, 'Thou art my God.' 15 My fortunes are in thy hand; rescue me from my enemies and those who persecute me. 16 Make thy face shine upon thy servant; save me in thy unfailing love. 17 O LORD, do not put me to shame when I call upon thee; let the wicked be ashamed, let them sink into Sheol. 18 Strike dumb the lying lips which speak with contempt against</p>	<p>Happy the man whose 1 disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put away! Happy is a man when the LORD lays 2 no guilt to his account, and in his spirit there is no deceit. While I refused to speak, my body 3 wasted away with moaning all day long.</p>
<p><sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds my soul and my body. <sup>s</sup> I have . . . scorn me: or I am scorned by all my enemies. <sup>t</sup> when . . . straits: prob. rdg.; Heb. like a city besieged.</p>	

7: *Unfailing love*: a single word, *hesed*, in Heb. *Hesed* is a key word in the OT. At times translated as "steadfast love" or "loving kindness," it has the connotation of a love arising out of a covenant or a bond, and manifested in concrete action; see also vv. 16 and 21. 9-13: Compare with this passage Job 30.1-15. The *distress* is the loneliness of a man fallen from heights to a low estate, and fearful of plots against his life. The latter possibly is to be taken figuratively, but compare Jer.20.10. 16: *Make thy face shine*: see 4.6 n. 20: Compare 27.5.

Ps. 32: *Happy is a man who is forgiven*. A Thanksgiving Psalm, probably used as a Wisdom Psalm (see Introduction). An ancient idea that sickness was a consequence of sin is clearly implied (vv. 3-5). The poem proceeds (vv. 6-11) to commend to others the poet's experience of forgiveness and recovery from illness. 3: *Refused to speak*: a refusal to acknowledge or confess



4	For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, the sap in me dried up as in summer drought.	Give thanks to the LORD on the harp; sing him psalms to the ten-stringed lute.	2
5	Then I declared my sin, I did not conceal my guilt. I said, 'With sorrow I will confess my disobedience to the LORD'; then thou didst remit the penalty of my sin.	Sing to him a new song; strike up with all your art and shout in triumph. The word of the LORD holds true, and all his work endures.	3
6	So every faithful heart shall pray to thee in the hour of anxiety, <sup>u</sup> when great floods threaten. Thou art a refuge for me from distress so that it cannot touch me; <sup>v</sup>	The LORD loves righteousness and justice, his love unailing fills the earth. The LORD's word made the heavens, all the host of heaven was made at his command.	5
7	thou dost guard me <sup>w</sup> and enfold me in salvation beyond all reach of harm, <sup>x</sup>	He gathered the sea like water in a goatskin; he laid up the deep in his store- chambers.	7
8	I will teach you, and guide you in the way you should go. I will keep you under my eye.	Let the whole world fear the LORD and all men on earth stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it was; he commanded, and it stood firm.	8
9	Do not behave like horse or mule, unreasoning creatures, whose course must be checked with bit and bridle.	The LORD brings the plans of nations to nothing; he frustrates the counsel of the peoples.	10
10	Many are the torments of the ungodly; but unailing love enfolds him who trusts in the LORD.	But the LORD's own plans shall stand for ever, and his counsel endure for all generations.	11
11	Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous men, and sing aloud, all men of upright heart.	Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he has chosen for his own possession. The LORD looks out from heaven, he sees the whole race of men; he surveys from his dwelling-place all the inhabitants of earth.	12
33			
1	Shout for joy before the LORD, you who are righteous; praise comes well from the upright.		14

<sup>u</sup> of anxiety: *prob. rdg.*: Heb. unintelligible.

<sup>v</sup> *Prob. rdg.*: Heb. him.

<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg.*: Heb. adds an unintelligible word.

<sup>x</sup> beyond . . . harm: *transposed from end of verse 9.*

sin, a condition for healing in traditional Israelite theology; see Prov.28.13. 4: The *hand* of God is *heavy*, especially with calamity, when he touches someone's life. 8-11: Possibly an oracle spoken by a priest in the Temple. 10: *Love*: see 31.7 n.

Ps. 33: Shout for joy. A Hymn (see Introduction), in praise and description of God. The praise (vv. 1-3) turns into praise of God as creator and ruler (4-11). 3: *Shout in triumph*: one word in Heb., the battle cry of an attacking army (Josh.6.5); later it meant a liturgical acclamation of God as king of Israel and of the nations (as here; compare Num.23.21), and as savior (compare Isa.44.23). 4-5: The four terms, *holds true* (i.e. is faithful), *righteousness*, *justice*, and *love unailing*, are used most consistently in the OT to describe God and his activities; compare Hos.2.19. 6: *His command*: lit. "the wind of his mouth"; compare the "mighty wind" of Gen.1.2. 7: *Water* was often carried in a whole *goatskin* of which the orifices were tied, the skins being lighter and more convenient than earthenware. Out of chaos (the combat in which God defeats the sea), there comes order. 8: *Fear*: that is, religion, for which creation is the basis. 10-19: God's universal rule. 10: *Counsel of the peoples*: human wisdom and diplomacy. 12: Israel in the context of many nations. In virtue of the mighty deeds at the Exodus by which

15	It is he who fashions the hearts of all men alike, who discerns all that they do.	he heard him and saved him from all his troubles.	
16	A king is not saved by a great army, nor a warrior delivered by great strength.	The angel of the LORD is on guard	7
17	A man cannot trust his horse to save him, nor can it deliver him for all its strength.	round those who fear him, and rescues them.	
18	The LORD's eyes are turned towards those who fear him, towards those who hope for his unfailing love	Taste, then, and see that the LORD is good.	8
19	to deliver them from death, to keep them alive in famine.	Happy the man who finds refuge in him!	
20	We have waited eagerly for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.	Fear the LORD, all you his holy people;	9
21	For in him our hearts are glad, because we have trusted in his holy name.	for those who fear him lack nothing. Unbelievers suffer want and go hungry,	10
22	Let thy unfailing love, O LORD, rest upon us, as we have put our hope in thee.	but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, my children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.	11
		Which of you delights in life and desires a long life to enjoy all good things?	12
		Then keep your tongue from evil and your lips from uttering lies;	13
		turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.	14

34

1	I will bless the LORD continually; his praise shall be always on my lips.	The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries.	
2	In the LORD I will glory; the humble shall hear and be glad.	The LORD sets his face against evildoers	16
3	O glorify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.	to blot out their memory from the earth.	
4	I sought the LORD's help and he answered me;	When men cry for help, the LORD hears them	17
5	he set me free from all my terrors.	and sets them free from all their troubles.	
6	Look towards him and shine with joy; no longer hang your heads in shame.	The LORD is close to those whose courage is broken and he saves those whose spirit is crushed.	18
7	Here was a poor wretch who cried to the LORD;	The good man's misfortunes may be many,	19

God redeemed her from Egypt, Israel is his *possession*. 20-22: God alone is the hope of Israel. Ps. 34: The LORD ransoms the lives of his servants. A Thanksgiving, and an alphabetic acrostic (see Ps.25 n.). Both this psalm and Ps.25, also an acrostic, provide, after the alphabet is complete, an extra verse which begins with the Heb. word for "ransom" or "redeem." Such acrostic psalms were useful in instruction, and were connected to the experiences of Israel's kings. Thus, the superscription (see Introduction) connects it with the time when David feigned madness (1 Sam.21.11-16). 1-3: The praise of God. 4-8: God's deliverance. 7: An *angel* to *guard* it was promised to Israel at the Exodus; see Exod.23.20,23. The theme was developed extensively during the persecution of the Maccabean period; compare Tob.5.6-27; 2 Macc.11.6-8. 8: To *taste* is to surrender to God's care and to distinguish true *good* from the apparent; compare Job 34.3-6; Ps.37.4-6. 9-22: The way of God with the righteous. 10: *Unbelievers*: older versions abstain from a minor correction of the Heb., adopted here, and hence read instead, "young lions." *Lack no good thing*: compare 23.1.

- the LORD delivers him out of them  
all.
- 20 He guards every bone of his body,  
and not one of them is broken.
- 21 Their own misdeeds are death to the  
wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous  
are brought to ruin.
- 22 The LORD ransoms the lives of his  
servants,  
and none who seek refuge in him  
are brought to ruin.
- 35
- 1 Strive, O LORD, with those who  
strive against me;  
fight against those who fight me.
- 2 Grasp shield and buckler,  
and rise up to help me.
- 3 Uncover the spear and bar the way  
against my pursuers.  
Let me hear thee declare,  
'I am your salvation.'
- 4 Shame and disgrace be on those who  
seek my life;  
and may those who plan to hurt me  
retreat in dismay!
- 5 May they be like chaff before the  
wind,  
driven by the angel of the LORD!
- 6 Let their way be dark and slippery  
as the angel of the LORD pursues  
them!
- 7 For unprovoked they have hidden  
a net<sup>y</sup> for me,  
unprovoked they have dug a pit to  
trap me.
- 8 May destruction unforeseen come  
on him;  
may the net which he hid catch him;  
may he crash headlong into it!
- 9 Then I shall rejoice in the LORD  
and delight in his salvation.
- 10 My very bones cry out,  
'LORD, who is like thee?—  
thou saviour of the poor from those
- too strong for them,  
the poor and wretched from those  
who prey on them.'
- Malicious witnesses step forward; 11  
they question me on matters of  
which I know nothing.
- They return me evil for good, 12  
lying in wait<sup>z</sup> to take my life.
- And yet when they were sick, I put 13  
on sackcloth,  
I mortified myself with fasting.  
When my prayer came back  
unanswered,  
I walked with head bowed in grief 14  
as if for a brother;  
as one in sorrow for his mother I lay  
prostrate in mourning.
- But when I stumbled, they crowded 15  
round rejoicing,  
they crowded about me;  
nameless ruffians<sup>a</sup> jeered at me  
and nothing would stop them.
- When I slipped, brutes who would 16  
mock even a hunchback  
ground their teeth at me.
- O Lord, how long wilt thou look on 17  
at those who hate me for no  
reason<sup>b</sup>?
- Rescue me out of their cruel grasp,  
save my precious life from the  
unbelievers.
- Then I will praise thee before a 18  
great assembly,  
I will extol thee where many people  
meet.
- Let no treacherous enemy gloat 19  
over me  
nor leer at me in triumph.<sup>c</sup>
- No friendly greeting do they give 20  
to peaceable folk.
- They invent lie upon lie,  
they open their mouths at me: 21  
'Hurrah!' they shout in their joy,  
feasting their eyes on me.
- Thou hast seen all this, O LORD, 22  
do not keep silence;

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg., transposing a pit from this line to follow have dug.

<sup>z</sup> lying in wait: prob. rdg.; Heb. bereavement.

<sup>a</sup> nameless ruffians: or ruffians who give me no rest.

<sup>b</sup> Line transposed from verse 19. <sup>c</sup> See note on verse 17.

**Ps. 35: O LORD, be not far from me.** A Lament (see Introduction). Some would see three Laments in this psalm (vv. 1–10, 11–18, 19–28), yet the structure of the Lament was never so firm as to bar the variations found here. Rather, the whole psalm seems to be a single Lament, but with a three-fold vow. The first part (vv. 1–8) contains a cry for deliverance and vengeance, plus the first vow (9–10); the second (vv. 11–17), a cry of innocence and a plea for help, plus the second vow (v. 18); and the third (vv. 19–27), a complaint and a cry for justice, plus the third vow (v. 28). **5: Angel of the LORD:** see Ps. 34.7 n. **13: Sackcloth:** sign of grief; **fasting:** expression of supplication; compare Joel 1.13–14. **16: Ground their teeth:** sign of hatred and malicious

- O Lord, be not far from me.  
 23 Awake, bestir thyself, to do me  
     justice,  
     to plead my cause, my Lord and  
     my God.  
 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, as thou  
     art true;  
     do not let them gloat over me.  
 25 Do not let them say to themselves,  
     ‘Hurrah!  
     We have swallowed him up at  
     one gulp.’  
 26 Let them all be disgraced and  
     dismayed  
     who rejoice at my fall;  
     let them be covered with shame and  
     dishonour  
     who glory over me.  
 27 But let all who would see me  
     righted shout for joy,  
     let them cry continually,  
     ‘All glory to the LORD  
     who would see his servant thrive!’  
 28 So shall I talk of thy justice  
     and of thy praise all the day long.

## 36

- 1 Deep in his heart, sin whispers to  
     the wicked man  
     who cherishes no fear of God.  
 2 For he flatters himself in his own  
     opinion  
     and, when he is found out, he does  
     not mend his ways.<sup>d</sup>  
 3 All that he says is mischievous and  
     false;  
     he has turned his back on wisdom;  
 4 in his bed he plots how best to do  
     mischief.  
     So set is he on his wrong courses  
     that he rejects nothing evil.  
 5 But thy unfailing love, O LORD,  
     reaches to heaven,

- thy faithfulness to the skies.  
 Thy righteousness is like the lofty 6  
     mountains,  
 thy judgements are like the great  
     abyss;  
 O LORD, who savest man and beast,  
     how precious is thy unfailing 7  
     love!  
 Gods and men seek refuge in the  
     shadow of thy wings.  
 They are filled with the rich 8  
     plenty of thy house,  
     and thou givest them water from  
     the flowing stream of thy  
     delights;  
     for with thee is the fountain of 9  
     life,  
     and in thy light we are bathed  
     with light.  
 Maintain thy love unfailing over 10  
     those who know thee,  
     and thy justice toward men of  
     honest heart.  
 Let not the foot of pride come 11  
     near me,  
     no wicked hand disturb me.  
 There they lie, the evildoers, 12  
     they are hurled down and cannot  
     rise.

## 37

- Do not strive to outdo the 1  
     evildoers  
     or emulate those who do wrong.  
 For like grass they soon wither, 2  
     and fade like the green of spring.  
 Trust in the LORD and do good; 3  
     settle in the land and find safe  
     pasture.  
 Depend upon the LORD, 4  
     and he will grant you your heart’s  
     desire.

*d* he does . . . ways: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

aggressiveness; compare Lam.2.16; Acts 7.54. **23-24:** *Justice . . . Judge . . . true:* qualities of God by which he saves the oppressed.

**Ps. 36:** *Maintain thy love unfailing.* Perhaps a Lament, though a common element, the vow, is missing (see Introduction); it might be classified as a Wisdom Psalm, depicting the two ways, the lonely way of evil and the union with God, the way of the good. **1:** *Fear of God* is the beginning of Wisdom, according to the sages, and the sinner is a fool; see Prov.13.6. **5-6:** God’s *faithfulness, righteousness, judgements* are qualities by which he saves both *man* and *beast*. **8-9:** A *fountain of water* in arid Palestine is a symbol of God’s life-giving qualities; compare Jer.2.13; Ezek.47.1-12.

**Ps. 37:** *The righteous shall possess the land.* A Wisdom Psalm, in acrostic form (see Ps.111 n.). V. 40 has the idea, but not the identical words, found in 25.22 and 34.22, that the LORD will save. Just as some Laments can be related to the challenging speeches of Job, so a psalm such as this

- 5 Commit your life to the LORD;  
trust in him and he will act.
- 6 He will make your righteousness  
shine clear as the day  
and the justice of your cause like  
the sun at noon.
- 7 Wait quietly for the LORD, be  
patient till he comes;  
do not strive to outdo the  
successful  
nor envy him who gains his ends.
- 8 Be angry no more, have done with  
wrath;  
strive not to outdo in evildoing.
- 9 For evildoers will be destroyed,  
but they who hope in the LORD  
shall possess the land.
- 10 A little while, and the wicked will  
be no more;  
look well, and you will find their  
place is empty.
- 11 But the humble shall possess the  
land  
and enjoy untold prosperity.
- 12 The wicked mutter against the  
righteous man  
and grind their teeth at the sight of  
him;
- 13 the Lord shall laugh at them,  
for he sees that their time is coming.
- 14 The wicked have drawn their swords  
and strung their bows  
to bring low the poor and needy  
and to slaughter honest men.
- 15 Their swords shall pierce their own  
hearts  
and their bows be broken.
- 16 Better is the little which the  
righteous has  
than the great wealth of the  
wicked.
- 17 For the strong arm of the wicked  
shall be broken,  
but the LORD upholds the righteous.
- 18 The LORD knows each day of the  
good man's life,  
and his inheritance shall last for  
ever.
- 19 When times are bad, he shall not  
be distressed,  
and in days of famine he shall  
have enough.
- But the wicked shall perish,  
and their children shall beg their  
bread.<sup>e</sup>  
The enemies of the LORD, like fuel  
in a furnace,<sup>f</sup>  
are consumed in smoke.  
The wicked man borrows and does  
not pay back,  
but the righteous is a generous giver.  
All whom the LORD has blessed shall  
possess the land,  
and all who are cursed by him  
shall be destroyed.  
It is the LORD who directs a man's  
steps,  
he holds him firm and watches  
over his path.  
Though he may fall, he will not  
go headlong,  
for the LORD grasps him by the  
hand.  
I have been young and am now  
grown old,  
and never have I seen a righteous  
man forsaken.<sup>g</sup>  
Day in, day out, he lends  
generously,  
and his children become a  
blessing.  
Turn from evil and do good,  
and live at peace for ever;  
for the LORD is a lover of justice  
and will not forsake his loyal  
servants.  
The lawless are banished for ever  
and the children of the wicked  
destroyed.  
The righteous shall possess the land  
and shall live there at peace for ever.  
The righteous man utters words of  
wisdom  
and justice is always on his lips.  
The law of his God is in his  
heart,  
his steps do not falter.  
The wicked watch for the righteous  
man  
and seek to take his life;

<sup>e</sup> Line transposed from verse 25.

<sup>f</sup> like . . . furnace: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* like the worth of rams.

<sup>g</sup> See note on verse 20.

can be related to the "orthodox" view of Job's "friends," that the righteous will be rewarded but the wicked perish (compare vv. 20 and 25). Because the psalm is an acrostic, it presents a variety of views, rather than a single, well-developed view. **11:** Compare Mt.5.5. **12:** *Grind teeth:* see 35.16 n. **18:** *Knows each day:* is in control of it. **22:** For the significance of a curse see

- 33 but the LORD will not leave him in  
their power  
nor let him be condemned before  
his judges.
- 34 Wait for the LORD and hold to his  
way;  
he will keep you<sup>b</sup> safe from  
wicked men<sup>i</sup>  
and will raise you to be master of  
the land.  
When the wicked are destroyed, you  
shall be there to see.
- 35 I have watched a wicked man at  
his work,  
rank as a spreading tree in its  
native soil.
- 36 I passed by one day, and he was  
gone;  
I searched for him, but he could  
not be found.
- 37 Now look at the good man, watch  
him who is honest,  
for the man of peace leaves  
descendants;
- 38 but transgressors are wiped out one  
and all,  
and the descendants of the wicked  
are destroyed.
- 39 Deliverance for the righteous comes  
from the LORD,  
their refuge in time of trouble.
- 40 The LORD will help them and  
deliver them;<sup>j</sup>  
he will save them because they  
seek shelter with him.
- there is no health in my whole  
frame because of my sin.  
For my iniquities have poured over 4  
my head;  
they are a load heavier than I can  
bear.  
My wounds fester and stink because 5  
of my folly.  
I am bowed down and utterly 6  
prostrate.  
All day long I go about as if in  
mourning,  
for my loins burn with fever, 7  
and there is no wholesome flesh  
in me.  
All battered and benumbed, 8  
I groan aloud in my heart's  
longing.  
O Lord, all my lament lies open 9  
before thee  
and my sighing is no secret to thee.  
My heart beats fast, my strength has 10  
ebbed away,  
and the light has gone out of my  
eyes.  
My friends and my companions 11  
shun me in my sickness,  
and my kinsfolk keep far away.  
Those who wish me dead defame 12  
me,  
those who mean to injure me spread  
cruel gossip  
and mutter slanders all day long.  
But I am deaf, I do not listen; 13  
I am like a dumb man who cannot  
open his mouth.  
I behave like a man who cannot 14  
hear  
and whose tongue offers no  
defence.  
On thee, O LORD, I fix my hope; 15  
thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.  
I said, 'Let them never rejoice over 16  
me  
who exult when my foot slips.'

## 38

- 1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in thy  
anger,  
nor punish me in thy wrath.
- 2 For thou hast aimed thy arrows<sup>k</sup>  
at me,  
and thy hand weighs heavy  
upon me.
- 3 Thy indignation has left no part  
of my body unscarred;
- <sup>h</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.*  
<sup>i</sup> *he will . . . wicked men: transposed from verse 40.*  
<sup>j</sup> *See note on verse 34.*  
<sup>k</sup> *thou . . . arrows: prob. rdg.; Heb. thy arrows have  
come down.*

Num.22.6. 36-38: In a number of biblical books, the view occurs that the scandal of seeing a wicked man prospering would be removed by the sudden death of the wicked or the extermination of his *descendants*.

Ps. 38: Lord, do not thou forsake me. A Lament (see Introduction). The psalmist asserts that his sickness (v. 3) is the result of sin and folly. 2: God's *hand* is *heavy* upon a person when he visits him with affliction and trial; compare 32.4 and see n. 3: The poet attributes loss of *health* to his *sin* and to God's consequent *indignation*. 10: *Heart beats fast*, etc.: symptoms of the illness. 12: *Spread . . . slanders*: possibly conjectures as to the sin that is causing the illness.

- 17 I am indeed prone to stumble,  
and suffering is never far away.
- 18 I make no secret of my iniquity  
and am anxious at the thought  
of my sin.
- 19 But many are my enemies, all  
without cause,<sup>1</sup>  
and many those who hate me  
wrongfully.
- 20 Those who repay good with evil  
oppose me because my purpose is  
good.
- 21 But, LORD, do not thou forsake  
me;  
keep not far from me, my God.
- 22 Hasten to my help, O Lord my  
salvation.

## 39

- 1 I said: I will keep close watch  
over myself  
that all I say may be free from sin.  
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth,  
so long as wicked men confront  
me.
- 2 In dumb silence I held my peace.  
So my agony was quickened,
- 3 and my heart burned within me.  
My mind wandered as the fever  
grew,  
and I began to speak:
- 4 LORD, let me know my end  
and the number of my days;  
tell me how short my life must be.
- 5 I know thou hast made my days a  
mere span long,  
and my whole life is nothing in  
thy sight.  
Man, though he stands upright, is  
but a puff of wind,  
6 he moves like a phantom;  
the riches<sup>m</sup> he piles up are no  
more than vapour,

## 40

- I waited, waited for the LORD,  
1 he bent down to me and heard my  
cry.  
He brought me up out of the muddy  
2 pit,  
out of the mire and the clay;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm footing;  
and on my lips he put a new song,  
3 a song of praise to our God.  
Many when they see will be filled  
with awe

<sup>1</sup> all . . . cause: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* living.  
<sup>m</sup> the riches: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they murmur.

**18:** In traditional theology restoration to health required the confession of *sin*. Compare 32.3-5.

**Ps. 39:** Plague me no more. A Lament (see Introduction), but a rather strange one, for it begins by asserting that the poet had earlier stifled his complaint (vv. 1-3). Indeed, this silence increased his agony. Aware that life is short (*span* is a measurement, about three inches, v. 5) and riches unyielding (v. 6), he prays for healing from his sickness, even if he may receive only a brief respite (vv. 7-13). **12-13:** It was the duty of a host, here God, to defend his *guest* against any avenger and even to hold back his own vengeance, if it were deserved, until the guest went *away*.

**Ps. 40:** My desire is to do thy will, O LORD. A Thanksgiving, though ending with a Lament (vv. 12-17); see Introduction. Vv. 13-17 are almost identical with Ps.70. Like other psalms at the end of Book 1 (see Introduction), this psalm echoes Wisdom poems, as in v. 4, *happy is the man*. **2:** The psalmist viewed himself as already sinking into the *pit*, i.e. Sheol, when God drew

and will learn to trust in the  
LORD:  
4 happy is the man  
who makes the LORD his trust,  
and does not look to brutal and  
treacherous men.  
5 Great things thou hast done,  
O LORD my God;  
thy wonderful purposes are all for  
our good;  
none can compare with thee;  
I would proclaim them and speak  
of them,  
but they are more than I can tell.  
6 If thou hadst desired sacrifice and  
offering  
thou wouldst have given me ears  
to hear.  
If thou hadst asked for whole-  
offering and sin-offering  
7 I would have said, 'Here I am.'<sup>n</sup>  
8 My desire is to do thy will, O God,  
and thy law is in my heart.  
9 In the great assembly I have  
proclaimed what is right,  
I do not hold back my words,  
as thou knowest, O LORD.  
10 I have not kept thy goodness  
hidden in my heart;  
I have proclaimed thy faithfulness  
and saving power,  
and not concealed thy unfailing  
love and truth  
from the great assembly.  
11 Thou, O LORD, dost not withhold  
thy tender care from me;  
thy unfailing love and truth for ever  
guard me.  
12 For misfortunes beyond counting  
press on me from all sides;  
my iniquities have overtaken me,  
and my sight fails;  
they are more than the hairs of my  
head,  
and my courage forsakes me.  
13<sup>o</sup> Show me favour, O LORD, and  
save me;  
hasten to help me, O LORD.  
14 Let those who seek to take my  
life

be put to shame and dismayed one  
and all;  
let all who love to hurt me shrink  
back disgraced;  
let those who cry 'Hurrah!' at my  
downfall  
be horrified at their reward of  
shame.  
But let all those who seek thee  
be jubilant and rejoice in thee;  
16 and let those who long for thy saving  
help ever cry,  
'All glory to the LORD!'  
But I am poor and needy;  
17 O Lord, think of me.<sup>p</sup>  
Thou art my help and my salvation;  
O my God, make no delay.

## 41

Happy the man who has a concern  
1 for the helpless!  
The LORD will save him in time of  
trouble.  
The LORD protects him and gives  
2 him life,  
making him secure in the land;  
the LORD never leaves him<sup>q</sup> to the  
greed of his enemies.  
He nurses him on his sick-bed;  
3 he turns his bed when he is ill.  
But I said, 'LORD, be gracious to me;  
4 heal me, for I have sinned against  
thee.'  
'His case is desperate,' my enemies  
5 say;  
'when will he die, and his line become  
extinct?'  
All who visit me speak from an  
6 empty heart,  
alert to gather bad news;  
then they go out to spread it abroad.

<sup>n</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* in a scroll of a book it is prescribed for me.

<sup>o</sup> *Verses 13-17: cp. Ps. 70, 1-5.*

<sup>p</sup> O Lord . . . me: *prob. rdg.; Heb. may the Lord think of me.*

<sup>q</sup> never leaves him: *prob. rdg.; Heb. do thou not give him up . . .*

him out and set him on a rock. 6-8: The righteous man esteems God's will above ritual sacrifice. This passage is quoted in Heb. 10.5-7. On Tfn. *n*, see 56.8 and Exod. 32.33.

Ps. 41: Thou keepest me for ever in thy sight. A mixture of Thanksgiving and Lament; see Introduction. Possibly the psalm has been reworked as a conclusion to Book 1 (see Introduction). It begins in the same way as Ps. 1: *Happy is the man.* 4-9: The Lament, possibly of some king,



- 7 All who hate me whisper together  
about me  
and love to make the worst of  
everything:
- 8 'An evil spell is cast upon him;  
he is laid on his bed, and will rise no  
more.'
- 9 Even the friend whom I trusted, who  
ate at my table,<sup>r</sup>  
exults over my misfortune.
- 10 O LORD, be gracious and restore me,  
that I may pay them out to the full.<sup>s</sup>
- 11 Then I shall know that thou  
delightest in me  
and that my enemy will not triumph  
over me.
- 12 But I am upheld by thee because of  
my innocence;  
thou keepest me for ever in thy  
sight.
- 13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of  
Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting.

Amen, Amen.

## BOOK 2

### 42-43

- 1 As a hind longs for the running  
streams,  
so do I long for thee, O God.
- 2 With my whole being I thirst for  
God, the living God.  
When shall I come to God and  
appear in his presence?
- 3 Day and night, tears are my food;

- 'Where is your God?' they ask me  
all day long.
- As I pour out my soul in distress, 4  
I call to mind  
how I marched in the ranks of the  
great to the house of God,  
among exultant shouts of praise, the  
clamour of the pilgrims.
- How deep I am sunk in misery, 5  
groaning in my distress:  
yet I will wait for God;  
I will praise him continually,  
my deliverer, my God.
- I am sunk in misery, therefore will I 6  
remember thee,  
though from the Hermons and the  
springs of Jordan,  
and from the hill of Mizar,  
deep calls to deep in the roar of thy 7  
cataracts,  
and all thy waves, all thy breakers,  
pass over me.
- The LORD makes his unfailing love 8  
shine forth<sup>t</sup>  
alike by day and night;  
his praise on my lips is a prayer  
to the God of my life.
- I will say to God my rock, 'Why 9  
hast thou forgotten me?'
- Why must I go like a mourner  
because my foes oppress me?
- My enemies taunt me, jeering<sup>u</sup> at 10  
my misfortunes;
- 'Where is your God?' they ask me all  
day long.
- How deep I am sunk in misery, 11  
groaning in my distress:  
yet I will wait for God;

<sup>r</sup> who . . . table: or slanders me.

<sup>s</sup> to the full: transposed from end of verse 9.

<sup>t</sup> makes . . . forth: or entrusts me to his unfailing love.

<sup>u</sup> jeering: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

often interpreted as David; the *friend* (v. 9) has been traditionally seen as Ahithophel (2 Sam.15.30-31). 5: The extinction of *his line* was the greatest tragedy and punishment from God that could befall a person. 9: *Ate at my table*: the height in betrayal; see Jn.13.18. 13: This verse, not truly a part of the psalm, marks the end of Book 1. Compare 72.18-20; 89.52; 106.48, which end, respectively, Books 2, 3, and 4.

**Pss. 42-43: Send forth thy light.** These two psalms make up a single Lament which has three parts. (Note the repeated refrain, vv. 5,11; 43.5. Compare the three-part structure of Ps.35.) The psalmist lives in the far north, near the sources of the Jordan (42.6); sick, he cannot join the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem but hopes to do so in the future (43.3-4). The poems in Book 2 (see Introduction) emphasize the importance of Jerusalem and the Temple, and hence this psalm is an appropriate beginning. 2: God's presence was considered especially realized above the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple; see 1 Chr.13.6. 3: *Where is your God?*: the rhetorical question is intended as a reproach to a man in distress, as with the implication that God has deserted him if sin caused his illness. See the repetition in v. 10. See Job 35.10. 6: *Hermons*: A mountain in northern Palestine, usually written Hermon, but here in the plural because of its three peaks. *Mizar*: a hill probably near Hermon, its exact location is unknown.

	I will praise him continually, my deliverer, my God.	By thy help we will throw back our enemies,	5
43	Plead my cause and give me judgement against an impious race; save me from malignant men and liars, O God.	in thy name we will trample down our adversaries.	
		I will not trust in my bow, nor will my sword win me the victory;	6
2	Thou, O God, art my refuge; why hast thou rejected me? Why must I go like a mourner because my foes oppress me?	for thou dost deliver us from our foes and put all our enemies to shame.	7
3	Send forth thy light and thy truth to be my guide and lead me to thy holy hill, to thy tabernacle,	In God have we gloried all day long, and we will praise thy name for ever.	8
4	then shall I come to the altar of God, the God of my joy, and praise thee on the harp, O God, thou God of my delight.	But now thou hast rejected and humbled us and dost no longer lead our armies into battle.	9
5	How deep I am sunk in misery, groaning in my distress: yet I will wait for God; I will praise him continually, my deliverer, my God.	Thou hast hurled us back before the enemy, and our foes plunder us as they will.	10
		Thou hast given us up to be butchered like sheep and hast scattered us among the nations.	11
		Thou hast sold thy people for next to nothing and had no profit from the sale.	12
		Thou hast exposed us to the taunts of our neighbours, to the mockery and contempt of all around.	13
		Thou hast made us a byword among the nations, and the peoples shake their heads at us;	14
		so my disgrace confronts me all day long, and I am covered with shame at the shouts of those who taunt and abuse me	15
		as the enemy takes his revenge.	16
		All this has befallen us, but we do not forget thee	17
		and have not betrayed thy covenant; we have not gone back on our purpose,	18
		nor have our feet strayed from thy path.	

## 44

1	O God, we have heard for ourselves, our fathers have told us all the deeds which thou didst in their days,		
2	all the work of thy hand in days of old. Thou didst plant them in the land and drive the nations out, thou didst make them strike root, breaking up the peoples;		
3	it was not our fathers' swords won them the land, nor their arm that gave them the victory, but thy right hand and thy arm and the light of thy presence; such was thy favour to them.		
4	Thou art my king and my God; at thy bidding Jacob is victorious.		

43.3: *Holy hill*: this is the site of the Temple, where the psalmist prays to be sent.

Ps. 44: *Arise and come to our help*. A collective Lament, after a bitter military defeat suffered by the nation. 2: Compare Exod.15.17. 3: That God fought and won the victory for Israel at the time of the Exodus is a frequent theme; compare Josh.24.6-11. 9: Perhaps this is a reference to the time when the Ark of the Covenant was taken by *armies into battle*; compare 1 Sam.4.1-11. The Ark was lost during the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. 10-16: The conditions described here fit the period after the destruction of Jerusalem when Israel was scattered *among the nations*; see Ezek.36.1-8. 12: God received *no profit* from handing over Israel into captivity because the nations gave credit for it to their gods, not to him. See Isa.52.3. 17-22: The conditions described here fit the Maccabean period (about 165 B.C.) when Israel was persecuted

- 19 Yet thou hast crushed us as the sea-serpent was crushed and covered us with the darkness of death.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God and spread our hands in prayer to any other,
- 21 would not God find this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart?
- 22 Because of thee we are done to death all day long, and are treated as sheep for slaughter.
- 23 Bestir thyself, Lord; why dost thou sleep? Awake, do not reject us for ever.
- 24 Why dost thou hide thy face, heedless of our misery and our sufferings?
- 25 For we sink down to the dust and lie prone on the earth.
- 26 Arise and come to our help; for thy love's sake set us free.
- Your right hand shall show you a scene of terror:  
your sharp arrows flying, nations beneath your feet,  
the courage of the king's foes melting away!<sup>w</sup>
- Your throne is like God's throne, eternal,  
your royal sceptre a sceptre of righteousness.
- You have loved right and hated wrong;  
so God, your God, has anointed you above your fellows with oil, the token of joy.
- Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and powder of aloes,  
and the music of strings greets you from a palace panelled with ivory.
- A princess takes her place among the noblest of your women,  
a royal lady at your side in gold of Ophir.

## 45

- 1 My heart is stirred by a noble theme, in a king's honour I utter the song I have made,  
and my tongue runs like the pen of an expert scribe.
- 2 You surpass all mankind in beauty, your lips are moulded in grace, so you are blessed by God for ever.
- 3 With your sword ready at your side, warrior king,
- 4 your limbs resplendent<sup>v</sup> in their royal armour,  
ride on to execute true sentence and just judgement.
- I listen, my daughter, hear my words and consider them:  
forget your own people and your father's house;  
and, when the king desires your beauty,  
remember that he is your lord.  
Do him obeisance, daughter of Tyre, and the richest in the land will court you with gifts.
- In the palace honour awaits her;<sup>x</sup> she is a king's daughter,  
arrayed in cloth-of-gold richly embroidered.

<sup>v</sup> your limbs resplendent: *prob. rdg.; Heb. and in your pomp prosper.*

<sup>w</sup> the courage . . . away: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>x</sup> honour awaits her: *prob. rdg.; Heb. all honoured.*

because of her loyalty to the Covenant; see 1 Macc.1.25–64. 19: With the Babylonian Exile Israel ceased to exist as a nation and was lost in the *darkness of death*; compare Lam.3.6; Ezek.37.1–14. 23: The poet believed so strongly in the justice of Israel's cause and in God's power to deliver it that no other reason suited the human emotions except that the *Lord* was in *sleep* even though only alien gods were considered to slumber; see 7.6; 35.23; Isa.51.9. Contrast Ps.121.4. 24: *Hide thy face*: see 10.11 n.

Ps. 45: *Blessed by God forever*. A Royal Psalm, a wedding song for a king and his bride. It is a unique psalm. It consists of an introduction (v. 1), words about the king (vv. 2–9), words about the queen (vv.10–15), and the conclusion (vv. 16–17). 2–9: This section may have been used before the wedding at a feast for the king and his friends (see Gen.29.22). 6: It was the king's duty to establish the righteousness of God; see 1 Sam.10.1. 8: The *palaces* of the kings of the Northern Kingdom are described as *ivory* either because they abounded in ivory utensils or because the stone of which they were made resembled ivory. 10–15: This passage may have traditionally been read to the bride and her friends before she was brought to the king (see Gen.29.23).

<p>Virgins shall follow her into the presence of the king; her companions shall be brought to her,</p> <p>15 escorted with the noise of revels and rejoicing as they enter the king's palace.</p> <p>16 You shall have sons, O king, in place of your forefathers and will make them rulers over all the land.<sup>y</sup></p> <p>17 I will declare your fame to all generations; therefore the nations will praise you for ever and ever.</p>	<p>The LORD of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob our high stronghold.</p> <p>Come and see what the LORD has done, the devastation he has brought upon earth, from end to end of the earth he stamps out war: he breaks the bow, he snaps the spear and burns the shield in the fire.</p> <p>Let be then: learn that I am God, high over the nations, high above earth.</p> <p>The LORD of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob our high stronghold.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p>
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## 46

<p>1 God is our shelter and our refuge, a timely help in trouble;</p> <p>2 so we are not afraid when the earth heaves and the mountains are hurled into the sea,</p> <p>3 when its waters seethe in tumult and the mountains quake before his majesty.</p> <p>4 There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God,<sup>z</sup> which the Most High has made his holy dwelling;</p> <p>5 God is in that city; she will not be overthrown, and he will help her at the break of day.</p> <p>6 Nations are in tumult, kingdoms hurled down; when he thunders, the earth surges like the sea.</p>
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## 47

<p>Clap your hands, all you nations; acclaim our God with shouts of joy. How fearful is the LORD Most High, great sovereign over all the earth! He lays the nations prostrate beneath us, he lays peoples under our feet; he chose our patrimony for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loved.</p> <p>God has gone up with shouts of acclamation, the LORD has gone up with a fanfare of trumpets.</p> <p>Praise God,<sup>a</sup> praise him with psalms;</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>
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<sup>y</sup> over all the land: *or* in all the earth.  
<sup>z</sup> the city of God: *or* a wondrous city.  
<sup>a</sup> Praise God: *or* Praise, you gods.

**Ps. 46: The LORD of Hosts is with us.** A Hymn, probably glorifying God's power as it will be manifested in the final judgment over the world. The vision of the future is based on the mythology of creation borrowed from non-Israelite sources. The centrality of Jerusalem in the poem (vv. 4-5) has prompted a phrase, "songs of Zion," from 137.3, to allude to this and other psalms emphasizing Jerusalem. 1-3: God will abide in the upheavals to take place at the end of time. 1: This verse inspired Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." 4-5: *That city*: Jerusalem. Here it is apparently under siege, but God will deliver it as the climax to history. 4: *A river*: that is, the place of the divine throne. In the mythology of Ancient Near East, God, after defeating chaos, sits upon the sea or water (see 29.10). Also, a river or some kind of water is often mentioned in connection with his throne or temple (see Ezek.47.1-12; Zech.14.8-9; or Rev.22.1-2). 8-11: A vision of universal peace, after the punishing upheavals.

**Ps. 47: God is King of all the earth.** An Enthronement Hymn, celebrating the kingship of God. Enthronement Hymns are believed to have been sung on a festival, probably Booths. Other such hymns are Pss.93,96-99. A view, often disputed, supposes that behind such hymns lies the folklore of a dying and resurrected god, with the Enthronement in reality the reascension of the throne by the resurrected deity. 5-9: The passage has a liturgical ring. 5-7: The Ark of the Covenant was carried in liturgical procession with *shouts, psalms, clapping of hands* (v. 1) and

praise our king, praise him with  
 psalms.  
 7 God is king of all the earth;  
 sing psalms with all your art.  
 8 God reigns over the nations,  
 God is seated on his holy throne.  
 9 The princes of the nations  
 assemble  
 with the families of Abraham's  
 line;<sup>b</sup>  
 for the mighty ones of earth belong  
 to God,  
 and he is raised above them all.

## 48

1 The LORD is great and worthy of  
 our praise  
 in the city of our God, upon his  
 holy hill.  
 2 Fair and lofty, the joy of the whole  
 earth  
 is Zion's hill, like the farthest  
 reaches of the north,<sup>c</sup>  
 the hill of the great King's city.  
 3 In her palaces God is known for a  
 tower of strength.  
 4 See how the kings all gather round  
 her,  
 marching on in company.  
 5 They are struck with amazement  
 when they see her,  
 they are filled with alarm and  
 panic;  
 6 they are seized with trembling,  
 they toss in pain like a woman  
 in labour,  
 7 like the ships of Tarshish  
 when an east wind wrecks them.  
 8 All we had heard we saw with our  
 own eyes  
 in the city of the LORD of Hosts,  
 in the city of our God,  
 the city which God plants firm for  
 evermore.

O God, we re-enact the story of thy 9  
 true love  
 within thy temple;  
 the praise thy name deserves, O God, 10  
 is heard at earth's farthest  
 bounds.  
 Thy hand is charged with justice,  
 and the hill of Zion rejoices, 11  
 Judah's daughter-cities exult  
 in thy judgements.

Make the round of Zion in 12  
 procession,  
 count the number of her towers,  
 take good note of her ramparts, 13  
 pass her palaces in review,  
 that you may tell generations yet  
 to come:  
 Such is God, 14  
 our God for ever and ever;  
 he shall be our guide eternally.

## 49

Hear this, all you nations; 1  
 listen, all who inhabit this world,  
 all mankind, every living man, 2  
 rich and poor alike;  
 for the words that I speak are wise, 3  
 my thoughtful heart is full of  
 understanding.

I will set my ear to catch the moral 4  
 of the story  
 and tell on the harp how I read the  
 riddle;  
 why should I be afraid in evil times, 5  
 beset by the wickedness of  
 treacherous foes,  
 who trust in their riches 6  
 and boast of their great wealth?  
 Alas! no man can ever ransom 7  
 himself

*b* the families of Abraham's line; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.*  
 the God of Abraham.  
*c* *Or* of Zaphon.

fanfare of trumpets; see 2 Sam.6.12-19. 9: God is the true King, and hence the King of kings. Ps. 48: The joy of the whole earth is Zion's hill. A Hymn, a "Song of Zion" (see Ps.46 n.). The psalm exultantly expresses confidence in the formidable power of Jerusalem as a fortress city. 2: *North*: lit. Zaphon (Tfn. c), to be identified with Mount Casius, north of the ancient city of Ugarit, site of a temple of Baal, where the Canaanite pantheon dwelled. To Zion are ascribed the majestic qualities which mythology ascribed to Zaphon. 7: *The ships of Tarshish* were used for the transport of metals from the western Mediterranean to Phoenicia (1 Kgs.10.22). Tarshish is often supposed to have been in southern Spain. *East wind*: a violent wind arising in the desert.

Ps. 49: No man can ever ransom himself. A Wisdom Psalm. Quite beyond the usual Wisdom theme of the merits of the righteous, this meditation asserts that not only is life short but also

nor pay God the price of that  
release;  
8 his ransom would cost too much,  
for ever beyond his power to pay,  
9 the ransom that would let him live  
on always  
and never see the pit of death.

For men are like oxen whose life 20  
cannot last,  
they are like cattle whose time is  
short.

## 50

10 But remember this:<sup>d</sup> wise men  
must die;  
stupid men, brutish men, all perish.<sup>e</sup>  
11 The grave is their eternal home,  
their dwelling for all time to come;  
they may give their own names to  
estates,  
but they must leave their riches to  
others.<sup>f</sup>  
12 For men are like oxen whose life  
cannot last,  
they are like cattle whose time is  
short.  
13 Such is the fate of foolish men  
and of all who seek to please them;  
14 like sheep they run headlong into  
Sheol, the land of Death;  
he is their shepherd and urges  
them on;  
their flesh must rot away<sup>g</sup>  
and their bodies be wasted by Sheol,  
stripped of all honour.  
15 But God will ransom my life,  
he will take me from the power  
of Sheol.  
16 Do not envy a man when he grows  
rich,  
when the wealth of his family  
increases;  
17 for he will take nothing when he  
dies,  
and his wealth will not go with him.  
18 Though in his lifetime he counts  
himself happy  
and men praise him in his<sup>h</sup>  
prosperity,  
19 he<sup>i</sup> will go to join the company of  
his forefathers  
who will never again see the light.

God, the LORD God, has spoken 1  
and summoned the world from the  
rising to the setting sun.  
God shines out from Zion, perfect 2  
in beauty.  
Our God is coming and will not 3  
keep silence:  
consuming fire runs before him  
and wreathes him closely round.<sup>j</sup>  
He summons heaven on high and 4  
earth  
to the judgement of his people:  
'Gather to me my loyal servants,  
all who by sacrifice have made a 5  
covenant with me.'  
The heavens proclaim his justice, 6  
for God himself is the judge.  
Listen, my people, and I will speak; 7  
I will bear witness against you, O  
Israel:  
I am God, your God,  
shall I not<sup>k</sup> find fault with your 8  
sacrifices,  
though<sup>l</sup> your offerings are before  
me always?  
I need take no young bull from 9  
your house,  
no he-goat from your folds;  
for all the beasts of the forest are 10  
mine

<sup>d</sup> But remember this: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* But he will remember this.

<sup>e</sup> Line transposed from here to follow verse 11.

<sup>f</sup> Line transposed from verse 10.

<sup>g</sup> and urges . . . rot away: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>h</sup> him . . . his: *prob. rdg.; Heb. you . . . your.*

<sup>i</sup> he: *prob. rdg.; Heb. you.*

<sup>j</sup> and wreathes him closely round: *or and rages round*

him.

<sup>k</sup> Or I will not.

<sup>l</sup> Or for.

no one can buy salvation. A man need not fear the rich, for they too die. A refrain occurs twice (vv. 12,20). 11: The giving of *names to estates* was a common practice. 15: *Take me from the power of Sheol*: most scholars hold that this passage speaks only about deliverance from present trouble. *Sheol* is the place of the dead; hence, to some interpreters it seems quite possible that the psalmist here speaks of an afterlife with God. But compare v. 19.

**Ps. 50: God has summoned the world.** A prophetic judgment. The prophets often used the figure of the courtroom. Here, God, the judge, will summon the world to the courtroom and there present his case against his people, indicting them on two counts: (a) formalism in worship (vv. 8-15); and (b) transgression of the moral law (vv. 16-22). 1: *God, the LORD God*: lit. God of gods is the LORD (compare Josh.22.22 and Ps.136.1-3). 8: *Shall I not*: there is some uncertainty whether the passage is a question, or a statement (see Tfn. *k*). Regardless of this

- and the cattle in thousands on my hills.
- 11 I know every bird on those hills, the teeming life of the fields is my care.
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it are mine.
- 13 Shall I eat the flesh of your bulls or drink the blood of he-goats?
- 14 Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High.
- 15 If you call upon me in time of trouble, I will come to your rescue, and you shall honour me.
- 16 God's word to the wicked man is this:  
What right have you to recite my laws and make so free with the words of my covenant,  
17 you who hate correction and turn your back when I am speaking?
- 18 If you meet a thief, you choose him as your friend;  
you make common cause with adulterers;  
19 you charge your mouth with wickedness and harness your tongue to slander.
- 20 You are for ever talking against your brother, stabbing your own mother's son in the back.
- 21 All this you have done, and shall I keep silence?  
You thought that I was another like yourself,  
but point by point I will rebuke you
- to your face.  
Think well on this, you who forget God,  
or I will tear you in pieces and no one shall save you.  
He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving  
23 does me due honour,  
and to him who follows my way<sup>m</sup> I will show the salvation of God.
- 51**
- Be gracious to me, O God, in thy true love;  
in the fullness of thy mercy blot out my misdeeds.
- Wash away all my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.  
For well I know my misdeeds,  
3 and my sins confront me all the day long.
- Against thee, thee only, I have sinned  
4 and done what displeases thee, so that thou mayest be proved right in thy charge and just in passing sentence.
- In iniquity I was brought to birth  
5 and my mother conceived me in sin;  
yet, though thou hast hidden the  
6 truth in darkness, through this mystery thou dost teach me wisdom.
- Take hyssop<sup>n</sup> and sprinkle me, that  
7 I may be clean;  
wash me, that I may become whiter than snow;

<sup>m</sup> him who follows my way: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* him who puts a way.  
<sup>n</sup> Or marjoram.

problem, *sacrifices* in general are not deemed important. 12: Animal sacrifices satisfied no need of God, such as hunger, as was thought in pagan sacrifices. 14,23: *Sacrifice of thanksgiving*: it is possible that Thanksgiving Psalms were used in accompaniment of thanksgiving sacrifices at the Temple. 16: While the indictment for ritualism applied to the whole nation, what follows is addressed only to the *wicked*. 21: God, in effect, keeps silence if he leaves evil unpunished.

Ps. 51: **Be gracious to me, O God.** A Lament, in confession of sin. The superscription (see Introduction) gives the occasion for the psalm as the time when Nathan came to David after his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam.12.1-10). Illness ("broken bones," v. 8) was a token of sin, confessed to in a general way in vv. 1-9, followed by a plea for forgiveness and restoration (10-12) in terms of genuine contrition (13-17); an addition (vv. 18-19) validates worthy sacrifices seemingly deemed worthless in v. 16. 5: Man is already a sinner at conception and surrounded by iniquity at birth, a condition which the poet puts forth as a motive of forgiveness. 7: *Hyssop*: leaves of an aromatic plant, used in ceremonies for purging guilt; see Exod.12.22; Lev.14.49-53.

8	let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness, let the bones dance which thou hast broken.	52	Why make your wickedness your boast, you man of might, forging wild lies all day against God's loyal servant? Your slanderous tongue is sharp as a razor. You love evil and not good, falsehood, not speaking the truth; cruel gossip you love and slanderous talk.	1-2
9	Turn away thy face from my sins and blot out all my guilt.		So may God <sup>a</sup> pull you down to the ground, sweep you away, leave you ruined and homeless, uprooted from the land of the living.	3
10	Create a pure heart in me, O God, and give me a new and steadfast spirit;		The righteous will look on, awestruck, and laugh at his plight: 'This is the man', they say, 'who does not make God his refuge, but trusts in his great wealth and takes refuge in wild lies.'	4
11	do not drive me from thy presence		But I am like a spreading olive-tree in God's house;	5
12	or take thy holy spirit from me; revive in me the joy of thy deliverance and grant me a willing spirit to uphold me.		for I trust in God's true love for ever and ever. I will praise thee for ever for what thou hast done, and glorify thy name among thy loyal servants; for that is good.	6
13	I will teach transgressors the ways that lead to thee, and sinners shall return to thee again.			7
14	O LORD God, my deliverer, save me from bloodshed, <sup>o</sup> and I will sing the praises of thy justice.			8
15	Open my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may proclaim thy praise.			9
16	Thou hast no delight in sacrifice; if I brought thee an offering, thou wouldst not accept it.			
17	My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a wounded heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.			
18	Let it be thy pleasure to do good to Zion, to build anew the walls of Jerusalem.	53	The impious fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'	17
19	Then only shalt thou delight in the appointed sacrifices; <sup>p</sup> then shall young bulls be offered on thy altar.			

<sup>o</sup> Or from punishment by death.

<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds a whole-offering and one wholly consumed.

<sup>q</sup> Or So God will.

<sup>r</sup> Verses 1-6: cp. Ps. 14. 1-7.

Here the request is that God figuratively purge the sinner. **8:** *The bones . . . broken* seems to refer to a physical illness which will give way to *dance*, the transition from guilt to forgiveness. **10:** Creation of a *pure heart* and a *new . . . spirit* meant a total transformation of man which could be accomplished only by God; compare Ezek.36.25-27. **16:** *Thou hast no delight in sacrifice:* the statement is sweeping, and is modified in the last verses. **17:** *Broken spirit:* afflicted and humbled. **18-19:** This modification of v. 16 is probably an addition. **18:** *Build anew the walls:* see Neh. chs. 1-3, which rebuilding is possibly alluded to here.

**Ps. 52:** I am like a spreading olive-tree. A psalm difficult to classify (see Introduction) and a Lament only in that a righteous man is denouncing a wicked one, and it ends in the typical vow (v. 9). The tone is righteous, even vindictive (vv. 5-6). *Man of might* (vv. 1 and 7) is unclear, but is surely someone highly placed and wealthy, accused of slander and falsehood (vv. 3-4).

**Ps. 53:** *If only Israel's deliverance might come out of Zion.* A Lament, with the usual vow (v. 6). See Ps.14, with which this psalm is almost identical. They differ in that the use here is of *Elohim* (God), and in Ps.14 it is *Yahweh* (LORD).



How vile men are, how depraved  
and loathsome;  
not one does anything good!  
2 God looks down from heaven  
on all mankind  
to see if any act wisely,  
if any seek out God.  
3 But all are unfaithful, all are rotten  
to the core;  
not one does anything good,  
no, not even one.  
4 Shall they not rue it,  
these evildoers who devour my  
people  
as men devour bread,  
and never call upon God?  
5 There they were in dire alarm  
when God scattered them.  
The crimes of the godless were  
frustrated;<sup>s</sup>  
for God had rejected them.  
6 If only Israel's deliverance might  
come out of Zion!  
When God restores his people's  
fortunes,  
let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

## 54

1 Save me, O God, by the power of  
thy name,  
and vindicate me through thy  
might.  
2 O God, hear my prayer,  
listen to my supplication.  
3 Insolent men rise to attack me,  
ruthless men seek my life;  
they give no thought to God.  
4 But God is my helper,  
the Lord the mainstay of my life.  
5 May their own malice recoil on my  
watchful foes;  
silence them by thy truth, O LORD.  
6 I will offer thee a willing sacrifice  
and praise thy name, for that is  
good;

God has rescued me from every 7  
trouble,  
and I look on my enemies' downfall  
with delight.

## 55

Listen, O God, to my pleading, 1  
do not hide thyself when I pray.  
Hear me and answer, 2  
for my cares give me no peace.  
I am panic-stricken at the shouts of 3  
my enemies,  
at the shrill clamour of the wicked;  
for they heap trouble on me  
and they revile me in their anger.  
My heart is torn with anguish 4  
and the terrors of death come upon  
me.  
Fear and trembling overwhelm me 5  
and I shudder from head to foot.  
'Oh that I had the wings of a dove 6  
to fly away and be at rest!  
I should escape far away 7  
and find a refuge in the  
wilderness;  
soon I should find myself a 8  
sanctuary  
from wind and storm,  
from the blasts of calumny, O Lord, 9  
from my enemies' contentious  
tongues.  
I have seen violence and strife in the  
city;  
day and night they encircle it, 10  
all along its walls;  
it is filled with trouble and mischief,  
alive with rumour and scandal, 11  
and its public square is never free  
from violence and spite.  
It was no enemy that taunted me, 12  
or I should have avoided him;  
no adversary that treated me with  
scorn,  
or I should have kept out of his  
way.

<sup>s</sup> The crimes . . . frustrated: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>t</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. prefixes* And I said.

**Ps. 54: O God, hear my prayer.** A Lament (see Introduction), possibly the prayer of a king as in Ps.20. 1-2: A plea for help. 3-4: The distress caused by evildoers. 5: Against the foe. 6-7: The vow usual in a Lament. 6: *A willing sacrifice*: see Num.15.3. 7: The conclusion is straightforward in its vindictiveness.

**Ps. 55: Hear me and answer.** A Lament (see Introduction), with a vindictive tone. 1-2: A plea for God's response. 3-15: The poet's distress. 3-9a: The impulse to flee. 7: *A refuge in the wilderness*: see Jer.9.2. 9b-11: The vice in the city. 12-15a: On such betrayal, compare 41.9 n.

- 13 It was you, a man of my own sort,  
my comrade, my own dear friend,  
14-15 with whom I kept pleasant company  
in the house of God.
- May death strike them,  
and may they<sup>u</sup> perish in confusion,  
may they go down alive into Sheol;  
for their homes are haunts of  
evil!
- 16 But I will call upon God;  
the LORD will save me.  
17 Evening and morning and at noon  
I nurse my woes, and groan.  
18 He has heard my cry, he rescued me  
and gave me back my peace,  
when they beset me like archers,<sup>v</sup>  
massing against me,  
19 like Ishmael and the desert tribes  
and those who dwell in the East,  
who have no respect for an oath  
nor any fear of God.  
20 Such men do violence to those at  
peace with them  
and break their promised word;  
21 their speech is smoother than  
butter  
but their thoughts are of war;  
their words are slippery as oil  
but sharp as drawn swords.
- 22 Commit your fortunes to the LORD,  
and he will sustain you;  
he will never let the righteous be  
shaken.  
23 Cast them, O God, into the pit of  
destruction;  
bloodthirsty and treacherous,  
they shall not live out half their  
days;  
but I will put my trust in thee.
- All the day long my watchful foes 2  
persecute me;  
countless are those who assail me.  
Appear on high<sup>w</sup> in my day of fear; 3  
I put my trust in thee.  
With God to help me I will shout 4  
defiance,  
in God I trust and shall not be  
afraid;  
what can mortal men do to me?  
All day long abuse of me is their 5  
only theme,  
all their thoughts are hostile.  
In malice they are on the look-out, 6  
and watch for me,  
they dog my footsteps;  
but, while they lie in wait for me,  
it is they who will not<sup>x</sup> escape. 7  
O God, in thy anger bring ruin on  
the nations.
- Enter my lament in thy book,<sup>y</sup> 8  
store every tear in thy flask.<sup>z</sup>  
Then my enemies will turn back 9  
on the day when I call upon  
thee;<sup>a</sup>  
for this I know, that God is on my  
side,  
with God to help me I will shout 10  
defiance.<sup>b</sup>  
In God I trust and shall not be 11  
afraid;  
what can man do to me?  
I have bound myself with vows to 12  
thee, O God,  
and will redeem them with due  
thank-offerings;  
for thou hast rescued me from 13  
death<sup>c</sup>  
to walk in thy presence, in the  
light of life.

*u* Prob. rdg.; Heb. we.  
*v* when . . . archers: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
*w* Appear on high: prob. rdg.; Heb. Height.  
*x* it is . . . not: prob. rdg.; Heb. for iniquity.  
*y* Enter . . . book: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
*z* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds is it not in thy book?  
*a* Enter . . . thee: or Thou hast entered my lament  
in thy book, my tears are put in thy flask. Then my  
enemies turned back, when I called upon thee.  
*b* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds With the LORD to help me I  
will shout defiance.  
*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds is it not my feet from stum-  
bling (cp. Ps. 116. 8).

## 56

- 1 Be gracious to me, O God, for the  
enemy persecute me,  
my assailants harass me all day long.

**15b:** A curse. *Sheol:* the netherworld. **16-21:** God's deliverance. **19:** *Ishmael:* compare Gen. 16:11-12. The translation rests on the frequently corrected Heb. text. **22-23:** The word of trust.  
**Ps. 56:** Be gracious to me, O God. A Lament (see Introduction), similar to the others (Pss. 51-61), but somewhat less plaintive. The distress is in vv. 1-2 and 5-6, the expression of trust in vv. 3-4, and the vow in v. 12. The latter part of v. 7 is a plea for vengeance. **8:** On a heavenly record book, see Exod. 32.33. **12:** *Thank-offerings:* see Ps. 50.14, 23 n. **13:** God's presence is the light that gives meaning and value to life, just as darkness is death because devoid of worthwhile activity; compare Isa. 5.9-10.

## 57

- 1 Be gracious to me, O God, be  
gracious;  
for I have made thee my refuge.  
I will take refuge in the shadow of  
thy wings  
until the storms are past.
- 2 I will call upon God Most High,  
on God who fulfils his purpose for  
me.
- 3 He will send his truth and his love  
that never fails,  
he will send from heaven and save  
me.  
God himself will frustrate my  
persecutors;
- 4 for I lie down among lions, man-  
eaters,  
whose teeth are spears and arrows  
and whose tongues are sharp  
swords.
- 5 Show thyself, O God, high above  
the heavens;  
let thy glory shine over all the  
earth.
- 6 Men have prepared a net to catch  
me as I walk,  
but I bow my head to escape  
from it;  
they have dug a pit in my path  
but have fallen into it themselves.
- 7<sup>d</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God,  
my heart is steadfast.  
I will sing and raise a psalm;  
awake, my spirit,  
awake, lute and harp,  
I will awake at dawn of day.<sup>e</sup>
- 9 I will confess thee, O Lord, among  
the peoples,  
among the nations I will raise a  
psalm to thee,

for thy unfailing love is wide as the 10  
heavens  
and thy truth reaches to the skies.  
Show thyself, O God, high above 11  
the heavens;  
let thy glory shine over all the  
earth.

## 58

- Answer, you rulers:<sup>f</sup> are your 1  
judgements just?  
Do you decide impartially between  
man and man?  
Never! Your hearts devise all kinds 2  
of wickedness  
and survey the violence that you  
have done on earth.
- Wicked men, from birth they have 3  
taken to devious ways;  
liars, no sooner born than they go  
astray,  
venomous with the venom of 4  
serpents,  
of the deaf asp which stops its ears  
and will not listen to the sound of 5  
the charmer,  
however skilful his spells may be.
- O God, break the teeth in their 6  
mouths.  
Break, O LORD, the jaws of the  
unbelievers.<sup>g</sup>
- May they melt, may they vanish 7  
like water,  
may they wither like trodden grass,<sup>h</sup>  
like an abortive birth which melts 8  
away

<sup>d</sup> Verses 7-11: cp. Ps. 108. 1-5.

<sup>e</sup> at dawn of day; or the dawn.

<sup>f</sup> Or you gods.

<sup>g</sup> the jaws of the unbelievers; or the lions' fangs.

<sup>h</sup> like trodden grass: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

**Ps. 57: Be gracious to me, O God.** A Lament (see Introduction), the poet's plea to God and his trust in him. 1-6: The poet's distress. 1: The figure of an eagle protecting its young under its wings to represent God giving refuge to the innocent goes back to the trials of the Exodus from Egypt; see Exod.19.4; Deut.32.10-11. 3-4: The poet's tribulation is that he was attacked by slanderous tongues and he asks God's truth to ward off the evil. Teeth biting flesh is the symbol of slander; compare Job 19.22. 5: A refrain. 6: One could escape a trap made of a net by keeping the head low to the ground, i.e. by being humble. 7-11: A combined vow and utterance of thanks, virtually identical with Ps.108.1-5. 7: Raise a psalm: see Ps.50.14, 23 n. 8: The poet's confidence in God is so great that he anticipates his restoration by a thanksgiving on lute and harp at the earliest opportunity, i.e. dawn. 11: A refrain.

**Ps. 58: O God, break the teeth in their mouths.** A Lament (see Introduction), violent in its outburst of wrath. The curse uttered in v. 6 is often viewed as responsive to a curse that enemies have put on the poet, alluded to in the word "charmer" in v. 5. It is uncertain, however, just who the enemies are in vv. 1-5, which allude to them. The curse (vv. 6-9) is followed by an assurance of vengeance (vv. 10-11). 1: Rulers: gods (Tfn. f); in either case the translation rests

- or a still-born child which never  
sees<sup>l</sup> the sun!
- 9 All unawares, may they be rooted  
up like<sup>j</sup> a thorn-bush,  
like weeds which a man angrily<sup>k</sup>  
clears away!
- 10 The righteous shall rejoice that he  
has seen vengeance done  
and shall wash his feet in the  
blood of the wicked,
- 11 and men shall say,  
'There is after all a reward for the  
righteous;  
after all, there is a God that judges  
on earth.'
- 59**
- 1 Rescue me from my enemies, O my  
God,  
be my tower of strength against all  
who assail me,
- 2 rescue me from these evildoers,  
deliver me from men of blood.
- 3 Savage men lie in wait for me,  
they lie in ambush ready to attack  
me;  
for no fault or guilt of mine, O  
LORD,
- 4-5 innocent as I am, they run to take  
post against me.  
But thou, LORD God of Hosts,  
Israel's God,  
do thou bestir thyself at my call,  
and look:  
awake, and punish all the nations.  
Have no mercy on villains and  
traitors,
- 6 who run wild at nightfall like  
dogs,  
snarling and prowling round the  
city,
- 15<sup>l</sup> wandering to and fro in search of  
food,  
and howling if they are not satisfied.
- From their mouths comes a stream 7  
of nonsense;  
'But who will hear?' they murmur.  
But thou, O LORD, dost laugh at 8  
them,  
and deride all the nations.  
O my strength,<sup>m</sup> to thee I turn in 9  
the night-watches;  
for thou, O God, art my strong  
tower.  
My God, in his true love, shall be 10  
my champion;  
with God's help, I shall gloat over  
my watchful foes.  
Wilt thou not kill them, lest my 11  
people forget?  
Scatter them by thy might and  
bring them to ruin.  
Deliver them,<sup>n</sup> O Lord, to be 12  
destroyed  
by their own sinful words;  
let what they have spoken entrap  
them in their pride.  
Let them be cut off for their cursing  
and falsehood;  
bring them to an end in thy 13  
wrath,  
and they will be no more;  
then they will know that God is  
ruler in Jacob,  
even to earth's farthest limits.<sup>o p</sup>  
But I will sing of thy strength, 16  
and celebrate thy love when  
morning comes;  
for thou hast been my strong tower  
and a sure retreat in days of trouble.  
O thou my strength, I will raise a 17  
psalm to thee;  
for thou, O God, art my strong  
tower.

*i* sees: prob. rdg.; Heb. they see.

*j* may they be rooted up like: prob. rdg.; Heb. your  
pois

*k* angrily: prob. rdg.; Heb. like anger.

*l* Verse transposed

*m* Or refuge.

*n* Deliver them: prob. rdg.; Heb. Our shield.

*o* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds (14) who run wild at nightfall  
like dogs, snarling and prowling round the city (cp.  
verse 6.)

*p* Verse 15 transposed to follow verse 6.

on a usual correction of the Heb. 10: *Wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*: the Canaanite goddess Anat is described after a battle with her enemies, in a text from Ugarit, as follows: "She washes her hands of the blood of warriors, her fingers of the gore of troops."

Ps. 59: *Rescue me from my enemies, O my God*. A Lament, which seems to veer from the personal (vv. 1-4a) to the national (4b-7), unless "nations" is a figure of speech for personal enemies. The usual trust is in vv. 8-10, the plea for vengeance in 11-13, and the vow in 16-17. Note that v. 15 has been moved and v. 14 put into Tfn. o. 4-5: *Bestir thyself. . . awake*: compare Ps.44.23 n. 8: *Laugh*: compare Ps.2.4. 9: The parts of the city walls that were the weakest, e.g. gates, were furnished with *strong towers* from which defenders could repel the attackers; see v. 17. 12: *Cut off*: brought to a sudden death.

## 60

1 O God, thou hast cast us off and  
broken us;  
thou hast been angry and rebuked  
us cruelly.

2 Thou hast made the land quake and  
torn it open;  
it gives way and crumbles into  
pieces.

3 Thou hast made thy people drunk  
with a bitter draught,  
thou hast given us wine that makes  
us stagger.

4 But thou hast given a warning to  
those who fear thee,  
to make their escape before the  
sentence falls.

5<sup>a</sup> Deliver those that are dear to thee;  
save them with thy right hand, and  
answer.

6 God has spoken from his sanctuary:<sup>r</sup>  
'I will go up now and measure out  
Shechem;  
I will divide the valley of Succoth  
into plots;

7 Gilead and Manasseh are mine;  
Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my  
sceptre;

8 Moab is my wash-bowl, I fling my  
shoes at Edom;  
Philistia is the target of my anger.'

9 Who can bring me to the fortified  
city,  
who can guide me to Edom,  
10 since thou, O God, hast abandoned  
us  
and goest not forth with our  
armies?

Grant us help against the enemy, 11  
for deliverance by man is a vain  
hope.

With God's help we shall do 12  
valiantly,  
and God himself will tread our  
enemies under foot.

## 61

Hear my cry, O God, listen to my 1  
prayer.

From the end of the earth I call to 2  
thee with fainting heart;  
lift me up and set me upon a rock.

For thou hast been my shelter, 3  
a tower for refuge from the  
enemy.

In thy tent will I make my home 4  
for ever  
and find my shelter under the  
cover of thy wings.

For thou, O God, hast heard my 5  
vows  
and granted the wish<sup>s</sup> of all who  
revere thy name.

To the king's life add length of days, 6  
year upon year for many  
generations;  
may he dwell in God's presence for 7  
ever,  
may true and constant love preserve  
him.

So will I ever sing psalms in 8  
honour of thy name  
as I fulfil my vows day after day.

*q* Verses 5-12: cp. Ps. 108. 6-13.  
*r* from his sanctuary: or in his holiness.  
*s* Prob. rdg.; Heb. the inheritance.

**Ps. 60: Deliver those that are dear to thee.** A Lament, after a national humiliation. **1a:** The Lament begins, as usual, with an invocation of the divine name. **1b-3:** The national tribulation, a military humiliation, is depicted in the apocalyptic imagery of a cosmic catastrophe; compare Isa.24.19-20. **4:** A warning: compare Amos 5.6. **5:** The supplication for deliverance asks for an answer in the form of an oracle. **6-8:** In the oracle, spoken probably by a priest, assurance is given that even though the lands of *Shechem*, *Succoth*, *Gilead* and *Manasseh* are in the hands of foreigners, they belong to God and he will measure them out again as an inheritance to his people; compare Jer.32.42-44. The cause of *Ephraim* and *Judah* is God's cause for they are his instruments of judgment and warfare, *helmet* and *sceptre*. *Moab*, *Edom* and *Philistia*, which now oppress the land, are objects of scorn and anger. The conditions fit the period after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; compare Ezek.25.8-17. **9:** *Me*: probably the king is meant. **10:** Perhaps an allusion to the fact that the Ark of the Covenant was lost after 587 B.C. and no longer taken to battle as in early days; see 1 Sam.4.3-11.

**Ps. 61: Hear my cry, O God.** A Lament (see Introduction) by someone far from Judea, who yearns for the Temple in Jerusalem, possibly a Levite or a priest who had been attached to the Temple. **2: End of the earth:** outside the Holy Land. **4: Tent:** an ancient word for tabernacle or temple; see 27.6. *Cover of thy wings:* see Ps.57.1 n. **6-7:** The prayer for the king appears to be an interpolation; it recalls Nathan's prophecy in 2 Sam.7.16.

## 62

- 1 Truly my heart waits silently for  
God;  
my deliverance comes from him.
- 2 In truth he is my rock of deliverance,  
my tower of strength, so that I  
stand unshaken.
- 3 How long will you assail a man  
with your threats,  
all battering on a leaning wall?
- 4 In truth men plan to topple him  
from his height,  
and stamp on the fallen stones.<sup>t</sup>  
With their lips they bless him, the  
hypocrites,  
but revile him in their hearts.
- 5 Truly my heart waits silently for  
God;  
my hope of deliverance comes  
from him.
- 6 In truth he is my rock of deliverance,  
my tower of strength, so that I am  
unshaken.
- 7 My deliverance and my honour  
depend upon God,  
God who is my rock of refuge and  
my shelter.
- 8 Trust always in God, my people,  
pour out your hearts before him;  
God is our shelter.
- 9 In very truth men are a puff of  
wind,  
all men are faithless;  
put them in the balance and they  
can only rise,  
all of them lighter than wind.
- 10 Put no trust in extortion,  
do not be proud of stolen goods;  
though wealth breeds wealth, set  
not your heart on it.
- 11 One thing God has spoken,  
two things I have learnt:

'Power belongs to God'  
and 'True love, O Lord, is thine';<sup>12</sup>  
thou dost requite a man for his  
deeds.

## 63

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee 1  
early  
with a heart that thirsts for thee  
and a body wasted with longing for  
thee,  
like a dry and thirsty land that has  
no water.

So longing, I come before thee in 2  
the sanctuary  
to look upon thy power and glory.  
Thy true love is better than life; 3  
therefore I will sing thy praises.  
And so I bless thee all my life 4  
and in thy name lift my hands in  
prayer.

I am satisfied as with a rich and 5  
sumptuous feast  
and wake the echoes with thy praise.  
When I call thee to mind upon my 6  
bed  
and think on thee in the watches of  
the night,  
remembering how thou hast been 7  
my help  
and that I am safe in the shadow  
of thy wings,  
then I humbly follow thee with all 8  
my heart,  
and thy right hand is my support.

Those who seek my life, bent on evil, 9  
shall sink into the depths of the  
earth;  
they shall be given over to the 10  
sword;  
they shall be carrion for jackals.

<sup>t</sup> the fallen stones: transposed from end of verse 3.

**Ps. 62: Power belongs to God.** A poem of trust, kindred to a Wisdom Psalm, though echoing the Lament. Its theme is that not men and wealth, but only God can help. The distress of the poet (vv. 3-4) comes in between two assertions of trust in God (1-2 and 5-7), followed by the counsel to others also to trust in God (8-12). **10:** Wisdom literature often warns against setting the heart on riches. **11: One thing . . . two things:** compare Prov.6.16; 30.15-31. This numerical progression is common in Wisdom literature.

**Ps. 63: I seek thee, O God.** A Wisdom Psalm emphasizing the poet's *longing* for God. **1:** A thirst for God and for Wisdom is a frequent theme in Wisdom literature. See Ecclus.24.23-34; Isa.55.1. **5:** Wisdom, as a quality of God, is presented as a *sumptuous feast*; see Prov.9.1-5. **6: Watches of the night** were divided into three shifts. **7: Shadow of thy wings:** see Ps.57.1 n. **9-10:** The sinner *bent on evil* is a fool, for his life ends in the *earth*. **11:** Especially in need of Wisdom is the *king*; see Wis.1.1.

11 The king shall rejoice in God,  
and whoever swears by God's name  
shall exult;  
the voice of falsehood shall be  
silenced.

## 64

1 Hear me, O God, hear my lament;  
keep me safe from the threats of the  
enemy.  
2 Hide me from the factions of the  
wicked,  
from the turbulent mob of  
evildoers,  
3 who sharpen their tongues like  
swords  
and wing their cruel words like  
arrows,<sup>u</sup>  
4 to shoot down the innocent from  
cover,  
shooting suddenly, themselves  
unseen.  
5 They boldly<sup>v</sup> hide their snares,  
sure that none will see them;  
6 they hatch their secret plans<sup>w</sup> with  
skill and cunning,  
with evil<sup>x</sup> purpose and deep design.  
7 But God with his arrow shoots  
them down,  
and sudden is their overthrow.  
8 They may repeat their wicked tales,<sup>y</sup>  
but their mischievous tongues<sup>z</sup> are  
their undoing.  
All who see their fate take fright  
at it,  
9 every man is afraid;  
'This is God's work', they declare;  
they learn their lesson from what  
he has done.  
10 The righteous rejoice and seek refuge  
in the LORD  
and all the upright exult.

## 65

We owe thee praise, O God, in Zion; 1-2  
thou hearest prayer, vows shall be  
paid to thee.  
All men shall lay their guilt before 3  
thee:  
our sins are too heavy for us;  
only thou canst blot them out.  
Happy is the man of thy choice, 4  
whom thou dost bring  
to dwell in thy courts;  
let us enjoy the blessing of thy  
house,  
thy holy temple.  
By deeds of terror answer us with 5  
victory,  
O God of our deliverance,  
in whom men trust from the ends  
of the earth  
and far-off seas;  
thou art girded with strength, 6  
and by thy might dost fix the  
mountains in their place,  
dost calm the rage of the seas and 7  
their raging waves.<sup>a</sup>  
The dwellers at the ends of the 8  
earth  
hold thy signs in awe;  
thou makest morning and evening  
sing aloud in triumph.  
Thou dost visit the earth and give 9  
it abundance,  
as often as thou dost enrich it  
with the waters of heaven, brimming  
in their channels,  
providing rain<sup>b</sup> for men.

<sup>u</sup> and wing . . . arrows: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they tread their arrow a cruel word.

<sup>v</sup> See first note on verse 8.

<sup>w</sup> their secret plans: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* unintelligible.

<sup>x</sup> evil: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* man.

<sup>y</sup> They . . . tales: *transposed from after boldly in verse 5.*

<sup>z</sup> their mischievous tongues: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* against them their tongues.

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adls and tumult of people.

<sup>b</sup> Or corn.

**Ps. 64:** Hear me, O God, hear my plea. A Lament on the evil of the wicked. A plea (vv. 1-2) is followed by a description of the wicked (5-6), whom God overthrows (7-9), to the gratification of the righteous (10). **3:** *Cruel words:* either slander, or else curses believed to have magical force. **6:** The poet is the object of backbiting and calumny.

**Ps. 65:** We owe thee praise, O God. A Thanksgiving Hymn because it praises God for what he always does for man (vv. 6-10). It was recited in the context of a pilgrimage to the Temple (v. 4) which probably took place at the Feast of Weeks; see Deut.16.9-12. Hence, it can also be classified as a pilgrimage psalm. **4:** *Dwell:* visit. **6-8:** One of frequent allusions to God the warrior who at creation defeated chaos; compare 24.1-2 n. **7:** *The rage of the seas:* compare Ps.74.12-14. **8:** *Morning and evening sing aloud:* the psalmist joins the chorus of all creation in praise of the creator. **9:** *Waters of heaven:* water falling from the reservoir above the vault of heaven; see Gen.1.6-7. The much needed *rain* is a blessing to the crops. See Pss.68.9,10; 104.14.

10 For this is thy provision for it,  
 watering its furrows, levelling its  
 ridges,  
 softening it with showers and  
 blessing its growth.  
 11 Thou dost crown the year with thy  
 good palms  
 and the palm-trees drip with sweet  
 juice;  
 12 the pastures in the wild are rich  
 with blessing  
 and the hills wreathed in happiness,  
 13 the meadows are clothed with  
 sheep  
 and the valleys mantled in corn,  
 so that they shout, they break  
 into song.

66

1 Acclaim our God, all men on earth;  
 2 let psalms declare the glory of  
 his name,  
 make glorious his praise.  
 3 Say unto God, 'How fearful are thy  
 works!  
 Thy foes cower before the greatness  
 of thy strength.  
 4 All men on earth fall prostrate in  
 thy presence,  
 and sing to thee, sing psalms in  
 honour of thy name.'  
 5 Come and see all that God has  
 done,  
 tremendous in his dealings with  
 mankind.  
 6 He turned the waters into dry land  
 so that his people passed through  
 the sea on foot;  
 there did we rejoice in him.<sup>c</sup>  
 7 He rules for ever by his power,  
 his eye rests on the nations;  
 let no rebel rise in defiance.

Bless our God, all nations; 8  
 let his praise be heard far and  
 near.  
 He set us in the land of the living; 9  
 he keeps our feet from stumbling.  
 For thou, O God, hast put us to 10  
 the proof  
 and refined us like silver.  
 Thou hast caught us in a net, 11  
 thou hast bound our bodies fast;  
 thou hast let men ride over our 12  
 heads.  
 We went through fire and water,  
 but thou hast brought us out  
 into liberty.

I will bring sacrifices into thy 13  
 temple  
 and fulfil my vows to thee,  
 vows which I made with my own 14  
 lips  
 and swore with my own mouth  
 when in distress.  
 I will offer thee fat beasts as 15  
 sacrifices  
 and burn rams as a savoury  
 offering;  
 I will make ready oxen and  
 he-goats.

Come, listen, all who fear God, 16  
 and I will tell you all that he has  
 done for me;  
 I lifted up my voice in prayer, 17  
 his high praise was on my lips.  
 If I had cherished evil thoughts, 18  
 the Lord would not have heard  
 me;  
 but in truth God has heard 19  
 and given heed to my prayer.  
 Blessed is God 20  
 who has not withdrawn his love and  
 care from me.

<sup>c</sup> there . . . him: or where we see this, we will rejoice in him.

11-13: As the pilgrims go through the fields teeming with life just before the harvest, they are overwhelmed with joy and a feeling of thanksgiving.

Ps. 66: Let psalms declare the glory of his name. Verses 1-12 are a corporate Thanksgiving Hymn (see vv. 1-4), vv. 13-20 a personal, private one. The two portions are fused together, both beginning with the invitation "come" (5,16). 1: The invitation to all men to acclaim God is the typical beginning of a Hymn. 6: This verse recalls the Exodus from Egypt and the entry into the land of Canaan. 10-12: Perhaps these verses echo either the Babylonian Exile, or the bitter experiences of the Maccabean revolt. 13-15: The large numbers of sacrifices referred to such as would be offered by a prince or a ruler; see Ezek.46.4-7. 16-20: The verses seem to hearken back to vv. 1-2. 16: Fear: the word reflects not fright but dutiful worship. To fear God or to love God are synonymous in the Heb. Bible. 18: The prayers of even the devout will not be answered if evil thoughts are cherished.



## 67

- 1 God be gracious to us and bless us,  
God make his face shine upon us,  
2 that his ways may be known on  
earth  
and his saving power among all  
the nations.  
3 Let the peoples praise thee, O God;  
let all peoples praise thee.  
4 Let all nations rejoice and shout in  
triumph;  
for thou dost judge the peoples  
with justice  
and guidest the nations of the earth.  
5 Let the peoples praise thee, O God;  
let all peoples praise thee.  
6 The earth has given its increase  
and God, our God, will bless us.  
7 God grant us his blessing,  
that all the ends of the earth may  
fear him.

## 68

- 1 God arises and his enemies are  
scattered;  
those who hate him flee before him,  
2 driven away like smoke in the  
wind;  
like wax melting at the fire,  
the wicked perish at the presence  
of God.  
3 But the righteous are joyful, they  
exult before God,  
they are jubilant and shout for  
joy.  
4 Sing the praises of God, raise a  
psalm to his name,  
extol him who rides over the desert  
plains.<sup>d</sup>

- Be joyful<sup>e</sup> and exult before him,  
father of the fatherless, the widow's  
champion—  
God in his holy dwelling-place.  
God gives the friendless a home  
and brings out the prisoner safe  
and sound;  
but rebels must live in the scorching  
desert.  
O God, when thou didst go forth  
before thy people,  
marching across the wilderness,  
earth trembled, the very heavens  
quaked  
before God the lord of Sinai, before  
God the God of Israel.  
Of thy bounty, O God, thou dost  
refresh with rain  
thy own land in its weariness,  
the land which thou thyself didst  
provide,  
where thy own people made their  
home,  
which thou, O God, in thy goodness  
providest for the poor.

- The Lord proclaims good news:<sup>f</sup>  
'Kings with their armies have fled  
headlong.'  
O mighty host, will you linger among  
the sheepfolds  
while the women in your tents divide  
the spoil—  
an image of a dove, its wings  
sheathed in silver  
and its pinions in yellow gold—  
while the Almighty scatters kings  
far and wide  
like snowflakes falling on Zalmon?

<sup>d</sup> over the desert plains: or on the plains.

<sup>e</sup> Be joyful: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* In the LORD is his name.

<sup>f</sup> proclaims good news: or gives the word, women bearing good news.

**Ps. 67:** Let all the people praise thee. A Hymn of Praise, kindred to a blessing (compare Num.6.24–27 which is here echoed). 1: *Make his face shine*: compare Ps.4.6 n. 6–7: The occasion seems to be a rich harvest; compare Ps.65.11–13.

**Ps. 68:** Sing the praises of God. The psalm is a Hymn in which God is praised for his deeds in the liberation of Israel from Egypt, her establishment in the Land, and victories over attackers in later history. Since different historical events are alluded to in poetic form, the impression is given of disconnected fragments which some scholars see collected here. 1–3: Narrative of what God is accustomed to do in behalf of the *righteous*. 4–10: Allusion to the Exodus and the conquest of the Land. 4: A slight correction of the Heb., proposed by some scholars, would yield “clouds” rather than *desert plains*. “Rider of the clouds” is a phrase used also of the Canaanite god Baal; see v. 33. On the other hand, desert plains would be an allusion to God’s traveling with Israel to Sinai, and then to Canaan (Judg.5.4). 5: Israel saw herself as a *fatherless* girl abandoned in the desert and found by God; see Ezek.16.1–6. 7–8: *Heavens quaked*: Exod.19.16–25. 11–14: The allusion is to the victory over the Canaanite *kings* after

- 15 The hill of Bashan is a hill of  
God indeed,  
a hill of many peaks is Bashan's  
hill.
- 16 But, O hill of many peaks, why gaze  
in envy  
at the hill where the LORD delights  
to dwell,  
where the LORD himself will live  
for ever?
- 17 Twice ten thousand were God's  
chariots, thousands upon  
thousands,  
when the Lord came in holiness  
from Sinai.<sup>g</sup>
- 18 Thou didst go up to thy lofty home  
with captives in thy train,  
having received tribute from men;  
in the presence of the LORD God no  
rebel could live.
- 19 Blessed is the Lord:  
he carries us day by day,  
God our salvation.
- 20 Our God is a God who saves us,  
in the LORD God's hand lies escape  
from death.<sup>h</sup>
- 21 God himself will smite<sup>i</sup> the head of  
his enemies,  
those proud sinners with their  
flowing locks.
- 22 The Lord says, 'I will return from  
the Dragon,<sup>j</sup>  
I will return from the depths of  
the sea,  
23 that you may dabble your feet in  
blood,  
while the tongues of your dogs are  
eager<sup>k</sup> for it.'
- 24 Thy procession, O God, comes  
into view,
- the procession of my God and  
King into the sanctuary:  
at its head the singers, next come 25  
minstrels,  
girls among them playing on  
tambourines.  
In the great concourse they bless 26  
God,  
all Israel assembled<sup>l</sup> bless the LORD.  
There is the little tribe of Benjamin 27  
leading them,  
there the company of Judah's  
princes,  
the princes of Zebulun and of  
Naphtali.
- O God, in virtue of thy power<sup>m</sup>— 28  
that godlike power which has acted  
for us—  
command kings to bring gifts to thee 29  
for the honour of thy temple in  
Jerusalem.  
Rebuke those wild beasts of the 30  
reeds, that herd of bulls,  
the bull-calf warriors of the  
nations;<sup>n</sup>  
scatter these nations which revel in  
war;  
make them bring tribute from 31  
Egypt,  
precious stones and silver from  
Pathros;<sup>o</sup>  
let Nubia stretch out<sup>p</sup> her hands to  
God.

*g* came . . . from Sinai: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*h* in the LORD God's hand . . . death: *or* death is expelled by the LORD God.

*i* will smite: *or* smites.

*j* the Dragon: *or* Bashan.

*k* are eager: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. from enemies.*

*l* assembled: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*m* O God . . . power: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. Your God your power.*

*n* See first note on verse 31.

*o* precious . . . Pathros: *prob. rdg., transposed from verse 30 and slightly altered.*

*p* stretch out: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

much hesitation on the part of some tribes to leave their *sheepfolds*; see Judg.5.16–20. **15–18:** The allusion seems to be to the victory over the Ammonites either by Jephthah (Judg.11.4–33), or by Saul (1 Sam.11.1–11), or by David (2 Sam.10.1–12.31). **15:** The Syrians from the territory of *Bashan* joined the Ammonites in the fight against David; see 2 Sam.10.6. Mount Hermon with its three *peaks* personifies the Syrian rulers. Because of its height and majesty it was considered the *hill of God*, vying with Mount Zion for glory. **21:** The desert warriors left their hair *flowing* loose when they went to battle; see Judg.5.1 and Tfn. *j* there. **22:** See Tfn. *j*. God comes back victorious from the *Dragon* (Bashan) and from the depths of the Red Sea where he conquered Egypt. **23:** Compare 58.10 and see n. **24–35:** A liturgical celebration in which the victories of God are reenacted in a Temple procession, possibly with the Ark of the Covenant at its head. **27:** Men of *Benjamin* are first in the procession, either because of their role in the victory over the Canaanites (Judg.5.14) or because Saul of Benjamin was victorious over the Ammonites (1 Sam.11.1–11). David of *Judah* defeated the Ammonites; see vv.15–18 n. *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* were the leading tribes in the victory over the Canaanites; see Judg.4.6–7. **30:** *Beasts of the reeds:* Egyptians. *Herd of bulls:* warriors (Syrians) from Bashan, a place known for its cattle. **31:** *Pathos* and *Nubia* adjoined Egypt. **32–35:** A Hymn of praise; compare Ps.29. **33:** See v. 4 n.

32 All you kingdoms of the world, sing  
praises to God,  
sing psalms to the Lord,  
33 to him who rides on the heavens,  
the ancient heavens.  
Hark! he speaks in the mighty  
thunder.  
34 Ascribe all might to God, Israel's  
High God,  
Israel's pride and might throned in  
the skies.  
35 Terrible is God as he comes from  
his sanctuary;  
he is Israel's own God,  
who gives to his people might and  
abundant power.

Blessed be God.

## 69

1 Save me, O God;  
for the waters have risen up to my  
neck.  
2 I sink in muddy depths and have no  
foothold;  
I am swept into deep water, and the  
flood carries me away.  
3 I am wearied with crying out, my  
throat is sore,  
my eyes grow dim as I wait for God  
to help me.  
4 Those who hate me without reason  
are more than the hairs of my head;  
they outnumber my hairs, those who  
accuse me falsely.  
How can I give back what I have  
not stolen?  
5 O God, thou knowest how foolish  
I am,  
and my guilty deeds are not hidden  
from thee.  
6 Let none of those who look to thee  
be shamed on my account,  
O Lord God of Hosts;  
let none who seek thee be humbled  
through my fault,  
O God of Israel.  
7 For in thy service I have suffered  
reproach;

I dare not show my face for shame.  
I have become a stranger to my  
brothers,  
an alien to my own mother's  
sons;  
bitter enemies of thy temple tear me  
in pieces;<sup>q</sup>  
those who reproach thee reproach  
me.  
I have broken my spirit with fasting,  
only to lay myself open to many  
reproaches.  
I have made sackcloth my clothing  
and have become a byword among  
them.  
Those who sit by the town gate  
talk about me;  
drunkards sing songs about me in  
their cups.  
But I lift up this prayer to thee,  
O LORD:  
accept me<sup>r</sup> now in thy great love,  
answer me with thy sure deliverance,  
O God.  
Rescue me from the mire, do not  
let me sink;  
let me be rescued from the muddy  
depths,<sup>s</sup>  
so that no flood may carry me  
away,  
no abyss swallow me up,  
no deep close over me.  
Answer me, O LORD, in the goodness  
of thy unfailing love,  
turn towards me in thy great  
affection.  
I am thy servant, do not hide thy  
face from me.  
Make haste to answer me, for I am  
in distress.  
Come near to me and redeem me;  
ransom me, for I have many  
enemies.  
Thou knowest what reproaches I  
bear,  
all my anguish is seen by thee.  
Reproach has broken my heart,

<sup>q</sup> bitter . . . pieces; or zeal for thy temple has eaten me up (cp. *John 2. 17*).

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. acceptance.

<sup>s</sup> from . . . depths; prob. rdg.; Heb. from my haters and from the depths.

Ps. 69: Save me, O God. A Lament, probably written by an exile (in Babylon) in the sixth century B.C., as suggested by v. 35. The figure of a man sunken into the mire is most vivid. 1-6: The poet's distress. The mire (vv. 1-3) is figurative; it is repeated in vv. 14-15. 7-21: His experience of humiliation. 9: The allusion is uncertain, but see Ezra 4.4-5, 23-24; 5.2-3. The use may be noted in Jn. 2.17. 13-18: An intervening prayer. 17: *Hide thy face*: compare 10.11 and 27.9.

my shame and my dishonour<sup>t</sup> are  
 past hope;  
 I looked for consolation and  
 received none,  
 for comfort and did not find any.  
 21 They put poison in my food  
 and gave me vinegar when I was  
 thirsty.  
 22 May their own table be a snare to  
 them  
 and their sacred feasts lure them to  
 their ruin;  
 23 may their eyes be darkened so that  
 they do not see,  
 let a continual ague shake their  
 loins.  
 24 Pour out thine indignation upon  
 them  
 and let thy burning anger  
 overtake them.  
 25 May their settlements be desolate,  
 and no one living in their tents;  
 26 for they pursue him whom thou  
 hast struck down  
 and multiply the torments of those  
 whom thou hast wounded.  
 27 Give them the punishment their  
 sin deserves;<sup>u</sup>  
 exclude them from thy righteous  
 mercy;  
 28 let them be blotted out from the  
 book of life  
 and not be enrolled among the  
 righteous.  
 29 But by thy saving power, O God,  
 lift me high  
 above my pain and my distress,  
 30 then I will praise God's name in  
 song  
 and glorify him with thanksgiving;  
 31 that will please the LORD more than  
 the offering of a bull,  
 a young bull with horn and cloven  
 hoof.  
 32 See and rejoice, you humble folk,  
 take heart, you seekers after God;  
 33 for the LORD listens to the poor  
 and does not despise those bound

to his service.  
 Let sky and earth praise him, 34  
 the seas and all that move in them,  
 for God will deliver Zion 35-36  
 and rebuild the cities of Judah.  
 His servants' children shall inherit  
 them;  
 they shall dwell there in their own  
 possession  
 and all who love his name shall  
 live in them.

70

Show me favour,<sup>v</sup> O God, and save 1<sup>w</sup>  
 me;  
 hasten to help me, O LORD.  
 Let all who seek my life be brought 2  
 to shame and dismay,  
 let all who love to hurt me shrink  
 back disgraced;  
 let those who cry 'Hurrah!' at my 3  
 downfall  
 turn back at the shame they incur,  
 but let all who seek thee 4  
 be jubilant and rejoice in thee,  
 and let those who long for thy  
 saving help ever cry,  
 'All glory to God!'  
 But I am poor and needy; 5  
 O God, hasten to my aid.  
 Thou art my help, my salvation;  
 O LORD, make no delay.

71

In thee, O LORD, I have taken 1  
 refuge;  
 never let me be put to shame.  
 As thou art righteous rescue me 2  
 and save my life;  
 hear me and set me free,  
 be a rock of refuge for me, 3

*t* my shame and my dishonour: transposed from after reproaches in verse 19.  
*u* Give them . . . deserves: or Add punishment to punishment.  
*v* Show me favour: prob. rdg., cp. Ps. 40. 13; Heb. om.  
*w* Verses 1-5: cp. Ps. 40. 13-17.

21: Compare Mt.27.34,48; Mk.15.36; Lk.23.36; Jn.19.29. 22-28: A curse. 25: See Acts 1.20. 28: The book of life: compare 56.8 n.; 109.15. 29-31: A prayer and vow. Normally the vow is favorable to animal sacrifice. 32-36: The psalmist's trust in God. 35: An allusion to the situation after the Babylonian conquest (597 B.C.) and the Exile (587-520).  
 Ps. 70: O God, hasten to my aid. A Lament (see Introduction) almost identical to Ps.40.13-17.  
 Ps. 71: Forsake me not, O God. A Lament (see Introduction), apparently of an old man in

	where I may ever find safety at thy call; for thou art my towering crag and stronghold.		I will begin with a tale of great deeds, O Lord GOD, and sing of thy righteousness, thine alone.	16
4	O God, keep my life safe from the wicked, from the clutches of unjust and cruel men.		O God, thou hast taught me from boyhood, all my life I have proclaimed thy marvellous works; and now that I am old and my hairs	17
5	Thou art my hope, O Lord, my trust, O LORD, since boyhood.		are grey, forsake me not, O God, when I extol thy mighty arm to future generations,	18
6	From birth I have leaned upon thee, my protector since I left <sup>x</sup> my mother's womb. <sup>y</sup>		thy power and righteousness, O God,	19
7	To many I seem a solemn warning; but I have thee for my strong refuge.		to highest heaven; for thou hast done great things. Who is like thee, O God?	
8	My mouth shall be full of thy praises, I shall tell of thy splendour all day long.		Thou hast made me pass through	20
9	Do not cast me off when old age comes, nor forsake me when my strength fails,		bitter and deep distress, yet dost revive me once again and lift me again from earth's watery depths.	
10	when my enemies' rancour bursts upon me <sup>z</sup> and those who watch me whisper together,		Restore me to honour, turn and comfort me,	21
11	saying, 'God has forsaken him; after him! seize him; no one will rescue him.'		then I will praise thee on the lute for thy faithfulness, O God; I will sing psalms to thee with the harp,	22
12	O God, do not stand aloof from me; O my God, hasten to my help.		thou Holy One of Israel; songs of joy shall be on my lips;	23
13	Let all my traducers be shamed and dishonoured, let all who seek my hurt be covered with scorn.		I will sing thee psalms, because thou hast redeemed me.	
14	But I will wait in continual hope, I will praise thee again and yet again;		All day long my tongue shall tell of thy righteousness;	24
15	all day long thy righteousness, thy saving acts, shall be upon my lips. Thou shalt ever be the theme of my praise, <sup>a</sup> although I have not the skill of a poet.		shame and disgrace await those who seek my hurt.	
			<b>72</b>	
			O God, endow the king with thy own justice, and give thy righteousness to a king's son,	1

<sup>x</sup> my . . . left: or who didst bring me out from.

<sup>y</sup> See note on verse 15.

<sup>z</sup> enemies' . . . me: prob. *rlq.*; Heb. enemies say of me.

<sup>a</sup> Line transposed from verse 6.

serious trouble who reminds God of his past faithfulness. 7-11: The general belief of the OT, that troubles were due to a rejection by God because of some sin, made the psalmist's troubled life (v. 20) seem a solemn warning to would-be sinners. 14-24: The vow here to praise as a motive for God's favorable action is longer than usual. 20: The earth's watery depths are the underground place of the dead into which the man seems already sunk. 22: Though not a poet (v. 15), the psalmist offers this musical praise as the content of his vow.

Ps. 72: May the king live long. A Royal Psalm. The superscription (see Introduction) describes this as a psalm of Solomon. Vv. 18-20 are an editorial addition to close Book 2 (see Ps.41.13 n. for other closings). Royal or Wisdom psalms are common at the beginnings and at the ends

<p>2 that he may judge thy people rightly and deal out justice to the poor and suffering.</p> <p>3 May hills and mountains afford thy people peace and prosperity in righteousness.</p> <p>4 He shall give judgement for the suffering and help those of the people that are needy; he shall crush the oppressor.</p> <p>5 He shall live as long as the sun endures, long as the moon, age after age.</p> <p>6 He shall be like rain falling on early crops, like showers watering<sup>b</sup> the earth.</p> <p>7 In his days righteousness shall flourish, prosperity abound until the moon is no more.</p> <p>8 May he hold sway from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.</p> <p>9 Ethiopians shall crouch low before him; his enemies shall lick the dust.</p> <p>10 The kings of Tarshish and the islands shall bring gifts, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall present their tribute,</p> <p>11 and all kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him.</p> <p>12 For he shall rescue the needy from their rich oppressors, the distressed who have no protector.</p> <p>13 May he have pity on the needy and the poor, deliver the poor from death;</p> <p>14 may he redeem them from oppression and violence</p>	<p>and may their blood be precious in his eyes.</p> <p>May the king live long and receive gifts of gold<sup>c</sup> from Sheba; prayer be made for him continually, blessings be his all the day long.</p> <p>16 May there be abundance of corn in the land, growing in plenty to the tops of the hills; may the crops flourish like Lebanon, and the sheaves<sup>d</sup> be numberless as blades of grass.</p> <p>17 Long may the king's name endure, may it live for ever like the sun; so shall all peoples pray to be blessed as he was, all nations tell of his happiness.</p> <p>Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvellous things; blessed be his glorious name for ever,</p> <p>19 and may his glory fill all the earth. Amen, Amen.</p> <p>Here end the prayers of David son of Jesse.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p>
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BOOK 3

73

How good God is to the upright!<sup>e</sup> 1  
How good to those who are pure  
in heart!

*b* like showers watering: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*  
*c* Or frankincense.  
*d* the sheaves: *prob. rdg.; Heb. from a city.*  
*e* How . . . upright: *prob. rdg.; Heb. How good it is to Israel!*

of the five books (see Pss.1,2,41,73,89,90,91). This psalm could have been used at a coronation or at its annual celebration. 1-2: To *judge* meant to vindicate the rights of the poor and to relieve suffering. Thus, the king was also a judge, and therefore needed to be just. 6-7: *Early crops* were those that matured before the drought of summer came and hence needed much rain. In Near Eastern ideas of the king, even the fertility of the land depended on him. 8-11: The desired territory for the Israelite king. 8: *River*: the Euphrates (1 Kgs.4.21). 9: *Ethiopians*, elsewhere called also Cushites, were considered fierce warriors; see Jer.46.9. *To lick dust* was a symbol of utter defeat. 10: *Tarshish*: probably in Spain. *Sheba and Seba*: in South Arabia. 12-14: The king, like God (v. 1), was to *redeem* people from *oppression*. The absolute kings of the Near East tended to shed the blood of the weak with little remorse; see Ezek.24.1-13. 15-17: A prayer on behalf of the king. 17: Many kings in the Ancient Near East were called "the Sun" and still more were compared to the sun. 18-19: A prayer, not part of the original psalm, but added by an editor to close (v. 20) the second collection of psalms.

Ps. 73: *How good God is to the upright*. A Wisdom Psalm, used as the introduction to Book 3

2	My feet had almost slipped, my foothold had all but given way,	but I found it too hard for me, until I went into God's sacred	17
3	because the boasts of sinners roused my envy when I saw how they prosper.	courts; there I saw clearly what their end would be.	
4	No pain, no suffering is theirs; they are sleek and sound in limb;	How often thou dost set them on slippery ground	18
5	they are not plunged in trouble as other men are, nor do they suffer the torments of mortal men.	and drive them headlong into ruin!	
6	Therefore pride is their collar of jewels and violence the robe that wraps them round.	Then in a moment how dreadful their end, cut off root and branch by death with all its terrors,	19
7	Their eyes gleam through folds of fat; while vain fancies pass through their minds.	like a dream when a man rouses himself, O Lord, like images in sleep which are dismissed on waking!	20
8	Their talk is all sneers and malice; scornfully they spread their calumnies.	When my heart was embittered I felt the pangs of envy,	21
9	Their slanders reach up to heaven, while their tongues ply to and fro on earth.	I would not understand, so brutish was I,	22
10	And so my people follow their lead <sup>f</sup> and find nothing to blame in them, <sup>g</sup>	I was a mere beast in thy sight, O God.	23
11	even though they say, 'What does God know? The Most High neither knows nor cares.'	Yet I am always with thee, thou holdest my right hand; thou dost guide me by thy counsel and afterwards wilt receive me with glory.	24
12	So wicked men talk, yet still they prosper, and rogues <sup>h</sup> amass great wealth.	Whom have I in heaven but thee? And having thee, <sup>i</sup> I desire nothing else on earth.	25
13	So it was all in vain that I kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence.	Though heart and body fail, yet God is my possession for ever.	26
14	For all day long I suffer torment and am punished every morning.	They who are far from thee are lost; thou dost destroy all who wantonly forsake thee.	27
15	Yet had I let myself talk on in this fashion, I should have betrayed the family of God.	But my chief good is to be near thee, O God;	28
16	So I set myself to think this out	I have chosen thee, Lord GOD, to be my refuge. <sup>j</sup>	

<sup>f</sup> their lead: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* hither.

<sup>g</sup> and find . . . in them: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.

<sup>h</sup> yet . . . rogues: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* those at ease for ever.

<sup>i</sup> Or And compared with thee.

<sup>j</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds to tell all thy works.

(see Introduction). The psalm falls into two major divisions. The first (vv. 2–15) asks why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer; the second (vv. 16–28) asserts that after a visit to the Temple, the psalmist learned that the prosperity of the wicked is only temporary and that the righteous enjoy the constant guidance of God. 6–7: *Fat* connotes an insensitive heart which indulges in *violence*. 11: The assertion of the wicked, that God is indifferent to man and his behavior, is a practical “atheism”; the theoretical denial of God’s existence does not occur in the Bible. 13–15: The claim that a *pure heart*, i.e. upright life, is *in vain* and useless, is to attack the foundation of Israel’s existence and so a betrayal of her hopes; see Deut. 6.1–3. 17: *God’s courts*: the Temple. 22–23: A *brutish* man is moved only by physical force in pain and is insensitive to God’s touch in leading him by the *hand*; compare Ps. 32.8–10. 24–27: The final reward of the just man is to be in dialogue with God and to receive his counsel; compare Job 38.1–42.6; Pss. 27.4; 32.8; 63.1–11.

## 74

- 1 Why hast thou cast us off, O God?  
Is it for ever?  
Why art thou so stern, so angry  
with the sheep of thy flock?
- 2 Remember the assembly of thy  
people,  
taken long since for thy own,<sup>k</sup>  
and Mount Zion, which was thy  
home.
- 3 Now at last<sup>l</sup> restore what was  
ruined beyond repair,  
the wreck that the foe has made of  
thy sanctuary.
- 4 The shouts of thy enemies filled the  
holy place,<sup>m</sup>  
they planted their standards there  
as tokens of victory.
- 5 They brought it crashing down,<sup>n</sup>  
like woodmen plying their axes  
in the forest;
- 6 they ripped the carvings clean out,  
they smashed them with hatchet  
and pick.
- 7 They set fire to thy sanctuary,  
tore down and polluted the shrine  
sacred to thy name.
- 8 They said to themselves, 'We will  
sweep them away',  
and all over the land they burnt  
God's holy places.<sup>o</sup>
- 9 We cannot see what lies before us,<sup>p</sup>  
we have no prophet now;  
we have no one who knows how  
long this is to last.
- 10 How long, O God, will the enemy  
taunt thee?  
Will the adversary pour scorn on  
thy name for ever?
- 11 Why dost thou hold back thy hand,  
why keep thy right hand within thy  
bosom?
- But thou, O God, thou king from 12  
of old,  
thou mighty conqueror all the  
world over,  
by thy power thou didst cleave the 13  
sea-monster in two  
and break the sea-serpent's heads  
above the waters;  
thou didst crush Leviathan's many 14  
heads  
and throw him to the sharks<sup>q</sup> for  
food.  
Thou didst open channels for spring 15  
and torrent;  
thou didst dry up rivers never  
known to fail.  
The day is thine, and the night is 16  
thine also,  
thou didst ordain the light of moon  
and sun;  
thou hast fixed all the regions of 17  
the earth;  
summer and winter, thou didst create  
them both.
- Remember, O LORD, the taunts of 18  
the enemy,  
the scorn a savage nation pours on  
thy name.  
Cast not to the beasts the soul that 19  
confesses thee;  
forget not for ever the sufferings of  
thy servants.  
Look upon thy creatures:<sup>r</sup> they are 20  
filled with hatred,  
and earth is the haunt of violence.  
Let not the oppressed be shamed 21  
and turned away;

*k* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds thou didst redeem the tribe of thy possession.

*l* Now at last: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Thy steps.

*m* the holy place: or thy meeting place.

*n* They . . . down: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* unintelligible.

*o* holy places: or meeting places.

*p* what . . . us: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* our signs.

*q* to the sharks: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* to a people, desert-dwellers.

*r* thy creatures: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the covenant, because.

**Ps. 74: Forget not forever the sufferings of the servants.** A Lament over the destruction of the Temple by a foreign invader whom some scholars identify as the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. and others as the Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. (1 Macc.4.38). **9:** The lack of a *prophet* seems to indicate Maccabean times as the period of composition, since prophets did continue their activity after the Babylonian destruction; see 1 Macc.9.27. **11: Hold back thy hand:** refrain from acting in behalf of Israel. **12-17:** God's power in restoring dispersed Israel is often compared to the creation of the universe and described in the mythological imagery of the Ancient Near East; compare Isa.51.9-16. God is here a great warrior who defeats primitive chaos identified as the *sea-monster, sea-serpent, Leviathan*, so that he may bring about a benevolent order of *day* and *night*, etc. **18-23:** A prayer for deliverance, the motive being to end the *taunts of the enemy* against God. The vow usual in a Lament is absent, perhaps because it involved a sacrifice which was impossible because the Temple was in ruins.



let the poor and the downtrodden  
praise thy name.

- 22 Rise up, O God, maintain thy own  
cause;  
remember how brutal men taunt  
thee all day long.
- 23 Ignore no longer the cries of thy  
assailants,  
the mounting clamour of those who  
defy thee.

## 75

- 1 We give thee thanks, O God, we give  
thee thanks;  
thy name is brought very near to us  
in the story of thy wonderful deeds.
- 2 I seize the appointed time  
and then I judge mankind with justice.
- 3 When the earth rocks, with all who  
live on it,  
I make its pillars firm.
- 4 To the boastful I say, 'Boast no  
more',  
and to the wicked, 'Do not toss  
your proud horns:  
5 toss not your horns against high  
heaven  
nor speak arrogantly against your  
Creator.'
- 6 No power from the east nor from  
the west,  
no power from the wilderness, can  
raise a man up.
- 7 For God is judge;  
he puts one man down and raises  
up another.
- 8 The LORD holds a cup in his hand,  
and the wine foams in it, hot with  
spice;  
he offers it to every man for drink,  
and all the wicked on earth must  
drain it to the dregs.
- 9 But I will glorify him for ever;

I will sing praises to the God of  
Jacob.

I will break off the horns of the  
wicked,  
but the horns of the righteous shall  
be lifted high.

## 76

In Judah God is known, 1  
his name is great in Israel;  
his tent is pitched in Salem, 2  
in Zion his battle-quarters are set up.<sup>8</sup>  
He has broken the flashing arrows, 3  
shield and sword and weapons of  
war.

Thou art terrible, O Lord, and 4  
mighty:  
men that lust for plunder stand 5  
aghast,  
the boldest swoon away,  
and the strongest cannot lift a hand.  
At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, 6  
rider and horse fall senseless.  
Terrible art thou, O Lord; 7  
who can stand in thy presence when  
thou art angry?  
Thou didst give sentence out of 8  
heaven;  
the earth was afraid and kept  
silence.  
O God, at thy rising<sup>t</sup> in judgement 9  
to deliver all humble men on the  
earth,  
for all her fury Edom shall confess 10  
thee,  
and the remnant left in Hamath  
shall dance in worship.

Make vows to the LORD your God, 11  
and pay them duly;

<sup>s</sup> are set up: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* thither (at beginning of  
verse 3).

<sup>t</sup> O God . . . rising: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* When God rises.

**Ps. 75: We give thee thanks, O God.** This is classified by some as a Thanksgiving but by others as a Wisdom Psalm of exhortation. **1:** Gratitude due God. **2-5, 10:** God is the speaker. **4:** *Horns:* a symbol of power. **6-9:** God alone is the true judge, and his judgment is sure to come. **8:** On the *cup* of judgment, compare Isa.51.22-23; Jer.25.15; Lk.22.42.

**Ps. 76: Terrible art thou, O Lord.** A Hymn, after a military victory (v. 3). The introduction (vv. 1-3) is followed by allusions to an unknown battle (vv. 6-10), and ended by an exhortation to thank God (vv. 11-12). This is one of the songs of Zion (see Ps.46 n.). **2:** *Salem:* mentioned in Gen.14.18; tradition, as here, identifies it with Jerusalem. **4:** *Terrible:* the translation is based on a correction of the *Heb.*; "terrible" means able to elicit terror. **10:** *Edom* to the south-east and *Hamath* to the north. This translation is based on minor corrections of the *MT*. **11:** *Vows:* in Laments, the poet usually vows to express his gratitude through offering a sacrifice.

let the peoples all around him  
bring their tribute;<sup>u</sup>  
12 for he breaks the spirit of princes,  
he is the terror of the kings on  
earth.

## 77

1 I cried aloud to God,  
I cried to God, and he heard me.  
2 In the day of my distress I sought  
the Lord,  
and by night I lifted<sup>v</sup> my outspread  
hands in prayer.  
I lay sweating and nothing would  
cool me;  
I refused all comfort.  
3 When I called God to mind, I  
groaned;  
as I lay thinking, darkness came over  
my spirit.  
4 My eyelids were tightly closed;  
I was dazed and I could not speak.  
5 My thoughts went back to times  
long past,  
I remembered forgotten years;  
6 all night long I was in deep distress,  
as I lay thinking, my spirit was sunk  
in despair.  
7 Will the Lord reject us for evermore  
and never again show favour?  
8 Has his unailing love now failed us  
utterly,  
must his promise time and again be  
unfulfilled?  
9 Has God forgotten to be gracious,  
has he in anger withheld his mercies?  
10 'Has his right hand', I said, 'lost its  
grasp?  
Does it hang powerless,<sup>w</sup> the arm  
of the Most High?'  
11 But then, O LORD, I call to mind  
thy deeds;<sup>x</sup>

I recall thy wonderful acts in times  
gone by.  
I meditate upon thy works  
and muse on all that thou hast  
done.  
O God, thy way is holy;  
what god is so great as our God?  
Thou art the God who workest  
miracles;  
thou hast shown the nations thy  
power.  
With thy strong arm thou didst  
redeem thy people,  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.  
The waters saw thee, O God,  
they saw thee and writhed in  
anguish;  
the ocean was troubled to its  
depths.  
The clouds poured water, the skies  
thundered,  
thy arrows flashed hither and  
thither.  
The sound of thy thunder was in the  
whirlwind,<sup>y</sup>  
thy lightnings lit up the world,  
earth shook and quaked.  
Thy path was through the sea, thy  
way through mighty waters,  
and no man marked thy  
footsteps.  
Thou didst guide thy people like a  
flock of sheep,  
under the hand of Moses and  
Aaron.

## 78

Mark my teaching, O my people,  
listen to the words I am to speak. 1

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds for the terror (cp. verse 12).  
<sup>v</sup> I lifted; prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
<sup>w</sup> lost . . . powerless; prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.  
<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. then I call to mind the deeds of  
the LORD, for.  
<sup>y</sup> Or in the chariot-wheels.

**Ps. 77:** I cried aloud to God but then I recalled his wonderful acts. A Lament that has a hymn of praise (vv. 11-20), in place of the usual vow, as a motive in eliciting God's saving action. 2-4: *Sweating* and a *dazed* condition indicate either the fever of a physical illness or great anxiety of spirit; compare Lk.22.44. 9-10: Two questions about God arise in the face of human suffering: (a) Is God *gracious*, i.e. good and concerned enough about man to want to help him? (b) Is he able or is he *powerless* to help? 11-15: A Hymn, extolling God's *way as holy* in redeeming his *people* in the past, affirms his goodness. 16-19: An ancient Hymn describing creation in mythological images—the sea serpent writhes *in anguish*—affirms God's power to help. See 74.13-14. 20: Since God's goodness and power were manifested to the *people* in the Exodus, they need to be displayed again now.

**Ps. 78:** From Moses to David. A historical psalm (see also Pss.105,106,135,136). Israel's

2	I will tell you a story with a meaning, I will expound the riddle of things past, 3 things that we have heard and know, and our fathers have repeated to us. 4 From their sons we will not hide the praises of the LORD and his might nor the wonderful acts he has performed; then they shall repeat them to the next generation. 5 He laid on Jacob a solemn charge and established a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach their sons, 6 that it might be known to a future generation, to children yet unborn, and these would repeat it to their sons in turn. 7 He charged them to put their trust in God, to hold his great acts ever in mind and to keep all his commandments; 8 not to do as their fathers did, a disobedient and rebellious race, a generation with no firm purpose, with hearts not fixed steadfastly on God. 9 The men of Ephraim, bowmen all and marksmen, turned and ran in the hour of battle. 10 They had not kept God's covenant and had refused to live by his law; 11 they forgot all that he had done and the wonderful acts which he had shown them. 12 He did wonders in their fathers' sight	in the land of Egypt, the country of Zoan: he divided the sea and took them through it, making the water stand up like banks on either side. He led them with a cloud by day and all night long with a glowing fire. He cleft the rock in the wilderness and gave them water to drink, abundant as the sea; he brought streams out of the cliff and made water run down like rivers. But they sinned against him yet again: in the desert they defied the Most High, they tried God's patience wilfully, demanding food to satisfy their hunger. They vented their grievance against God and said, 'Can God spread a table in the wilderness?' When he struck a rock, water gushed out until the gullies overflowed; they said, 'Can he give bread as well, can he provide meat for his people?' When he heard this, the LORD was filled with fury: fire raged against Jacob, anger blazed up against Israel, because they put no trust in God and had no faith in his power to save. Then he gave orders to the skies above and threw open heaven's doors, he rained down manna for them to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. So men ate the bread of angels;	13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
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story was undoubtedly told again and again by her poets and for various reasons. An emphasis here is the condemnation of Ephraim (9–11,67), the leading tribe of the Northern Kingdom. The historical allusions are quite clear, especially in the light of information in the Pentateuch. Perhaps the psalm was used on a festival day; perhaps, too, vv.1–9,67 are an addition. 1–4: This introduction is kindred to Wisdom writings (see 49.1–4); the *teaching* is offered so that the present generation will perpetuate its legacy. 2: This verse is paraphrased in Mt.13.35. 5–8: The Sinai episode, Exod. chs. 19–24. 6: Compare Deut.6.7. 9–11: The allusion to *in the hour of battle* is obscure. The major denunciation, though, is in 10–11. 12–53: A review of the Exodus and the Wilderness experience emphasizes God's wondrous deeds related in Exod. and Num. The usual trespasses of Israel (17–20 and 32–40) balanced God's great deeds with men's deficiencies. 12: *Zoan*: called Rameses in Exod.1.11. 15–16: See Exod.17.6 and Num.20.10–13. 17–25: See Exod.15.23–16.8. 17: See Deut.9.22; Heb.3.16. 18: See Num.20.11. 24: See Jn.6.31.

	he sent them food to their heart's desire.		and did not rouse his anger to its height.	
26	He let loose the east wind from heaven and drove the south wind by his power;		He remembered that they were only mortal men, who pass by like a wind and never return.	39
27	he rained meat like a dust-storm upon them, flying birds like the sand of the sea-shore,		How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!	40
28	which he made settle all over the camp round the tents where they lived.		Again and again they tried God's patience and provoked the Holy One of Israel.	41
29	So the people ate and were well filled, for he had given them what they craved.		They did not remember his prowess on the day when he saved them from the enemy, how he set his signs in Egypt,	42
30	Yet they did not abandon their complaints <sup>z</sup> even while the food was in their mouths.		his portents in the land of Zoan. He turned their streams into blood, and they could not drink the running water.	43 44
31	Then the anger of God blazed up against them; he spread death among their stoutest men and brought the young men of Israel to the ground.		He sent swarms of flies which devoured them, and frogs which brought devastation; he gave their harvest over to locusts and their produce to the grubs; he killed their vines with hailstones and their figs with torrents of rain;	45 46 47
32	In spite of all, they persisted in their sin and had no faith in his wonderful acts.		he abandoned their cattle to the plague and their beasts to the arrows of pestilence.	48
33	So in one moment he snuffed out their lives and ended their years in calamity.		He loosed upon them the violence of his anger, wrath and enmity and rage, launching those messengers of evil to open a way for his fury.	49
34	When he struck them, they began to seek him, they would turn and look eagerly for God;		He struck down all the first-born in Egypt, the flower of their manhood in the tents of Ham, not shielding their lives from death but abandoning their bodies to the plague.	50-51
35	they remembered that God was their Creator, that God Most High was their deliverer.		But he led out his own people like sheep and guided them like a flock in the wilderness.	52
36	But still they beguiled him with words and deceived him with fine speeches;		He led them in safety and they were not afraid, and the sea closed over their enemies.	53
37	they were not loyal to him in their hearts nor were they faithful to his covenant.			
38	Yet he wiped out their guilt and did not smother his own <sup>a</sup> natural affection; often he restrained his wrath			

<sup>z</sup> Or craving.  
<sup>a</sup> his own: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

27.39: Num.11.31-34. 42-53: The sequence of the plagues differs from that of Exod. chs. 7-12.

- 54 He brought them to his holy mountain,  
the hill which his right hand had won;  
55 he drove out nations before them,  
he allotted their lands to Israel as a possession  
and settled his tribes in their dwellings.  
56 Yet they tried God's patience and rebelled against him;  
they did not keep the commands of the Most High;  
57 they were renegades, traitors like their fathers,  
they changed, they went slack like a bow.  
58 They provoked him to anger with their hill-shrines  
and roused his jealousy with their carved images.  
59 When God heard this, he put them out of mind  
and utterly rejected Israel.  
60 He forsook his home at Shiloh,  
the tabernacle in which he dwelt among men;  
61 he surrendered the symbol of his strength into captivity  
and his pride into enemy hands;  
62 he gave his people over to the sword  
and put his own possession out of mind.  
63 Fire devoured his young men,  
and his maidens could raise no lament for them;  
64 his priests fell by the sword,  
and his widows could not weep.  
65 Then the Lord awoke as a sleeper awakes,  
like a warrior heated with wine;  
66 he struck his foes in the back parts  
and brought perpetual shame upon them.  
67 He despised the clan of Joseph
- and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim;  
he chose the tribe of Judah  
and Mount Zion which he loved;  
68 he built his sanctuary high as the heavens,  
69 founded like the earth to last for ever.  
He chose David to be his servant  
and took him from the sheepfolds;  
70 he brought him from minding the ewes  
71 to be the shepherd of his people  
Jacob;<sup>b</sup>  
and he shepherded them in  
72 singleness of heart  
and guided them with skilful hand.
- 79
- O God, the heathen have set foot in thy domain,  
1 defiled thy holy temple  
and laid Jerusalem in ruins.  
They have thrown out the dead  
2 bodies of thy servants  
to feed the birds of the air;  
they have made thy loyal servants  
carrion for wild beasts.  
Their blood is spilled all round  
3 Jerusalem like water,  
and there they lie unburied.  
We suffer the contempt of our  
4 neighbours,  
the gibes and mockery of all  
around us.  
5  
How long, O LORD, wilt thou be roused to such fury?  
Must thy jealousy rage like a fire?  
6 Pour out thy wrath over nations  
which do not know thee  
and over kingdoms which do not invoke thee by name;

<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* and Israel his possession.

54-64: These vv. deal with the conquest of the land of Canaan and the age of the Judges. God gave Israel the land, but infidelity did not cease. 54: *Holy mountain*: Zion. 55: Josh. chs. 13-17. 60: *Shiloh*: See Josh.18.1; Judg.18.31; 1 Sam. chs. 1-4. On its abandonment, see Jer.7.12-14; 26.6. 61: *The symbol of his strength*: the Ark of the Covenant, captured by the Philistines; see 1 Sam.4.1-7.1. 65-72: Perhaps this section refers to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C., 2 Kgs.17.3-6; perhaps, as some suggest, it reflects the Samaritan schism of the age of Ezra and Nehemiah. 65: *The Lord awoke*: compare 44.23 n. and 59.5. 66: *Back parts*: see 1 Sam.5.6-12. 68: *Judah*: the tribe to which David belonged. 69: 1 Kgs. chs. 6-8. 70-71: 1 Sam.16.1-16.

Ps. 79: *How long, O Lord*. A national Lament after invaders have defiled the Temple and devastated Jerusalem. For the occasion see Ps.74 n. 3: *An unburied corpse* was a great indignity to the dead person (Tob.1.17-19) and made the whole place unclean; see Num.19.11-16. 5: Israel aroused God to *jealousy* by her acceptance of other gods and religious practices;

- 7 see how they have devoured Jacob  
and laid waste his homesteads.
- 8 Do not remember against us the  
guilt of past generations  
but let thy compassion come swiftly  
to meet us,  
we have been brought so low.
- 9 Help us, O God our saviour, for the  
honour of thy name;  
for thy name's sake deliver us and  
wipe out our sins.
- 10 Why should the nations ask, 'Where  
is their God?'  
Let thy vengeance for the bloody  
slaughter of thy servants  
fall on those nations before our  
very eyes.
- 11 Let the groaning of the captives  
reach thy presence  
and in thy great might set free  
death's prisoners.
- 12 As for the contempt our neighbours  
pour on thee, O Lord,  
turn it back sevenfold on their own  
heads.
- 13 Then we thy people, the flock  
which thou dost shepherd,  
will give thee thanks for ever  
and repeat thy praise to every  
generation.
- 80**
- 1 Hear us, O shepherd of Israel,  
who ledest Joseph like a flock of  
sheep.  
Show thyself, thou that art throned  
on the cherubim,
- 2 to Ephraim and to Benjamin.  
Rouse thy victorious might from  
slumber,<sup>c</sup>  
come to our rescue.
- Restore us, O God,  
and make thy face shine upon us that  
we may be saved.
- O LORD God of Hosts,  
how long wilt thou resist thy people's  
prayer?  
Thou hast made sorrow their  
daily bread  
and tears of threefold grief their  
drink.  
Thou hast humbled us before our  
neighbours,  
and our enemies mock us to their  
hearts' content.  
O God of Hosts, restore us;  
make thy face shine upon us that we  
may be saved.
- Thou didst bring a vine out of Egypt,  
thou didst drive out nations and  
plant it;  
thou didst clear the ground before  
it,  
so that it made good roots and filled  
the land.  
The mountains were covered with  
its shade,  
and its branches were like those  
of mighty cedars.  
It put out boughs all the way to the  
Sea  
and its shoots as far as the River.  
Why hast thou broken down the  
wall round it  
so that every passer-by can pluck  
its fruit?
- The wild boar from the thickets  
gnaws it,  
and swarming insects from the  
fields feed on it.  
O God of Hosts, once more look  
down from heaven,  
take thought for this vine and  
tend it,

*c* from slumber: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and *Manasseh*.

see Deut.4.23–24; 5.9. 7: *Jacob*, the father of the twelve patriarchs, is the ancestor of the Israelites and here a symbol for the nation. 8: Solidarity in guilt between parents and children was a belief of the OT and carried over into the NT; see Deut.5.9; Jn.9.2.

**Ps. 80:** *Hear us, O shepherd of Israel.* A group Lament, probably composed in the Northern Kingdom as suggested by the tribes named (vv. 2–3). The time may have been shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. The parts are indicated by the refrain found three times (vv. 3,7,19); see Ps.4.6 n. for this phrase. 1: For God to *show* himself to someone is to bring life and joy to that person. *Cherubim*: see 1 Sam.4.4. 2: *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* were the sons of Joseph who gave their names to the two principal tribes of the Northern Kingdom. The tribe of *Benjamin*, Joseph's younger brother, was often associated with them. 8–16: Israel is the *vine*, a frequent figure; see Hos.10.1 and compare Isa.5.1–7. 11: *The Sea*: the Mediterranean. *The River*: the Euphrates. 12: *The wall round it* serves as God's protection.

- 15 this stock that thy right hand has  
planted.<sup>d</sup> 16<sup>f</sup>  
16 Let them that set fire to it or cut it  
down  
perish before thy angry face.  
17 Let thy hand rest upon the man at  
thy right side,  
the man whom thou hast made  
strong for thy service.  
18 We have not turned back from thee,  
so grant us new life, and we will  
invoke thee by name.  
19 LORD God of Hosts, restore us;  
make thy face shine upon us that  
we may be saved. 12

## 81

- 1 Sing out in praise of God our  
refuge,<sup>e</sup>  
acclaim the God of Jacob.  
2 Take pipe and tabor,  
take tuneful harp and lute.  
3 Blow the horn for the new month,  
for the full moon on the day of  
our pilgrim-feast.  
4 This is a law for Israel,  
an ordinance of the God of Jacob,  
5 laid as a solemn charge on Joseph  
when he came out of Egypt.<sup>f</sup> 15

- 6 When I lifted the load from his  
shoulders,  
his hands let go the builder's basket.  
7 When you cried to me in distress, I  
rescued you;  
unseen, I answered you in  
thunder.  
I tested you at the waters of  
Meribah,  
where I opened your mouths and  
filled them.<sup>g</sup>

- If my people would but listen to  
me,  
if Israel would only conform to  
my ways,  
I would soon bring their enemies 14  
to their knees  
and lay a heavy hand upon their  
persecutors.  
Let those who hate them<sup>k</sup> come 15  
cringing to them,  
and meet with everlasting troubles.<sup>l</sup>

## 82

- God takes his stand in the court 1  
of heaven  
to deliver judgement among the  
gods themselves.

*d* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and on the son whom thou hast made strong for thy service (cp. verse 17).

*e* Or strength.

*f* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds I hear an unfamiliar language.

*g* Line transposed from end of verse 10.

*h* I fed Israel: prob. rdg.; Heb. He fed him.

*i* Verse transposed. *j* See note on verse 7.

*k* those . . . them: prob. rdg.; Heb. those who hate the LORD.

*l* Verse 16 transposed to follow verse 7.

17: This may be a prayer for the king, or else the man a figure for Israel. 18: The vow usual in a Lament is here a promise to invoke God's name. It is overshadowed by the refrain in v. 19.

**Ps. 81: Acclaim the God of Jacob.** A Didactic Psalm used for a festival (possibly Passover or Booths), consisting of ritual prescriptions (vv. 1-5) and prophetic exhortation (vv. 6-15). 3: It is not clear which *pilgrim-feast* is meant of the three ordained in the Pentateuch: Passover, Booths, or Weeks (Deut.16.16). The first two fit the *full moon* prescription. 6-12: The divine words were possibly spoken as an exhortation by a cultic prophet in a liturgical recitation. This latter may begin with the words of v. 5 found in Tfn. *f* which would mean that God begins by saying that he met Israel as strangers (they were speaking the Egyptian language). 7: *When you cried to me*: see Exod.3.7. *Thunder*: i.e. at Sinai. *Meribah*: see Exod.17.7 and Ps.95.8. 9-10: *No strange god*: the first of the Ten Commandments; Exod.20.2-3. 13-15: God's benefits to Israel are conditional on Israel's obedience and fidelity; compare 95.7-11.

**Ps. 82: Arise, O God and judge the earth.** A Lament, or a Wisdom Psalm, possibly in a liturgical setting, in which a prophetic judgment against the unjust rulers of the world is given. 1: *Court of heaven* as an assembly of *gods* (Heb. *elohim*), superhuman beings lesser than God,

2 How long will you judge unjustly  
and show favour to the wicked?  
3 You ought to give judgement for  
the weak and the orphan,  
and see right done to the destitute  
and downtrodden,  
4 you ought to rescue the weak and  
the poor,  
and save them from the clutches  
of wicked men.  
5 But you know nothing, you  
understand nothing,  
you walk in the dark  
while earth's foundations are  
giving way.  
6 This is my sentence: Gods you  
may be,  
sons all of you of a high god,<sup>m</sup>  
7 yet you shall die as men die;<sup>n</sup>  
princes fall, every one of them, and  
so shall you.  
8 Arise, O God, and judge the earth;  
for thou dost pass all nations  
through thy sieve.

83

1 Rest not, O God;  
O God, be neither silent nor still,  
2 for thy enemies are making a  
tumult,  
and those that hate thee carry their  
heads high.  
3 They devise cunning schemes  
against thy people  
and conspire against those thou  
hast made thy treasure:  
4 'Come, away with them,' they cry,  
'let them be a nation no longer,

let Israel's name be remembered no  
more.'  
With one mind they have agreed 5  
together  
to make a league against thee:  
the families of Edom, the 6  
Ishmaelites,  
Moabites and Hagarenes,  
Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, 7  
Philistia and the citizens of Tyre,  
Asshur too their ally, 8  
all of them lending aid to the  
descendants of Lot.  
Deal with them as with Sisera, 9  
as with Jabin by the torrent of  
Kishon,  
who fell vanquished as Midian<sup>o</sup> fell 10  
at En-harod,<sup>p</sup>  
and were spread on the battlefield  
like dung.  
Make their princes like Oreb and 11  
Zeeb,  
make all their nobles like Zebah  
and Zalmunna;  
for they said, 'We will seize for 12  
ourselves  
all the pastures of God's people.'  
Scatter them, O God, like 13  
thistledown,  
like chaff before the wind.  
Like fire raging through the forest 14  
or flames which blaze across the  
hills,  
hunt them down with thy tempest, 15  
and dismay them with thy storm-  
wind.  
Heap shame upon their heads, O 16  
LORD,

*m* Or of the Most High.  
*n* Or as Adam died.  
*o* as Midian: transposed from previous verse.  
*p* En-harod: prob. rdg., cp. Judg. 7. 1; Heb. Endor.

is found also in 89.5-7; Job 1.6 and elsewhere. Some scholars interpret "gods" (here and in v. 6) literally as a mythological motif taken over from Canaanite literature. Others see it as a reference to human judges, as in Jn.10.34. 2-7: One explanation of evil in the world was that heavenly beings abused the power over the world given them by God; compare Col.2.6-15. The divine words, possibly spoken by a prophet in a temple ceremony, contain a condemnation of these beings by God; this takes the place of the lamentation and the vow usual in a Lament.

**Ps. 83: Rest not, O God.** A Lament calling for vengeance on the nations which intended to destroy Israel. The exact historic situation is unclear; a loose connection with Ps.79 is possible. A call for help (v. 1) arises from the aggressive plans of the nations (vv. 2-8); a plea follows for their destruction (vv. 9-18) as other foes were once destroyed (vv. 9-11). 6-7: The enemies are neighboring nations, often mentioned in Scripture, except for the unclear *Hagarenes*. Since the Ishmaelites were descended from Hagar (Gen.16.15), the name may be a synonym for Ishmaelites, a desert people. *Gebal* probably means the Phoenician city Byblos. An interesting variant from Masada reads "the gods of Edom" instead of *the families of Edom*. 8: *Asshur* is clearly Assyria, but the allusion is not clear. Lot's *descendants* were Ammon and Moab (Gen.19.30-38). 9: *Sisera and Jabin*: see Judg. chs. 4-5. 10: *Midian*: compare Judg. chs. 6-8. 11: *Oreb . . . Zeeb*: Judg.7.25. *Zebah and Zalmunna*: Judg.8.21. 12-19: A characteristic curse.



- until they confess the greatness  
of thy name.
- 17 Let them be abashed, and live in  
perpetual dismay;  
let them feel their shame and  
perish.
- 18 So let them learn that thou alone  
art LORD,  
God Most High over all the earth.

## 84

- 1 How dear is thy dwelling-place,  
thou LORD of Hosts!
- 2 I pine, I faint with longing  
for the courts of the LORD's  
temple;  
my whole being cries out with joy  
to the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow has her nest,  
where she rears her brood beside  
thy altars,  
O LORD of Hosts, my King and  
my God.
- 4 Happy are those who dwell in thy  
house;  
they never cease from praising  
thee.
- 5 Happy the men whose refuge is in  
thee,  
whose hearts are set on the  
pilgrim ways!<sup>1</sup>
- 6 As they pass through the thirsty  
valley  
they find water from a spring;  
and the LORD provides even men  
who lose their way  
with pools to quench their thirst.<sup>2</sup>
- 7 So they pass on from outer wall to  
inner,  
and the God of gods shows himself  
in Zion.
- 8 O LORD God of Hosts, hear my  
prayer;  
listen, O God of Jacob.
- 9 O God, look upon our lord the king

and accept thy anointed prince  
with favour.

- Better one day in thy courts 10  
than a thousand days at home;  
better to linger by the threshold of  
God's house  
than to live in the dwellings of  
the wicked.
- The LORD God is a battlement and 11  
a shield;  
grace and honour are his to give.  
The LORD will hold back no good  
thing  
from those whose life is blameless.

O LORD of Hosts, 12  
happy the man who trusts in thee!

## 85

- LORD, thou hast been gracious to 1  
thy land  
and turned the tide of Jacob's  
fortunes.
- Thou hast forgiven the guilt of 2  
thy people  
and put away all their sins.  
Thou hast taken back all thy 3  
anger  
and turned from thy bitter wrath.
- Turn back to us, O God our 4  
saviour,  
and cancel thy displeasure.  
Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? 5  
Must thy wrath last for all  
generations?
- Wilt thou not give us new life 6  
that thy people may rejoice in thee?  
O LORD, show us thy true love 7  
and grant us thy deliverance.

Let me hear the words of the LORD: 8  
are they not<sup>3</sup> words of peace,

<sup>1</sup> are set . . . ways: or high praises fill.  
<sup>2</sup> they find . . . thirst: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
<sup>3</sup> of the LORD: are they not: prob. rdg.; Heb. of God  
the LORD.

**Ps. 84: Happy are those who dwell in thy house.** A Hymn, probably sung by a pilgrim at the Temple on a festival. A prayer for the king (vv. 8-9) may be an addition. The praise of the Temple (vv. 1-4) is followed by an allusion to the pilgrim's journey (vv. 5-7), and an exaltation of the Temple (vv. 10-12) closes the psalm. 6: *Thirsty*: older translations interpreted the Heb. to mean "valley of weeping."

**Ps. 85: Wilt thou not give us new life?** A national Lament (see Introduction), possibly composed during the difficult times following the return from the Exile, as seems indicated by v. 12;

- peace to his people and his loyal servants  
and to all who turn and trust in him?
- 9 Deliverance is near to those who worship him,  
so that glory may dwell in our land.
- 10 Love and fidelity have come together;  
justice and peace join hands.
- 11 Fidelity springs up from earth and justice looks down from heaven.
- 12 The LORD will add prosperity, and our land shall yield its harvest.
- 13 Justice shall go in front of him and the path before his feet shall be peace.<sup>t</sup>
- 86**
- 1 Turn to me, LORD, and answer;  
I am downtrodden and poor.
- 2 Guard me, for I am constant and true;  
save thy servant who puts his trust in thee.
- 3 O Lord my God,<sup>u</sup> show me thy favour;  
I call to thee all day long.
- 4 Fill thy servant's heart with joy,  
O Lord,  
for I lift up my heart to thee.
- 5 Thou, O Lord, art kind and forgiving,  
full of true love for all who cry to thee.
- 6 Listen, O LORD, to my prayer  
and hear my pleading.
- 7 In the day of my distress I call on thee;  
for thou wilt answer me.
- 8 Among the gods not one is like thee, O Lord,  
no deeds are like thine.
- 9 All the nations thou hast made,  
O Lord, will come,
- will bow down before thee and honour thy name;  
for thou art great, thy works are wonderful,  
thou alone art God.
- Guide me, O LORD,  
that I may be true to thee and follow thy path;  
let me be one in heart with those who revere thy name.
- I will praise thee, O Lord my God,  
with all my heart  
and honour thy name for ever.
- For thy true love stands high above me;  
thou hast rescued my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- O God, proud men attack me;  
a mob of ruffians seek my life  
and give no thought to thee.
- Thou, Lord, art God, compassionate and gracious,  
forbearing, ever constant and true.
- Turn towards me and show me thy favour;  
grant thy slave protection  
and rescue thy slave-girl's son.
- Give me proof of thy kindness;  
let those who hate thee see to their shame  
that thou, O LORD, hast been my help and comfort.
- 87<sup>v</sup>**
- The LORD loves the gates of Zion  
more than all the dwellings of Jacob;  
her<sup>w</sup> foundations are laid upon holy hills,  
and he has made her his home.<sup>x</sup>

<sup>t</sup> and the path . . . peace: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* so that he may put his feet to the way.

<sup>u</sup> my God: *transposed from previous verse.*

<sup>v</sup> The text of this psalm is disordered, and several verses have been re-arranged.

<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his.

<sup>x</sup> his home: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* most high.

see Neh.5.1-5. 9: *Glory* may refer to the presence of God in the Temple. His presence left Jerusalem at the Exile and returned with the captives; see Ezek.11.23-24; 43.1-2. 10-11: God's love and Israel's fidelity are seen as a dialogue between heaven and earth.

Ps. 86: Listen, O Lord, to my prayer. A Lament. 1: Downtrodden: perhaps to be taken literally, but more likely the usual language of self-abasement. 13: Rescued my soul from Sheol: saved my life from death. 16: Thy slave-girl's son is the psalmist.

Ps. 87: O city of God. A Hymn. It has long been recognized as transmitted defectively; see Tfn. v. Zion, the city of God, is the mother of the faithful of all the world. 4: Egypt: *Heb.*

I will count Egypt and Babylon  
among my friends;  
Philistine, Tyrian and Nubian shall  
be<sup>y</sup> there;  
and Zion shall be called a mother  
in whom men of every race are born.  
6 The LORD shall write against each  
in the roll of nations:  
'This one was born in her.'  
7 Singers and dancers alike all chant<sup>z</sup>  
your praises,  
3 proclaiming glorious things of you,  
O city of God.

and spread out my hands in prayer  
to thee.

Dost thou work wonders for the 10  
dead?  
Shall their company rise up and  
praise thee?  
Will they speak of thy faithful love 11  
in the grave,  
of thy sure help in the place of  
Destruction?  
Will thy wonders be known in the 12  
dark,  
thy victories in the land of  
oblivion?

## 88

1 O LORD, my God, by day I call  
for help,<sup>a</sup>  
by night I cry aloud in thy presence.  
2 Let my prayer come before thee,  
hear my loud lament;  
3 for I have had my fill of woes,  
and they have brought me to the  
threshold of Sheol.  
4 I am numbered with those who go  
down to the abyss  
and have become like a man  
beyond help,  
5 like a man who lies dead<sup>b</sup>  
or the slain who sleep in the  
grave,  
whom thou rememberest no more  
because they are cut off from thy  
care.  
6 Thou hast plunged me into the  
lowest abyss,  
in dark places, in the depths.  
7 Thy wrath rises against me,  
thou hast turned on me the full  
force of thy anger.<sup>c</sup>  
8 Thou hast taken all my friends far  
from me,  
and made me loathsome to them.  
I am in prison and cannot escape;  
9 my eyes are failing and dim with  
anguish.  
I have called upon thee, O LORD,  
every day

But, LORD, I cry to thee, 13  
my prayer comes before thee in the  
morning.  
Why hast thou cast me off, O LORD, 14  
why dost thou hide thy face from  
me?  
I have suffered from boyhood and 15  
come near to death;  
I have borne thy terrors, I cower  
beneath thy blows.  
Thy burning fury has swept over me, 16  
thy onslaughts have put me to  
silence;  
all the day long they surge round 17  
me like a flood,  
they engulf me in a moment.  
Thou hast taken lover and friend 18  
far from me,  
and parted me from my  
companions.

## 89

I will sing the story of thy love, O 1  
LORD, for ever;  
I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all  
generations.

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds this one was born (cp. verse 6).  
<sup>z</sup> all chant: prob. rdg.; Heb. all my springs.  
<sup>a</sup> I call for help: prob. rdg.; Heb. my deliverance.  
<sup>b</sup> who lies dead: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
<sup>c</sup> anger: or waves.

*Rahab*, the sea dragon, a frequent figure for Egypt. 6: *Against each*: respecting each. *Born in her*: her citizens.

**Ps. 88:** *Hear my loud lament.* An extremely bitter Lament of a man desperately ill, perhaps from a life-long sickness (v. 15). 3-5: He considers himself all but dead, *Sheol* and *abyss* being the place of the dead. 10-12: A classic description of Sheol. The motive for securing God's healing is that no one can praise God in the grave. 13: The usual vow is the promise of prayer.

**Ps. 89:** *How long must thy wrath blaze like fire?* A Lament with a complicated structure, including a hymn and a royal prayer for a lasting line (v. 36). 1-8: A hymn of praise to the Creator-King.

- 2 Thy true love is firm as the ancient  
earth,<sup>d</sup>  
thy faithfulness fixed as the heavens.
- 5<sup>e</sup> The heavens praise thy wonders,  
O LORD,  
and the council of the holy ones  
exalts thy faithfulness.
- 6 In the skies who is there like the  
LORD,  
who like the LORD in the court of  
heaven,  
7 like God who is dreaded among the  
assembled holy ones,  
great and terrible above all who  
stand about him?
- 8 O LORD God of Hosts, who is like  
thee?  
Thy strength<sup>f</sup> and faithfulness, O  
LORD, surround thee.
- 9 Thou rulest the surging sea,  
calming the turmoil<sup>g</sup> of its waves.
- 10 Thou didst crush the monster Rahab  
with a mortal blow  
and scatter thy enemies with thy  
strong arm.
- 11 Thine are the heavens, the earth is  
thine also;  
the world with all that is in it is of  
thy foundation.
- 12 Thou didst create Zaphon and  
Amanus;<sup>h</sup>  
Tabor and Hermon echo thy name.
- 13 Strength of arm and valour are  
thine;  
thy hand is mighty, thy right hand  
lifted high;  
14 thy throne is built upon righteous-  
ness and justice,  
true love and faithfulness herald thy  
coming.
- 15 Happy the people who have learnt  
to acclaim thee,  
who walk, O LORD, in the light of  
thy presence!
- 16 In thy name they shall rejoice all  
day long;  
thy righteousness shall lift them up.
- 17 Thou art thyself the strength in  
which they glory;  
through thy favour we hold our  
heads high.
- The LORD, he is our shield;  
the Holy One of Israel, he is our  
king.
- Then didst thou announce in a  
vision  
and declare to thy faithful servants:  
I have made a covenant with him  
I have chosen,  
I have sworn to my servant  
David;  
'I will establish your posterity for  
ever,  
I will make your throne endure for  
all generations.'
- I have endowed a warrior with  
princely gifts,  
so that the youth I have chosen  
towers over his people.
- I have discovered David my servant;  
I have anointed him with my holy  
oil.
- My hand shall be ready to help him  
and my arm to give him strength.
- No enemy shall strike at him  
and no rebel bring him low;
- I will shatter his foes before him  
and vanquish those who hate him.
- My faithfulness and true love shall  
be with him  
and through my name he shall hold  
his head high.
- I will extend his rule over the Sea  
and his dominion as far as the  
River.
- He will say to me, 'Thou art my  
father,  
my God, my rock and my safe  
refuge.'
- And I will name him my first-born,  
highest among the kings of the  
earth.

<sup>d</sup> Thy . . . earth: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Thou hast said for ever true love shall be made firm.

<sup>e</sup> Verses 3 and 4 transposed to follow servants in verse 19.

<sup>f</sup> Thy strength: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>g</sup> turmoil: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>h</sup> Amanus: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* right hand or south.

5-7: See 82.1 n. *Terrible*: inspires terror. 9-10: On the mythical language of creation see 74.12-17 n.; Isa. 51.9-10. 12: The four mountains, *Zaphon* (48.2 n.), *Amanus* in southern Turkey, *Tabor* in northern Israel, and *Hermon* in Syria, near Damascus, were considered sacred in ancient myths as residences of the gods. 14: *Righteousness, justice, true love, and faithfulness* are the most characteristic attributes of God in his covenant dealings with Israel. 18: *Shield*: protector. 19-37: God's words which proclaimed an eternal dynasty for David and his descendants, even should the latter fall into *disobedience* (v. 32). 26-27: *First-born*: the position of highest favor.

- 28 I will maintain my love for him for ever  
and be faithful in my covenant with him.
- 29 I will establish his posterity for ever  
and his throne as long as the heavens endure.
- 30 If his sons forsake my law  
and do not conform to my judgements,  
31 if they renounce my statutes  
and do not observe my commands,  
32 I will punish their disobedience  
with the rod  
and their iniquity with lashes.
- 33 Yet I will not deprive him of my true love  
nor let my faithfulness prove false;  
34 I will not renounce my covenant  
nor change my promised purpose.
- 35 I have sworn by my holiness once  
and for all,  
I will not break my word to David:  
36 his posterity shall continue for ever,  
his throne before me like the sun;  
37 it shall be sure for ever as the moon's return,  
faithful so long as the skies remain.<sup>3</sup>
- 38 Yet thou hast rejected thy anointed king,  
thou hast spurned him and raged against him,<sup>1</sup>  
39 thou hast denounced the covenant  
with thy servant,  
defiled his crown and flung it to the ground.
- 40 Thou hast breached his walls  
and laid his fortresses in ruin;  
41 all who pass by plunder him,  
and he suffers the taunts of his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast increased the power of his enemies  
and brought joy to all his foes;  
43 thou hast let his sharp sword be driven back  
and left him without help in the battle.
- Thou hast put an end to his glorious rule<sup>k</sup>  
and hurled his throne to the ground;  
thou hast cut short the days of his youth and vigour  
and covered him with shame.
- How long, O LORD, wilt thou hide thyself from sight?  
How long must thy wrath blaze like fire?  
Remember that I shall not live for ever;<sup>l</sup>  
hast thou created man in vain?  
What man shall live and not see death  
or save himself from the power of Sheol?  
Where are those former acts of thy love, O Lord,  
those faithful promises given to David?  
Remember, O Lord, the taunts hurled at thy servant,  
how I have borne in my heart the calumnies of the nations;<sup>m</sup>  
so have thy enemies taunted us,  
O LORD,  
taunted the successors of thy anointed king.
- Blessed is the LORD for ever.
- Amen, Amen.

## BOOK 4

## 90

- Lord, thou hast been our refuge 1  
from generation to generation.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or earth and world were born in travail, 2

*i* so long . . . remain: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a witness in the skies.

*j* raged against him: *or* put him out of mind.

*k* his glorious rule: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from his purity.

*l* live for ever: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.

*m* the calumnies . . . nations: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* all of many peoples.

38–45: A military defeat seems to have ended the king's *glorious rule* and nullified *the covenant*. 46: God's *wrath blazes* when he hides himself from man's *sight*, i.e. experience. 47–51: The fragility of *man* and God's faithfulness to his *promises* are motives for deliverance.

Ps. 90: *Teach us to order our days*. A Lament of the community in which the description of

from age to age everlasting thou art  
God.  
3 Thou turnest man back into dust;  
'Turn back,' thou sayest, 'you sons  
of men';  
4 for in thy sight a thousand years  
are as yesterday;  
5 a night-watch passes, and thou hast  
cut them off;  
they are like a dream at daybreak,  
6 they fade like grass which springs  
up<sup>n</sup> with the morning  
but when evening comes is parched  
and withered.  
7 So we are brought to an end by thy  
anger  
and silenced by thy wrath.  
8 Thou dost lay bare our iniquities  
before thee  
and our lusts in the full light of  
thy presence.  
9 All our days go by under the  
shadow of thy wrath;  
our years die away like a murmur.  
10 Seventy years is the span of our  
life,  
eighty if our strength holds;<sup>o</sup>  
the hurrying years are labour and  
sorrow,  
so quickly they pass and are  
forgotten.  
11 Who feels the power of thy anger,  
who feels thy wrath like those that  
fear thee?  
12 Teach us to order our days rightly,  
that we may enter the gate of  
wisdom.  
13 How long, O LORD?  
Relent, and take pity on thy  
servants.  
14 Satisfy us with thy love when  
morning breaks,  
that we may sing for joy and be  
glad all our days.  
15 Repay us days of gladness for our  
days of suffering,  
for the years thou hast humbled us.  
16 Show thy servants thy deeds  
and their children thy majesty.

May all delightful things be ours, O 17  
Lord our God;  
establish firmly all we do.

## 91

You that live in the shelter of 1  
the Most High  
and lodge under the shadow of  
the Almighty,  
who say, 'The LORD is my safe 2  
retreat,  
my God the fastness in which I  
trust';  
he himself will snatch you away 3  
from fowler's snare or raging  
tempest.  
He will cover you with his pinions, 4  
and you shall find safety beneath  
his wings;  
you shall not fear the hunters' trap 5  
by night  
or the arrow that flies by day,  
the pestilence that stalks in darkness 6  
or the plague raging at noonday.  
A thousand may fall at your side, 7  
ten thousand close at hand,  
but you it shall not touch;  
his truth<sup>p</sup> will be your shield and  
your rampart.<sup>q</sup>  
With your own eyes you shall see 8  
all this;  
you shall watch the punishment  
of the wicked.  
For you, the LORD is a<sup>r</sup> safe retreat; 9  
you have made the Most High  
your refuge.  
No disaster shall befall you, 10  
no calamity shall come upon your  
home.  
For he has charged his angels 11  
to guard you wherever you go,  
to lift you on their hands 12  
for fear you should strike your foot  
against a stone.

*n* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and passes away.

*o* Or eighty at the most. *p* Or his arm.

*q* his truth . . . rampart: transposed from end of verse 4.

*r* Prob. rdg.; Heb. my.

the grievance is a wisdomlike reflection on the transient condition of human life (vv. 3-12). This psalm, standing at the beginning of Book 4, resembles in form and content Pss. 42-43, which begin Book 2. 13-17: The petition for deliverance has as its motive the prolonged suffering of the past.

**Ps. 91: I will satisfy him with long life.** A psalm of trust in the Wisdom tradition. 1: *Most High, Almighty, LORD, God* represent different Heb. names for God. To know the name of a person indicates a deep knowledge of, and special power over, the person; see v. 14. 6: *Pestilence* and *plague*: considered demonic powers in Israelite belief. 11-12: Used in Mt.4.6; Lk.4.10-11.

- 13 You shall step on asp and cobra,  
you shall tread safely on snake and  
serpent. 7
- 14 Because his love is set on me, I will  
deliver him;  
I will lift him beyond danger, for he  
knows me by my name. 8
- 15 When he calls upon me, I will  
answer;  
I will be with him in time of  
trouble;  
I will rescue him and bring him  
to honour. 9
- 16 I will satisfy him with long life  
to enjoy the fullness of my salvation. 10
- I lift my head high, like a wild ox  
tossing its horn;  
I am anointed richly with oil.  
I gloat over all who speak ill of me,  
I listen for the downfall of my cruel  
foes. 11
- The righteous flourish like a palm-  
tree,  
they grow tall as a cedar on  
Lebanon;  
planted as they are in the house  
of the LORD,  
they flourish in the courts of our  
God,  
vigorous in old age like trees full of  
sap,  
luxuriant, wide-spreading,  
eager to declare that the LORD is  
just, 14
- the LORD my rock,<sup>s</sup> in whom there  
is no unrighteousness. 15
- 92
- 1 O LORD, it is good to give thee  
thanks,  
to sing psalms to thy name, O  
Most High,  
2 to declare thy love in the morning  
and thy constancy every night,  
3 to the music of a ten-stringed lute,  
to the sounding chords of the  
harp.
- 4 Thy acts, O LORD, fill me with  
exultation;  
I shout in triumph at thy mighty  
deeds.
- 5 How great are thy deeds, O LORD!  
How fathomless thy thoughts!
- 6 He who does not know this is a  
brute,  
a fool is he who does not under-  
stand this:
- 93
- The LORD is king; he is clothed in  
majesty;  
the LORD clothes himself with might  
and fastens on his belt of wrath. 1

<sup>s</sup> Or creator.

14-16: The words are God's, perhaps in an oracle spoken by a priest in the Temple; they reflect the Wisdom teaching that God tests the virtuous by their suffering, but in the end *will deliver* them.

**Ps. 92: It is good to give thanks.** A Thanksgiving Psalm which has a hymn of praise for introduction (vv. 1-5) and a Wisdom-tradition description of the "two ways of human life," good rewarded and evil punished. 8-9: God, Creator-King, reigns forever because he has defeated the cosmic powers. This is one of several echoes in Psalms of a common ancient myth. The MT equivalent to v. 9 has three portions instead of the usual two: (1) For lo, thy enemies, O LORD, (2) for lo thy enemies will surely perish, (3) all evildoers will be scattered. Many scholars view the MT version as a parallel to a "tricolon" found in a Ugaritic text (68.8-9) describing Baal's defeat of the Sea: "Lo, your enemies, O Baal, Lo your enemies you will smite, Lo, you will vanquish your foes." 10: *Ox tossing its horn*: symbol of strength; *anointed with oil*: symbol of well-being and prosperity. 13: Other passages (e.g. 52.8; Exod.15.17) speak of righteous people as *planted* in God's house.

**Ps. 93: The LORD is King.** An Enthronement Hymn, as are also Pss. 95-99 and 47; see 47 n. The theme of enthronement (vv. 1-2) moves (3-4) to a recollection of the cosmic warfare (symbolized by the control of the sea); see 74.12-17; 104.7-9; Job 38.8-11. 1: The *belt* is that of the warrior, as if to say that God is valiant in warfare; compare Exod.15.3; Isa 42.13. "King," "warrior," and "creator" are many times synonymous, and all are implied in this

Thou hast fixed the earth  
 immovable and firm,  
 2 thy throne firm from of old;  
 from all eternity thou art God.  
 3 O LORD, the ocean lifts up, the  
 ocean lifts up its clamour;  
 the ocean lifts up<sup>t</sup> its pounding  
 waves.  
 4 The LORD on high is mightier  
 far  
 than the noise of great waters,  
 mightier than the breakers of  
 the sea.  
 5 Thy law stands firm, and holiness is  
 the beauty of thy temple,  
 while time shall last, O LORD.

94

1 O LORD, thou God of vengeance,  
 thou God of vengeance, show  
 thyself.  
 2 Rise up, judge of the earth;  
 punish the arrogant as they deserve.  
 3 How long shall the wicked, O LORD,  
 how long shall the wicked exult?  
 4 Evildoers are full of bluster,  
 boasting and swaggering;  
 5 they beat down thy people,  
 O LORD,  
 and oppress thy chosen nation;  
 6 they murder the widow and the  
 stranger  
 and do the fatherless to death;  
 7 they say, 'The LORD does not see,  
 the God of Jacob pays no heed.'  
 8 Pay heed yourselves, most brutish  
 of the people;  
 you fools, when will you be wise?  
 9 Does he that planted the ear not  
 hear,  
 he that moulded the eye not see?  
 10 Shall not he that instructs the  
 nations correct them?  
 The teacher of mankind, has he  
 no<sup>u</sup> knowledge?

The LORD knows the thoughts of 11  
 man,  
 that they are but a puff of wind.  
 Happy the man whom thou dost 12  
 instruct, O LORD,  
 and teach out of thy law,  
 giving him respite from adversity 13  
 until a pit is dug for the wicked.  
 The LORD will not abandon his 14  
 people  
 nor forsake his chosen nation;  
 for righteousness still informs 15  
 his judgement,<sup>v</sup>  
 and all upright men follow it.  
 Who is on my side against these 16  
 sinful men?  
 Who will stand up for me against  
 these evildoers?  
 If the LORD had not been my helper, 17  
 I should soon have slept in the silent  
 grave.  
 When I felt that my foot was 18  
 slipping,  
 thy love, O LORD, held me up.  
 Anxious thoughts may fill my 19  
 heart,  
 but thy presence is my joy and  
 my consolation.  
 Shall sanctimonious calumny 20  
 call thee partner,  
 or he that contrives a mischief  
 under cover of law?  
 For they put the righteous on 21  
 trial<sup>w</sup> for his life  
 and condemn to death innocent  
 men.  
 But the LORD has been my strong 22  
 tower,  
 and God my rock of refuge;  
 our God requites the wicked for 23  
 their injustice,

<sup>t</sup> the ocean lifts up: or let the ocean lift up.  
<sup>u</sup> no: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
<sup>v</sup> for . . . judgement: prob. rdg.; Heb. for judgement  
 will return as far as righteousness.  
<sup>w</sup> they put . . . trial: prob. rdg.; Heb. they cut the  
 righteous.

Hymn. 2-4: God controls the sea, and hence secures order in all creation. 5: Holiness is the divine quality of being removed from and beyond the profane and human.

Ps. 94: Thy love, O LORD, held me up. It is difficult to say whether this psalm is a Thanksgiving in which former trials are described, or a Lament in which deliverance and thanksgiving are anticipated. There is an invocation of God to help (vv. 1-3); the description of the trials (if a Lament) is in the Wisdom motif of the "two ways"—the evil and their punishment (vv. 4-11) and the virtuous being tested and their reward (vv. 12-15). 20-21: Under pious pretense of carrying out God's law, the powerful oppress the innocent weak; see 1 Kgs. 21.1-14; Job 13.4-7.



the LORD puts them to silence for  
their misdeeds.

As I swore in my anger: 11  
They shall never enter my rest.

## 95

## 96

- 1 Come! Let us raise a joyful song to  
the LORD,  
a shout of triumph to the Rock of  
our salvation.
- 2 Let us come into his presence with  
thanksgiving,  
and sing him psalms of triumph.
- 3 For the LORD is a great God,  
a great king over all gods;
- 4 the farthest places of the earth are  
in his hands,  
and the folds of the hills are  
his;
- 5 the sea is his, he made it;  
the dry land fashioned by his hands  
is his.
- 6 Come! Let us throw ourselves at  
his feet in homage,  
let us kneel before the LORD who  
made us;
- 7 for he is our God,  
we are his people, we the flock he  
shepherds.  
You shall know<sup>x</sup> his power today  
if you will listen to his voice.
- 8 Do not grow stubborn, as you  
were at Meribah,<sup>y</sup>  
as at the time of Massah<sup>z</sup> in the  
wilderness,
- 9 when your forefathers challenged  
me,  
tested me and saw for themselves  
all that I did.
- 10 For forty years I was indignant  
with that generation, and I said:  
They are a people whose hearts are  
astray,  
and they will not discern my ways.

- Sing a new song to the LORD; 1<sup>a</sup>  
sing to the LORD, all men on earth.  
Sing to the LORD and bless his name, 2  
proclaim his triumph day by day.  
Declare his glory among the nations, 3  
his marvellous deeds among all  
peoples.  
Great is the LORD and worthy of all 4  
praise;  
he is more to be feared than all  
gods.  
For the gods of the nations are 5  
idols every one;  
but the LORD made the heavens.  
Majesty and splendour attend him, 6  
might and beauty are in his  
sanctuary.
- Ascribe to the LORD, you families 7  
of nations,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and might;  
ascribe to the LORD the glory due 8  
to his name,  
bring a gift and come into his  
courts.
- Bow down to the LORD in the 9  
splendour of holiness,<sup>b</sup>  
and dance in his honour, all men  
on earth.
- Declare among the nations, 'The 10  
LORD is king.  
He has fixed the earth firm,  
immovable;  
he will judge the peoples justly.'  
Let the heavens rejoice and the earth 11  
exult,

<sup>x</sup> You shall know: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

<sup>y</sup> That is Dispute.

<sup>z</sup> That is Challenge.

<sup>a</sup> Verses 1-13: *cp. 1 Chr. 16. 23-33.*

<sup>b</sup> the splendour of holiness: *or holy vestments.*

**Ps. 95: The LORD is a great God.** An Enthronement Hymn (see Ps. 47 n.) with the motif of God as king, expressed in a liturgical ceremony. 1: God is the *Rock of our salvation*. This is either in reference to the rock which gave water in the desert (Exod.17.1-7) or the rock on which the Temple stood (2 Sam.24.18). 3-7: God is *king* in virtue of being the Creator. 3: *Gods*: see 82.1 n. 7: *Know his power*: experience his helping presence. Israel listened to God's *voice* speaking in nature and in the covenant. Vv. 7b-11 are quoted in Heb.3.7-11; 4.3-11. 8-9: For the event at *Meribah* see Exod.17.1-7; Num.20.1-13. 10: *Forty years* is usually symbolic of *one generation*; see Num.14.33. 11: *My rest*: land of Canaan; see Deut.3.20; 12.10.

**Ps. 96: The LORD is King.** An Enthronement Hymn; see Ps. 47 n. It is found also in 1 Chr.16.23-33 though the order of lines is different. There it appears as used on the occasion of the movement of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. 4-6: *Than all gods*: see 82.1 n.; 89.5-7. God as Creator is a usual motif in Enthronement psalms, as is his *sanctuary*. 10-13: A description of God as the divine *king*, Creator and *judge*.

	let the sea roar and all the creatures in it,	The LORD loves <sup>d</sup> those who hate evil;	10
12	let the fields exult and all that is in them;	he keeps his loyal servants safe and rescues them from the wicked.	
	then let all the trees of the forest shout for joy	A harvest of light is sown for the righteous,	11
13	before the LORD when he comes to judge the earth.	and joy for all good men.	
	He will judge the earth with righteousness	You that are righteous, rejoice in the LORD	12
	and the peoples in good faith.	and praise his holy name.	

97

98

1	The LORD is king, let the earth be glad,	Sing a new song to the LORD, for he has done marvellous deeds;	1
	let coasts and islands all rejoice.	his right hand and holy arm have won him victory.	
2	Cloud and mist enfold him, righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.	The LORD has made his victory known;	2
3	Fire goes before him and burns up his enemies all around.	he has displayed his righteousness to all the nations.	
4	The world is lit up beneath his lightning-flash; the earth sees it and writhes in pain.	He has remembered his constancy, his love for the house of Israel.	3
		All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.	
5	The mountains melt like wax as the LORD approaches, the Lord of all the earth.	Acclaim the LORD, all men on earth,	4
6	The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory.	break into songs of joy, sing psalms. Sing psalms in the LORD's honour	5
7	Let all who worship images, who vaunt their idols, be put to shame; bow down, all gods, <sup>e</sup> before him.	with the harp, with the harp and with the music of the psaltery.	
		With trumpet and echoing horn acclaim the presence of the LORD our king.	6
8	Zion heard and rejoiced, the cities of Judah were glad	Let the sea roar and all its creatures, the world and those who dwell in it.	7
9	For thou, LORD, art most high over all the earth, far exalted above all gods.	Let the rivers clap their hands, let the hills sing aloud together	8

<sup>c</sup> bow . . . gods: or all gods bow down . . .  
<sup>d</sup> The LORD loves: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Lovers of the LORD.

**Ps. 97: The LORD is King.** An Enthronement Hymn with motifs of God's future final victory and rule over all peoples (vv. 1-7); see Ps.47 n. 2-6: The images employed here occur in other psalms; see 18.7-15; 50.1-3. **9: Above all gods:** see 82.1 n.; 89.6-7.

**Ps. 98: The LORD our King.** An Enthronement Hymn (Ps.47 n.) with motifs of God's final judgment and establishment of "peoples in justice" (v. 9). The themes in this and other Enthronement psalms are frequent in Isa. chs. 40-55, e.g. 41.1-5. **1: God's right hand . . . won him victory,** both initially and most decisively, over chaos at the time of creation. **2-3: God's creative power is continued by his characteristic qualities in dealing with Israel: righteousness, constancy, love, justice** (v. 9). **5-6: A flourish of trumpets** accompanies God's enthronement here as it did at the making of the covenant on Sinai (Exod.19.16), in the manner of the coronation of the kings of Israel; see 2 Sam.15.10; 1 Kgs.1.34. **7-9: Compare,** e.g. 96.7-13 and Isa.14.23; 52.10.

- 9 before the LORD; for he comes  
to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with  
righteousness  
and the peoples in justice.

## 99

- 1 The LORD is king, the peoples are  
perturbed;  
he is throned on the cherubim, earth  
quivers.  
2 The LORD is great in Zion;  
he is exalted above all the peoples.  
3 They extol his<sup>e</sup> name as great and  
terrible;  
4 he is holy, he is mighty,  
a king who loves justice.

Thou hast established justice and  
equity;  
thou hast dealt righteously in Jacob.  
5 Exalt the LORD our God,  
bow down before his footstool;  
he is holy.

- 6 Moses and Aaron among his  
priests,  
and Samuel among those who  
call on his name,  
called to the LORD, and he answered.  
7 He spoke to them in a pillar of  
cloud;  
they followed his teaching and kept  
the law he gave them.  
8 Thou, O LORD our God, thou didst  
answer them;  
thou wast a God who forgave all  
their misdeeds  
and held them innocent.  
9 Exalt the LORD our God,  
bow down towards his holy hill;  
for the LORD our God is holy.

## 100

- Acclaim the LORD, all men on  
earth,  
worship the LORD in gladness;  
2 enter his presence with songs of  
exultation.  
3 Know that the LORD is God;  
he has made us and we are his own,  
his people, the flock which he  
shepherds.  
4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise.  
5 Give thanks to him and bless his  
name;  
for the LORD is good and his love is  
everlasting,  
his constancy endures to all  
generations.

## 101

- I sing of loyalty and justice;  
1 I will raise a psalm to thee, O  
LORD.<sup>f</sup>  
2 I will follow a wise and blameless  
course,  
whatever may befall me.<sup>g</sup>  
I will go about my house in purity  
of heart.  
3 I will set before myself no sordid  
aim;  
I will hate disloyalty, I will have  
none of it.  
4 I will reject all crooked thoughts;  
I will have no dealings with evil.  
5 I will silence those who spread tales  
behind men's backs,

<sup>e</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb. thy.*

<sup>f</sup> I sing . . . O LORD; or I will follow a course of justice  
and loyalty; I will hold thee in awe, O LORD.

<sup>g</sup> whatever may befall me; *prob. rdg.: Heb. when  
comest thou to me?*

**Ps. 99: The LORD is King.** An Enthronement Hymn; see 47 n. There is more emphasis than usual on God's distance from Israel because "he is holy," yet at the same time his closeness to Israel in historical events is presented. Note the refrain "he is holy" in vv. 4, 5, and 9. **1: Cherubim:** see Exod. 25.18-22. **4: God is holy** because he is beyond the reach of the mundane. **6-8: Moses** (Exod. 32.30-35), **Aaron** (Num. 16.46-50), and **Samuel** (1 Sam. 7.8-9) interceded with God and were favorably answered. It is unusual for Moses to be included among the *priests*.

**Ps. 100: The LORD is God.** An Enthronement Hymn (see 47 n.), or a part of an incomplete one. Some regard it as a deliberate close of the collection of Enthronement hymns: Pss. 93, 95-99. It carries on the themes of these other, longer psalms.

**Ps. 101: A wise and blameless course.** A Royal Psalm. It may represent the king's vow at the time of the coronation; compare Ps. 45. In much biblical thought, the king is viewed as God's representative on earth. Hence, a proper king needed to display the qualities attributed to God himself. Here the king offers such assurance. **2: Purity of heart:** sincerity and single-heartedness.

	I will not sit at table with proud, pompous men,	But thou, LORD, art enthroned for ever	12
6	I will choose the most loyal for my companions; my servants shall be men whose lives are blameless.	and thy fame shall be known to all generations.	
7	No scandal-monger shall live in my household; no liar shall set himself up where I can see him.	Thou wilt arise and have mercy on Zion;	13
8	Morning after morning I will put all wicked men to silence and will rid the LORD's city of all evildoers.	for the time is come <sup>t</sup> to pity her. Her very stones are dear to thy servants, and even her dust moves them with pity.	14
		Then shall the nations revere thy name, O LORD; and all the kings of the earth thy glory,	15
		when the LORD builds up Zion again and shows himself in his glory.	16
		He turns to hear the prayer of the destitute	17
		and does not scorn them when they pray.	
		This shall be written down for future generations, and a people yet unborn shall praise the LORD.	18
		The LORD looks down from his sanctuary on high,	19
		from heaven he surveys the earth to listen to the groaning of the prisoners	20
		and set free men under sentence of death;	
		so shall the LORD's name be on men's lips in Zion and his praise shall be told in Jerusalem,	21
		when peoples are assembled together, peoples and kingdoms, to serve the LORD.	22
		My strength is broken in mid course;	23
		the time allotted me is short.	24
		Snatch me not away before half my days are done,	

<sup>h</sup> Wasted away; transposed from previous verse.  
<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds season.

8: *The LORD's city*: probably Jerusalem, but it can refer more restrictedly to the Temple and palace quarter.

Ps. 102: Let my cry for help reach thee. A Lament (see Introduction). The first section (vv. 1–11) contains an individual's cry for help from his sickness and loneliness; next (vv. 12–22) there is an appeal to God to have mercy on and rebuild Zion. Finally (vv. 23–28) there is another individual cry for help, as from an ill man; it contrasts the brevity of human life with the eternity of God in the manner of Wisdom literature (see Ecclus. ch. 17). 2: *Hide not thy face*: see 4.6 n. and 10.11. 14: *Stones . . . dust*: possibly an allusion to the Temple lying in ruins. 19: *Sanctuary*

- for thy years last through all generations.
- 25 Long ago thou didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens were thy handiwork.
- 26 They shall pass away, but thou endurest; like clothes they shall all grow old; thou shalt cast them off like a cloak, and they shall vanish;
- 27 but thou art the same and thy years shall have no end;
- 28 thy servants' children shall continue, and their posterity shall be established in thy presence.
- long-suffering and for ever constant;  
he will not always be the accuser  
or nurse his anger for all time.  
He has not treated us as our sins  
deserve  
or requited us for our misdeeds.  
For as the heaven stands high above  
the earth,  
so his strong love stands high over  
all who fear him.  
Far as east is from west,  
so far has he put our offences away  
from us.  
As a father has compassion on  
his children,  
so has the LORD compassion on all  
who fear him.  
For he knows how we were made,  
he knows full well that we are dust.

## 103

- 1 Bless the LORD, my soul;  
my innermost heart, bless his  
holy name.
- 2 Bless the LORD, my soul,  
and forget none of his benefits.
- 3 He pardons all my guilt  
and heals all my suffering.
- 4 He rescues me from the pit of death  
and surrounds me with constant love,  
with tender affection;
- 5 he contents me with all good in the  
prime of life,  
and my youth is ever new like an  
eagle's.
- 6 The LORD is righteous in his acts;  
he brings justice to all who have  
been wronged.
- 7 He taught Moses to know his way  
and showed the Israelites what  
he could do.
- 8 The LORD is compassionate and  
gracious,
- Man's days are like the grass;  
he blossoms like the flowers of the  
field:  
a wind passes over them, and they  
cease to be,  
and their place knows them no  
more.  
But the LORD's love never fails those  
who fear him;  
his righteousness never fails their  
sons and their grandsons  
who listen to his voice<sup>j</sup> and keep  
his covenant,  
who remember his command-  
ments and obey them.
- The LORD has established his throne  
in heaven,  
his kingly power over the whole  
world.  
Bless the LORD, all his angels,  
creatures of might who do his  
bidding.

*j* who listen to his voice: transposed from end of verse 20.

*on high*: God's abode in heaven. 25–27: These verses are used in Heb.1.10–12. 27: *The same*: lit. "Thou art he." See Isa.43.10,13,25 for this expression. 28: Assurance, if not to a man, to his children.

**Ps. 103: Bless the LORD, all created things.** A Hymn in which the poet's thanksgiving for his own healing (vv. 3–5) overflows into a universal praise of God for all his goodness to Israel (vv. 6–10) and to all men (vv. 11–18). 1: *Bless the LORD*: praise and thank him. *Soul . . . heart*: totality of a person's life, nonrational as well as intellectual. 3: *Guilt* and *suffering* were linked together in a causal relationship. 5: *An eagle's* strength was thought to be renewed with molting. 6–8: These verses contain the heart of OT piety, for they show the characteristic qualities of God's dealing with Israel as revealed to Moses: *righteous, compassionate, gracious, long-suffering, ever constant, bringing justice* to the *wronged*; see Exod.34.6. 16: The hot wind from the desert wilts all vegetation in its path. 19: *Throne in heaven*: compare 102.19.

- 21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,  
his ministers who serve his will.  
22 Bless the LORD, all created things,  
in every place where he has  
dominion.

Bless the LORD, my soul.

## 104

- 1 Bless the LORD, my soul:  
O LORD my God, thou art great  
indeed,  
clothed in majesty and splendour,  
2 and wrapped in a robe of light.  
Thou hast spread out the heavens  
like a tent  
3 and on their waters laid the beams  
of thy pavilion;  
who takest the clouds for thy  
chariot,  
riding on the wings of the wind;  
4 who makest the winds thy  
messengers  
and flames of fire thy servants;  
5 thou didst fix the earth on its  
foundation  
so that it never can be shaken;  
6 the deep overspread it like a  
cloak,  
and the waters lay above the  
mountains.  
7 At thy rebuke they ran,  
at the sound of thy thunder they  
rushed away,  
8 flowing over the hills,  
pouring down into the valleys  
to the place appointed for them.  
9 Thou didst fix a boundary which  
they might not pass;  
they shall not return to cover the  
earth.  
10 Thou dost make springs break out  
in the gullies,

so that their water runs between  
the hills.  
The wild beasts all drink from them, 11  
the wild asses quench their thirst;  
the birds of the air nest on their 12  
banks  
and sing among the leaves.

From thy high pavilion thou dost 13  
water the hills;  
the earth is enriched by thy  
provision.  
Thou makest grass grow for the 14  
cattle  
and green things for those who  
toil for man,  
bringing bread out of the earth  
and wine to gladden men's hearts, 15  
oil to make their faces shine  
and bread to sustain their strength.  
The trees of the LORD are green 16  
and leafy,  
the cedars of Lebanon which he  
planted;  
the birds build their nests in them, 17  
the stork makes her home in their  
tops.<sup>k</sup>  
High hills are the haunt of the 18  
mountain-goat,  
and boulders a refuge for the rock-  
badger.  
Thou hast made the moon to 19  
measure the year  
and taught the sun where to set.  
When thou makest darkness and it 20  
is night,  
all the beasts of the forest come forth;  
the young lions roar for prey, 21  
seeking their food from God.  
When thou makest the sun rise, they 22  
slink away  
and go to rest in their lairs;  
but man comes out to his work 23  
and to his labours until evening.

<sup>k</sup> in their tops: *prob. rdg.; Heb. the pine-trees.*

**Ps. 104:** Thou hast made all by thy wisdom. A creation Hymn often compared to the Egyptian "Hymn to Aton" and to the Mesopotamian "Enuma Elish" since it uses similar mythological language. Ps.104 begins and closes in the same way as Ps.103. Perhaps Pss.104-105 were used together in the Temple liturgy, providing a sequence of movement from God's majesty in the universe (Ps.104) to his historic deeds on behalf of Israel (105.5-45); see vv. 31-35 n.

**3:** The *beams* of God's *pavilion*, i.e. his dwelling, were thought to rest above the reservoir of water contained in the vault of heaven (29.10), just as the earth is established on the waters below it; see Gen.1.6-8. **6-9:** God controls the sea, having fixed a *boundary* for it, making Leviathan, the wild sea monster who symbolizes the unruly sea of the original chaos, into a "plaything" (v. 26); compare 74.12-17 n. **10-26:** The order God brought out of chaos is

24 Countless are the things thou hast  
made, O LORD.  
Thou hast made all by thy wisdom;  
and the earth is full of thy creatures,  
25 beasts great and small.

Here is the great immeasurable sea,  
in which move creatures beyond  
number.

26 Here ships sail to and fro,  
here is Leviathan whom thou hast  
made thy plaything.<sup>l</sup>

27 All of them look expectantly to  
thee  
to give them their food at the  
proper time;  
28 what thou givest them they gather  
up;  
when thou openest thy hand, they  
eat their fill.  
29 Then thou hidest thy face, and they  
are restless and troubled;  
when thou takest away their breath,  
they fail  
[and they return to the dust from  
which they came];  
30 but when thou breathest into them,  
they recover;  
thou givest new life to the earth.

31 May the glory of the LORD stand  
for ever  
and may he rejoice in his works!  
32 When he looks at the earth, it  
quakes;  
when he touches the hills, they  
pour forth smoke.

33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I  
live,  
all my life I will sing psalms to my  
God.

34 May my meditation please the  
LORD,  
as I show my joy in him!

Away with all sinners from the  
earth  
and may the wicked be no more!

Bless the LORD, my soul.

O praise the LORD.

## 105

Give the LORD thanks and invoke  
him by name,  
make his deeds known in the world  
around.

Pay him honour with song and psalm  
and think upon all his wonders.

Exult in his hallowed name;  
let those who seek the LORD be  
joyful in heart.

Turn to the LORD, your strength,  
seek his presence always.

Remember the wonders that he has  
wrought,  
his portents and the judgements  
he has given,

O offspring of Abraham his servant,  
O chosen sons of Jacob.

He is the LORD our God;  
his judgements fill the earth.

He called to mind his covenant  
from long ago,<sup>n</sup>  
the promise he extended to a  
thousand generations—  
the covenant made with Abraham,  
his oath given to Isaac,  
the decree by which he bound  
himself for Jacob,  
his everlasting covenant with Israel:  
'I will give you the land of Canaan',  
he said,  
'to be your possession, your  
patrimony.'

<sup>l</sup> thy plaything: or that it may sport in it.  
<sup>m</sup> Verses 1–15: cp. 1 Chr. 16. 8–22.  
<sup>n</sup> from long ago: or for ever.

marvelous and benign. 27–30: God continued his creative presence to prevent a return to chaos. 29: God's *breath*, spirit, is the source of all *life* (v. 30); see Gen. 1.2 and Tfn. *b* there; 2.7. 31–35: A prayer that all may continue beneficently for the righteous. It ends with *Bless the LORD, my soul*, thus beginning and closing in the same way. The final phrase, *O praise the LORD* (in Heb. *Hallelujah*) may belong to Ps. 105 as its beginning.

**Ps. 105: Remember the wonders that God has wrought.** A Hymn celebrating God's action in Israel's history. It could have been used at any of the major festivals; vv. 1–15 are used in 1 Chr. 16.8–22 for the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. While nothing is mentioned specifically of the events at Sinai, the themes of covenant (v. 8) and of laws and statutes (v. 45) presuppose Sinai and form the framework of the historical recital. **5: Judgements:** God's decisive actions in behalf of Israel, the *sons of Jacob*. **8–15:** The *roaming of Abraham, Isaac and*

12	A small company it was, few in number, strangers in that land,	even their princes' inner chambers. At his command came swarms of flies	31
13	roaming from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another;	and maggots the whole land through.	
14	but he let no one ill-treat them, for their sake he admonished kings:	He changed their rain into hail	32
15	'Touch not my anointed servants, do my prophets no harm.'	and flashed fire over their country. He blasted their vines and their fig-trees	33
16	He called down famine on the land and cut short their daily bread.	and splintered the trees throughout the land.	
17	But he had sent on a man before them,	At his command came locusts, hoppers past all number,	34
18	Joseph, who was sold into slavery; he was kept a prisoner with fetters on his feet	they consumed every green thing in the land,	35
19	and an iron collar clamped on his neck.	consumed all the produce of the soil.	
20	He was tested by the LORD's command	Then he struck down all the	36
21	until what he foretold came true.	first-born in Egypt,	
22	Then the king sent and set him free, the ruler of nations released him;	the firstfruits of their manhood; he led Israel out, laden with silver and gold,	37
23	he made him master of his household	and among all their tribes no man fell.	
24	and ruler over all his possessions, to correct his officers at will and teach his counsellors wisdom.	The Egyptians were glad when they went,	38
25	Then Israel too went down into Egypt	for fear of Israel had taken hold of them.	
26	and Jacob came to live in the land of Ham.	He spread a cloud as a screen, and fire to light up the night.	39
27	There God made his people very fruitful,	They asked, and he sent them quails,	40
28	he made them stronger than their enemies,	he gave them bread from heaven in plenty.	
29	whose hearts he turned to hatred of his people	He opened a rock and water gushed out,	41
30	and double-dealing with his servants.	a river flowing in a parched land; for he had remembered his solemn promise	42
31	He sent his servant Moses and Aaron whom he had chosen.	given to his servant Abraham.	
32	They were his mouthpiece to announce his signs,	So he led out his people rejoicing, his chosen ones in triumph.	43
33	his portents in the land of Ham.	He gave them the lands of heathen nations	44
34	He sent darkness, and all was dark, but still they resisted his commands.	and they took possession where others had toiled,	
35	He turned their waters into blood and killed all their fish.	so that they might keep his statutes	45
36	Their country swarmed with frogs,	and obey his laws.	
		O praise the LORD.	

*Jacob from nation to nation* is narrated in Gen.12.1–37.1. **15:** The patriarchs are called *anointed servants* inasmuch as they were filled with the spirit of the LORD, like the *prophets*; compare Isa.61.1. **16–23:** The story of *Joseph*; see Gen. chs. 37, 39–50. **24–43:** The Exodus and God's guidance in the Wilderness; see Exod.1.1–17.6. **27:** *Ham*: Egypt, as in 78.5; see Gen.10.6. **44–45:** The gift of *lands* and the *laws*: an allusion to Joshua.



## 106

		and would not wait to hear his counsel;	
1	O praise the LORD.	their greed was insatiable in the wilderness,	14
	It is good to give thanks to the LORD;	they tried God's patience in the desert.	
	for his love endures for ever.	He gave them what they asked	15
2	Who will tell of the LORD's mighty acts	but sent a wasting sickness among them. <sup>q</sup>	
	and make his praises heard?		
3	Happy are they who act justly and do right at all times!	They were envious of Moses in the camp,	16
4	Remember me, LORD, when thou showest favour to thy people,	and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD.	
	look upon me when thou savest them,	The earth opened and swallowed Dathan,	17
5	that I may see the prosperity of thy chosen,	it closed over the company of Abiram;	
	rejoice in thy nation's joy and exult with thy own people.	fire raged through their company, the wicked perished in flames.	18
6	We have sinned like our forefathers, we have erred and done wrong.	At Horeb they made a calf and bowed down to an image;	19
7	Our fathers in Egypt took no account of thy marvels,	they exchanged their Glory <sup>r</sup> for the image of a bull that feeds on grass.	20
	they did not remember thy many acts of faithful love,	They forgot God their deliverer, who had done great deeds in Egypt,	21
	but in spite of all <sup>o</sup> they rebelled by the Red Sea. <sup>p</sup>	marvels in the land of Ham, terrible things at the Red Sea.	22
8	Yet the LORD delivered them for his name's sake	So his purpose was to destroy them,	23
	and so made known his mighty power.	but Moses, the man he had chosen, threw himself into the breach to turn back his wrath lest it destroy them.	
9	He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,		
	he led his people through the deeps as through the wilderness.		
10	So he delivered them from those who hated them,	They made light of the pleasant land,	24
	and claimed them back from the enemy's hand.	disbelieving his promise;	
11	The waters closed over their adversaries,	they muttered treason in their tents	25
	not one of them survived.	and would not obey the LORD.	
12	Then they believed his promises and sang praises to him.	So with uplifted hand he swore to strike them down in the wilderness,	26
13	But they quickly forgot all he had done		

*o* in spite of all; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*p* Or the Sea of Reeds.

*q* among them; or in their throats.

*r* their Glory; or the glory of God (*cp. Jer. 2. 11; Romans 1. 23*).

**Ps. 106: Deliver us, O LORD our God.** A Lament (see Introduction) of the community, in a liturgical setting, in which the recitation of the adversity is a national confession of sins which brought on various punishments, ending in the crowning adversity of being scattered among the nations in the Exile. The psalm closes Book 4. 1-5: The invitation to *praise the LORD* seems to be in the course of a worship. 6: To have *sinned* against God is the greatest calamity to have befallen Israel; this is the theme of the psalm. 7-12: Story of the Exodus; see 105.24-43 n. 13-15: Manna and the quail: Num.11.4-15,31-34. 16-18: *Dathan* and *Abiram*: Num. ch. 16. 19-23: *Horeb*: Sinai; for the golden *calf* incident, see Exod. ch. 32. 24-27: Refusal to enter

27	to scatter their descendants among the nations and disperse them throughout the world.	and loathed them, his own chosen nation; so he gave them into the hands of the nations,	41
28	They joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor and ate meat sacrificed to lifeless gods.	and they were ruled by their foes; their enemies oppressed them and made them subject to their power.	42
29	Their deeds provoked the LORD to anger,	Many times he came to their rescue,	43
30	and plague broke out amongst them; but Phinehas stood up and interceded,	but they were disobedient and rebellious still. <sup>s</sup>	
31	so the plague was stopped. This was counted to him as righteousness throughout all generations for ever.	And yet, when he heard them wail and cry aloud, he looked with pity on their distress;	44
32	They roused the LORD to anger at the waters of Meribah, and Moses suffered because of them;	he called to mind his covenant with them and, in his boundless love, relented;	45
33	for they had embittered his spirit and he had spoken rashly.	he roused compassion for them in the hearts of all their captors.	46
34	They did not destroy the peoples round about, as the LORD had commanded them to do,	Deliver us, O LORD our God, and gather us in from among the nations that we may give thanks to thy holy name and make thy praise our pride.	47
35	but they mingled with the nations, learning their ways;	Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel	48
36	they worshipped their idols and were ensnared by them.	from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say 'Amen.'	
37	Their sons and their daughters they sacrificed to foreign demons;	O praise the LORD.	
38	they shed innocent blood, the blood of sons and daughters offered to the gods of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.	BOOK 5	
39	Thus they defiled themselves by their conduct and they followed their lusts and broke faith with God.	107	
40	Then the LORD grew angry with his people	It is good to give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures for ever.	1

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and were brought low by their guilt.

the promised land shows disloyalty; Num. ch. 14. 28–31: In Num. ch. 25, Phinehas slays the offending Israelite; the episode is embellished here. 32–33: The incident of the *waters of Meribah* has also been embellished; see Num.20.2–13. 34–46: Summary of the events in the Book of Judges. 34: *The LORD had commanded*: compare Exod.23.23–33; Deut.7.1–5. 38: The precise incident of polluting the *land with blood* is not clear in Judg.; however, compare 1 Kgs.16.34. The prohibition seems to counter a common practice; see Num.35.33–34; Lev.18.25–29. 47: This verse seems to indicate that the psalm was written during the Babylonian Exile, i.e. after 587 B.C.; compare Ps.74 n. 48: *Let all the people say* seems to be a liturgical prescription. This verse appears to be an addition to the psalm, either to adapt it to public worship or to close the collection of psalms in Book 4.

Ps. 107: Let them thank the LORD. A Thanksgiving of the community sung either by captives

2	So let them say who were redeemed by the LORD, redeemed by him from the power of the enemy	he has shattered doors of bronze, bars of iron he has snapped in two.	16
3	and gathered out of every land, from east and west, from north and south.	Some were fools, they took to rebellious ways, and for their transgression they suffered punishment.	17
4	Some lost their way in desert wastes; they found no road to a city to live in;	They sickened at the sight of food and drew near to the very gates of death.	18
5	hungry and thirsty, their spirit sank within them.	So they cried to the LORD in their trouble,	19
6	So they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress;	and he saved them from their distress; he sent his word to heal them and bring them alive out of the pit of death. <sup>t</sup>	20
7	he led them by a straight and easy way until they came to a city to live in.	Let them thank the LORD for his enduring love	21
8	Let them thank the LORD for his enduring love and for the marvellous things he has done for men:	and for the marvellous things he has done for men. Let them offer sacrifices of	22
9	he has satisfied the thirsty and filled the hungry with good things.	thanksgiving and recite his deeds with shouts of joy.	22
10	Some sit in darkness, dark as death, prisoners bound fast in iron,	Others there are who go to sea in ships	23
11	because they had rebelled against God's commands and flouted the purpose of the Most High.	and make their living on the wide waters. These men have seen the acts of the	24
12	Their spirit was subdued by hard labour; they stumbled and fell with none to help them.	LORD and his marvellous doings in the deep.	24
13	So they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;	At his command the storm-wind rose and lifted the waves high. Carried up to heaven, plunged down	25
14	he brought them out of darkness, dark as death, and broke their chains.	to the depths, tossed to and fro in peril, they reeled and staggered like	26
15	Let them thank the LORD for his enduring love and for the marvellous things he has done for men:	drunken men, and their seamanship was all in vain. So they cried to the LORD in their	27
		trouble,	28

<sup>t</sup> alive . . . death: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from their corruption.

returning from the Babylonian Exile or by pilgrims to Jerusalem who had been delivered from various dangers. Wisdom motifs are prominent (vv. 33–43) as in other psalms which stand at the beginning of collections: Pss. 1 (Book 1), 73 (Book 3) and 90 (Book 4). 1: A frequent exclamation of praise in the liturgy of the Temple; see 118.1; 1 Chr. 16.34; 1 Macc. 4.24. 2–3: A universal gathering out of all nations of those whom God calls and delivers; compare Isa. 43.5–6; 49.12. The four sections that follow perhaps symbolize the four quarters of the earth. 4–32: Thanksgiving of those delivered from perils of the desert (vv. 4–7), from prison (vv. 10–16), from sickness (vv. 17–22), from the dangers of the sea (vv. 23–32). 8–9: A refrain that is repeated and adapted to each situation; see vv. 15–16; 21–22; 31–32. 22: *Sacrifices*: probably to fulfill

and he brought them out of their  
distress.  
29 The storm sank to a murmur  
and the waves of the sea were  
stilled.  
30 They were glad then that all was  
calm,  
as he guided them to the harbour  
they desired.  
31 Let them thank the LORD for his  
enduring love  
and for the marvellous things he has  
done for men.  
32 Let them exalt him in the assembly  
of the people  
and praise him in the council of  
the elders.  
33 He turns rivers into desert  
and springs of water into thirsty  
ground;  
34 he turns fruitful land into salt  
waste,  
because the men who dwell there  
are so wicked.  
35 Desert he changes into standing  
pools,  
and parched land into springs of  
water.  
36 There he gives the hungry a home,  
and they build themselves a city  
to live in;  
37 they sow fields and plant vineyards  
and reap a fruitful harvest.  
38 He blesses them and their numbers  
increase,  
and he does not let their herds  
lose strength.  
39 Tyrants<sup>u</sup> lose their strength and are  
brought low  
in the grip of misfortune and  
sorrow;  
40 he brings princes into contempt  
and leaves them wandering in a  
trackless waste.  
41 But the poor man he lifts clear of  
his troubles  
and makes families increase like  
flocks of sheep.  
42 The upright see it and are glad,  
while evildoers are filled with  
disgust.

Let the wise man lay these things to 43  
heart,  
and ponder the record of the  
LORD's enduring love.

## 108

My heart is steadfast, O God, 1<sup>v</sup>  
my heart is steadfast.  
I will sing and raise a psalm;  
awake,<sup>w</sup> my spirit,  
awake, lute and harp, 2  
I will awake at dawn of day.<sup>x</sup>  
I will confess thee, O LORD, among 3  
the peoples,  
among the nations I will raise a  
psalm to thee;  
for thy unfailing love is wider than 4  
the heavens  
and thy truth reaches to the skies.  
Show thyself, O God, high above 5  
the heavens;  
let thy glory shine over all the  
earth.  
Deliver those that are dear to thee; 6<sup>y</sup>  
save with thy right hand and  
answer.  
God has spoken from his sanctuary:<sup>z</sup> 7  
'I will go up now and measure out  
Shechem;  
I will divide the valley of Succoth  
into plots;  
Gilead and Manasseh are mine; 8  
Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my  
sceptre;  
Moab is my wash-bowl, I fling my 9  
shoes at Edom;  
Philistia is the target of my anger.'

Who can bring me to the impregnable 10  
city,  
who can guide me to Edom,  
since thou, O God, hast abandoned 11  
us  
and goest not forth with our  
armies?

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>v</sup> Verses 1-5: cp. Ps. 57. 7-11.

<sup>w</sup> awake: prob. rdg.; Heb. also.

<sup>x</sup> at dawn of day: or the dawn.

<sup>y</sup> Verses 6-13: cp. Ps. 60; 5-12.

<sup>z</sup> from his sanctuary: or in his holiness.

vows made during distress. 33-43: The Wisdom themes of the two ways, "good and evil," and the reversal of situations in rewarding the *upright* and humiliating the *evildoers* are elaborated.

Ps. 108: I will raise a psalm to thee. A vow; vv. 1-5 are almost identical with 57.7-11 and vv. 6-13 with 60.5-12. See the annotations to those passages.

- 12 Grant us help against the enemy,  
for deliverance by man is a vain  
hope.  
13 With God's help we shall do  
valiantly,  
and God himself will tread our  
enemies under foot.

## 109

- 1 O God of my praise, be silent no  
longer,  
2 for wicked men heap calumnies  
upon me.  
3 They have lied to my face  
and ringed me round with words  
of hate.  
They have attacked me without a  
cause<sup>a</sup>  
4 and accused me though I have  
done nothing unseemly.<sup>b</sup>  
5 They have repaid me evil for good  
and hatred in return for my love.  
6 They say, 'Put up some rascal to  
denounce him,  
an accuser to stand at his right  
side.'  
7 But when judgement is given, that  
rascal will be exposed  
and his follies accounted a sin.  
8 May his days be few;  
may his hoarded wealth<sup>c</sup> fall to  
another!  
9 May his children be fatherless,  
his wife a widow!  
10 May his children be vagabonds and  
beggars,  
driven from their homes!  
11 May the money-lender distraint on  
all his goods  
and strangers seize his earnings!  
12 May none remain loyal to him,  
and none have mercy on his  
fatherless children!

- May his line be doomed to  
extinction,  
may their name be wiped out  
within a generation!  
May the sins of his forefathers be  
remembered  
and his mother's wickedness never  
be wiped out!  
May they remain on record before  
the LORD,  
but may he extinguish their name  
from the earth!  
For that man never set himself  
to be loyal to his friend  
but persecuted the downtrodden  
and the poor  
and hounded the broken-hearted  
to their death.  
Curses he loved: may the curse fall  
on him!  
He took no pleasure in blessing:  
may no blessing be his!  
He clothed himself in cursing like a  
garment:  
may it seep into his body like water  
and into his bones like oil!  
May it wrap him round like the  
clothes he puts on,  
like the belt which he wears every  
day!  
May the LORD so requite my  
accusers  
and those who speak evil against  
me!  
But thou, O LORD God,  
deal with me as befits thy honour;  
in the goodness of thy unfailing  
love deliver me,  
for I am downtrodden and poor,  
and my heart within me is  
distracted.

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.:* Heb. adds in return for my love.  
<sup>b</sup> though . . . unseemly; *prob. rdg.:* Heb. obscure.  
<sup>c</sup> hoarded wealth: or charge, cp. Acts 1. 20.

**Ps. 109: Help me, O LORD my God.** A Lament (see Introduction) of an individual who is falsely accused of causing the death of someone (v. 16). It is divided into three distinct sections; the first (vv. 1-5) and the third (vv. 20-31) are supplications for deliverance, the second (vv. 6-19) is a series of curses against an individual by his enemies. 1: No one is left to *praise* the psalmist, i.e. to take his part, but *God*, and he is *silent*. 6-19: These verses seem to be spoken by the poet's enemies, for there is a profound emotional change—from meekness of vv. 1-5 into hatred, as well as a pronominal change from "they" of vv. 1-5, to *his*. The curses all say one thing: "may he be put to death." 6: Ordinarily the accuser stood at the left of the accused and his defender at the right: see v. 31; 110.5; 120.5. 8: See Tfn. c. 13: For his *name* to be wiped out in one *generation* was the Israelite's greatest tragedy; compare Isa. 53.12 for the opposite. 16-17: It seems that the psalmist was accused of accomplishing someone's *death* by a *curse*. 20: Other translations of this verse are possible; in this one the psalmist invokes the law of the talion,

23 I fade like a passing shadow,  
 I am shaken off like a locust.  
 24 My knees are weak with fasting  
 and my flesh wastes away, so  
 meagre is my fare.  
 25 I have become the victim of their  
 taunts;  
 when they see me they toss their  
 heads.  
 26 Help me, O LORD my God;  
 save me, by thy unfailing love,  
 27 that men may know this is thy doing  
 and thou alone, O LORD, hast  
 done it.  
 28 They may curse, but thou dost  
 bless;  
 may my opponents be put to  
 shame,  
 but may thy servant rejoice!  
 29 May my accusers be clothed with  
 dishonour,  
 wrapped in their shame as in a  
 cloak!  
 30 I will lift up my voice to extol the  
 LORD,  
 and before a great company I  
 will praise him.  
 31 For he stands at the poor man's  
 right side  
 to save him from his adversaries.<sup>d</sup>

110

1 The LORD said to my lord,  
 'You shall sit<sup>e</sup> at my right hand  
 when<sup>f</sup> I make your enemies the  
 footstool under your feet.'  
 2 When the LORD from Zion hands  
 you the sceptre, the symbol of  
 your power,  
 march forth through the ranks of<sup>g</sup>  
 your enemies.  
 3 At birth<sup>h</sup> you were endowed with  
 princely gifts

and<sup>i</sup> resplendent<sup>j</sup> in holiness.  
 You have shone with the dew of youth  
 since your mother bore you.  
 The LORD has sworn and will not  
 change his purpose: 4  
 'You are a priest for ever,  
 in the succession of Melchizedek.'  
 The Lord at your right hand 5  
 has broken kings in the day of his  
 anger.  
 So the king in his majesty,<sup>k</sup> 6  
 sovereign of a mighty land,  
 will punish nations;<sup>l</sup>  
 he will drink from the torrent 7  
 beside the path  
 and therefore will hold his head  
 high.

111

O praise the LORD. 1  
 With all my heart will I praise the  
 LORD  
 in the company of good men, in the  
 whole congregation.  
 Great are the doings of the LORD; 2  
 all men study them for their delight.  
 His acts are full of majesty and 3  
 splendour;  
 righteousness is his for ever.  
 He has won a name by his 4  
 marvellous deeds;  
 the LORD is gracious and  
 compassionate.  
 He gives food to those who fear him, 5  
 he keeps his covenant always in  
 mind.

*d* Prob. rdg.; Heb. his judges. *e* You shall sit: or Sit.  
*f* Or until or while. *g* Or reign in the midst of.  
*h* At birth: or On the day of your power.  
*i* you were . . . and: or your people offered themselves  
 willingly; mng. of Heb. uncertain.  
*j* Or apparelled.  
*k* So . . . majesty: poss. rdg.; Heb. full of corpses, he  
 crushed.  
*l* So . . . nations: or He shall punish the nations—  
 heaps of corpses, broken heads—over a wide expanse.

i.e. "an eye for an eye" against his accusers. 23: Locusts were either *shaken off* to the ground and killed or swept away by the wind; see Exod.10.19. 25: To *toss* the head was a sign of derision and hostility.

**Ps. 110: Sit at my right hand.** A Royal Psalm, probably used at the coronation ceremonies for kings (compare Ps.2). 1: *The LORD*: Yahweh. *My lord*: the king who is taking office. *Footstool*: a figure for complete domination. 4: *The succession of Melchizedek*: the king will also serve as priest, like a predecessor Melchizedek, the Canaanite priest-king of Jerusalem (Gen.14.18-20). The verse is used in a very different way in Heb.5.6 and 7.1,17. 5: *Right hand*: chief support, as in v. 1.

**Ps. 111: The beginning of Wisdom.** A Hymn with Wisdom themes. It is an acrostic; hence each of the twenty-two half-verses begins with a successive letter of the Heb. alphabet. The opening phrase, *O praise the LORD* (Heb. Hallelujah), is not part of the alphabetic structure; Pss.112

- |    |  |  |    |
|----|--|--|----|
| 6  | He showed his people what his strength could do, bestowing on them the lands of other nations.   | his goodness shall be remembered for all time.   |    |
| 7  | His works are truth and justice; his precepts all stand on firm foundations,   | Bad news shall have no terrors for him, because his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.                                | 7  |
| 8  | strongly based to endure for ever, their fabric goodness and truth.  | His confidence is strongly based, he will have no fear; and in the end he will gloat over his enemies.                       | 8  |
| 9  | He sent and redeemed his people; he decreed that his covenant should always endure.  | He gives freely to the poor; righteousness shall be his for ever; in honour he carries his head high.                        | 9  |
| 10 | Holy is his name, inspiring awe. The fear of the LORD is the beginning <sup>m</sup> of wisdom, and they who live by it grow in understanding. Praise will be his for ever. | The wicked man shall see it with rising anger and grind his teeth in despair; the hopes of wicked men shall come to nothing. | 10 |

## 112

## 113

- |   |   |  |     |
|---|---|--|-----|
| 1 | O praise the LORD.  | O praise the LORD.   | 1   |
|   | Happy is the man who fears the LORD and finds great joy in his commandments.              | Praise the LORD, you that are his servants, praise the name of the LORD.   |     |
| 2 | His descendants shall be the mightiest in the land, a blessed generation of good men.     | Blessed be the name of the LORD now and evermore.  | 2   |
| 3 | His house shall be full of wealth and riches; righteousness shall be his for ever.        | From the rising of the sun to its setting may the LORD's name be praised.  | 3   |
| 4 | He is gracious, compassionate, good, a beacon in darkness for honest men.                 | High is the LORD above all nations, his glory above the heavens.   | 4   |
| 5 | It is right for a man to be gracious in his lending, to order his affairs with judgement. | There is none like the LORD our God in heaven or on earth, who sets his throne so high but deigns to look down so low; | 5-6 |
| 6 | Nothing shall ever shake him;   |  |     |

<sup>m</sup> Or chief part.

and 113 also begin with this ritual proclamation. 9: *Inspiring awe*: compare 76.4 n. 10: Compare Prov.1.7 and Job 28.28.

**Ps. 112: Happy is the man who fears the LORD.** A Wisdom Psalm in acrostic form; see Ps.111 n. It continues the previous psalm, being linked to it by the phrase "fear of the LORD" (v. 1; 111.10), which it elaborates and applies to practical life. Attributes assigned to God in Ps.111 are here ascribed to the virtuous man who acts as God does (v. 4). 1: *Praise the LORD*: see Ps.111 n. 3-5: *Righteousness*, graciousness, compassion, goodness, *judgement* are all attributes that are applied ordinarily to God in his dealings with all men and in particular with Israel; see 111.3-4; 103.6-8,13,17. 3: *Righteousness* here is the state of being in proper order with God and of possessing the happiness that flows from it. 5: To act *with judgement* is to work truth and justice (111.7) by delivering the oppressed, giving freely to the poor (v.9) to bring about righteousness. 8: *Strongly based*: compare 111.7-8. 10: *Grind teeth*: an expression of extreme and malicious anger and/or frustration; see Lam.3.16; Mt.8.12; Acts 7.54.

**Ps. 113: Praise the LORD.** A Hymn, the first of a collection (Pss.113-118) known as the "Hallel" (praise). This collection (often called the "Egyptian Hallel") was used on the great festivals: Booths, Passover, and Weeks. At the Passover seder service, Pss.113-114 are sung before the meal and Pss.115-118 after it. See Mt.26.30; Mk.14.26. 2-4: The response of an assembly to the call to praise the LORD (v. 1). 5-6: A key concept in Israel's relation to God was that he was exalted *so high* as to be beyond reach, yet came *so low* as to live in their midst; see

7	who lifts the weak out of the dust and raises the poor from the dunghill,	for thy true love and for thy constancy.	
8	giving them a place among princes, among the princes of his people;	Why do the nations ask, "Where then is their God?"	2
9	who makes the woman in a childless house a happy mother of children. <sup>n</sup>	Our God is in high heaven; he does whatever pleases him. Their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths that cannot speak, and eyes that cannot see; they have ears that cannot hear, nostrils, and cannot smell; with their hands they cannot feel, with their feet they cannot walk, and no sound comes from their throats. Their makers grow to be like them, and so do all who trust in them.	3 4 5 6 7
<b>114</b>			
1	O praise the LORD. <sup>o</sup>  When Israel came out of Egypt, Jacob from a people of outlandish speech,	But Israel trusts in the LORD; he is their helper and their shield. The house of Aaron trusts in the LORD; he is their helper and their shield. Those who fear the LORD trust in the LORD; he is their helper and their shield. The LORD remembers us, and he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. The LORD will bless all who fear him, high and low alike.	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
2	Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.		
3	The sea looked and ran away; Jordan turned back.		
4	The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like young sheep.		
5	What was it, sea? Why did you run? Jordan, why did you turn back?		
6	Why, mountains, did you skip like rams, and you, hills, like young sheep?		
7	Dance, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,		
8	who turned the rock into a pool of water, the granite cliff into a fountain.		
<b>115</b>			
1	Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to thy name ascribe the glory,	May the LORD give you increase, both you and your sons.	14

<sup>n</sup> O praise the LORD transposed to the beginning of Ps. 114.  
<sup>o</sup> See note on Ps. 113. 9.

Ezek.48.35. 7: *Dunghill*: sign of abject rejection and ritual uncleanness. 9: Barrenness was considered a curse and disgrace; see Gen.16.4-5; 1 Sam.1.6.

Ps. 114: *Judah became his sanctuary*. A Thanksgiving, although some classify it as a Hymn. This psalm, which continues the Hallel, is a psalm of praise proclaiming how God saved Israel at the Exodus. 2: *Judah*: name of the southern portion; *Israel*: name of the northern portion. 3-6: Wondrous events accompanied the Exodus at the Red sea (Exod. ch. 14), at the Jordan River (Josh. ch. 3) and at Sinai (Exod.19.16-20). 7-8: The entire world is to enter into the joy of vv. 3-6. 8: See Exod.17.6 and Num.20.11.

Ps. 115: *To thy name ascribe the glory*. A Liturgy, part of the Hallel (Ps.113 n.), contrasts the invisible God with the idols of the heathen. 1: God's glory is his *true love*; compare 1 Jn.4.7-9. 2-8: Israel's God is invisible to the *nations* but his actions of constant love are evident; the idols are visible but their actions are not. 9-11: These verses perhaps were sung antiphonally, i.e. one chorus said the first part of the verse and another the second. Three classes of people take part: *Israel* are all the lay people; *house of Aaron* are the priestly class; *those who fear the LORD* are either the converts from the pagan nations or the first two classes combined. 12-13: An oracle perhaps pronounced by a Temple prophet. 14-15: A blessing pronounced by a priest. 14: See Deut.1.11 on *increase*. An abundance of children was seen as a sign of God's beneficent favor.



15 You are blessed by the LORD,  
the LORD who made heaven and  
earth.  
16 The heavens, they are the LORD's;  
the earth he has given to all  
mankind.  
17 It is not the dead who praise the  
LORD,  
not those who go down into  
silence;  
18 but we, the living, bless the LORD,  
now and for evermore.

O praise the LORD.

## 116

1 I love the LORD, for he has heard me  
and listens to my prayer;  
2 for he has given me a hearing  
whenever I have cried to him.  
3 The cords of death bound me,  
Sheol held me in its grip.  
Anguish and torment held me fast;  
4 so I invoked the LORD by name,  
'Deliver me, O LORD, I beseech thee;  
for I am thy slave.'<sup>p</sup>  
5 Gracious is the LORD and righteous,  
our God is full of compassion.  
6 The LORD preserves the simple-  
hearted;  
I was brought low and he saved me.  
7 Be at rest once more, my heart,  
for the LORD has showered gifts  
upon you.  
8 He has rescued me from death  
and my feet from stumbling.  
9 I will walk in the presence of the  
LORD  
in the land of the living.

I was sure that I should be swept 10  
away,  
and my distress was bitter.  
In panic I cried, 11  
'How faithless all men are!'  
How can I repay the LORD 12  
for all his gifts to me?  
I will take in my hands the cup of 13  
salvation  
and invoke the LORD by name.  
I will pay my vows to the LORD 14  
in the presence of all his people.  
A precious thing in the LORD's 15  
sight  
is the death of those who die  
faithful to him.  
<sup>q</sup>I am thy slave, thy slave-girl's son; 16  
thou hast undone the bonds that  
bound me.  
To thee will I bring a thank-offering 17  
and invoke the LORD by name.  
I will pay my vows to the LORD 18  
in the presence of all his people,  
in the courts of the LORD's house, 19  
in the midst of you, Jerusalem.  
  
O praise the LORD.

## 117

Praise the LORD, all nations, 1  
extol him, all you peoples;  
for his love protecting us is strong, 2  
the LORD's constancy is  
everlasting.  
  
O praise the LORD.

<sup>p</sup> for . . . slave: transposed from the beginning of verse 16;  
Heb. adds O LORD.  
<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. prefixes For I am thy slave, O  
LORD; see note on verse 4.

17: In Sheol, the underworld of the *dead*, there is only *silence*; see Job 3.13,18. 18: See Ps.113.2. Ps. 116: I love the LORD, for he has heard me. A Thanksgiving Psalm, part of the Hallel; see Ps.113 n. It supposes a recovery from serious illness (vv. 2-4) and the ensuing fulfillment of a vow to offer a sacrifice of thanks in the Temple (vv. 17-20). 3: *Sheol*, the place of the dead, is pictured as a trapper that has snared the poet in the *cords* of his noose. 4: Calling a person, here the LORD, by name not only expresses a submission to him (v. 13) but also draws power from him. 5: The key attributes of God in dealing with men: graciousness, righteousness, *full of compassion*; see 103.6-8 n. 10-11: The poet describes as *faithless* either himself because he lost confidence in God (v. 9) or his friends who left him helpless in his illness. 13: *Cup of salvation*: possibly a figurative expression or possibly an allusion to a sacrificial libation in fulfillment of a vow such as mentioned in Num.15.1-10. 14: The *vows* are fulfilled in the Temple in the *presence of people*. 15: In the Hebrew concept of Sheol, *death* severed all contact between God and the *faithful* whom he loves (117.2) and so their death is precious, i.e. costly to him. Another possible interpretation is that they are like gold purified in the fire and hence costly; see Wis.3.1-8. 17: *Thank-offering*: see Lev.7.12-15. 19: *LORD's house*: the Temple.

Ps. 117: Praise the LORD. A Hymn, probably part of the Temple liturgy. The shortest of the psalms, it is part of the Hallel (see Ps.113 n.). 2: O praise the LORD may belong with Ps.118 as its opening words.

## 118

1	It is good to give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures for ever.	but the LORD has helped me. The LORD is my refuge and defence, and he has become my deliverer.	14
2	Declare it, house of Israel: his love endures for ever.	Hark! Shouts of deliverance in the camp of the victors!	15
3	Declare it, house of Aaron: his love endures for ever.	With his right hand the LORD does mighty deeds, the right hand of the LORD raises up.	16
4	Declare it, you that fear the LORD: his love endures for ever.	I shall not die but live to proclaim the works of the LORD.	17
5	When in my distress I called to the LORD, his answer was to set me free.	The LORD did indeed chasten me, but he did not surrender me to Death.	18
6	The LORD is on my side, I have no fear; what can man do to me?	Open to me the gates of victory; <sup>8</sup> I will enter by them and praise the LORD.	19
7	The LORD is on my side, he is my helper, and I shall gloat over my enemies.	This is the gate of the LORD; the victors <sup>l</sup> shall make their entry through it.	20
8	It is better to find refuge in the LORD than to trust in men.	I will praise thee, for thou hast answered me and hast become my deliverer.	21
9	It is better to find refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.	The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner-stone.	22
10	All nations surround me, but in the LORD's name I will drive them away.	This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.	23
11	They surround me on this side and on that, but in the LORD's name I will drive them away.	This is the day on which the LORD has acted: <sup>u</sup> let us exult and rejoice in it.	24
12	They surround me like bees at the honey; they attack me, as fire attacks brushwood, but in the LORD's name I will drive them away.	We pray thee, O LORD, deliver us; we pray thee, O LORD, send us prosperity.	25
13	They thrust hard against me so that I nearly fall;	Blessed in the name of the LORD are all who come;	26

*r* Or righteous. *s* Or righteousness.  
*l* Or righteous. *u* Or which the LORD has made.

**Ps. 118:** This is the LORD's doing. A Thanksgiving, originally possibly a king's thanksgiving hymn for victory in battle (vv. 10-14), sung in the Temple. However, as the last of the "Egyptian Hallel" (see Ps. 113 n.), it was appropriate for use at the Passover. The psalm seems to be a dramatic ceremonial (see Neh. 12.27-43) with the following structure: a procession forms outside the Temple and is invited to praise the LORD (vv. 1-4); the king or another individual in the name of the group describes dramatically how God came to the rescue when the nation confidently implored his help (vv. 5-18); a dialogue between the leader of the procession outside the Temple gates and the priests within (vv. 19-25); the blessing given by the priest to the procession gathered round the altar (vv. 26-27); resumption of the invitation (v. 1) to praise the LORD (vv. 28-29). 2-4: *House of Israel . . . Aaron . . . you that fear the LORD*: see 115.10-12 n. 10-12: *In the LORD's name*: by the power of the LORD. 20-21: The condition for entering the Temple is a righteous life which is attested by the fact that God has *answered* in time of need. 22: In the context of the Exodus feasts—Passover, Weeks, and Booths—Israel was the *stone rejected* by the empire *builders*, Egypt. The verse is quoted frequently in the NT; see Mt. 21.42; Acts 4.11. 24: Israelite festivals came to be viewed as a contemporary reenactment of a *day* on which God acted in past events: Passover as the Exodus; Weeks, the Sinai episode; Booths, the Wilderness. Christian liturgy interprets "the day" to mean the Resurrection of Christ. 25: *Deliver us*: Heb. "Hosanna"; see Mt. 21.9 and parallels. 27: *Light*: possibly a reminiscence of a primitive celebration held at dawn. The four elevations at the corners of the altar were called *horns*; see Exod. 27.2; Lev. 4.7.

	we bless you from the house of the LORD.	let me not stray from thy commandments.	
27	The LORD is God; he has given light to us, the ordered line of pilgrims by the horns of the altar.	I treasure thy promise in my heart, for fear that I might sin against thee.	11
28	Thou art my God and I will praise thee; my God, I will exalt thee.	Blessed art thou, O LORD; teach me thy statutes.	12
29	It is good to give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures for ever.	I say them over, one by one, the decrees that thou hast proclaimed.	13
		I have found more joy along the path of thy instruction than in any kind of wealth.	14
		I will meditate on thy precepts and keep thy paths ever before my eyes.	15
1	Happy are they whose life is blameless, who conform to the law of the LORD.	In thy statutes I find continual delight; I will not forget thy word.	16
2	Happy are they who obey his instruction, who set their heart on finding him;	Grant this to me, thy servant: let me live and, living, keep thy word.	17
3	who have done no wrong and have lived according to his will.	Take the veil from my eyes, that I may see the marvels that spring from thy law.	18
4	Thou, Lord, hast laid down thy precepts for men to keep them faithfully.	I am but a stranger here on earth, <sup>v</sup> do not hide thy commandments from me.	19
5	If only I might hold a steady course, keeping thy statutes!	My heart pines with longing day and night for thy decrees.	20
6	I shall never be put to shame if I fix my eyes on thy command- ments.	The proud have felt thy rebuke; cursed are those who turn from thy commandments.	21
7	I will praise thee in sincerity of heart as I learn thy just decrees.	Set me free from scorn and insult, for I have obeyed thy instruction.	22
8	Thy statutes will I keep faithfully; O do not leave me forsaken.	The powers that be sit scheming together against me; but I, thy servant, will study thy statutes.	23
9	How shall a young man steer an honest course? By holding to thy word.	Thy instruction is my continual delight;	24
10	With all my heart I strive to find thee;	I turn to it for counsel.	

<sup>v</sup> Or in the land.

**Ps. 119: Thy law, O LORD, is my continual delight.** A Wisdom meditation, didactic in nature, with many motifs of a Lament. Its unparalleled length arises from its being an acrostic (see Ps. 111 n.) with eight verses for each of the twenty-two letters of the Heb. alphabet. The word "law" and its synonyms—instruction, will, precept, statutes, commandments, decrees, word, promise, paths—occur in every verse. Frequent also is the plea that God teach his Law that man may be faithful to him. Law and its synonyms are understood in the wide sense of divine teaching as found in the Pentateuch and in the prophets. There is very little logical development of thought but ideas are strung together loosely. The main thrust appears to be "How I love thy precepts, O LORD." The elements of a Lament are: description of troubles and enemies, pleas for deliverance, vows both explicit and implicit (vv. 106,175). The psalm is considered to be a late composition. **18:** Only an extraneous obstruction of vision, a *veil*, prevents a person from seeing the benefits of the *law*. **19:** The poet needs to be taught the native law of God's *earth* since every man comes into the world as a *stranger*. **21:** The *proud* are the most averse to God's commandments. **23:** *Powers that be:* lit. princes. The joy of keeping God's *statutes* is the

25	I lie prone in the dust; grant me life according to thy word.	because I trust in thy word. Rob me not of my power to speak the truth,	43
26	I tell thee all I have done and thou dost answer me; teach me thy statutes.	for I put my hope in thy decrees. I will heed thy law continually, for ever and ever;	44
27	Show me the way set out in thy precepts, and I will meditate on thy wonders.	I walk in freedom wherever I will, because I have studied thy precepts.	45
28	I cannot rest for misery; renew my strength in accordance with thy word.	I will speak of thy instruction before kings and will not be ashamed;	46
29	Keep falsehood far from me and grant me the grace of living by thy law.	in thy commandments I find continuing delight; I love them with all my heart.	47
30	I have chosen the path of truth and have set thy decrees before me.	I will welcome thy commandments <sup>w</sup> and will meditate on thy statutes.	48
31	I hold fast to thy instruction; O LORD, let me not be put to shame.	Remember the word spoken to me, thy servant, on which thou hast taught me to fix my hope.	49
32	I will run the course set out in thy commandments, for they gladden my heart.	In time of trouble my consolation is this, that thy promise has given me life.	50
33	Teach me, O LORD, the way set out in thy statutes, and in keeping them I shall find my reward.	Proud men treat me with insolent scorn, but I do not swerve from thy law.	51
34	Give me the insight to obey thy law and to keep it with all my heart;	I have cherished thy decrees all my life long, and in them I find consolation,	52
35	make me walk in the path of thy commandments, for that is my desire.	O LORD.	
36	Dispose my heart toward thy instruction and not toward ill-gotten gains;	Gusts of anger seize me as I think of evil men who forsake thy law.	53
37	turn away my eyes from all that is vile, grant me life by thy word.	Thy statutes are the theme of my song <sup>x</sup> wherever I make my home.	54
38	Fulfil thy promise for thy servant, the promise made to those who fear thee.	In the night I remember thy name, O LORD, and dwell upon thy law.	55
39	Turn away the censure which I dread, for thy decrees are good.	This is true of me, that I have kept thy precepts.	56
40	How I long for thy precepts! In thy righteousness grant me life.	Thou, LORD, art all I have; I have promised to keep thy word.	57
41	Thy love never fails; let it light on me, O LORD, and thy deliverance, for that was thy promise;	With all my heart I have tried to please thee; fulfil thy promise and be gracious to me.	58
42	then I shall have my answer to the man who taunts me,	I have thought much about the course of my life	59

<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds which I love.*  
<sup>x</sup> *the theme of my song: or wonderful to me.*

immediate reward of the docile. **48:** *Will welcome:* lit. "stretch out my hand to." **55:** For the

	and always turned back to thy instruction;	I know, O LORD, that thy decrees are just	75
60	I have never delayed but always made haste	and even in punishing thou keepest faith with me.	
	to keep thy commandments.	Let thy never-failing love console me,	76
61	Bands of evil men close round me, but I do not forget thy law.	as thou hast promised me, thy servant.	
62	At midnight I rise to give thee thanks	Extend thy compassion to me, that I may live;	77
	for the justice of thy decrees.	for thy law is my continual delight.	
63	I keep company with all who fear thee,	Put the proud to shame, for with their lies they wrong me;	78
	with all who follow thy precepts.	but I will meditate on thy precepts.	
64	The earth is full of thy never-failing love;	Let all who fear thee turn to me, all who cherish thy instruction.	79
	O LORD, teach me thy statutes.	Let me give my whole heart to thy statutes,	80
65	Thou hast shown thy servant much kindness,	so that I am not put to shame.	
	fulfilling thy word, O LORD.	I long with all my heart for thy deliverance,	81
66	Give me insight, give me knowledge, for I put my trust in thy commandments.	hoping for the fulfilment of thy word;	
67	I went astray before I was punished; but now I pay heed to thy promise.	my sight grows dim with looking for thy promise	82
68	Thou art good and thou doest good;	and still I cry, 'When wilt thou comfort me?'	
	teach me thy statutes.	Though I shrivel like a wine-skin in the smoke,	83
69	Proud men blacken my name with lies,	I do not forget thy statutes.	
	yet I follow thy precepts with all my heart;	How long has thy servant to wait for thee to fulfil thy decree	84
70	their hearts are thick and gross; but I continually delight in thy law.	against my persecutors?	
71	How good it is for me to have been punished,	Proud men who flout thy law spread tales about me.	85
	to school me in thy statutes!	Help me, for they hound me with their lies,	86
72	The law thou hast ordained means more to me	but thy commandments all stand for ever.	
	than a fortune in gold and silver.	They had almost swept me from the earth,	87
73	Thy hands moulded me and made me what I am;	but I did not forsake thy precepts;	
	show me how I may learn thy commandments.	grant me life, as thy love is unchanging,	88
74	Let all who fear thee be glad when they see me,	that I may follow all thy instruction.	
	because I hope for the fulfilment of thy word.	Eternal is thy word, O LORD, planted firm in heaven.	89

Semite, darkness of *night* connotes the absence of God. 70: *Thick* and *gross hearts* are dull, insensitive and cruel. 75: If God's *decrees are just* their observance is beneficial to men and God keeps *faith with* men in punishing transgressions. 83: Leather flasks containing wine were hung from the ceiling, out of reach of children and rodents, where, exposed to heat and *smoke*, they eventually became brittle and useless. Though the psalmist is shriveled by age like an old

<p>90 Thy promise<sup>y</sup> endures for all time, stable as the earth which thou hast fixed.</p> <p>91 This day, as ever, thy decrees stand fast; for all things serve thee.</p> <p>92 If thy law had not been my continual delight, I should have perished in all my troubles;</p> <p>93 never will I forget thy precepts, for through them thou hast given me life.</p> <p>94 I am thine; O save me, for I have pondered thy precepts.</p> <p>95 Evil men lie in wait to destroy me; but I will give thought to thy instruction.</p> <p>96 I see that all things come to an end, but thy commandment has no limit.</p> <p>97 O how I love thy law! It is my study all day long.</p> <p>98 Thy commandments are mine for ever; through them I am wiser than my enemies.</p> <p>99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for thy instruction is my study;</p> <p>100 I have more wisdom than the old, because I have kept thy precepts.</p> <p>101 I set no foot on any evil path in my obedience to thy word;</p> <p>102 I do not swerve from thy decrees, for thou thyself hast been my teacher.</p> <p>103 How sweet is thy promise in my mouth, sweeter on my tongue than honey!</p> <p>104 From thy precepts I learn wisdom; therefore I hate the paths of falsehood.</p> <p>105 Thy word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light on my path;</p> <p>106 I have bound myself by oath and solemn vow to keep thy just decrees.</p> <p>107 I am cruelly afflicted;</p>	<p>O LORD, revive me and make good thy word.</p> <p>Accept, O LORD, the willing tribute 108 of my lips and teach me thy decrees.</p> <p>Every day I take my life in my 109 hands, yet I never forget thy law.</p> <p>Evil men have set traps for me, 110 but I do not stray from thy precepts.</p> <p>Thy instruction is my everlasting 111 inheritance; it is the joy of my heart.</p> <p>I am resolved to fulfil thy statutes; 112 they are a reward that never fails.</p> <p>I hate men who are not single- 113 minded, but I love thy law.</p> <p>Thou art my shield and hiding-place; 114 I hope for the fulfilment of thy word.</p> <p>Go, you evildoers, and leave me to 115 myself, that I may keep the command- ments of my God.</p> <p>Support me as thou hast promised, 116 that I may live; do not disappoint my hope.</p> <p>Sustain me, that I may see 117 deliverance; so shall I always be occupied with thy statutes.</p> <p>Thou dost reject those who stray 118 from thy statutes, for their talk is all malice and lies.</p> <p>In thy sight all the wicked on earth 119 are scum; therefore I love thy instruction.</p> <p>The dread of thee makes my flesh 120 creep, and I stand in awe of thy decrees.</p> <p>I have done what is just and right; 121 thou wilt not abandon me to my oppressors.</p> <p>Stand surety for the welfare of thy 122 servant;</p>
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<sup>y</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. Thy constancy.*

wineskin, he can still meditate on the law in good vigor. 99: In the study of the Law, God is the inner teacher so that the psalmist has more *insight* than his academic *teachers*. 100: Even though wisdom and old age were equated, the young who *kept* the Law acquired *more wisdom* than the old who did not. 109: The threat to *life* itself does not distract him from attention to the Law. 113: *Not single-minded*: those whose allegiance is divided, who have ambivalent feelings about

	let not the proud oppress me. <sup>z</sup>	I may be despised and of little	141
123	My sight grows dim with looking for thy deliverance and waiting for thy righteous promise.	account, but I do not forget thy precepts.	
124	In all thy dealings with me, LORD, show thy true love and teach me thy statutes.	Thy justice is an everlasting justice, and thy law is truth.	142
125	I am thy servant; give me insight to understand thy instruction.	Though I am oppressed by trouble and anxiety, thy commandments are my continual delight.	143
126	It is time to act, O LORD; for men have broken thy law.	Thy instruction is ever just; give me understanding that I may live.	144
127	Truly I love thy commandments more than the finest gold.		
128	It is by thy precepts that I find the right way; I hate the paths of falsehood.	I call with my whole heart; answer me, LORD. I will keep thy statutes.	145
129	Thy instruction is wonderful; therefore I gladly keep it.	I call to thee; O save me that I may heed thy instruction.	146
130	Thy word is revealed, and all is light; it gives understanding even to the untaught.	I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope for the fulfilment of thy word.	147
131	I pant, I thirst, longing for thy commandments.	Before the midnight watch also my eyes are open for meditation on thy promise.	148
132	Turn to me and be gracious, as thou hast decreed for those who love thy name.	Hear me, as thy love is unchanging, and give me life, O LORD, by thy decree.	149
133	Make my step firm according to thy promise, and let no wrong have the mastery over me.	My pursuers in their malice are close behind me, but they are far from thy law.	150
134	Set me free from man's oppression, that I may observe thy precepts.	Yet thou art near, O LORD, and all thy commandments are true.	151
135	Let thy face shine upon thy servant and teach me thy statutes.	I have long known from thy instruction that thou hast given it eternal foundations.	152
136	My eyes stream with tears because men do not heed thy law.		
137	How just thou art, O LORD! How straight and true are thy decrees!	See in what trouble I am and set me free, for I do not forget thy law.	153
138	How just is the instruction thou givest! It is fixed firm and sure.	Be thou my advocate and win release for me; true to thy promise, give me life.	154
139	I am speechless with resentment, for my enemies have forgotten thy words.	Such deliverance is beyond the reach of wicked men, because they do not ponder thy statutes.	155
140	Thy promise has been tested through and through, and thy servant loves it.	Great is thy compassion, O LORD; grant me life by thy decree.	156

<sup>z</sup> oppress me: or charge me falsely.

the Law. **135:** *Let thy face shine:* regard favorably. **140:** *Tested:* proved valid. **150:** Though evildoers may apprehend the psalmist, they cannot overpower the Law which is his support.

157	Many are my persecutors and enemies, but I have not swerved from thy instruction.	be true to thy promise and save me. Let thy praise pour from my lips, because thou teachest me thy statutes;	171
158	I was cut to the quick when I saw traitors who had no regard for thy promise.	let the music of thy promises be on my tongue, for thy commandments are justice itself.	172
159	See how I love thy precepts, O LORD! Grant me life, as thy love is unchanging.	Let thy hand be prompt to help me, for I have chosen thy precepts;	173
160	Thy word is founded in truth, and thy just decrees are everlasting.	I long for thy deliverance, O LORD, and thy law is my continual delight.	174
161	The powers that be persecute me without cause, yet my heart thrills at thy word.	Let me live and I will praise thee; let thy decrees be my support.	175
162	I am jubilant over thy promise, like a man carrying off much booty.	I have strayed like a lost sheep; come, search for thy servant, for I have not forgotten thy commandments.	176
163	Falsehood I detest and loathe, but I love thy law.		
<b>120</b>			
164	Seven times a day I praise thee for the justice of thy decrees.	I called to the LORD in my distress, and he answered me.	1
165	Peace is the reward of those who love thy law; no pitfalls beset their path.	'O LORD,' I cried, 'save me from lying lips and from the tongue of slander.'	2
166	I hope for thy deliverance, O LORD, and I fulfil thy commandments;	What has he in store for you, slanderous tongue?	3
167	gladly I heed thy instruction and love it greatly.	What more has he for you?	
168	I heed thy precepts and thy instruction, for all my life lies open before thee.	Nothing but a warrior's sharp arrows or red-hot charcoal. Hard is my lot, exiled in Meshech, dwelling by the tents of Kedar.	4 5
169	Let my cry of joy reach thee, O LORD; give me understanding of thy word.	All the time that I dwelt among men who hated peace, I sought peace; but whenever I spoke of it, they were for war.	6 7
170	Let my supplication reach thee;		

**164:** *Seven times:* either a symbolic number meaning "always" (compare Mt.18.21), or an allusion to a pious regimen of prayer.

**Ps. 120: He answered me.** Either a Thanksgiving (v. 1) which contains a past lamentation (vv. 2-7) or a Lament with God's assurance of deliverance. The superscriptions in the MT (see Introduction) designate Pss.120-134 as "Songs of Ascents." The phrase could mean the ascent of pilgrims to the city of Jerusalem, one of the highest points in Palestine, and hence a song for one of the great annual pilgrim feasts designated in Exod.23.14-17; Deut.16.16. It could also mean the ascent of a procession within Jerusalem up the steps leading to the Temple; hence the interpretation of the superscription as "Psalms of the Steps." The theme of exile (v. 5) among a hostile people (vv. 6-7) with the resultant longing for Jerusalem, the city of peace, possibly made this a Pilgrim Song. **3: What more:** a formula commonly used for a curse in Heb.; compare 1 Sam.25.22. **4: Sharp arrows:** death in battle. **5: Meshech:** an ancient people to the north of Palestine (Gen.10.2) from whom the final enemy of Israel would come; see Ezek.38.2. **Kedar:** a land in the Syrian desert, perhaps a symbol of hardship or barbarism; see S. of S.1.5-6. **7:** See 55-21.



## 121

- 1 If I lift up my eyes to the hills,  
where shall I find help?  
2 Help comes only from the LORD,  
maker of heaven and earth.  
3 How could he let your foot stumble?  
How could he, your guardian,  
sleep?  
4 The guardian of Israel  
never slumbers, never sleeps.  
5 The LORD is your guardian,  
your defence at your right hand;  
6 the sun will not strike you by day  
nor the moon by night.  
7 The LORD will guard you against  
all evil;  
he will guard you, body and soul.  
8 The LORD will guard your going  
and your coming,  
now and for evermore.

## 122

- 1 I rejoiced when they said to me,  
'Let us go to the house of the  
LORD.'  
2 Now we stand within your gates,  
O Jerusalem:  
3 Jerusalem that is built to be a city  
where people come together in  
unity;  
4 to which the tribes resort, the tribes  
of the LORD,  
to give thanks to the LORD  
himself,  
the bounden duty of Israel.  
5 For in her are set the thrones of  
justice,

the thrones of the house of David.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 6  
'May those who love you prosper;  
peace be within your ramparts 7  
and prosperity in your palaces.'  
For the sake of these my brothers 8  
and my friends,  
I will say, 'Peace be within you.'  
For the sake of the house of the 9  
LORD our God  
I will pray for your good.

## 123

I lift my eyes to thee 1  
whose throne is in heaven.  
As the eyes of a slave follow his 2  
master's hand  
or the eyes of a slave-girl her  
mistress,  
so our eyes are turned to the  
LORD our God  
waiting for kindness from him.  
Deal kindly with us, O LORD, deal 3  
kindly,  
for we have suffered insult enough;  
too long have we had to suffer 4  
the insults of the wealthy,  
the scorn of proud men.

## 124

If the LORD had not been on our 1  
side,  
Israel may now say,  
if the LORD had not been on our 2  
side  
when they assailed us,

**Ps. 121: The guardian of Israel.** A Hymn, another Song of Ascents (see Ps.120 n.), pointing to Mount Zion as the source of protection in the dangers of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem (vv. 2-6) as well as in life (vv. 7-8). 1: Sanctuaries were built on *hills*, both to the pagan Baals (2 Kgs.23.5) and to the God of Israel for whom the Temple on Mount Zion was built. 4: *Never sleeps*: the affirmation is in sharp contrast with the anxiety in 44.23. 5: The defendant of an accused man stood at his *right hand* at a trial. 8: *Going and coming*: the performance of one's daily work; see Deut.28.6.

**Ps. 122: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.** A Hymn, sung by admiring pilgrims at their departure as they still stood within the walls of Jerusalem. 3: Jerusalem was the center of political *unity* since it belonged to no tribe when David made it his capital (2 Sam.5.6-10); it was the center of religious unity, in whose Temple alone could sacrifices be legitimately offered; see Deut.12.5-7; 2 Kgs. ch. 23. 5: *Thrones of justice*: where the king held court (1 Kgs.7.7). 6-9: Pilgrims *pray* for Jerusalem as they leave. 6: *Peace*: in Heb. "shalom," has wide-ranging positive meaning, namely, well-being, happiness, and prosperity.

**Ps. 123: Deal kindly with us, O LORD.** A Lament of the community which returned humbled and lowly from the Exile and was exposed to the contempt of its pagan neighbors; see Neh.2.19. 1: See Ps.121.1. 3-4: A plea for help.

**Ps. 124: Our help is in the name of the LORD.** A Thanksgiving. See Ps.120 n. on Songs of

- 3 they would have swallowed us alive  
when their anger was roused  
against us.
- 4 The waters would have carried us  
away  
and the torrent swept over us;  
5 over us would have swept  
the seething waters.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD, who did not  
leave us  
to be the prey between their teeth.
- 7 We have escaped like a bird  
from the fowler's trap;  
the trap broke, and so we escaped.
- 8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,  
maker of heaven and earth.

## 125

- 1 Those who trust in the LORD are  
like Mount Zion,  
which cannot be shaken but stands  
fast for ever.
- 2 As the hills enfold Jerusalem,  
so the LORD enfolds his people, now  
and evermore.
- 3 The sceptre of wickedness shall  
surely find no home  
in the land allotted to the  
righteous,  
so that the righteous shall not set  
their hands to injustice.
- 4 Do good, O LORD, to those who  
are good  
and to those who are upright in  
heart.
- 5 But those who turn aside into  
crooked ways,  
may the LORD destroy them, as he  
destroys all evildoers!

Peace be upon Israel!

## 126

- When the LORD turned the tide of  
Zion's fortune,  
we were like men who had found  
new health.<sup>a</sup>
- Our mouths were full of laughter  
and our tongues sang aloud for joy.
- Then word went round among the  
nations,  
'The LORD has done great things  
for them.'
- Great things indeed the LORD then  
did for us,  
and we rejoiced.

- Turn once again our fortune, LORD,  
as streams return in the dry south.
- Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with songs of joy.
- A man may go out weeping,  
carrying his bag of seed;  
but he will come back with songs  
of joy,  
carrying home his sheaves.

## 127

- Unless the LORD builds the house,  
its builders will have toiled in vain.
- Unless the LORD keeps watch over  
a city,  
in vain the watchman stands on  
guard.
- In vain you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
toiling for the bread you eat;  
he supplies the need of those he  
loves.<sup>b</sup>
- Sons are a gift from the LORD

<sup>a</sup> like . . . health; or like dreamers.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds an unintelligible word.

Ascents. The theme is the deliverance of the nation from its foes. 4-5: The metaphor of *waters* is also found in 69.1-2,15. 8: Compare 121.2.

**Ps. 125: Peace be upon Israel.** A Lament; a Song of Ascents (see 120 n.). 1-3: The security of those who trust in God is as solid as Mount Zion, the rock on which the Temple stood. 3: *Sceptre of wickedness*: a foreign conqueror. The allusion is, however, quite vague. 4-5: A plea for help.

**Ps. 126. Turn once again our fortune, O LORD.** A Lament with a prayer for deliverance, possibly from the hardships the community experienced in the first years after the return from Exile; see Neh.5.1-5. 1-2: To the returned Exiles their new life of freedom at first seemed like a dream (see Tfn. *a*) as they *sang*, in contrast to their stay in Babylon; compare 137.2-4. 4: In the *south* of Palestine water courses, dry during most of the year, all at once fill up with streams of water from sudden rains in winter.

**Ps. 127: Without the LORD all is in vain.** A Wisdom Psalm. Since this Song of Ascents (see Ps.120 n.) is a Wisdom Psalm, it is ascribed to Solomon in the superscription of the MT (see Introduction). 1-2: God is the true source of security and blessing. 3-5: The blessing of having

- and children a reward from him.  
 4 Like arrows in the hand of a  
   fighting man  
   are the sons of a man's youth.  
 5 Happy is the man  
   who has his quiver full of them;  
 such men shall not be put to shame  
   when they confront their enemies  
   in court.

## 128

- 1 Happy are all who fear the LORD,  
   who live according to his will.  
 2 You shall eat the fruit of your own  
   labours,  
   you shall be happy and you shall  
   prosper.  
 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful  
   vine  
   in the heart of your house;  
   your sons shall be like olive-shoots  
   round about your table.  
 4 This is the blessing in store for the  
   man  
   who fears the LORD.  
 5 May the LORD bless you from Zion;  
   may you share the prosperity of  
   Jerusalem  
   all the days of your life,  
 6 and live to see your children's  
   children!

Peace be upon Israel!

## 129

- 1 Often since I was young have men  
   attacked me—  
   let Israel now say—

- often since I was young have men 2  
   attacked me,  
   but never have they prevailed.  
 They scored my back with scourges, 3  
   like ploughmen driving long  
   furrows.  
 Yet the LORD in his justice 4  
   has cut me loose from the bonds  
   of the wicked.  
 Let all enemies of Zion 5  
   be thrown back in shame;  
 let them be like grass growing on 6  
   the roof,  
   which withers before it can shoot,  
   which will never fill a mower's hand 7  
   nor yield an armful for the  
   harvester,  
 so that passers-by will never say to 8  
   them,  
 'The blessing of the LORD be  
   upon you!  
 We bless you in the name of the  
   LORD.'

## 130

- Out of the depths have I called to 1  
   thee, O LORD;  
   Lord, hear my cry. 2  
 Let thy ears be attentive  
   to my plea for mercy.  
 If thou, LORD, shouldst keep 3  
   account of sins,  
   who, O LORD, could hold up his  
   head?  
 But in thee is forgiveness, 4  
   and therefore thou art revered.  
 I wait for the LORD with all my 5  
   soul,  
   I hope for the fulfilment of his  
   word.

many sons. 5: In an Israelite *court*, which was held in an open forum, the larger a man's family, the greater influence he had.

**Ps. 128: May the LORD bless you from Zion.** A Wisdom Psalm; see Ps.120 n. 1-4: It is a frequent theme of Wisdom teaching that the faithful are blessed with a devoted family. 5-6: A prayer for Jerusalem and for peace.

**Ps. 129: Let all enemies of Zion be thrown back in shame.** A Lament of the community in which an individual speaks for the whole nation, apparently in a cultic setting. See Ps.120 n. 1: Israel was *young* in the Exodus from Egypt and in the wandering in the desert. 3: *Ploughmen driving long furrows*: apparently a popular metaphor (also found in a Ugaritic text 62.4-5). 5-8: A curse, prompted by the danger from foes. 6: In Palestine a house has a *flat roof* made of clay from which *grass* sprouts after a rain but quickly *withers* in the sunshine that follows. See Ps.37.2. 8: See Ps.118.26; Ruth 2.4.

**Ps. 130: LORD, hear my cry.** A Lament; see Ps.120 n. This psalm is one of the seven "Penitential Psalms" (others are: Pss. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 143), so called because they are used in the Christian liturgy on occasions of mourning as an expression of repentance. 1: *Depths*: affliction of the spirit because of sinfulness rather than physical misery. 4: God is revered because he is

6	My soul waits <sup>e</sup> for the Lord more eagerly than watchmen for the morning. Like men who watch for the morning,	a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.’ We heard of it in Ephrathah; we came upon it in the region of Jaar.	6
7	O Israel, look for the LORD. For in the LORD is love unfailing, and great is his power to set men free.	Let us enter his dwelling, let us fall in worship at his footstool.	7
8	He alone will set Israel free from all their sins.	Arise, O LORD, and come to thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy power. Let thy priests be clothed in righteousness and let thy loyal servants shout for joy.	8 9

131

1	O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I do not busy myself with great matters or things too marvellous for me.	For thy servant David’s sake reject not thy anointed king. The LORD swore to David an oath which he will not break: ‘A prince of your own line will I set upon your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and heed the teaching that I give them, their sons in turn for all time shall sit upon your throne.’	10
2	No; I submit myself, I account myself lowly, as a weaned child clinging to its mother. <sup>d</sup>	For the LORD has chosen Zion and desired it for his home: ‘This is my resting-place for ever; here will I make my home, for such is my desire. I will richly bless her destitute <sup>e</sup> and satisfy her needy with bread. With salvation will I clothe her priests; her loyal servants shall shout for joy.	11 12
3	O Israel, look for the LORD now and evermore.		13

132

1	O LORD, remember David in the time of his adversity, how he swore to the LORD and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:		14
2	‘I will not enter my house nor will I mount my bed, I will not close my eyes in sleep or my eyelids in slumber, until I find a sanctuary for the LORD,		15
3			16

*c* waits: transposed from after the LORD in verse 5.  
*d* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds as a weaned child clinging to me.  
*e* her destitute: prob. rdg.; Heb. her provisions.

forgiving and not because he is vindictive. 6-7: Men keeping a military or shepherd’s watch during the darkest hours before dawn eagerly await the security of the morning. 8: Set Israel free: compare Isa.44.22.

Ps. 131: I submit myself. A fragment of a Song of Ascents; see Ps.120 n. 1b: The allusion in these words of humility is unclear. 2: For the suggestion that God is like a mother see Isa.66.7-13.

Ps. 132: The LORD swore to David. A Royal Psalm. It was probably used in a liturgical setting, possibly at a coronation ceremony or at a processional ceremony, to commemorate the finding of the Ark (vv. 6-8; see 1 Sam.6.13) and its transfer to Jerusalem (2 Sam. ch. 6.) This latter use put it into the category of the Ascents; see Ps.120 n. 2; Mighty One: a name for God. 5: Dwelling: a shrine to house the Ark of the Covenant above which God was considered to be present in a special way; see Exod.25.22. 6: Ephrathah: Bethlehem, David’s birth-place. Jaar: Kiriath-jearim, a city in Judah to which the Philistines returned the Ark after capturing it in battle; see 1 Sam.6.13-7.2. 7: His footstool: the Ark; see v. 5. 8: Arise, O LORD: a ceremonial exclamation when moving the Ark; see 68.1 and compare Num.10.35. 9: This is possibly a rubric for the priests to put on sacred vestments, i.e. be clothed in righteousness, and for the assembly to shout for joy, i.e. start singing as the procession begins. 11-18: Possibly an oracle by a Temple prophet proclaiming God’s promises to David and to Zion. 17: God lights a lamp for David by establishing his successor (see 1 Kgs.11.36).

- 17 There will I renew the line of  
David's house  
and light a lamp for my anointed  
king;  
18 his enemies will I clothe with shame,  
but on his head shall be a shining  
crown.<sup>7</sup>

## 133

- 1 How good it is and how pleasant  
for brothers to live<sup>f</sup> together!  
2 It is fragrant as oil poured upon  
the head  
and falling over the beard,  
Aaron's beard, when the oil runs down  
over the collar of his vestments.  
3 It is like the dew of Hermon falling  
upon the hills of Zion.  
There the LORD bestows his blessing,  
life for evermore.

## 134

- 1 Come, bless the LORD,  
all you servants of the LORD,  
who stand night after night  
in the house of the LORD.  
2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary  
and bless the LORD.  
3 The LORD, maker of heaven and  
earth,  
bless you from Zion!

## 135

- 1 O praise the LORD.

Praise the name of the LORD;

- praise him, you servants of the  
LORD,  
who stand in the house of the LORD, 2  
in the temple courts of our God.  
Praise the LORD, for that is good; 3  
honour his name with psalms,  
for that is pleasant.  
The LORD has chosen Jacob to be 4  
his own  
and Israel as his special treasure.  
I know that the LORD is great, 5  
that our LORD is above all gods.  
Whatever the LORD pleases, 6  
that he does, in heaven and on  
earth,  
in the sea, in the depths of ocean.  
He brings up the mist from the 7  
ends of the earth,  
he opens rifts<sup>g</sup> for the rain,  
and brings the wind out of his  
storehouses.  
He struck down all the first-born in 8  
Egypt,  
both man and beast.  
In Egypt he sent signs and portents 9  
against Pharaoh and all his  
subjects.  
He struck down mighty nations 10  
and slew great kings,  
Sihon king of the Amorites, Og the 11  
king of Bashan,  
and all the princes of Canaan,  
and gave their land to Israel, 12  
to Israel his people as their  
patrimony.  
O LORD, thy name endures for ever; 13  
thy renown, O LORD, shall last for  
all generations.  
The LORD will give his people 14  
justice

*f* Or to worship. *g* Prob. rdg.; Heb. lightnings.

**Ps. 133: How pleasant for brothers to live together.** A Wisdom Psalm; see Introduction. The united community of Israel is seen to be as beneficent as the oil that conferred the blessings of the priesthood and the dew that brought refreshment in the heat. **2:** *Oil upon the head* was part of the ceremony of priestly consecration which brought a person into a brotherly relationship of Temple ministers; see Exod.29.7. **3:** *Hermon* is the highest mountain in Syria, whose peak is almost always covered with snow and lost in mist. It was believed by the ancients to be the source of the refreshing *dew* that settled on the parched countryside to the south of Palestine.

**Ps. 134: The LORD bless you from Zion.** A Benediction which closes the Songs of Ascents (Ps.120 n.) with a blessing. It consists of a liturgical dialogue between pilgrims who leave and the priests who remain on duty in the Temple at night, 1-2: Encouragement given to the priests, the *servants of the LORD*, by the pilgrims. **3:** Blessing imparted by the priests in the name of the LORD, from whom all blessings in *heaven* and on *earth* come. *Maker of heaven and earth:* also used in 121.2 and 124.8.

**Ps. 135: O praise the LORD.** A Hymn which begins and ends with a ritual call to worship. It is composed almost entirely of allusions to, or borrowings from, other psalms and passages of the Bible. **7:** In the absence of meteorological science, the formation of *mist* was a mystery. Also, rain was thought to fall from *rifts* opened by God in the vault containing the waters above the heaven; see Gen.1.6-8. **8-12:** God's deeds in history. **10:** For the defeat of *kings* see Num.

	and have compassion on his servants.	his love endures for ever, and brought Israel from among them;	11
15	The gods of the nations are idols of silver and gold, made by the hands of men.	his love endures for ever. With strong hand and outstretched arm,	12
16	They have mouths that cannot speak and eyes that cannot see;	his love endures for ever, he divided the Red Sea in two,	13
17	they have ears that do not hear, and there is no breath in their nostrils. <sup>b</sup>	his love endures for ever, and made Israel pass through it, his love endures for ever;	14
18	Their makers grow like them, and so do all who trust in them.	but Pharaoh and his host he swept into the sea;	15
19	O house of Israel, bless the LORD; O house of Aaron, bless the LORD.	his love endures for ever. He led his people through the wilderness;	16
20	O house of Levi, bless the LORD; you who fear the LORD, bless the LORD.	his love endures for ever. He struck down great kings; his love endures for ever.	17
21	Blessed from Zion be the LORD who dwells in Jerusalem.	He slew mighty kings, his love endures for ever, Sihon king of the Amorites, his love endures for ever, and Og the king of Bashan; his love endures for ever.	18 19 20

O praise the LORD.

136

1	It is good to give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures for ever.	He gave their land to Israel, his love endures for ever,	21
2	Give thanks to the God of gods; his love endures for ever.	to Israel his servant as their patrimony;	22
3	Give thanks to the Lord of lords; his love endures for ever.	his love endures for ever. He remembered us when we were cast down,	23
4	Alone he works great marvels; his love endures for ever.	his love endures for ever, and rescued us from our enemies;	24
5	In wisdom he made the heavens; his love endures for ever.	his love endures for ever. He gives food to all his creatures;	25
6	He laid the earth upon the waters; his love endures for ever.	his love endures for ever. Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his love endures for ever.	26
7	He made the great lights, his love endures for ever,		
8	the sun to rule by day, his love endures for ever,		
9	the moon and the stars to rule by night;		
	his love endures for ever.		
10	He struck down the first-born of the Egyptians,		

137

By the rivers of Babylon we sat  
down and wept

*h Prob. rdg.; Heb. mouths.*

21.21-35. 15-18: Similar to 115.3-8. 19-21: For the house of *Israel, Aaron*, etc., see 115.9-11 n.  
**Ps. 136: His love endures forever.** A Hymn. In the Jewish liturgy it is called "the Great Hallel" since it was recited at the Passover meal after the "Lesser Hallel," i.e. Pss.113-118. In structure it is a litany; that is, the refrain, "his love endures forever," in the second half of every verse, was sung by the congregation in response to the first half of the verse sung by a soloist. The basic structure is an introduction (vv. 1-3), God's majesty in creation (vv. 4-9), his greatness in the Exodus (vv. 10-15), in the Wilderness (vv. 16-20), in the Conquest (vv. 21-22), his deliverance in the time of the Judges (vv. 23-25), and a conclusion (v. 26). 17-20: Num.21.21-35; compare Ps.135.11. 23-25: Compare 135.13-18.

**Ps. 137: We sat down and wept.** A Lament sung in the Exile after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. 1: *Rivers of Babylon*: the Tigris and Euphrates and the irrigation

when we remembered Zion.  
 2 There on the willow-trees<sup>d</sup>  
 we hung up our harps,  
 3 for there those who carried us off  
 demanded music and singing,  
 and our captors called on us to be  
 merry:  
 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'  
 4 How could we sing the LORD's song  
 in a foreign land?  
 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
 let my right hand wither away;  
 6 let my tongue cling to the roof of  
 my mouth  
 if I do not remember you,  
 if I do not set Jerusalem  
 above my highest joy.  
 7 Remember, O LORD, against the  
 people of Edom  
 the day of Jerusalem's fall,  
 when they said, 'Down with it,  
 down with it,  
 down to its very foundations!'  
 8 O Babylon, Babylon the destroyer,  
 happy the man who repays you  
 for all that you did to us!  
 9 Happy is he who shall seize your  
 children  
 and dash them against the rock.

## 138

1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with all  
 my heart;  
 boldly, O God, will I sing psalms  
 to thee.<sup>j</sup>  
 2 I will bow down towards thy holy  
 temple,  
 for thy love and faithfulness I will  
 praise thy name;  
 for thou hast made thy promise wide  
 as the heavens.

When I called to thee thou didst 3  
 answer me  
 and make me bold and valiant-  
 hearted.  
 Let all the kings of the earth praise<sup>k</sup> 4  
 thee, O LORD,  
 when they hear the words thou  
 hast spoken;  
 and let them sing of<sup>l</sup> the LORD's 5  
 ways,  
 for great is the glory of the LORD.  
 For the LORD, high as he is, cares 6  
 for the lowly,  
 and from afar he humbles the  
 proud.  
 Though I walk among foes thou dost 7  
 preserve my life,  
 exerting thy power against the rage  
 of my enemies,  
 and with thy right hand thou  
 savest me.  
 The LORD will accomplish his 8  
 purpose for me.  
 Thy true love, O LORD, endures  
 for ever;  
 leave not thy work unfinished.

## 139

LORD, thou hast examined me and 1  
 knowest me.  
 Thou knowest all, whether I sit 2  
 down or rise up;  
 thou hast discerned my thoughts  
 from afar.  
 Thou hast traced my journey and 3  
 my resting places,  
 and art familiar with all my paths.  
 For there is not a word on my 4  
 tongue

*i* Or poplars.

*j* boldly . . . thee: or I will sing psalms to thee before  
 the gods.

*k* Or confess. *l* Or walk in.

ditches which branched off from them. 3: A group of psalms which extol Jerusalem, the "city of God" are called the *songs*, or canticles, of *Zion*; they are Pss. 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, and 122. 7: *The people of Edom* (a country to the southeast of Judah), allied themselves with the Babylonians in plundering Jerusalem after the *day* of its capture in June-July, 587 B.C.; see Ezek. 35.5; Obad. 10-14. 9: In ancient warfare *children* were often cruelly killed.

**Ps. 138: I will praise thee, O LORD.** A Thanksgiving Psalm, probably a royal one sung in the Temple. 1: The word "gods" in Tfn. *j* can also mean godlike beings and may be translated as "angels"; some versions interpret it "kings" or "judges." 2: *Promise wide as the heavens*: God offers everything to man, including himself. 6: Not only does God stay *afar* from the *proud*, those who aspire to be his equals, but he also humbles them, in bringing them lower than they were.

**Ps. 139: Slay the wicked.** A Lament (see Introduction). Man's life is mysterious; and since God has shown himself all-wise and all-powerful in creating man, he knows intimately the inner soul of the poet and his need for guidance. 2: *Sit down or rise up*: all of man's actions.

	but thou, LORD, knowest them all. <sup>m</sup>	day by day they were fashioned, not one of them was late in growing. <sup>n</sup>	
5	Thou hast kept close guard before me and behind and hast spread thy hand over me.	How deep I find thy thoughts, O God,	17
6	Such knowledge is beyond my understanding, so high that I cannot reach it.	how inexhaustible their themes! Can I count them? They outnumber	18
7	Where can I escape from thy spirit? Where can I flee from thy presence?	the grains of sand; to finish the count, my years must equal thine.	
8	If I climb up to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, again I find thee.	O God, if only thou wouldst slay the wicked!	19
9	If I take my flight to the frontiers of the morning or dwell at the limit of the western sea,	If those men of blood would but leave me in peace— those who provoke thee with deliberate evil	20
10	even there thy hand will meet me and thy right hand will hold me fast.	and rise in vicious rebellion against thee!	
11	If I say, 'Surely darkness will steal over me, night will close around me',	How I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee!	21
12	darkness is no darkness for thee and night is luminous as day; to thee both dark and light are one.	I am cut to the quick when they oppose thee; I hate them with undying hatred; I hold them all my enemies.	22
13	Thou it was who didst fashion my inward parts; thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.	Examine me, O God, and know my thoughts; test me, and understand my misgivings.	23
14	I will praise thee, for thou dost fill me with awe; wonderful thou art, and wonderful thy works.	Watch lest I follow any path that grieves thee; guide me in the ancient <sup>o</sup> ways.	24
	Thou knowest me through and through:		
15	my body is no mystery to thee, how I was secretly kneaded into shape and patterned in the depths of the earth.	140	
16	Thou didst see my limbs unformed in the womb, and in thy book they are all recorded;	Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men: 1 keep me safe from violent men, whose heads are full of wicked 2 schemes, who stir up contention day after day. Their tongues are sharp as serpents' 3 fangs;	

*m* For . . . them all: or If there is any offence on my tongue, thou, LORD, knowest it all.  
*n* was late in growing: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
*o* Or everlasting.

**8:** Although God's knowledge encompassed *Sheol* (Job 26.6), he was ordinarily considered absent from it (Job 3.13–19), the view here being unique. **9:** The great mysteries for the ancient man affecting his life daily were the *frontiers of the morning*, "the home of light" and the limit of the western sea, the Mediterranean, the "dwelling of darkness"; see Job 38.12–20. **15:** *Depths of the earth:* the womb, the emphasis being on the mystery of the process that is at work. **16:** *Thy book:* see 56.8 n. **22:** For the Hebrew, God's cause is the cause of his faithful, and vice versa; compare Mt.12.30. **24:** *Ancient ways:* the fidelity of the patriarchs to God even when his guidance was a mystery to them.

**Ps. 140: Rescue me, O LORD.** A Lament (see Introduction), a lengthy appeal for deliverance from enemies. **1–2:** A prayer for help. **3–7:** The entrapment by the wicked. **3:** *Tongues:* possibly



- on their lips is spiders' poison.  
 4 Guard me, O LORD, from wicked men;  
 keep me safe from violent men,  
 who plan to thrust me out of the  
 way.  
 5 Arrogant men set hidden traps for  
 me,  
 rogues spread their nets  
 and lay snares for me along the  
 path.  
 6 I said, 'O LORD, thou art my God;  
 O LORD, hear my plea for mercy.  
 7 O LORD God, stronghold of my  
 safety,  
 thou hast shielded my head in the  
 day of battle.  
 8-9 Frustrate, O LORD, their designs  
 against me;  
 never let the wicked gain their  
 purpose.  
 If any of those at my table rise  
 against me,  
 let their own conspiracies be  
 their undoing.  
 10 Let burning coals be tipped upon  
 them;  
 let them be plunged into the  
 miry depths,  
 never to rise again.  
 11 Slander shall find no home in the  
 land;  
 evil and violence shall be hounded  
 to destruction.'  
 12 I know that the LORD will give their  
 due to the needy  
 and justice to the downtrodden.  
 13 Righteous men will surely give  
 thanks to thy name;  
 the upright will worship in thy  
 presence.
- listen to my cry when I call to  
 thee.  
 Let my prayer be like incense duly 2  
 set before thee  
 and my raised hands like the  
 evening sacrifice.  
 Set a guard, O LORD, over my 3  
 mouth;  
 keep watch at the door of my lips.  
 Turn not my heart to sinful thoughts 4  
 nor to any pursuit of evil courses.  
 The evildoers appal me;<sup>p</sup>  
 not for me the delights of their  
 table.  
 I would rather be buffeted by the 5  
 righteous  
 and reproved by good men.  
 My head shall not be anointed with  
 the oil of wicked men,  
 for that would make me a party to  
 their crimes.  
 They shall founder on the rock of 6  
 justice  
 and shall learn how acceptable  
 my words are.  
 Their bones shall be scattered at the 7  
 mouth of Sheol,  
 like splinters of wood or stone on  
 the ground.  
 But my eyes are fixed on thee, O 8  
 LORD God;  
 thou art my refuge; leave me not  
 unprotected.  
 Keep me from the trap which they 9  
 have set for me,  
 from the snares of evildoers.  
 Let the wicked fall into their own 10  
 nets,  
 whilst I pass in safety, all alone.

## 142

- 141
- 1 O LORD, I call to thee, come  
 quickly to my aid;
- I cry aloud to the LORD;  
 to the LORD I plead aloud for  
 mercy.

<sup>p</sup> appal me: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* with men.

an allusion to a curse; compare 109.28. 6: His plea is based on his confession: *thou art my God*. 8-11: A curse on the enemies. 8-9: *My table*: compare 41.9. 12-13: The psalmist's trust.

Ps. 141: Listen to my cry. A Lament (see Introduction), with the usual vow absent. 2: The fragrant smoke of *incense* rising from the altar was a symbol of *prayer* acceptable to God; see Rev.5.8. *Raised hands* are a gesture of supplication which the poet prays may be acceptable as an *evening sacrifice* which God had commanded; see Exod.29.38-42. 3: *Guard over mouth*: against sinful words. 4: Anointing oneself with oil was a sign of prosperity and festivity; see 23.5; Ezek.16.9. 6: God is often called the *rock* on which the wicked founder; see 18.2; compare Lk.20.18. 7: *Bones at the mouth of Sheol*: symbol of shameful death.

Ps. 142: I cry to thee. O LORD. A Lament (see Introduction). See Ps.30.8 and 77.1.

2	I pour out my complaint before him and tell over my troubles in his presence.	so that my spirit fails me and my heart is dazed with despair.	4
3	When my spirit is faint within me, thou art there to watch over my steps. In the path that I should take they have hidden a snare.	I dwell upon the years long past, upon the memory of all that thou hast done; the wonders of thy creation fill my mind.	5
4	I look to my right hand, I find no friend by my side; no way of escape is in sight, no one comes to rescue me.	To thee I lift my outspread hands, athirst for thee in a thirsty land. LORD, make haste to answer, for my spirit faints.	6
5	I cry to thee, O LORD, and say, 'Thou art my refuge; thou art all I have in the land of the living.	Do not hide thy face from me or I shall be like those who go down to the abyss.	7
6	Give me a hearing when I cry, for I am brought very low; save me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me.	In the morning let me know thy true love; I have put my trust in thee. Show me the way that I must take; to thee I offer all my heart.	8
7	Set me free from my prison, so that I may praise thy name. The righteous shall crown me with garlands, <sup>q</sup> when thou givest me my due reward.	Deliver me, LORD, from my enemies, for with thee have I sought refuge. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; in thy gracious kindness, show me the level road. Keep me safe, O LORD, for the honour of thy name and, as thou art just, release me from my distress.	9
		10	10
		11	11

143

1	LORD, hear my prayer; be true to thyself, and listen to my pleading; then in thy righteousness answer me.	In thy love for me, reduce my enemies to silence and bring destruction on all who oppress me; for I am thy servant.	12
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2 Bring not thy servant to trial before  
thee;  
against thee no man on earth can  
be right.

144

3	An enemy has hunted me down, has ground my living body under foot and plunged me into darkness like a man long dead,	Blessed is the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle; my help that never fails, my fortress,	1
		2	2

<sup>q</sup> crown me with garlands: or crowd round me.

4: *Right hand*: see 109.6 n. 5: *Land of the living*: this earth. 7-8: The vow usual in a Lament. 7: *Prison*: probably meant figuratively for the feeling of being hemmed in by enemies. *Praise thy name*: the vow as a motive for deliverance. *Reward*: liberation and restoration to an honorable status surrounded by the *righteous*.

Ps. 143: LORD, make haste to answer. A Lament (see Introduction). This is the last of the so-called "Penitential Psalms" (see Ps.130 n.). The poet confesses that because of his sins he does not deserve to be heard in strict justice (vv. 1-2) but only in God's love (vv. 8,10,12). 1: God will be true to himself when he listens to the pleas of the psalmist since his attributes are: *righteousness*, true love (v. 8), and gracious kindness (v. 10); see 86.15 n. 7: *Hide thy face*: see 10.11 n. *Abyss*: Sheol, the place of the dead. 8-12: An appeal to God's love for deliverance and for the destruction of the enemies. 8: In the darkness and loneliness of night God seemed absent, but *morning* was the true indication of God's love.

Ps. 144: *Rescue me from the cruel sword*. A Lament (see Introduction), probably by a king (vv. 10-11). The first part, vv. 1-11, is almost completely borrowed from, or inspired by, other

my strong tower and my refuge,  
my shield in which I trust,  
he who puts nations under my  
feet.

- 3 O LORD, what is man that thou  
carest for him?  
What is mankind? Why give a  
thought to them?
- 4 Man is no more than a puff of wind,  
his days a passing shadow.
- 5 If thou, LORD, but tilt the heavens,  
down they come;  
touch the mountains, and they  
smoke.
- 6 Shoot forth thy lightning flashes,  
far and wide,  
and send thy arrows whistling.
- 7 Stretch out thy hands from on high  
to rescue me  
and snatch me from great waters.<sup>r</sup>
- 9 I will sing a new song to thee, O  
God,  
psalms to the music of a ten-stringed  
lute.
- 10 O God who gavest victory to kings  
and deliverance to thy servant  
David,  
rescue me from the cruel sword;  
snatch me from the power of  
foreign foes,  
whose every word is false  
and all their oaths are perjury.
- 12 Happy<sup>s</sup> are we whose sons in their  
early prime  
stand like tall towers,  
our daughters like sculptured  
pillars  
at the corners of a palace.
- 13 Our barns are full and furnish  
plentiful provision;  
our sheep bear lambs in thousands  
upon thousands;
- 14 the oxen in our fields are fat and  
sleek;  
there is no miscarriage or untimely  
birth,

no cries of distress in our public  
places.  
Happy are the people in such a  
case as ours;  
happy the people who have the  
LORD for their God. 15

## 145

- I will extol thee, O God my king,  
and bless thy name for ever and  
ever. 1
- Every day will I bless thee  
and praise thy name for ever and  
ever. 2
- Great is the LORD and worthy of  
all praise;  
his greatness is unfathomable. 3
- One generation shall commend thy  
works to another  
and set forth thy mighty deeds. 4
- My theme shall be thy marvellous  
works,  
the glorious splendour of thy  
majesty. 5
- Men shall declare thy mighty acts  
with awe  
and tell of thy great deeds. 6
- They shall recite the story of thy  
abounding goodness  
and sing of thy righteousness  
with joy. 7
- The LORD is gracious and  
compassionate,  
forbearing, and constant in his  
love. 8
- The LORD is good to all men,  
and his tender care rests upon all  
his creatures. 9
- All thy creatures praise thee, LORD,  
and thy servants bless thee. 10
- They talk of the glory of thy kingdom  
and tell of thy might, 11

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds from the power of foreign  
foes, (8) whose every word is false and all their  
oaths are perjury (cp. verse. 11).*

<sup>s</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. Who.*

psalms: vv. 1-2 = 18.2-3; v. 3 = 8.4-5; v. 4 = 39.5; v. 5 = 18.10; v. 9 = 18.49-50. 9: The  
vow usual in a Lament. 12-14: The blessing of peace and prosperity promised to Israel for  
obeying the Law; see Deut.28.1-12. 12: *Like sculptured pillars*: statuesque.

Ps. 145: *I will extol thee, O God my king*. A Hymn, many of whose phrases are similar to other  
psalms and other parts of the Bible. It extols the goodness and greatness of God. The preceding  
six psalms (139-144) are Laments, but the ensuing and last six (145-150) are Hymns. This  
acrostic psalm (see Ps.111 n.) lacks a verse for the Heb. letter *nun* in the MT, possibly as a  
result of a copyist's omission; its place would be between vv. 13 and 14. 8-9: The unique attri-

12 they proclaim to their fellows how  
mighty are thy deeds,  
how glorious the majesty of thy  
kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting  
kingdom,  
and thy dominion stands for all  
generations.

14 In all his promises the LORD keeps  
faith,  
he is unchanging in all his works;  
the LORD holds up those who  
stumble  
and straightens backs which are  
bent.

15 The eyes of all are lifted to thee in  
hope,  
and thou givest them their food  
when it is due;

16 with open and bountiful hand  
thou givest what they desire<sup>t</sup> to  
every living creature.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways,  
unchanging in all that he does;

18 very near is the LORD to those  
who call to him,  
who call to him in singleness of  
heart.

19 He fulfils their desire if only they  
fear him;  
he hears their cry and saves them.

20 The LORD watches over all who  
love him  
but sends the wicked to their  
doom.

21 My tongue shall speak out the  
praises of the LORD,  
and all creatures shall bless his  
holy name  
for ever and ever.

Praise the LORD, my soul.  
As long as I live I will praise the LORD;  
I will sing psalms to my God all  
my life long.

Put no faith in princes,  
in any man, who has no power  
to save.

He breathes his last breath,  
he returns to the dust;  
and in that same hour all his  
thinking ends.

Happy the man whose helper is the  
God of Jacob,  
whose hopes are in the LORD his  
God,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who serves wrongdoers as he has  
sworn  
and deals out justice to the  
oppressed.

The LORD feeds the hungry  
and sets the prisoner free.

The LORD restores sight to the  
blind  
and straightens backs which are  
bent;

the LORD loves the righteous  
and watches over the stranger;  
the LORD gives heart to the orphan  
and widow  
but turns the course of the wicked  
to their ruin.

The LORD shall reign for ever,  
thy God, O Zion, for all  
generations.

O praise the LORD.

146

147

1 O praise the LORD.

O praise the LORD. 1  
<sup>t</sup> they desire: or thou wilt.

butes of God in his dealing with Israel and all men; see 86.15 n. 14-20: God's responsive attention to the needs of the faithful. 21: The praise of God, an echo of vv. 1-4.

Ps. 146: Praise the LORD, my soul. A Hymn. The last five of the psalms (146-150) begin and end with O praise the LORD, Heb. "Hallelujah". 1-2: The praise of God. 3-4: Compare 144.3-4. 4: Returns to the dust: see Gen.3.19. His thinking: his planning and projects. 5-10: The great deeds, past and present, of God the Creator. 6-9: In extolling God's deeds on behalf of the poor in the present there is a subtle allusion to his deeds on behalf of Israel, the oppressed, the hungry, the prisoner, the bent of back in the Exodus.

Ps. 147: How good it is to sing psalms to our God. A Hymn, possibly two separate psalms joined together; the Sept. and Vg. treat this psalm as two (vv. 1-11 and 12-20) with a Hallelujah (see Ps.146 n.) in vv. 1 and 20. 1: The praise of God. 2-11: His power in history and over nature;

- How good it is to sing psalms to  
our God!  
How pleasant to praise him!
- 2 The LORD is rebuilding Jerusalem;  
he gathers in the scattered sons of  
Israel.
- 3 It is he who heals the broken in  
spirit  
and binds up their wounds,  
4 he who numbers the stars one by  
one  
and names them one and all.
- 5 Mighty is our Lord and great his  
power,  
and his wisdom beyond all  
telling.
- 6 The LORD gives new heart to the  
humble  
and brings evildoers down to the  
dust.
- 7 Sing to the LORD a song of  
thanksgiving,  
sing psalms to the harp in honour  
of our God.
- 8 He veils the sky in clouds  
and prepares rain for the earth;  
he clothes the hills with grass  
and green plants for the use of  
man.
- 9 He gives the cattle their food  
and the young ravens all that they  
gather.
- 10 The LORD sets no store by the  
strength of a horse  
and takes no pleasure in a  
runner's legs;  
11 his pleasure is in those who fear  
him,  
who wait for his true love.
- 12 Sing to the LORD, Jerusalem;  
O Zion, praise your God,  
13 for he has put new bars in your  
gates;  
he has blessed your children  
within them.
- 14 He has brought peace to your realm  
and given you fine wheat in  
plenty.
- He sends his command to the ends 15  
of the earth,  
and his word runs swiftly.  
He showers down snow, white as 16  
wool,  
and sprinkles hoar-frost thick as  
ashes;  
crystals of ice he scatters like 17  
bread-crumbs;  
he sends the cold, and the water  
stands frozen,  
he utters his word, and the ice is 18  
melted;  
he blows with his wind and the  
waters flow.  
To Jacob he makes his word known, 19  
his statutes and decrees to Israel;  
he has not done this for any other 20  
nation,  
nor taught them his decrees.
- O praise the LORD.

## 148

- O praise the LORD. 1
- Praise the LORD out of heaven;  
praise him in the heights. 2
- Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his host. 3
- Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars;  
praise him, heaven of heavens, 4  
and you waters above the heavens.
- Let them all praise the name of the 5  
LORD,  
for he spoke the word and they  
were created;  
he established them for ever and ever 6  
by an ordinance which shall never  
pass away.
- Praise the LORD from the earth, 7  
you water-spouts and ocean  
depths;  
fire and hail, snow and ice, 8  
gales of wind obeying his voice;

his goodness to the faithful. 2: A clue to the postexilic date of the poem. 12–20: God's special care of Jerusalem and Israel. 15: God's word here is presented as a messenger, an active power in the world.

**Ps. 148:** Let all praise the name of the LORD. A Hymn; see Ps. 146 n. 1–12: All that God has created should praise him. 2: *Host*: the armies of angels; compare Mt. 26.53. 3: *Heaven of heavens*: the highest heaven, i.e. God's dwelling, where he is enthroned above the vault and the heavenly reservoir of waters: see Gen. 1.6–8. 5: *He spoke the word*: compare Gen. ch. 1

<p>9 all mountains and hills; all fruit-trees and all cedars; 10 wild beasts and cattle, creeping things and winged birds; 11 kings and all earthly rulers, princes and judges over the whole earth; 12 young men and maidens, old men and young together. 13 Let all praise the name of the LORD, for his name is high above all others, and his majesty above earth and heaven; 14 he has exalted his people in the pride of power and crowned with praise his loyal servants, all Israel, the people nearest him.</p>	<p>let them shout for joy as they kneel before him. Let the high praises of God be on their lips and a two-edged sword in their hand, to wreak vengeance on the nations and to chastise the heathen; to load their kings with chains and put their nobles in irons; to execute the judgement decreed against them— this is the glory of all his faithful servants.</p>	<p>6 6 7 8 9</p>
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O praise the LORD.

O praise the LORD.

150

O praise the LORD. 1

149

1 O praise the LORD.

O praise God in his holy place,  
praise him in the vault of heaven,  
the vault of his power;  
praise him for his mighty works,  
praise him for his immeasurable  
greatness.  
Praise him with fanfares on the  
trumpet,  
praise him upon lute and harp;  
praise him with tambourines and  
dancing,  
praise him with flute and strings;  
praise him with the clash of cymbals,  
praise him with triumphant  
cymbals;  
let everything that has breath  
praise the LORD! 6

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
sing his praise in the assembly of  
the faithful;  
2 let Israel rejoice in his maker  
and the sons of Zion exult in their  
king.  
3 Let them praise his name in the  
dance,  
and sing him psalms with tambourine  
and harp.  
4 For the LORD accepts the service of  
his people;  
he crowns his humble folk with  
victory.  
5 Let his faithful servants exult in  
triumph;

O praise the LORD.

and Ps.33.6. 13-14: Israel has a very special place but should not be alone in praising the name of the LORD.

Ps. 149: Sing to the LORD a new song. A Hymn; see Ps.146 n. It reflects a liturgical setting. 3: Dance seems to be prescribed as part of the religious ceremony; see 2 Sam.6.14; Exod.15.20. 4-9: A military victory appears to be reflected.

Ps. 150: O praise God in his holy place. A Hymn. This is the last of Hallelujah psalms (see Ps.146 n.) and it also is a final doxology to Book 5 and to all the psalms. A festival seems to be the background (vv. 3-5). 1: Holy place: the Temple. 3-5: The various musical instruments used in the Temple liturgy are indicated. 6: Praise from all living beings, the note on which the Psalter closes.

# PROVERBS

The Book of Proverbs is a distillate of centuries of Israelite instruction in the home, court, and school. Called by some a foreign body in the Bible, Proverbs ignores major religious themes (covenant, patriarchs, Exodus, Sinai) and makes creative use of non-Israelite wisdom traditions, particularly Egyptian. In substance, it represents the results of a search for a divinely sustained order in the lessons derived from human experience. Prudence plus knowledge are thought to have been conferred by God, and these are regarded as an authoritative repository, entrusted to the care of fathers, teachers, and royal counselors. All insight being deemed a gift of God, Proverbs was thought of as revealed wisdom and hence was incorporated into Scripture.

Four long collections and five short appendixes are represented. Several headings indicate royal patronage (1.1; 10.1; 25.1); these and others (22.17; 24.23; 30.1; 31.1) testify to many centuries in which material accumulated. Chs. 1–9, by far the most religious collection, are the latest; these chapters have stylistic affinities with Deuteronomy and prophecy. The oldest collections, surely preexilic, are 10.1–22.16 and 25.1–29.27; these are basically “secular.” The teachings generally reflect an agricultural economy and are “this worldly” and optimistic despite a rigid principle of retribution. There is a characteristic tendency toward sharp contrast, such as rich/poor, wise/fool, good/evil.

	<i>Advice to the reader</i>		the sayings of wise men and their riddles.	
1	The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel,		The fear of the LORD is the beginning <sup>a</sup> of knowledge,	7
2	by which men will come to wisdom and instruction and will understand words that bring understanding,		but fools scorn wisdom and discipline.	
3	and by which they will gain a well-instructed intelligence, righteousness, justice, and probity.		Attend, my son, to your father's instruction	8
4	The simple will be endowed with shrewdness and the young with knowledge and prudence.		and do not reject the teaching of your mother;	
5	If the wise man listens, he will increase his learning, and the man of understanding will acquire skill		for they are a garland of grace on your head	9
6	to understand proverbs and parables,		and a chain of honour round your neck.	
			My son, bad men may tempt you <sup>b</sup> and say,	10, 11
			<small>a Or chief part. b Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds do not come, or, with some MSS., do not consent.</small>	

**1.1–7.27: Advice to the reader.** This section differs both stylistically and thematically from the subsequent ones. Only here are there discussions of single topics in long paragraphs and also reflections of Deut. and the Prophets. The personification of Wisdom and Folly is a major theme of the chapters; the picture of Lady Wisdom is a derivative of the portrait of Dame Folly. It is not fully clear how one is to view the allusions to the “foreign woman,” whether: (1) she may be a participant in a fertility cult, that is, a sacred prostitute; or (2) simply a loose woman, foreign because her bad behavior sets her apart. In either case, the chapters burn with the intense conviction that since all knowledge derives from God it instructs man in the path of life. The superscription (1.1) recalls a tradition, 1 Kgs. 4.29–34, that Solomon composed or compiled proverbs and songs.

**1.2–6: Introduction to the several collections.** The editor gives reasons for studying the proverbial traditions. 6: The Heb. word for proverb (*masal*) implies a “likeness” or an authoritative word, while that for riddle (*hidah*) suggests an enigmatic saying.

**1.7–9: Recommendation of wisdom.** 7: This motto of the book occurs again at 9.10, and in expanded form in Job 28.28 and Ecclus. 1.14. It is in creative tension with the anthropocentricity (“centering on man”) of most wisdom texts. *Fools*: a moral rather than an intellectual judgment.

**8:** A metaphor for student, *my son* derives from the family setting in which the father instructed his children in the way of the wise. The term is used frequently in Egyptian wisdom literature for “pupil.” **9:** *Garland*: a motif common in Egyptian wisdom literature.

**1.10–19: Warning against the sinner's style of life.** The attractiveness of evil is negated by its

	'Come with us; let us lie in wait for someone's blood; let us waylay <sup>c</sup> an innocent man who has done us no harm.	and would have nothing to do with my reproof, I in my turn will laugh at your doom	26
12	Like Sheol we will swallow them alive; though blameless, they shall be like men who go down to the abyss.	and deride you when terror comes upon you, when terror comes upon you like a hurricane	27
13	We shall take rich treasure of every sort and fill our homes with booty; throw in your lot with us, and we will have a common purse.'	and your doom descends like a whirlwind. <sup>f</sup> Insolent men delight in their insolence; stupid men hate knowledge. <sup>g</sup>	
14	My son, do not go along with them, keep clear of their ways;	When they call upon me, I will not answer them;	28
15	they hasten hot-foot into crime, impatient to shed blood.	when they search for me, they shall not find me.	
16	In vain is a net spread wide if any bird that flies can see it.	Because they hate knowledge and have not chosen to fear the LORD,	29
17	These men lie in wait for their own blood and waylay <sup>c</sup> no one but themselves.	because they have not accepted my counsel and have spurned all my reproof,	30
18	This is the fate <sup>d</sup> of men eager for ill-gotten gain: it robs those who get it of their lives.	they shall eat the fruits of their behaviour and have a surfeit of their own devices;	31
19	Wisdom cries aloud in the open air, she raises her voice in public places;	for the simpleton turns a deaf ear and comes to grief,	32
20	she calls at the top of the busy street and proclaims at the open gates of the city:	and the stupid are ruined by their own complacency.	
21	'Simple fools, how long will you be content with your simplicity?'	But whoever listens to me shall live without a care, undisturbed by fear of misfortune.'	33
22	If only you would respond to my reproof, I would give you my counsel and teach you my precepts.	My son, if you take my words to heart and lay up my commands in your mind,	2
23	But because you refused to listen when I called, because no one attended when I stretched out my hand,		
24	because you spurned all my advice		

*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. store up.  
*d* This . . . fate: prob. rdg.; Heb. Such are the courses.  
*e* The rest of verse 22 transposed to follow verse 27.  
*f* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds when anguish and distress come upon you.  
*g* Insolent . . . knowledge: transposed from end of verse 22.

ultimate result; compare Wis.2.1–20. 12: *Sheol*: the shadowy realm of the dead. 17: A popular proverb enforces the warning against gullibly paying heed to the enticing criminal.

1.20–33: **Wisdom in the role of prophethood.** In striking prophetic style personified Wisdom pleads for a hearing and rebukes those who pay her no heed. 20–21: Unafraid of competition, Wisdom speaks publicly at the *gates*, the center of economic and judicial activity. 23: *Give you my counsel*: lit. "I will pour out my spirit upon you . . ." recalling prophetic language, e.g. Isa.44.3. 24: The *hand* of God may be *stretched out* either to strengthen or save a people or else to punish them; the former is intended here, and resembles numerous prophetic texts (see the refrain in Isa.5.25; 9.17,21; 10.4). The outstretched hand is a frequent Deuteronomistic expression for God's saving deeds in defeating the enemies of his people. 32: *Turns a deaf ear*: turns away, i.e. waywardness. 33: See 3.24–26.

2.1–22: **The fruits of wisdom.** By diligent attention to the precepts of the sages one becomes heir to (1) insight into religious knowledge; (2) divine protection, both from evil ways and from



- 2 giving your attention to wisdom  
and your mind to understanding,  
3 if you summon discernment to your  
aid  
and invoke understanding,  
4 if you seek her out like silver  
and dig for her like buried treasure,  
5 then you will understand the fear of  
the LORD  
and attain to the knowledge of God;  
6 for the LORD bestows wisdom  
and teaches knowledge and  
understanding.  
7 Out of his store he endows the  
upright with ability  
as a shield for those who live  
blameless lives;  
8 for he guards the course of justice  
and keeps watch over the way of his  
loyal servants.
- 9 Then you will understand what is  
right and just  
and keep<sup>h</sup> only to the good man's  
path;  
10 for wisdom will sink into your mind,  
and knowledge will be your heart's  
delight.  
11 Prudence will keep watch over you,  
understanding will guard you,  
12 it will save you from evil ways  
and from men whose talk is  
subversive,  
13 who forsake the honest course  
to walk in ways of darkness,  
14 who rejoice in doing evil  
and exult in evil and subversive acts,  
15 whose own ways are crooked,  
whose tracks are devious.  
16 It will save you from the adulteress,  
from the loose woman with her  
seductive words,  
17 who forsakes the teaching of her  
childhood  
and has forgotten the covenant of  
her God;  
18 for her path<sup>i</sup> runs downhill towards  
death,
- and her course is set for the land of  
the dead.  
No one who resorts to her<sup>j</sup> finds his 19  
way back  
or regains the path to life.
- See then that you follow the 20  
footsteps of good men  
and keep to the course of the  
righteous;  
for the upright shall dwell on earth, 21  
and blameless men remain there;  
but the wicked shall be uprooted 22  
from it  
and traitors weeded out.
- My son, do not forget my teaching, 3  
but guard my commands in your  
heart;  
for long life and years in plenty 2  
will they bring you, and prosperity  
as well.  
Let your good faith and loyalty 3  
never fail,  
but bind them about your neck.  
Thus will you win favour and 4  
success  
in the sight of God and man.
- Put all your trust in the LORD 5  
and do not rely on your own  
understanding.  
Think of him in all your ways, 6  
and he will smooth your path.  
Do not think how wise you are, 7  
but fear the LORD and turn from  
evil.  
Let that be the medicine to keep you 8  
in health,  
the liniment for your limbs.  
Honour the LORD with your wealth 9  
as the first charge on all your  
earnings;  
then your granaries will be filled 10  
with corn<sup>k</sup>

*h* keep: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* uprightness.

*i* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* house.

*j* resorts to her: *or* takes to them.

*k* with corn: *or* to overflowing.

the adulteress; and (3) the promise of the land, i.e. possessions. 3: *Invoke understanding*: this passage comes near to personifying wisdom; see 1.1–7.27 n. 9: The insight is moral, what is *right* and *just*. 16: *Loose*: lit. alien; a moral rather than an ethnic term. 17: As frequently elsewhere, *covenant* is the term for the relation between God and man.

3.1–12: *Divine trustworthiness*. The LORD's discipline, like that of one's natural parents, has man's best interests at heart. 3: The New English Bible, with the Sept., omits a third clause found in the MT: "Write them upon the tablet of your heart." 9: *First charge*: lit. first fruit (see Exod.22.29). This is the sole cultic injunction in Prov.

	and your vats bursting with new wine.	and your feet will not stumble. When you sit, you need have no fear;	24
11	My son, do not spurn the LORD's correction	when you lie down, your sleep will be pleasant.	
12	or take offence at his reproof; for those whom he loves the LORD reproves, and he punishes a favourite son.	Do not be afraid when fools are frightened	25
13	Happy he who has found wisdom, and the man who has acquired understanding;	or when ruin comes upon the wicked;	
14	for wisdom is more profitable than silver, and the gain she brings is better than gold.	for the LORD will be at your side, and he will keep your feet clear of the trap.	26
15	She is more precious than red coral, and all your jewels are no match for her.	Refuse no man any favour that you owe him	27
16	Long life is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honour.	when it lies in your power to pay it. Do not say to your friend, 'Come back again;	28
17	Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths lead to prosperity.	you shall have it tomorrow'—when you have it already.	
18	She is a staff of life to all who grasp her, and those who hold her fast are safe.	Plot no evil against your friend, your unsuspecting neighbour.	29
19	In wisdom the LORD founded the earth	Do not pick a quarrel with a man for no reason,	30
20	and by understanding he set the heavens in their place;	if he has not done you a bad turn.	
21	by his knowledge the depths burst forth	Do not emulate a lawless man, do not choose to follow his footsteps;	31
22	and the clouds dropped dew.	for one who is not straight is detestable to the LORD,	32
23	My son, keep watch over your ability and prudence,	but upright men are in God's confidence.	
24	do not let them slip from sight;	The LORD's curse rests on the house of the evildoer,	33
25	they shall be a charm hung about your neck	while he blesses the home of the righteous.	
26	and an ornament on your breast.	Though God himself meets the arrogant with arrogance,	34
27	Then you will go your way without a care,	yet he bestows his favour on the meek. <sup>l</sup>	
		Wise men are adorned with <sup>m</sup> honour,	35
		but the coat <sup>n</sup> on a fool's back is contempt.	

<sup>l</sup> Or wretched.  
<sup>m</sup> are adorned with: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* shall inherit.  
<sup>n</sup> the coat: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

**3.13-18: Praise of Wisdom.** In the style almost of a hymn the author extols Wisdom as a precious treasure. **13:** *Happy*: the word that usually introduces beatitudes, as in "wisdom psalms" (Pss. 1.32, etc.). **16:** The image is likely that of the Egyptian goddess Maat, who holds in her *right hand* the symbol of life and in her *left hand* the scepter, symbolizing wealth and dignity. **18:** *Staff*: lit. tree.

**3.19-20: Wisdom's role at creation.** Wisdom was at God's side when he created the universe. This motif is elaborated in 8.22-31. **20:** *Depths*: underground springs (see Gen. 7.11; 2 Sam. 1.21). In Israelite thought the sources of water were three: rain, dew, and underground streams.

**3.21-35: Admonition and warning.** A series of exhortations to commendable behavior is followed by specific prohibitions, particularly in regard to the treatment of neighbors. **32:** *Detestable*: the word in the cultic sense is usually rendered "abomination," and is frequent in Deut. Originally it had the limited sense of ritual uncleanness.

- |    |  |  |    |
|----|--|--|----|
| 4  | Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction,<br>consider attentively how to gain understanding;                         | For they cannot sleep unless they have done some wrong;<br>unless they have been someone's downfall they lose their sleep.                             | 16 |
| 2  | for it is sound learning I give you;<br>so do not forsake my teaching.   | The bread they eat is the fruit of crime   | 17 |
| 3  | I too have been a father's son,<br>tender in years, my mother's only child.  | and they drink wine got by violence.<br>The course of the righteous is like morning light,   | 18 |
| 4  | He taught me and said to me:<br>Hold fast to my words with all your heart,<br>keep my commands and you will have life. | growing brighter till it is broad day;<br>but the ways of the wicked are like darkness at night,<br>and they do not know what has been their downfall. | 19 |
| 5  | Do not forget or turn a deaf ear to what I say.  | My son, attend to my speech,<br>pay heed to my words;<br>do not let them slip out of your mind,  | 20 |
| 7  | The first thing <sup>o</sup> is to acquire wisdom;<br>gain understanding though it cost you all you have.              | keep them close in your heart;<br>for they are life to him who finds them,<br>and health to his whole body.  | 21 |
| 6  | Do not forsake her, and she will keep you safe;<br>love her, and she will guard you;                                   | Guard your heart more than any treasure,<br>for it is the source of all life.  | 22 |
| 8  | cherish her, and she will lift you high;<br>if only you embrace her, she will bring you to honour.                     | Keep your mouth from crooked speech<br>and your lips from deceitful talk.  | 23 |
| 9  | She will set a garland of grace on your head<br>and bestow on you a crown of glory.                                    | Let your eyes look straight before you,<br>fix your gaze upon what lies ahead.   | 24 |
| 10 | Listen, my son, take my words to heart,<br>and the years of your life shall be multiplied.                             | Look out for the path that your feet must take,<br>and your ways will be secure.   | 25 |
| 11 | I will guide you in the paths of wisdom<br>and lead you in honest ways.  | Swerve neither to right nor left,<br>and keep clear of every evil thing.   | 26 |
| 12 | As you walk you will not slip,<br>and, if you run, nothing will bring you down.  | My son, attend to my wisdom<br>and listen to my good counsel,<br>so that you may observe proper prudence   | 5  |
| 13 | Cling to instruction and never let it go;<br>observe it well, for it is your life.                                     | and your speech be informed with knowledge.  | 2  |
| 14 | Do not take to the course of the wicked<br>or follow the way of evil men;  | For though the lips of an adulteress drip honey<br>and her tongue is smoother than oil,<br>yet in the end she is more bitter than wormwood,            | 3  |
| 15 | do not set foot on it, but avoid it;<br>turn aside and go on your way.   | 4  | 4  |

<sup>o</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds wisdom.*

4.1–27: **Threefold recommendation of Wisdom.** She is the supreme acquisition, indeed a lover or bride (vv. 1–9); a path of light enabling one to walk in the right way (10–19); and the pathway itself (20–27). 3: *I, too . . .*: This formula, one of self-abnegation, is also found in Wis.7.1.

5.1–23: **Warning against the loose woman.** Belying her beautiful appearance, the adulteress leads a youth to his destruction. He must be able to recognize her deceitfulness (vv. 1–6) in order to steer clear of embarrassment and loss (7–14), particularly since he should be faithful to his

<p>5 Her feet go downwards on the path to death, her course is set for Sheol.</p> <p>6 She does not watch for the road that leads to life; her course turns this way and that, and what does she care?<sup>p</sup></p> <p>7 Now, my son, listen to me and do not ignore what I say: 8 keep well away from her and do not go near the door of her house; 9 or you will lose your dignity in the eyes of others and your honour before strangers; 10 strangers will batten on your wealth, and your hard-won gains pass to another man's family.</p> <p>11 The end will be that you will starve, you will shrink to mere skin and bones.</p> <p>12 Then you will say, 'Why did I hate correction and set my heart against reproof? 13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or pay attention to my masters. 14 I soon earned<sup>q</sup> a bad name and was despised in the public assembly.'</p> <p>15 Drink water from your own cistern and running water from your own spring; 16 do not let your<sup>r</sup> well overflow into the road, your runnels of water pour into the street; 17 let them be yours alone, not shared with strangers.</p> <p>18 Let your fountain, the wife of your youth, 19 a lovely doe, a graceful hind, let her be your companion;</p>	<p>you will at all times be bathed in her love, and her love will continually wrap you round.</p> <p>Wherever you turn, she will guide you; when you lie in bed, she will watch over you, and when you wake she will talk with you.<sup>s</sup></p> <p>Why, my son, are you wrapped up in the love of an adulteress? 20 Why do you embrace a loose woman?</p> <p>For a man's ways are always in the LORD's sight 21 who watches for every path that he must take.</p> <p>The wicked man is caught in his own iniquities 22 and held fast in the toils of his own sin; he will perish for want of discipline, wrapped in the shroud of his boundless folly. 23</p> <p>My son, if you pledge yourself to another man 6 and stand surety for a stranger, if you are caught by your promise, 2 trapped by some promise you have made, do what I now tell you 3 and save yourself, my son: when you fall into another man's power, bestir yourself, go and pester the man, give yourself no rest, 4 allow yourself no sleep. Save yourself like a gazelle from the toils, 5 like a bird from the grasp of the fowler.</p>
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*p* what . . . care?: or she is restless.  
*q* Or I almost earned.  
*r* do not let your: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* shall your.  
*s* Wherever . . . with you: *transposed from ch. 6 (verse 22).*

solicitous wife (15–23). 6: The metaphor is that of restless turning *this way and that*, characteristic of the opportunist, who, irresponsible, does not *care*. 15: *Cistern*: a metaphor for wife (see v. 18); a cistern was important for storing precious water. 21: That God's *sight* takes in all the ways of a man is a theme in the Egyptian work by Amen-em-ope and in Mesopotamian hymns to the sun-god Shamash. That God sees everything is essential to the belief in a judgment after life, a theme prominent in Egypt.

6.1–19: **Various admonitions.** Do everything possible to be free of standing surety for another's debt (vv. 1–5); do not be a sluggard (vv. 6–11; compare 24.30–34); avoid scoundrels who by gestures belie their words (vv. 12–15); shun detestable habits (vv. 16–19; these are described by

- 6 Go to the ant, you sluggard,  
watch her ways and get wisdom.
- 7 She has no overseer,  
no governor or ruler;
- 8 but in summer she prepares her store  
of food  
and lays in her supplies at harvest.
- 9 How long, you sluggard, will you lie  
abed?  
When will you rouse yourself from  
sleep?
- 10 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little folding of the hands in rest,  
11 and poverty will come upon you like  
a robber,  
want like a ruffian.
- 12 A scoundrel, a mischievous man, is  
he  
who prowls about with crooked  
talk—
- 13 a wink of the eye,  
a touch with the foot,  
a sign with the fingers.
- 14 Subversion is the evil that he is  
plotting,  
he stirs up quarrels all the time.
- 15 Down comes disaster suddenly upon  
him;  
suddenly he is broken beyond all  
remedy.
- 16 Six things the LORD hates,  
seven things are detestable to him:
- 17 a proud eye, a false tongue,  
hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18 a heart that forges thoughts of  
mischief,  
and feet that run swiftly to do evil,
- 19 a false witness telling a pack of  
lies,  
and one who stirs up quarrels  
between brothers.
- 20 My son, observe your father's  
commands
- and do not reject the teaching of  
your mother;  
wear them always next your heart  
and bind them close about your  
neck;  
for a command is a lamp, and  
teaching a light,  
reproof and correction point the way  
of life,  
to keep you from the wife of  
another man,  
from the seductive tongue of the  
loose woman.  
Do not desire her beauty in your  
heart  
or let her glance provoke you;  
for a prostitute can be had for the  
price of a loaf,  
but a married woman is out for  
bigger game.
- Can a man kindle fire in his bosom  
without burning his clothes?  
If a man walks on hot coals,  
will his feet not be scorched?  
So is he who sleeps with his  
neighbour's wife;  
no one can touch such a woman  
and go free.  
Is not a thief contemptible when he  
steals  
to satisfy his appetite, even if he is  
hungry?  
And, if he is caught, must he not  
pay seven times over  
and surrender all that his house  
contains?  
So one who commits adultery is a  
senseless fool:  
he dishonours the woman and ruins  
himself;  
he will get nothing but blows and  
contumely  
and will never live down the  
disgrace;

<sup>1</sup> Verse 22 transposed to follow wrap you round in  
5. 19.

metaphors of the body in vv. 16–18). 16: *Six . . . seven*: a common literary device (see 30.15–31), perhaps growing out of the parallel structure of a Heb. verse (see 10.1–22.16 n.). The device usually means “the totality of,” rather than the specific number mentioned. 19: The climax of the section is in *false witness* and *one who stirs up quarrels*. . . .

6.20–35: **Warning against adultery.** What a young man learns in the family setting can shield him from adultery. He who succumbs to the allurements of the married woman cannot expect forgiveness from the woman's husband. 23: The commandment is a *lamp*, that is, more than simply a mechanical law. The psalms similarly throb with joyous exultation over the gift of the divine commandments. See too Deut.6.4–7. 27: This appears to be an old proverb about *fire* and its ill effects, applied to the destructive effects of passions left unrestrained. 31: *Seven times over*: contrast Exod.22.1–4.

<p>34 for a husband's anger is a jealous anger and in the day of vengeance he will show no mercy;</p> <p>35 compensation will not buy his forgiveness;<sup>u</sup> no bribe, however large, will purchase his connivance.</p> <p>7 My son, keep my words, store up my commands in your mind.</p> <p>2 Keep my commands if you would live, and treasure my teaching as the apple of your eye.</p> <p>3 Wear them like a ring on your finger; write them on the tablet of your memory.</p> <p>4 Call Wisdom your sister, greet Understanding as a familiar friend;</p> <p>5 then they will save you from the adulteress, from the loose woman with her seductive words.</p> <p>6 I glanced<sup>v</sup> out of the window of my house, I looked down through the lattice, and I saw among simple youths, there amongst the boys I noticed a lad, a foolish lad,</p> <p>8 passing along the street, at the corner, stepping out in the direction of her house</p> <p>9 at twilight, as the day faded, at dusk as the night grew dark; suddenly a woman came to meet him, dressed like a prostitute, full of wiles,</p> <p>11 flighty and inconstant, a woman never content to stay at home, lying in wait at every corner, now in the street, now in the public squares.</p>	<p>She caught hold of him and kissed 13 him; brazenly she accosted him and said, 'I have had a sacrifice, an offering, to 14 make and I have paid my vows today; that is why I have come out to meet 15 you, to watch for you and find you. I have spread coverings on my bed 16 of coloured linen from Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with 17 myrrh, my clothes<sup>w</sup> with aloes and cassia. Come! Let us drown ourselves in 18 pleasure, let us spend a whole night of love; for the man of the house is away, 19 he has gone on a long journey, he has taken a bag of silver with 20 him; until the moon is full he will not be home.'</p> <p>Persuasively she led him on, 21 she pressed him with seductive words. Like a simple fool he followed her, 22 like an ox on its way to the slaughter-house, like an antelope bounding into the noose, like a bird hurrying into the trap; 23 he did not know that he was risking his life until the arrow pierced his vitals.</p> <p>But now, my son, listen to me, 24 attend to what I say. Do not let your heart entice you 25 into her ways, do not stray down her paths; many has she pierced and laid low, 26 and her victims are without number.</p> <p>Her house is the entrance to Sheol, 27 which leads down to the halls of death.</p>
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*u* compensation . . . forgiveness: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
*v* I glanced: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
*w* my clothes: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

7.1–27: Wisdom as a defense against the loose woman. The words of the sages will protect one from the seductress. Her way of working is described by an observer, safely from a distance. 4: *Sister*: probably bride, as in S. of S.4.9–10,12, and in Egyptian love literature. 14: Having had an animal *sacrifice*, the seductress is now ready to enjoy the subsequent feast; see Lev.3.1–5 and 7.15. Irony is intended in the contrast of ritual observance and personal dissoluteness. See also 15.8 and Isa.1.12–17.

*Wisdom and folly contrasted*

8 Hear how Wisdom lifts her voice  
and Understanding cries out.  
2 She stands at the cross-roads,  
by the wayside, at the top of the  
3 hill;  
beside the gate, at the entrance to  
the city,  
at the entry by the open gate she  
calls aloud:  
4 'Men, it is to you I call,  
I appeal to every man:  
5 understand, you simple fools, what  
it is to be shrewd;  
you stupid people, understand what  
sense means.  
6 Listen! For I will speak clearly,  
you will have plain speech from me;  
7 for I speak nothing but truth  
and my lips detest wicked talk.  
8 All that I say is right,  
not a word is twisted or crooked.  
9 All is straightforward to him who  
can understand,  
all is plain to the man who has  
knowledge.  
10 Accept instruction and not silver,  
knowledge rather than pure gold;  
11 for wisdom is better than red coral,  
no jewels can match her.  
12 I am Wisdom, I bestow shrewdness  
and show the way to knowledge and  
prudence.  
13 <sup>†</sup>Pride, presumption, evil courses,  
subversive talk, all these I hate.  
14 I have force, I also have ability;  
understanding and power are mine.  
15 Through me kings are sovereign  
and governors make just laws.  
16 Through me princes act like princes,  
from me all rulers on earth derive  
their nobility.  
17 Those who love me I love,  
those who search for me find me.  
18 In my hands are riches and honour,

boundless wealth and the rewards of  
virtue.  
My harvest is better than gold, fine 19  
gold,  
and my revenue better than pure  
silver.  
I follow the course of virtue, 20  
my path is the path of justice;  
I endow with riches those who love 21  
me  
and I will fill their treasuries.  
'The LORD created me the beginning 22  
of his works,  
before all else that he made, long  
ago.  
Alone, I was fashioned in times 23  
long past,  
at the beginning, long before earth  
itself.  
When there was yet no ocean I was 24  
born,  
no springs brimming with water.  
Before the mountains were settled 25  
in their place,  
long before the hills I was born,  
when as yet he had made neither 26  
land nor lake  
nor the first clod<sup>y</sup> of earth.  
When he set the heavens in their 27  
place I was there,  
when he girdled the ocean with the  
horizon,  
when he fixed the canopy of clouds 28  
overhead  
and set the springs of ocean firm in  
their place,  
when he prescribed its limits for the 29  
sea<sup>z</sup>  
and knit together earth's  
foundations.  
Then I was at his side each day, 30  
his darling and delight,

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg. ; Heb. prefixes* The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.

<sup>y</sup> the first clod; *or* the sum of the clods.

<sup>z</sup> *Prob. rdg. ; Heb. adds* and the water shall not disobey his command.

**8.1-9.18: Wisdom and Folly contrasted.** Wisdom seeks out men where they usually congregate, and hence is readily available to, and clearly understandable by, all who wish to respond (8.1-13). She enables monarchs to rule as befits true kings (vv. 14-16). Those who seek her find her, and gain wealth and rewards beyond wealth (vv. 17-21). Created as the first of God's works, she is God's delight as man is hers (vv. 22-36). Like a gracious hostess, she invites men to her home and table (9.1-6). The insolent reject her, the wise accept her (vv. 7-12). By contrast, Lady Stupidity (vv. 13-18) invites fools to destruction. **13:** The verse has suffered in ancient copying. It was probably once a numerical saying, possibly reading: "Three things I hate, indeed four I loathe; pride, presumption, evil courses, and subversive talk." **22:** The emphasis on Wisdom's role *before all else* came into being is common in Egyptian and Babylonian texts; see also Col. 1.15-16 and Jn.1.1-3. *Created:* acquired, possessed. **30: Darling:** the Heb. is uncertain; perhaps

<p>31 playing in his presence continually, playing on the earth, when he had finished it, while my delight was in mankind.</p> <p>32-33 'Now, my sons, listen to me, listen to instruction and grow wise, do not reject it. Happy is the man who keeps to my ways,</p> <p>34 happy the man who listens to me, watching daily at my threshold with his eyes on the doorway; 35 for he who finds me finds life and wins favour with the LORD, 36 while he who finds me not, hurts himself, and all who hate me are in love with death.'</p> <p>9 Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars; 2 she has killed a beast and spiced her wine, and she has spread her table. 3 She has sent out her maidens to proclaim from the highest part of the town, 4 'Come in, you simpletons.' She says also to the fool, 5 'Come, dine with me and taste the wine that I have spiced. 6 Cease to be silly, and you will live, you will grow in understanding.'</p> <p>7 Correct an insolent man, and be sneered at for your pains; correct a bad man, and you will put yourself in the wrong. 8 Do not correct the insolent or they will hate you;</p>	<p>correct a wise man, and he will be your friend. Lecture a wise man, and he will grow wiser; teach a righteous man, and his learning will increase.</p> <p>The first step to wisdom is the fear of the LORD, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding; for through me your days will be multiplied and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, it will be to your own advantage; if you are haughty, you alone are to blame. The Lady Stupidity is a flighty creature; the simpleton, she cares for nothing. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat in the highest part of the town, to invite the passers-by indoors as they hurry on their way: 'Come in, you simpletons', she says. She says also to the fool, 'Stolen water is sweet and bread got by stealth tastes good.' Little does he know that death lurks there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p>
<p><i>A collection of wise sayings</i></p>		
<p>The proverbs of Solomon:</p> <p>A wise son brings joy to his father;</p>		<p>10</p>

the meaning is master workman or confidant. If darling, the figure is of a child playing in the presence of a loving father. The personification of Wisdom is of profound theological significance, for it corrects a faulty notion that God was thought of in Wisdom literature as somewhat remote from his creation. A development in the idea of personification can be traced from Job ch. 28, which asks about Wisdom's hiding place, through 8.22-31 (and 3.19-20), to Eccles.24.1-24 and Wis.7.22-8.21. In Eccles.24.1 Wisdom is identified with Torah; in Wis. she is viewed, in a Greek manner, as an emanation of God. 9.1: From the mention of *seven pillars* it has been conjectured that the house is really the world and the pillars are those which support the sky. Yet the figure seems modeled after vv. 14-15. 10: Contrast Wisdom as something to be learned with the inner knowledge of God as in Jer.31.33-34. 17: Lady Stupidity quotes an old proverb, to which may be compared the Arabic saying that "everything forbidden is sweet."

**10.1-22.16: A collection of wise sayings.** The section consists of observations from experience in the form of miscellaneous one-line maxims. Each verse is in parallelism, i.e. it consists of two balanced parts, as is usual in Heb. verse. The observations have a secular tone, and their date is preexilic. These proverbs may have been used for instruction in the home and in school.



<p>2 a foolish son is his mother's bane.          Ill-gotten wealth brings no profit;          uprightness is a safeguard against          death.</p> <p>3 The LORD does not let the righteous          go hungry,<sup>a</sup>          but he disappoints the cravings<sup>b</sup> of          the wicked.</p> <p>4 Idle hands make a man poor;          busy hands grow rich.</p> <p>5 A thoughtful son puts by in          summer;          a son who sleeps at harvest is a          disgrace.</p> <p>6 Blessings are showered on the          righteous;          the wicked are choked by their own          violence.</p> <p>7 The righteous are remembered in          blessings;          the name of the wicked turns rotten.</p> <p>8 A wise man takes a command to          heart;          a foolish talker comes to grief.</p> <p>9 A blameless life makes for security;          crooked ways bring a man down.</p> <p>10 To wink at a fault causes trouble;          a frank rebuke leads to peace.</p> <p>11 The words of good men are a          fountain of life;          the wicked are choked by their own          violence.</p> <p>12 Hate is always picking a quarrel,          but love turns a blind eye to every          fault.</p> <p>13 The man of understanding has          wisdom on his lips;          a rod is in store for the back of the          fool.</p> <p>14 Wise men lay up knowledge;          when a fool speaks, ruin is near.</p> <p>15 A rich man's wealth is his strong          city,          but poverty is the undoing of the          helpless.</p> <p>16 The good man's labour is his          livelihood;          the wicked man's earnings bring him          to a bad end.</p> <p>17 Correction is the high road to life;          neglect reproof and you miss the way.</p>	<p>There is no spite in a just man's          talk;          it is the stupid who are fluent with          calumny.</p> <p>When men talk too much, sin is          never far away;          common sense holds its tongue.          A good man's tongue is pure silver;          the heart of the wicked is trash.          The lips of a good man teach many,          but fools perish for want of sense.          The blessing of the LORD brings          riches          and he sends no sorrow with them.          Lewdness is sport for the stupid;          wisdom a delight to men of          understanding.</p> <p>The fears of the wicked will          overtake them;          the desire of the righteous will be          granted.</p> <p>When the whirlwind has passed by,          the wicked are gone;          the foundations of the righteous are          eternal.</p> <p>Like vinegar on the teeth or smoke          in the eyes,          so is the lazy servant to his master.          The fear of the LORD brings length          of days;          the years of the wicked are few.          The hope of the righteous blossoms;          the expectation of the wicked withers          away.</p> <p>The way of the LORD gives refuge to          the honest man,          but dismays those who do evil.          The righteous man will never be          shaken;          the wicked shall not remain on          earth.</p> <p>Wisdom flows from the mouth of          the righteous;          the subversive tongue will be rooted          out.</p> <p>The righteous man can suit his          words to the occasion;          the wicked know only subversive          talk.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p> <p>28</p> <p>29</p> <p>30</p> <p>31</p> <p>32</p>
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<sup>a</sup> Or be afraid.  
<sup>b</sup> Or the clamour.

The mention of Solomon does not imply his authorship, but rather his royal sponsorship, or else possibly a literary type. 2: Premature death was thought to be an indication of divine disfavor. 3: See also Ps.37.25. 6: The doctrine of reward and punishment is here almost mechanical, in that calamity is understood as punishment for sin. 25: *Whirlwind*: God uses natural phenomena to punish those with whom he is angry (see especially Eccles.39.28-31

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| <p>11 False scales are the LORD's abomination;<br/>correct weights are dear to his heart.</p> <p>2 When presumption comes in, in comes contempt,<br/>but wisdom goes with sagacity.</p> <p>3 Honesty is a guide to the upright,<br/>but rogues are balked by their own perversity.</p> <p>4 Wealth is worth nothing in the day of wrath,<br/>but uprightness is a safeguard against death.</p> <p>5 By uprightness the blameless keep their course,<br/>but the wicked are brought down by their wickedness.</p> <p>6 Uprightness saves the righteous,<br/>but rogues are trapped in their own greed.</p> <p>7 When a man dies, his thread of life ends,<br/>and with it ends the hope of affluence.</p> <p>8 A righteous man is rescued from disaster,<br/>and the wicked man plunges into it.</p> <p>9 By his words a godless man tries to ruin others,<br/>but they are saved when the righteous plead for them.</p> <p>10 A city rejoices in the prosperity of the righteous;<br/>there is jubilation when the wicked perish.</p> <p>11 By the blessing of the upright a city is built up;<br/>the words of the wicked tear it down.</p> <p>12 A man without sense despises others,<br/>but a man of understanding holds his peace.</p> <p>13 A gossip gives away secrets,<br/>but a trusty man keeps his own counsel.</p> <p>14 For want of skilful strategy an army is lost;<br/>victory is the fruit of long planning.</p> <p>15 Give a pledge for a stranger and know no peace;<br/>refuse to stand surety and be safe.</p> <p>16 Grace in a woman wins honour,</p> | <p>but she who hates virtue makes a home for dishonour.</p> <p>Be timid in business and come to beggary;<br/>be bold and make a fortune.</p> <p>Loyalty brings its own reward; 17<br/>a cruel man makes trouble for his kin.</p> <p>A wicked man earns a fallacious<sup>c</sup> 18<br/>profit;<br/>he who sows goodness reaps a sure reward.<sup>d</sup></p> <p>A man set on righteousness finds 19<br/>life,<br/>but the pursuit of evil leads to death.</p> <p>The LORD detests the crooked heart, 20<br/>but honesty is dear to him.</p> <p>Depend upon it: an evil man shall 21<br/>not escape punishment;<br/>the righteous and all their offspring shall go free.</p> <p>Like a gold ring in a pig's snout 22<br/>is a beautiful woman without good sense.</p> <p>The righteous desire only what is 23<br/>good;<br/>the hope of the wicked comes to nothing.</p> <p>A man may spend freely and yet 24<br/>grow richer;<br/>another is sparing beyond measure,<br/>yet ends in poverty.</p> <p>A generous man grows fat and 25<br/>prosperous,<br/>and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.</p> <p>He who withholds his grain is cursed 26<br/>by the people,<br/>but he who sells his corn is blessed.</p> <p>He who eagerly seeks what is good 27<br/>finds much favour,<br/>but if a man pursues evil it turns upon him.</p> <p>Whoever relies on his wealth is 28<br/>riding for a fall,<br/>but the righteous flourish like the green leaf.</p> <p>He who brings trouble on his family 29<br/>inherits the wind,<br/>and a fool becomes slave to a wise man.</p> |
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<sup>c</sup> Or fraudulent.  
<sup>d</sup> a sure reward: or the reward of honesty.

and Wis.16-19). 11.9: *Saved*: in the courts, when the righteous *plead* as advocates of the weak. 21: The strong statement seems to counter doubt about retribution (compare 24.16), as if one cannot always or truly depend on it; such questioning of the justice of God is a recurrent theme

- 30 The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life,  
but violence means the taking away of life.
- 31 If the righteous in the land get their deserts,  
how much more the wicked man and the sinner!
- 12 He who loves correction loves knowledge;  
he who hates reproof is a mere brute.
- 2 A good man earns favour from the LORD;  
the schemer is condemned.
- 3 No man can establish himself by wickedness,  
but good men have roots that cannot be dislodged.
- 4 A capable wife is her husband's crown;  
one who disgraces him is like rot in his bones.
- 5 The purposes of the righteous are lawful;  
the designs of the wicked are full of deceit.
- 6 The wicked are destroyed<sup>e</sup> by their own words;  
the words of the good man are his salvation.
- 7 Once the wicked are down, that is the end of them,  
but the good man's line continues.
- 8 A man is commended for his intelligence,  
but a warped mind is despised.
- 9 It is better to be modest<sup>f</sup> and earn one's living  
than to be concealed<sup>g</sup> and go hungry.
- 10 A righteous man cares for his beast,  
but a wicked man is cruel at heart.
- 11 He who tills his land has enough to eat,  
but to follow idle pursuits is foolishness.
- 12 The stronghold of the wicked crumbles like clay,<sup>h</sup>  
but the righteous take lasting root.
- 13 The wicked man is trapped by his own falsehoods,  
but the righteous comes safe through trouble.
- One man wins success by his words; 14  
another gets his due reward by the work of his hands.
- A fool thinks that he is always right; 15  
wise is the man who listens to advice.
- A fool shows his ill humour at once; 16  
a clever man slighted conceals his feelings.
- An honest speaker comes out with 17  
the truth,  
but the false witness is full of deceit.
- Gossip can be sharp as a sword, 18  
but the tongue of the wise heals.
- Truth spoken stands firm for ever, 19  
but lies live only for a moment.
- Those who plot evil delude 20  
themselves,  
but there is joy for those who seek the common good.
- No mischief will befall the righteous, 21  
but wicked men get their fill of adversity.
- The LORD detests a liar 22  
but delights in the honest man.
- A clever man conceals his knowledge, 23  
but a stupid man broadcasts his folly.
- Diligence brings a man to power, 24  
but laziness to forced labour.
- An anxious heart dispirits a man, 25  
and a kind word fills him with joy.
- A righteous man recoils from evil,<sup>i</sup> 26  
but the wicked take a path that leads them astray.
- The lazy hunter puts up no game, 27  
but the industrious man reaps a rich harvest.<sup>j</sup>
- The way of honesty leads to life, 28  
but there is a well-worn path to death.
- A wise man sees the reason for his 13  
father's correction;  
an arrogant man will not listen to rebuke.

<sup>e</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* are an ambush for blood.

<sup>f</sup> *Or* scorned.

<sup>g</sup> *Or* honoured.

<sup>h</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* A wicked man covets a stronghold

of crumbling earth.

<sup>i</sup> recoils from evil: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* let him spy out

his friend.

<sup>j</sup> but . . . harvest: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* obscure.

in Eccles. and the major theme of Job. 30: *Tree of life* (see Gen.3.22-24): a symbol for eternal life found also in Egypt and Babylonia. Here eternal life arises from righteous living. The motif of the beneficial effect of correction is frequent in Prov. and underwent further development

<p>2 A good man enjoys the fruit of righteousness, but violence is meat and drink for the treacherous.</p> <p>3 He who minds his words preserves his life; he who talks too much comes to grief.</p> <p>4 A lazy man is torn by appetite unsatisfied, but the diligent grow fat and prosperous.</p> <p>5 The righteous hate falsehood; the doings of the wicked are foul and deceitful.</p> <p>6 To do right is the protection of an honest man, but wickedness brings sinners to grief.<sup>k</sup></p> <p>7 One man pretends to be rich, although he has nothing; another has great wealth but goes in rags.<sup>l</sup></p> <p>8 A rich man must buy himself off, but a poor man is immune from threats.</p> <p>9 The light of the righteous burns brightly; the embers of the wicked will be put out.</p> <p>10 A brainless fool causes strife by his presumption; wisdom is found among friends in council.</p> <p>11 Wealth quickly come by dwindles away, but if it comes little by little, it multiplies.</p> <p>12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick; a wish come true is a staff of life.</p> <p>13 To despise a word of advice is to ask for trouble; mind what you are told, and you will be rewarded.</p> <p>14 A wise man's teaching is a fountain of life for one who would escape the snares of death.</p> <p>15 Good intelligence wins favour, but treachery leads to disaster.</p> <p>16 A clever man is wise and conceals everything, but the stupid parade their folly.</p>	<p>An evil messenger causes trouble,<sup>m</sup> 17 but a trusty envoy makes all go well again.</p> <p>To refuse correction brings poverty 18 and contempt; one who takes a reproof to heart comes to honour.</p> <p>Lust indulged sickens a man;<sup>n</sup> 19 stupid people loathe to mend their ways.</p> <p>Walk with the wise and be wise; 20 mix with the stupid and be misled.</p> <p>Ill fortune follows the sinner close 21 behind, but good rewards the righteous.</p> <p>A good man leaves an inheritance 22 to his descendants, but the sinner's hoard passes to the righteous.</p> <p>Untilled land might yield food 23 enough for the poor, but even that may be lost through injustice.</p> <p>A father who spares the rod hates 24 his son, but one who loves him keeps him in order.</p> <p>A righteous man eats his fill, 25 but the wicked go hungry.</p> <p>The wisest women build up their 14 homes; the foolish pull them down with their own hands.</p> <p>A straightforward man fears the 2 LORD; the double-dealer scorns him.</p> <p>The speech of a fool is a rod for his 3 back;<sup>o</sup> a wise man's words are his safeguard.</p> <p>Where there are no oxen the barn is 4 empty, but the strength of a great ox ensures rich crops.</p> <p>A truthful witness is no liar; 5 a false witness tells a pack of lies.</p>
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*k* brings . . . grief: or plays havoc with a man.

*l* One man . . . rags: Or One man may grow rich though he has nothing; another may grow poor though he has great wealth.

*m* causes trouble; or is unsuccessful.

*n* Lust . . . a man: or Desire fulfilled is pleasant to the appetite.

*o* his back: *prob. rdg.; Heb. pride.*

in later literature. 13.23: The land here is either that left uncultivated every seventh year (Lev.25.1-7) or the marginal areas left for the poor (Lev.19.9-10). 14.4: *Empty*: of fodder.

- 6 A conceited man seeks wisdom, yet  
finds none;  
to one of understanding, knowledge  
comes easily.
- 7 Avoid a stupid man,  
you will hear not a word of sense  
from him.
- 8 A clever man has the wit to find the  
right way;  
the folly of stupid men misleads  
them.
- 9 A fool is too arrogant to make  
amends;  
upright men know what  
reconciliation means.
- 10 The heart knows its own bitterness,  
and a stranger has no part in its joy.
- 11 The house of the wicked will be  
torn down,  
but the home of the upright  
flourishes.
- 12 A road may seem straightforward to  
a man,  
yet may end as the way to death.
- 13 Even in laughter the heart may  
grieve,  
and mirth may end in sorrow.
- 14 The renegade reaps the fruit of his  
conduct,  
a good man the fruit of his own  
achievements.
- 15 A simple man believes every word  
he hears;  
a clever man understands the need  
for proof.
- 16 A wise man is cautious and turns  
his back on evil;  
the stupid is heedless and falls  
headlong.
- 17 Impatience runs into folly;  
distinction comes by careful  
thought.<sup>p</sup>
- 18 The simple wear the trappings of  
folly;  
the clever are crowned with  
knowledge.
- 19 Evil men cringe before the good,  
wicked men at the righteous man's  
door.
- 20 A poor man is odious even to his  
friend;  
the rich have friends in plenty.
- He who despises a hungry man does 21  
wrong,  
but he who is generous to the poor  
is happy.
- Do not those who intend evil go 22  
astray,  
while those with good intentions are  
loyal and faithful?
- The pains of toil bring gain, 23  
but mere talk brings nothing but  
poverty.
- Insight is the crown of the wise; 24  
folly the chief ornament of the  
stupid.
- A truthful witness saves life; 25  
the false accuser utters nothing but  
lies.
- A strong man who trusts in the fear 26  
of the LORD  
will be a refuge for his sons.  
The fear of the LORD is the fountain 27  
of life  
for the man who would escape the  
snares of death.
- Many subjects make a famous king; 28  
with none to rule, a prince is ruined.
- To be patient shows great 29  
understanding;  
quick temper is the height of folly.
- A tranquil mind puts flesh on a 30  
man,  
but passion rots his bones.
- He who oppresses<sup>q</sup> the poor insults 31  
his Maker;  
he who is generous to the needy  
honours him.
- An evil man is brought down by his 32  
wickedness;  
the upright man is secure in his own  
honesty.
- Wisdom is at home in a discerning 33  
mind,  
but is ill at ease in the heart of a  
fool.
- Righteousness raises a people to 34  
honour;  
to do wrong is a disgrace to any  
nation.
- A king shows favour to an 35  
intelligent servant,

<sup>p</sup> distinction . . . thought: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a man of careful thought is hated.  
<sup>q</sup> Or slanders.

**31:** The attitude to the poor is ambivalent in Wisdom literature, for it is usually assumed that one's external circumstances indicate his interior life, and hence a rich man was enjoying God's reward and a poor man his punishment. On the other hand, the wise championed the cause of the widow, the orphan, and the poor. **33:** The harsh judgment on the *fool* is moral, associating

	but his displeasure strikes down those who fail him.	Better a dish of vegetables if love go with it	17
15	A soft answer turns away anger, but a sharp word makes tempers hot.	than a fat ox eaten in hatred.	
2	A wise man's tongue spreads knowledge; stupid men talk nonsense.	Bad temper provokes a quarrel, but patience heals discords.	18
3	The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, surveying evil and good men alike.	The path of the sluggard is a tangle of weeds,	19
4	A soothing word is a staff of life, but a mischievous tongue breaks the spirit.	but the road of the diligent is a highway.	
5	A fool spurns his father's correction, but to take a reproof to heart shows good sense.	A wise son brings joy to his father; a young fool despises his mother.	20
6	In the righteous man's house there is ample wealth; the gains of the wicked bring trouble.	Folly may amuse the empty-headed; a man of understanding makes straight for his goal.	21
7	The lips of a wise man promote knowledge; the hearts of the stupid are dishonest.	Schemes lightly made come to nothing,	22
8	The wicked man's sacrifice is abominable to the LORD; the good man's prayer is his delight.	but with long planning they succeed.	
9	The conduct of the wicked is abominable to the LORD, but he loves the seeker after righteousness.	A man may be pleased with his own retort;	23
10	A man who leaves the main road resents correction, and he who hates reproof will die.	how much better is a word in season!	
11	Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, how much more the hearts of men!	For men of intelligence the path of life leads upwards	24
12	The conceited man does not take kindly to reproof and he will not consult the wise.	and keeps them clear of Sheol below.	
13	A merry heart makes a cheerful face; heartache crushes the spirit.	The LORD pulls down the proud man's home	25
14	A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but the stupid man feeds on folly.	but fixes the widow's boundary-stones.	
15	In the life of the downtrodden every day is wretched, but to have a glad heart is a perpetual feast.	A bad man's thoughts are the LORD's abomination,	26
16	Better a pittance with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble in its train.	but the words of the pure are a delight. <sup>r</sup>	
		A grasping man brings trouble on his family,	27
		but he who spurns a bribe will enjoy long life.	
		The righteous think before they answer;	28
		a bad man's ready tongue is full of mischief.	
		The LORD stands aloof from the wicked,	29
		he listens to the righteous man's prayer.	
		A bright look brings joy to the heart,	30
		and good news warms a man's marrow.	
		Whoever listens to wholesome reproof	31
		shall enjoy the society of the wise.	

<sup>r</sup> the words . . . delight: or gracious words are pure.

folly with sin (13.10; 14.9; 15.5,7). **15.3:** *Eyes . . . everywhere:* God's scrutiny of men (see also 15.11; 20.27; 24.11–12) assures the working out of divine retribution (10.6). **8:** See also 21.3. **11.** *Abaddon:* lit. destruction or perdition. That is, God who sees into the realm of the dead surely sees into the hearts of living men. **25:** *Fixes:* that is, the LORD preserves her property

- 32 He who refuses correction is his own worst enemy, but he who listens to reproof learns sense.
- 33 The fear of the LORD is a training in wisdom, and the way to honour is humility.
- 16 A man may order his thoughts, but the LORD inspires the words he utters.
- 2 A man's whole conduct may be pure in his own eyes, but the LORD fixes a standard for the spirit of man.
- 3 Commit to the LORD all that you do, and your plans will be fulfilled.
- 4 The LORD has made each thing for its own end; he made even the wicked for a day of disaster.
- 5 Proud men, one and all, are abominable to the LORD; depend upon it: they will not escape punishment.
- 6 Guilt is wiped out by faith and loyalty, and the fear of the LORD makes men turn from evil.
- 7 When the LORD is pleased with a man and his ways, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.
- 8 Better a pittance honestly earned than great gains ill gotten.
- 9 Man plans his journey by his own wit, but it is the LORD who guides his steps.
- 10 The king's mouth is an oracle, he cannot err when he passes sentence.
- 11 Scales<sup>s</sup> and balances<sup>t</sup> are the LORD's concern;
- all the weights in the bag are his business.
- Wickedness is abhorrent to kings, 12 for a throne rests firm on righteousness.
- Honest speech is the desire of kings, 13 they love a man who speaks the truth.
- A king's anger is a messenger of death, 14 and a wise man will appease it, In the light of the king's countenance is life, 15 his favour is like a rain-cloud in the spring.
- How much better than gold it is to gain wisdom, 16 and to gain discernment is better than pure silver.
- To turn from evil is the highway of the upright; 17 watch your step and save your life. Pride comes before disaster, 18 and arrogance before a fall. Better sit humbly with those in need 19 than divide the spoil with the proud. The shrewd man of business will 20 succeed well, but the happy man is he who trusts in the LORD.
- The sensible man seeks advice from the wise, 21 he drinks it in and increases his knowledge.<sup>u</sup>
- Intelligence is a fountain of life to its possessors, 22 but a fool is punished by his own folly.
- The wise man's mind guides his speech, 23 and what his lips impart increases learning.<sup>v</sup>

<sup>s</sup> Or Pointer. <sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. balances of justice.

<sup>u</sup> he drinks . . . knowledge; or and he whose speech is persuasive increases learning.

<sup>v</sup> and what . . . learning; or and increases the learning of his utterance.

intact. 16.1: Man proposes but God disposes; compare the Egyptian Amen-em-ope 20.5-6, "If the tongue of man [be] the rudder of the boat, the All-Lord is its pilot." 2: A similar saying occurs in 21.2; see also v. 25. Compare the statement in a Babylonian work that what is good with man is evil with the gods, and what is evil to him is proper to a god. 4: The second half of the verse expresses the view that God is the source of evil as well as good. This view is characteristic of Hebrew "monism," namely, that the ultimate source of evil as well as good is God (see Isa.45.6-7). 9: Wisdom recognizes its limits (see 30.4). The limitation on the nature of human knowledge can induce some despair in the sage, for he can no longer perceive any purpose in life. This despair is increased greatly in Eccles. 10: The king functions as the ultimate source of appeal for redress (20.8; see 1 Kgs.3.16-28). 12: The idea of righteousness as a royal pedestal is an Egyptian motif as well. 15: *Rain-cloud*: the seasonal rain was eagerly awaited to assure the grain crop; hence the comparison with the favorable countenance of the king.

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| <p>24 Kind words are like dripping honey,<br/>sweetness on the tongue and health<br/>for the body.</p> <p>25 A road may seem straightforward to<br/>a man,<br/>yet may end as the way to death.</p> <p>26 The labourer's appetite is always<br/>plaguig him,<br/>his hunger spurs him on.</p> <p>27 A scoundrel repeats evil gossip;<br/>it is like a scorching fire on his lips.</p> <p>28 Disaffection stirs up quarrels,<br/>and tale-bearing breaks up<br/>friendship.</p> <p>29 A man of violence draws others on<br/>and leads them into lawless ways.</p> <p>30 The man who narrows his eyes is<br/>disaffected at heart,<br/>and a close-lipped man is bent on<br/>mischieif.</p> <p>31 Grey hair is a crown of glory,<br/>and it is won by a virtuous life.</p> <p>32 Better be slow to anger than a<br/>fighter,<br/>better govern one's temper than<br/>capture a city.</p> <p>33 The lots may be cast into the lap,<br/>but the issue depends wholly on the<br/>LORD.</p> <p><b>17</b> Better a dry crust and concord with it<br/>than a house full of feasting and<br/>strife.</p> <p>2 A wise slave may give orders to a<br/>disappointing son<br/>and share the inheritance with the<br/>brothers.</p> <p>3 The melting-pot is for silver and the<br/>crucible for gold,<br/>but it is the LORD who assays the<br/>hearts of men.</p> <p>4 A rogue gives a ready ear to<br/>mischievous talk,<br/>and a liar listens to slander.</p> <p>5 A man who sneers at the poor<br/>insults his Maker,<br/>and he who gloats over another's<br/>ruin will answer for it.</p> <p>6 Grandchildren are the crown of old<br/>age,<br/>and sons are proud of their fathers.</p> <p>7 Fine talk is out of place in a boor,</p> | <p>how much more is falsehood in the<br/>noble!</p> <p>He who offers a bribe finds it work 8<br/>like a charm,<br/>he prospers in all he undertakes.</p> <p>He who conceals another's offence 9<br/>seeks his goodwill,<br/>but he who harps on something<br/>breaks up friendship.</p> <p>A reproof is felt by a man of 10<br/>discernment<br/>more than a hundred blows by a<br/>stupid man.</p> <p>An evil man is set only on 11<br/>disobedience,<br/>but a messenger without mercy will<br/>be sent against him.</p> <p>Better face a she-bear robbed of her 12<br/>cubs<br/>than a stupid man in his folly.</p> <p>If a man repays evil for good, 13<br/>evil will never quit his house.</p> <p>Stealing water starts a quarrel; 14<br/>drop a dispute before you bare your<br/>teeth.</p> <p>To acquit the wicked and condemn 15<br/>the righteous,<br/>both are abominable in the LORD's<br/>sight.</p> <p>What use is money in the hands of 16<br/>a stupid man?<br/>Can he buy wisdom if he has no<br/>sense?</p> <p>A friend is a loving companion at 17<br/>all times,<br/>and a brother is born to share<br/>troubles.</p> <p>A man is without sense who gives a 18<br/>guarantee<br/>and surrenders himself to another as<br/>surety.</p> <p>He who loves strife loves sin. 19<br/>He who builds a lofty entrance<br/>invites thieves.</p> <p>A crooked heart will come to no 20<br/>good,<br/>and a mischievous tongue will end<br/>in disaster.</p> <p>A stupid man is the bane of his 21<br/>parent,<br/>and his father has no joy in a<br/>boorish son.</p> |
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**30:** *Narrows*: restricts himself to his evil purpose, and, being *close-lipped*, acts secretly to achieve his aim. **33:** The decision of God was learned by casting *lots* (called *Urim* and *Thummim*, Exod.28.15 n.) which were in the care of priests. **17.8:** *Bribe*: the meaning here is a proper gift,



- 22 A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance,  
but low spirits sap a man's strength.
- 23 A wicked man accepts a bribe under his cloak  
to pervert the course of justice.
- 24 Wisdom is never out of sight of a discerning man,  
but a stupid man's eyes are roving everywhere.
- 25 A stupid son exasperates his father and is a bitter sorrow to the mother who bore him.
- 26 Again, to punish the righteous is not good  
and it is wrong to inflict blows on men of noble mind.
- 27 Experience uses few words;  
discernment keeps a cool head.
- 28 Even a fool, if he holds his peace, is thought wise;  
keep your mouth shut and show your good sense.
- 18 The man who holds aloof seeks every pretext  
to bare his teeth in scorn at competent people.
- 2 The foolish have no interest in seeking to understand,  
but prefer to display their wit.
- 3 When wickedness comes in, in comes contempt;  
with loss of honour comes reproach.
- 4 The words of a man's mouth are a gushing torrent,  
but deep is the water in the well of wisdom.<sup>w</sup>
- 5 It is not good to show favour to the wicked  
or to deprive the righteous of justice.
- 6 When the stupid man talks,  
contention follows;  
his words provoke blows.
- 7 The stupid man's tongue is his undoing;  
his lips put his life in jeopardy.
- 8 A gossip's whispers are savoury morsels,  
gulped down into the inner man.
- 9 Again, the lazy worker is own brother  
to the man who enjoys destruction.
- The name of the LORD is a tower of strength,  
where the righteous may run for refuge.
- A rich man's wealth is his strong city,  
a towering wall, so he supposes.  
Before disaster comes, a man is proud,  
but the way to honour is humility.  
To answer a question before you have heard it out  
is both stupid and insulting.  
A man's spirit may sustain him in sickness,  
but if the spirit is wounded, who can mend it?
- Knowledge comes to the discerning mind;  
the wise ear listens to get knowledge.  
A gift opens the door to the giver and gains access to the great.  
In a lawsuit the first speaker seems right,  
until another steps forward and cross-questions him.
- Cast lots, and settle a quarrel,  
and so keep litigants apart.
- A reluctant brother is more unyielding than a fortress,  
and quarrels are stubborn as the bars of a castle.
- A man may live by the fruit of his tongue,  
his lips may earn him a livelihood.  
The tongue has power of life and death;  
make friends with it and enjoy its fruits.
- Find a wife, and you find a good thing;  
so you will earn the favour of the LORD.
- The poor man speaks in a tone of entreaty,  
and the rich man gives a harsh answer.
- Some companions are good only for idle talk,  
but a friend may stick closer than a brother.

<sup>w</sup> The words . . . wisdom: *prob. rdg.*; *inverting phrases.*not a dishonest one; the verse commends generosity. **18.10–11:** The trust in God, here expressed in *name*, is more dependable than a trust in wealth. See 2 Sam.22.3; Ps.18.2. **24:** See 17.17.

- 19 Better be poor and above reproach  
than rich and crooked in speech.
- 2 Again, desire without knowledge is  
not good;  
the man in a hurry misses the way.
- 3 A man's own folly wrecks his life,  
and then he bears a grudge against  
the LORD.
- 4 Wealth makes many friends,  
but a man without means loses the  
friend he has.
- 5 A false witness will not escape  
punishment,  
and one who utters nothing but lies  
will not go free.
- 6 Many curry favour with the great;  
a lavish giver has the world for his  
friend.
- 7 A poor man's brothers all dislike him,  
how much more is he shunned by  
his friends!  
Practice in evil makes the perfect  
scoundrel;  
the man who talks too much meets  
his deserts.
- 8 To learn sense is true self-love;  
cherish discernment and make sure  
of success.
- 9 A false witness will not escape  
punishment,  
and one who utters nothing but lies  
will perish.
- 10 A fool at the helm is out of place,  
how much worse a slave in  
command of men of rank!
- 11 To be patient shows intelligence;  
to overlook faults is a man's glory.
- 12 A king's rage is like a lion's roar,  
his favour like dew on the grass.
- 13 A stupid son is a calamity to his  
father;  
a nagging wife is like water dripping  
endlessly.
- 14 Home and wealth may come down  
from ancestors,  
but an intelligent wife is a gift from  
the LORD.
- 15 Laziness is the undoing of the  
worthless;  
idlers must starve.
- 16 To keep the commandments keeps a  
man safe,  
but scorning the way of the LORD  
brings death.
- 17 He who is generous to the poor  
lends to the LORD;
- he will repay him in full measure.  
Chastise your son while there is hope 18  
for him,  
but be careful not to flog him to  
death.  
A man's ill temper brings its own 19  
punishment;  
try to save him, and you make  
matters worse.  
Listen to advice and accept 20  
instruction,  
and you will die a wise man.  
A man's heart may be full of 21  
schemes,  
but the LORD's purpose will prevail.  
Greed is a disgrace to a man;  
better be a poor man than a liar. 22  
The fear of the LORD is life; 23  
he who is full of it will rest  
untouched by evil.  
The sluggard plunges his hand in the 24  
dish  
but will not so much as lift it to his  
mouth.  
Strike an arrogant man, and he 25  
resents it like a fool;  
reprove an understanding man, and  
he understands what you mean.  
He who talks his father down vexes 26  
his mother;  
he is a son to bring shame and  
disgrace on them.  
A son who ceases to accept 27  
correction  
is sure to turn his back on the  
teachings of knowledge.  
A rascally witness perverts justice, 28  
and the talk of the wicked fosters  
mischief.  
There is a rod in pickle for the 29  
arrogant,  
and blows ready for the stupid man's  
back.
- Wine is an insolent fellow, and 20  
strong drink makes an uproar;  
no one addicted to their company  
grows wise.  
A king's threat is like a lion's roar; 2  
one who ignores it is his own worst  
enemy.  
To draw back from a dispute is 3  
honourable;  
it is the fool who bares his teeth.  
The sluggard who does not plough 4  
in autumn

- goes begging at harvest and gets nothing.
- 5 Counsel in another's heart is like deep water,  
but a discerning man will draw it up.
- 6 Many a man protests his loyalty,  
but where will you find one to keep faith?
- 7 If a man leads a good and upright life,  
happy are the sons who come after him!
- 8 A king seated on the judgement-throne  
has an eye to sift all that is evil.
- 9 Who can say, 'I have a clear conscience;  
I am purged from my sin'?
- 10 A double standard in weights and measures  
is an abomination to the LORD.
- 11 Again, a young man is known by his actions,  
whether his conduct is innocent or guilty.<sup>x</sup>
- 12 The ear that hears, the eye that sees,  
the LORD made them both.
- 13 Love sleep, and you will end in poverty;  
keep your eyes open, and you will eat your fill.
- 14 'A bad bargain!' says the buyer to the seller,  
but off he goes to brag about it.
- 15 There is gold in plenty and coral too,  
but a wise word is a rare jewel.
- 16 Take a man's garment when he pledges his word for a stranger  
and hold that as a pledge for the unknown person.
- 17 Bread got by fraud tastes good,  
but afterwards it fills the mouth with grit.
- 18 Care is the secret of good planning;  
wars are won by skilful strategy.
- 19 A gossip will betray secrets;<sup>y</sup>  
have nothing to do with a tattler.
- 20 If a man reviles father and mother,  
his lamp will go out when darkness comes.
- 21 If you begin by piling up property in haste,  
it will bring you no blessing in the end.
- Do not think to repay evil for evil,  
wait for the LORD to deliver you.
- A double standard in weights is an abomination to the LORD,  
and false scales are not good in his sight.
- It is the LORD who directs a man's steps;  
how can mortal man understand the road he travels?
- It is dangerous to dedicate a gift rashly  
or to make a vow and have second thoughts.
- A wise king sifts out the wicked  
and turns back for them the wheel of fortune.
- The LORD shines into a man's very soul,  
searching out his inmost being.
- A king's guards are loyalty and good faith,  
his throne is upheld by righteousness.
- The glory of young men is their strength,  
the dignity of old men their grey hairs.
- A good beating purges the mind,  
and blows chasten the inmost being.
- The king's heart is under the LORD's hand;  
like runnels of water, he turns it wherever he will.
- A man may think that he is always right,  
but the LORD fixes a standard for the heart.
- Do what is right and just;  
that is more pleasing to the LORD than sacrifice.
- Haughty looks and a proud heart—  
these sins mark a wicked man.
- Forethought and diligence are sure of profit;  
the man in a hurry is as sure of poverty.

<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. upright.

<sup>y</sup> Or He who betrays secrets is a gossip.

20.16: *A man's garment*: demand a significant pledge if it is made by a man on behalf of a stranger. Ordinarily a garment taken in pledge had to be returned at sundown (Exod.22.26).  
25: Gifts *dedicated* to sanctuaries were accompanied by solemn oaths, not to be taken lightly; see Ps.15.4. 27: *Shines*: God plants moral discernment within every man. 21.3: See Hos.6.6.

6	He who makes a fortune by telling lies runs needlessly into the toils of death.	Persevere in right conduct and loyalty and you shall find life and honour.	21
7	The wicked are caught up in their own violence, because they refuse to do what is just.	A wise man climbs into a city full of armed men and undermines its strength and its confidence.	22
8	The criminal's conduct is tortuous; straight dealing is a sign of integrity.	Keep a guard over your lips and tongue and keep yourself out of trouble.	23
9	Better to live in a corner of the house-top than have a nagging wife and a brawling household.	The conceited man is haughty, his name is insolence; conceit and impatience are in all he does.	24
10	The wicked man is set on evil; he has no pity to spare for his friend.	The sluggard's cravings will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work;	25
11	The simple man is made wise when he sees the insolent punished, and learns his lesson when the wise man prospers.	all day long his cravings go unsatisfied, while the righteous man gives without stint.	26
12	The just God <sup>z</sup> makes the wicked man's home childless; <sup>a</sup> he overturns the wicked and ruins them.	The wicked man's sacrifice is an abomination to the LORD; how much more when he offers it with vileness at heart!	27
13	If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the helpless, he will cry for help himself and not be heard.	A lying witness will perish, but he whose words ring true will leave children behind him.	28
14	A gift in secret placates an angry man; a bribe slipped under the cloak pacifies great wrath.	A wicked man puts a bold face on it, whereas the upright man secures his line of retreat.	29
15	When justice is done, all good men rejoice, but it brings ruin to evildoers.	Face to face with the LORD, wisdom, understanding, counsel go for nothing.	30
16	A man who takes leave of common sense comes to rest in the company of the dead.	A horse may be made ready for the day of battle, but victory comes from the LORD.	31
17	Love pleasure and you will beg your bread; a man who loves wine and oil will never grow rich.	A good name is more to be desired than great riches; esteem is better than silver or gold. Rich and poor have this in common: the LORD made them both.	22
18	The wicked man serves as a ransom for the righteous, so does a traitor for the upright.	A shrewd man sees trouble coming and lies low; the simple walk into it and pay the penalty.	3
19	Better to live alone in the desert than with a nagging and ill-tempered wife.	The fruit of humility is the fear of God with riches and honour and life.	4
20	The wise man has his home full of fine and costly treasures; the stupid man is a mere spendthrift.		

<sup>z</sup> Or The just man.  
<sup>a</sup> makes . . . childless: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* considers the wicked man's home.

**9:** *Corner*: may mean a room apart. **18:** *Ransom*: the price society pays; righteous men are clearly discerned by comparison with the unrighteous.

- 5 The crooked man's path is set with  
snares and pitfalls;  
the cautious man will steer clear of  
them.
- 6 Start a boy on the right road,  
and even in old age he will not  
leave it.
- 7 The rich lord it over the poor;  
the borrower becomes the lender's  
slave.  
The man who sows injustice reaps  
trouble,  
and the end of his work will be the  
rod.<sup>b</sup>
- 9 The kindly man will be blessed,  
for he shares his food with the poor.
- 10 Drive out the insolent man, and  
strife goes with him;  
if he sits on the bench, he makes a  
mockery of justice.
- 11 The LORD loves a sincere man;  
but you will make a king your  
friend with your fine phrases.
- 12 The LORD keeps watch over every  
claim at law,  
and overturns the scoundrel's case.
- 13 The sluggard protests, "There's a  
lion outside;  
I shall get myself killed in the  
street."
- 14 The words of an adulteress are like  
a deep pit;  
those whom the LORD has cursed  
will fall into it.
- 15 Folly is deep-rooted in the heart of  
a boy;  
a good beating will drive it right out  
of him.
- 16 Oppression of the poor may bring  
gain to a man,  
but giving to the rich leads only to  
penury.
- open your mind to the knowledge I  
impart;  
to keep them in your heart will be a  
pleasure,  
and then you will always have them  
ready on your lips.  
I would have you trust in the LORD  
and so I tell you these things this  
day for your own good.  
Here I have written out for you  
thirty sayings,  
full of knowledge and wise advice,  
to impart to you a knowledge of the  
truth,  
that you may take back a true  
report<sup>c</sup> to him who sent you.
- Never rob a helpless man because  
he is helpless,  
nor ill-treat a poor wretch in court;  
for the LORD will take up their cause  
and rob him who robs them of their  
livelihood.  
Never make friends with an angry  
man  
nor keep company with a bad-  
tempered one;  
be careful not to learn his ways,  
or you will find yourself caught in a  
trap.  
Never be one to give guarantees,  
or to pledge yourself as surety for  
another;  
for if you cannot pay, beware:  
your bed will be taken from under  
you.  
Do not move the ancient boundary-  
stone  
which your forefathers set up.  
You see a man skilful at his craft:  
he will serve kings, he will not serve  
common men.

When you sit down to eat with a  
ruling prince,  
be sure to keep your mind on what  
is before you, **23**

17 The sayings of the wise:

Pay heed and listen to my words,

<sup>b</sup> the rod; or the threshing.  
<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds words of truth.

**22.17–24.22(34): Thirty wise sayings.** This section is dependent on the Egyptian work by Amen-em-ope, from which ten sayings have been derived and adapted to the Israelite setting. **17–21:** A prologue. The MT's reading (v. 20), formerly rendered "excellent things," has been corrected to "thirty sayings"—a very minor change in the Heb.—on the basis of the Amen-em-ope, where, as here, there are found both prologue and conclusion (for the latter see 24.21–22). **17:** *To my words:* MT reads "to the words of the wise," possibly a superscription belonging elsewhere and misplaced here. **28:** The prohibition against removing a landmark is in Amen-em-ope, ch. 6; compare Prov.23.10; Deut.19.14 and 27.17. **23.1:** *What:* i.e. who: in whose

<p>2 and if you are a greedy man, cut your throat first.</p> <p>3 Do not be greedy for his dainties, for they are not what they seem.</p> <p>4 Do not slave to get wealth;<sup>d</sup> be a sensible man, and give up.</p> <p>5 Before you can look round, it will be gone; it will surely grow wings like an eagle, like a bird in the sky.</p> <p>6 Do not go to dinner with a miser,<sup>e</sup> do not be greedy for his dainties; 7 for they will stick in your<sup>f</sup> throat like a hair. He will bid you eat and drink, but his heart is not with you;</p> <p>8 you will bring up the mouthful you have eaten, and your winning words will have been wasted.</p> <p>9 Hold your tongue in the hearing of a stupid man; for he will despise your words of wisdom.</p> <p>10 Do not move the ancient boundary- stone or encroach on the land of orphans: they have a powerful guardian who will take up their cause against you.</p> <p>11 Apply your mind to instruction and open your ears to knowledge when it speaks.</p> <p>12 Do not withhold discipline from a boy; take the stick to him, and save him from death.</p> <p>13 If you take the stick to him yourself, you will preserve him from the jaws of death.</p> <p>14 My son, if you are wise at heart, my heart in its turn will be glad;</p> <p>15 I shall rejoice with all my soul when you speak plain truth.</p> <p>16 Do not try to emulate sinners;</p>	<p>envy only those who fear the LORD day by day;</p> <p>do this, and you may look forward 18 to the future, and your thread of life will not be cut short.</p> <p>Listen, my son, listen, and become 19 wise; set your mind on the right course. Do not keep company with 20 drunkards or those who are greedy for the flesh-pots; for drink and greed will end in 21 poverty, and drunken stupor goes in rags.</p> <p>Listen to your father, who gave you 22 life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, never sell it; 23 buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. A good man's father will rejoice 24 and he who has a wise son will delight in him. Give your father and your mother 25 cause for delight, let her who bore you rejoice.</p> <p>My son, mark my words, 26 and accept my guidance with a will. A prostitute is a deep pit, 27 a loose woman a narrow well; she lies in wait like a robber 28 and betrays her husband with man after man.</p> <p>Whose is the misery? whose the 29 remorse? Whose are the quarrels and the anxiety? Who gets the bruises without knowing why? Whose eyes are bloodshot?</p>
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*d* to get wealth: or for an invitation to a feast.  
*e* Or a man with an evil eye.  
*f* Prob. rdg.; Heb. his.

presence you are. 2: *Cut your throat*: curb your appetite. 5: *Eagle*: Amen-em-ope here reads geese, but since Palestine has no such fowl, the Heb. text substitutes eagle. 10: *Ancient*: Amen-em-ope reads widow (in Heb. *almana*); *olam*, "ancient," is a scribe's error; "widow's boundary" is a more suitable parallel for the *land of orphans*. 11: The next-of-kin was responsible for the welfare of the defenseless victim of the powerful (see Lev.25.25; Ruth 4.1-6); here the *guardian* is God. 20: Meat was eaten by most people only on special occasions; hence the danger of greed when it was served. 27: *Deep pit*: dug as a trap for wild animals. 28: See 7.12.

- 30 Those who linger late over their wine,  
those who are always trying some new spiced liquor.
- 31 Do not gulp down the wine, the strong red wine,  
when the droplets form on the side of the cup;<sup>g</sup>
- 32 in the end it will bite like a snake and sting like a cobra.
- 33 Then your eyes see strange sights, your wits and your speech are confused;
- 34 you become like a man tossing out at sea,  
like one who clings to<sup>h</sup> the top of the rigging;
- 35 you say, 'If it lays me flat, what do I care?  
If it brings me to the ground, what of it?  
As soon as I wake up,  
I shall turn to it again.'
- 24 Do not emulate wicked men or long to make friends with them;  
2 for violence is all they think of, and all they say means mischief.
- 3 Wisdom builds the house,  
good judgement makes it secure,  
4 knowledge furnishes the rooms with all the precious and pleasant things that wealth can buy.
- 5 Wisdom prevails over strength,  
knowledge over brute force;  
6 for wars are won by skilful strategy,  
and victory is the fruit of long planning.
- 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;  
he dare not open his mouth in court.
- 8 A man who is bent on mischief gets a name for intrigue;  
9 the intrigues of foolish men misfire, and the insolent man is odious to his fellows.
- 10 If your strength fails on a lucky<sup>i</sup> day,
- how helpless will you be on a day of disaster!
- When you see a man being dragged 11  
to be killed, go to his rescue,  
and save those being hurried away to their death.
- If you say, 'But I do not know this 12  
man',  
God, who fixes a standard for the heart, will take note.  
God who watches you—be sure he will know;  
he will requite every man for what he does.
- Eat honey, my son, for it is good, 13  
and the honeycomb so sweet upon the tongue.
- Make wisdom too your own; 14  
if you find it, you may look forward to the future,  
and your thread of life will not be cut short.
- Do not lie in wait like a felon at the 15  
good man's house,  
or raid his farm.  
Though the good man may fall seven 16  
times, he is soon up again,  
but the rascal is brought down by misfortune.
- Do not rejoice when your enemy 17  
falls,  
do not gloat when he is brought down;  
or the LORD will see and be 18  
displeased with you,  
and he will cease to be angry with him.
- Do not vie with evildoers 19  
or emulate the wicked;  
for wicked men have no future to 20  
look forward to;  
their embers will be put out.
- My son, fear the LORD and grow 21  
rich,  
but have nothing to do with men of rank,

*g* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds it runs smoothly to and fro.  
*h* clings to: prob. rdg.; Heb. lies on.  
*i* lucky: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

24.11–22: Passive virtue is inadequate. See Ps.82.4; Isa.58.6,7; 1 Jn.3.16. 16: V.22; Ps.34.19. 17: See Job 31.29; Obad.12.

22 they will bring about disaster  
without warning;  
who knows what ruin such men  
may cause?<sup>j</sup>

23 More sayings of wise men:  
Partiality in dispensing justice is not  
good.

24 A judge who pronounces a guilty  
man innocent  
is cursed by all nations, all peoples  
execrate him;

25 but for those who convict the guilty  
all will go well,  
they will be blessed with prosperity.

26 A straightforward answer  
is as good as a kiss of friendship.

27 First put all in order out of doors  
and make everything ready on the  
land;  
then establish your house and home.

28 Do not be a witness against your  
neighbour without good reason  
nor misrepresent him in your  
evidence.

29 Do not say,  
'I will do to him what he has done  
to me;  
I will requite him for what he has  
done.'

30 I passed by the field of an idle man,  
by the vineyard of a man with no  
sense.

31 I looked, and it was all dried up,  
it was overgrown with thistles  
and covered with weeds,  
and the stones of its walls had been  
torn down.

32 I saw and I took good note,  
I considered and learnt the lesson:  
a little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little folding of the hands in rest,  
and poverty will come upon you  
like a robber,  
want like a ruffian.

Other collections of wise sayings

More proverbs of Solomon transcribed 25  
by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah:

The glory of God is to keep things 2  
hidden  
but the glory of kings is to fathom  
them.

The heavens for height, the earth<sup>k</sup> 3  
for depth:  
unfathomable is the heart of a king.  
Rid silver of its impurities, 4  
then it may go to<sup>l</sup> the silversmith;  
rid the king's presence of wicked men, 5  
and his throne will rest firmly on  
righteousness.

Do not put yourself forward in the 6  
king's presence  
or take your place among the great;  
for it is better that he should say to 7  
you, 'Come up here',  
than move you down to make room  
for a nobleman.

Be in no hurry to tell everyone what 8  
you have seen,  
or it will end in bitter reproaches  
from your friend.

Argue your own case with your 9  
neighbour,  
but do not reveal another man's  
secrets,  
or he will reproach you when he 10  
hears of it  
and your indiscretion will then be  
beyond recall.

Like apples of gold set in silver 11  
filigree  
is a word spoken in season.  
Like a golden earring or a necklace 12  
of Nubian gold  
is a wise man whose reproof finds  
attentive ears.

Like the coolness of snow in harvest 13  
is a trusty messenger to those who  
send him.<sup>m</sup>

*j* they . . . cause: or they will come to sudden disaster;  
who knows what the ruin of such men will be.  
*k* Or the underworld.  
*l* then it may go to: or and it will come out bright for.  
*m* Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds refreshing his master.

24.23-34: Miscellaneous proverbs, plus a narrative about a sluggard. 30-31: Compare Isa.5.1-7. 34: Identical with 6.11.

25.1-31.9: Other collections of wise sayings. Chs. 25-29 are a second collection of "Proverbs of Solomon." The reign of Hezekiah was 715-687 B.C. The official phrase *men of Hezekiah* suggests that this king took an active interest in the welfare of the Wisdom tradition, as had Solomon before him. 7: Compare Lk.14.7-11. 12: *Nubian*: Ethiopic. 14: In a subtropical climate the first *clouds* promising *rain* after the many dry months are greeted eagerly and become



- |    |  |   |           |
|----|--|---|-----------|
| 14 | Like clouds and wind that bring no rain<br>is the man who boasts of gifts he never gives.                      | Like a city that has burst out of its confining walls <sup>p</sup><br>is a man who cannot control his temper. | 28        |
| 15 | A prince may be persuaded by patience,<br>and a soft tongue may break down solid bone. <sup>n</sup>            | Like snow in summer or rain at harvest,<br>honour is unseasonable in a stupid man.                            | <b>26</b> |
| 16 | If you find honey, eat only what you need,<br>too much of it will make you sick;                               | Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow,<br>groundless abuse gets nowhere.                             | 2         |
| 17 | be sparing in visits to your neighbour's house,<br>if he sees too much of you, he will dislike you.            | The whip for a horse, the bridle for an ass,<br>the rod for the back of a fool!                               | 3         |
| 18 | Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow<br>is a false witness who denounces his friend.                        | Do not answer a stupid man in the language of his folly,<br>or you will grow like him;                        | 4         |
| 19 | Like a tooth decayed or a foot limping<br>is a traitor relied on in the day of trouble.                        | answer a stupid man as his folly deserves,<br>or he will think himself a wise man.                            | 5         |
| 20 | Like one who dresses <sup>o</sup> a wound with vinegar,<br>so is the sweetest of singers to the heavy-hearted. | He who sends a fool on an errand cuts his own leg off and displays the stump.                                 | 6         |
| 21 | If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;<br>if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;                  | A proverb in the mouth of stupid men<br>dangles helpless as a lame man's legs.                                | 7         |
| 22 | so you will heap glowing coals on his head,<br>and the LORD will reward you.                                   | Like one who gets the stone caught in his sling<br>is he who bestows honour on a fool.                        | 8         |
| 23 | As the north wind holds back the rain,<br>so an angry glance holds back slander.                               | Like a thorn that pierces a drunkard's hand<br>is a proverb in a stupid man's mouth.                          | 9         |
| 24 | Better to live in a corner of the house-top<br>than have a nagging wife and a brawling household.              | Like an archer who shoots at any passer-by <sup>q</sup><br>is one who hires a stupid man or a drunkard.       | 10        |
| 25 | Like cold water to the throat when it is dry<br>is good news from a distant land.                              | Like a dog returning to its vomit<br>is a stupid man who repeats his folly.                                   | 11        |
| 26 | Like a muddied spring or a tainted well<br>is a righteous man who gives way to a wicked one.                   | Do you see that man who thinks himself so wise?<br>There is more hope for a fool than for him.                | 12        |
| 27 | A surfeit of honey is bad for a man,<br>and the quest for honour is burdensome.                                | The sluggard protests, 'There is a lion <sup>r</sup> in the highway,<br>a lion at large in the streets.'      | 13        |

<sup>n</sup> solid bone: or authority.

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds a garment on a cold day.

<sup>p</sup> Or that is breached and left unvalled.

<sup>q</sup> passer-by: transposed from end of verse.

<sup>r</sup> Or snake.

particularly disappointing when no rain falls. **15:** Compare Ecclus.28.17. **22:** *Glowing coals* may have had a cultic origin in Egypt. The figure is used in Rom.12.20. **26.1:** Rainfall in Palestine is limited to certain seasons, so that the weather is highly predictable. **4-5:** The two

- |                 |  |   |    |
|-----------------|--|---|----|
| 14              | A door turns on its hinges,<br>a sluggard on his bed.  | from the lips of an outsider and not<br>from your own.  |    |
| 15              | A sluggard plunges his hand in the<br>dish<br>but is too lazy to lift it to his mouth.                 | Stone is a burden and sand a dead<br>weight,<br>but to be vexed by a fool is more<br>burdensome than either.                  | 3  |
| 16              | A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes<br>than seven men who answer<br>sensibly.                          | Wrath is cruel and anger is a<br>deluge;  | 4  |
| 17              | Like a man who seizes a passing cur<br>by the ears<br>is he who meddles in another's<br>quarrel.       | but who can stand up to jealousy?<br>Open reproof is better<br>than love concealed.   | 5  |
| 19 <sup>b</sup> | A man who deceives another<br>and then says, 'It was only a joke',                                     | The blows a friend gives are well<br>meant,<br>but the kisses of an enemy are<br>perfidious.                                  | 6  |
| 18              | is like a madman shooting at<br>random<br>his deadly darts and arrows.                                 | A man full-fed refuses honey,<br>but even bitter food tastes sweet to<br>a hungry man.  | 7  |
| 20              | For lack of fuel a fire dies down<br>and for want of a tale-bearer a<br>quarrel subsides.              | Like a bird that strays far from its<br>nest  | 8  |
| 21              | Like bellows for the coal and fuel<br>for the fire<br>is a quarrelsome man for kindling<br>strife.     | is a man far from his home.<br>Oil and perfume bring joy to the<br>heart,<br>but cares torment a man's very soul.             | 9  |
| 22              | A gossip's whispers are savoury<br>morsels<br>gulped down into the inner man.                          | Do not neglect your own friend or<br>your father's; <sup>f</sup><br>a neighbour at hand is better than a<br>brother far away. | 10 |
| 23              | Glib speech that covers a spiteful<br>heart<br>is like glaze spread on earthenware.                    | Be wise, my son, then you will bring<br>joy to my heart,<br>and I shall be able to forestall my<br>critics.                   | 11 |
| 24              | With his lips an enemy may speak<br>you fair<br>but inwardly he harbours deceit;                       | A shrewd man sees trouble coming<br>and lies low;<br>the simple walk into it and pay the<br>penalty.                          | 12 |
| 25              | when his words are gracious, do not<br>trust him,<br>for seven abominations fill his heart;            | Take a man's garment when he<br>pledges his word for a stranger<br>and hold that as a pledge for the<br>unknown person.       | 13 |
| 26              | he may cloak his enmity in<br>dissimulation,<br>but his wickedness is shown up<br>before the assembly. | If one man greets another too<br>heartily,<br>he may give great offence.  | 14 |
| 27              | If he digs a pit, he will fall into it;<br>if he rolls a stone, it will roll back<br>upon him.         | Endless dripping on a rainy day—<br>that is what a nagging wife is like.  | 15 |
| 28              | A lying tongue makes innocence<br>seem guilty,<br>and smooth words conceal their<br>sting.             | As well try to control the wind as to<br>control her!<br>As well try to pick up oil in one's<br>fingers!                      | 16 |
| 27              | Do not flatter yourself about<br>tomorrow,<br>for you never know what a day will<br>bring forth.       | As iron sharpens iron,<br>so one man sharpens the wits of<br>another.   | 17 |
| 2               | Let flattery come from a stranger,<br>not from yourself,   |   |    |

<sup>s</sup> Verses 18 and 19 transposed.

<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds or how should you enter your brother's house in the day of your ruin?

proverbs supplement each other: they are not in contradiction. 27.13: See 20.16. 15: See 19.13.

- 18 He who guards the fig-tree will eat  
its fruit,  
and he who watches his master's  
interests will come to honour.
- 19 As face answers face reflected in the  
water,  
so one man's heart answers  
another's.
- 20 Sheol and Abaddon are insatiable;  
a man's eyes too are never satisfied.
- 21 The melting-pot is for silver and the  
crucible for gold,  
but praise is the test of character.
- 22 Pound a fool with pestle and  
mortar,<sup>u</sup>  
his folly will never be knocked out  
of him.
- 23 Be careful to know your own sheep  
and take good care of your flocks;  
for possessions do not last for ever,  
nor will a crown endure to endless  
generations.
- 24 The grass disappears, new shoots are  
seen  
and the green growth on the hills is  
gathered in;
- 26 the lambs clothe you,  
the he-goats are worth the price of a  
field,
- 27 while the goats' milk is enough for  
your food  
and nourishment for your maidens.
- 28 The wicked man runs away with no  
one in pursuit,  
but the righteous is like a young  
lion in repose.
- 2 It is the fault of a violent man that  
quarrels start,  
but they are settled by a man of  
discernment.
- 3 A tyrant oppressing the poor  
is like driving rain which ruins the  
crop.
- 4 The lawless praise wicked men;  
the law-abiding contend with them.
- 5 Bad men do not know what justice  
is,  
but those who seek the LORD know  
everything good.
- 6 Better be poor and above reproach  
than rich and crooked.
- 7 A discerning son observes the law,  
but one who keeps riotous company  
wounds his father.
- 8 He who grows rich by lending at  
discount or at interest  
is saving for another who will be  
generous to the poor.
- 9 If a man turns a deaf ear to the law,  
even his prayers are an  
abomination.
- 10 He who tempts the upright into  
evil courses  
will himself fall into the pit he has  
dug.
- The honest shall inherit a fortune,  
but the wicked shall inherit nothing.
- 11 The rich man may think himself  
wise,  
but a poor man of discernment sees  
through him.
- 12 When the just are in power, there  
are great celebrations,<sup>v</sup>  
but when the wicked come to the  
top, others are downtrodden.
- 13 Conceal your faults, and you will  
not prosper;  
confess and give them up, and you  
will find mercy.
- 14 Happy the man who is scrupulous  
in conduct,  
but he who hardens his heart falls  
into misfortune.
- 15 Like a starving lion or a thirsty bear  
is a wicked man ruling a helpless  
people.
- 16 The man who is stupid and grasping  
will perish,  
but he who hates ill-gotten gain will  
live long.
- 17 A man charged with bloodshed  
will jump into a well to escape  
arrest.
- 18 Whoever leads an honest life will be  
safe,  
but a rogue will fail, one way or  
another.
- 19 One who cultivates his land has  
plenty to eat;  
idle pursuits lead to poverty.
- 20 A man of steady character will  
enjoy many blessings,  
but one in a hurry to grow rich will  
not go unpunished.

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds with goats.

<sup>v</sup> Or there is great pageantry.

28.6: See 14.31 n. 13: *Mercy*: from men. Divine mercy plays little role in Wisdom literature.

- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| 21 | To show favour is not good;<br>but men will do wrong for a mere<br>crust of bread.   | 8  | Arrogance can inflame a city,<br>but wisdom averts the people's<br>anger.  |
| 22 | The miser <sup>w</sup> is in a hurry to grow<br>rich,<br>never dreaming that want will<br>overtake him.                              | 9  | If a wise man goes to law with a<br>fool,<br>he will meet abuse or derision, but<br>get no remedy.   |
| 23 | Take a man to task and in the end<br>win more thanks<br>than the man with a flattering<br>tongue.                                    | 10 | Men who have tasted blood hate an<br>honest man,<br>but the upright set much store by<br>his life.   |
| 24 | To rob your father or mother and<br>say you do no wrong<br>is no better than wanton destruction.                                     | 11 | A stupid man gives free rein to his<br>anger;<br>a wise man waits and lets it grow<br>cool.  |
| 25 | A self-important <sup>x</sup> man provokes<br>quarrels,<br>but he who trusts in the LORD grows<br>fat and prosperous.                | 12 | If a prince listens to falsehood,<br>all his servants will be wicked.  |
| 26 | It is plain stupidity to trust in one's<br>own wits,<br>but he who walks the path of wisdom<br>will come safely through.             | 13 | Poor man and oppressor have this<br>in common:<br>what happiness each has comes from<br>the LORD.  |
| 27 | He who gives to the poor will never<br>want,<br>but he who turns a blind eye gets<br>nothing but curses.                             | 14 | A king who steadfastly deals out<br>justice to the weak<br>will be secure for ever on his throne.  |
| 28 | When the wicked come to the top,<br>others are pulled down; <sup>y</sup><br>but, when they perish, the righteous<br>come into power. | 15 | Rod and reprimand impart wisdom,<br>but a boy who runs wild brings<br>shame on his mother.   |
| 29 | A man who is still stubborn after<br>much reproof<br>will suddenly be broken past<br>mending.  | 16 | When the wicked are in power, sin<br>is in power,<br>but the righteous will gloat over<br>their downfall.                                    |
| 2  | When the righteous are in power<br>the people rejoice,<br>but they groan when the wicked<br>hold office.                             | 17 | Correct your son, and he will be a<br>comfort to you<br>and bring you delights of every kind.  |
| 3  | A lover of wisdom brings joy to his<br>father,<br>but one who keeps company with<br>harlots squanders his wealth.                    | 18 | Where there is no one in authority, <sup>a</sup><br>the people break loose,<br>but a guardian of the law keeps<br>them on the straight path. |
| 4  | By just government a king gives his<br>country stability,<br>but by forced contributions he<br>reduces it to ruin.                   | 19 | Mere words will not keep a slave<br>in order;<br>he may understand, but he will not<br>respond.  |
| 5  | A man who flatters his neighbour<br>is spreading a net for his feet.   | 20 | When you see someone over-eager<br>to speak, <sup>b</sup><br>there will be more hope for a fool<br>than for him.                             |
| 6  | An evil man is ensnared by his sin, <sup>z</sup><br>but a righteous man lives and<br>flourishes.                                     | 21 | Pamper a slave from boyhood,<br>and in the end he will prove<br>ungrateful.  |
| 7  | The righteous man is concerned for<br>the cause of the helpless,<br>but the wicked understand no such<br>concern.                    | 22 | A man prone to anger provokes a<br>quarrel<br>and a hot-head is always doing<br>wrong.   |

<sup>w</sup> Or The man with the evil eye. <sup>x</sup> Or grasping.  
<sup>y</sup> are pulled down: or hide themselves.

<sup>z</sup> An evil . . . sin: or When an evil man steps out a  
trap awaits him.

<sup>a</sup> Or no vision. <sup>b</sup> Or someone hasty in business.

- |  |   |   |    |
|--|---|---|----|
| 23   | Pride will bring a man low;<br>a man lowly in spirit wins honour.   | Put fraud and lying far from me;<br>give me neither poverty nor wealth,<br>provide me only with the food I<br>need.   | 8  |
| 24   | He who goes shares with a thief is<br>his own enemy:<br>he hears himself put on oath and<br>dare not give evidence.   | If I have too much, I shall deny thee<br>and say, 'Who is the LORD?'<br>If I am reduced to poverty, I shall<br>steal<br>and blacken the name of my God.   | 9  |
| 25   | A man's fears will prove a snare to<br>him,<br>but he who trusts in the LORD has<br>a high tower of refuge.   | Never disparage a slave to his<br>master,<br>or he will speak ill of you, and you<br>will pay for it.   | 10 |
| 26   | Many seek audience of a prince,<br>but in every case the LORD decides.  | There is a sort of people who<br>defame their fathers<br>and do not speak well of their own<br>mothers;   | 11 |
| 27   | The righteous cannot abide an<br>unjust man,<br>nor the wicked a man whose<br>conduct is upright.   | a sort who are pure in their own<br>eyes<br>and yet are not cleansed of their<br>filth;<br>a sort—how haughty are their looks,<br>how disdainful their glances!<br>A sort whose teeth are swords,<br>their jaws are set with knives,<br>they eat the wretched out of the<br>country<br>and the needy out of house and<br>home. <sup>d</sup> | 12 |
| <b>30 Sayings of Agur son of Jakeh from<br/>Massa:<sup>c</sup></b> |   | The leech has two daughters;<br>'Give', says one, and 'Give', says the<br>other.  | 15 |
|  | This is the great man's very word:<br>I am weary, O God,<br>I am weary and worn out;  | Three things there are which will never<br>be satisfied,<br>four which never say, 'Enough!'<br>The grave and a barren womb, <sup>e</sup><br>a land thirsty for water<br>and fire that never says, 'Enough!'   | 16 |
| 2  | I am a dumb brute, scarcely a man,<br>without a man's powers of<br>understanding;   | The eye that mocks a father or<br>scorns a mother's old age <sup>f</sup><br>will be plucked out by magpies<br>or eaten by the vulture's young.  | 17 |
| 3  | I have not learnt wisdom<br>nor have I received knowledge from<br>the Holy One.   |   |    |
| 4  | Who has ever gone up to heaven<br>and come down again?<br>Who has cupped the wind in the<br>hollow of his hands?<br>Who has bound up the waters in the<br>fold of his garment?<br>Who has fixed the boundaries of the<br>earth?<br>What is his name or his son's name,<br>if you know it? |   |    |
| 5  | God's every promise has stood the<br>test:<br>he is a shield to all who seek refuge<br>with him.  |   |    |
| 6  | Add nothing to his words,<br>or he will expose you for a liar.  |   |    |
| 7  | Two things I ask of thee;<br>do not withhold them from me<br>before I die.  |   |    |

<sup>c</sup> From Massa: *prob. rdg.*: (cp. 31. 1): *Heb.* the oracle.

<sup>d</sup> house and home: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* man.

<sup>e</sup> Or a woman's desire.

<sup>f</sup> old age: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* unintelligible.

**30.1-9: The skeptical words of Agur** (vv. 1-4), a non-Israelite (Tfn. c), followed by pious advice (5-6) and a prayer (7-9), form an appendix. **1:** *Massa*: probably a place in Arabia (Gen.25.14). The word also means "oracle." *Weary . . . worn out*: Some interpreters read here the proper names Ithiel and Ucal; the translation has altered the extremely difficult text. **3-4:** The style is ironical, scorning those who know too much about God, but the mood is agonized sadness.

**30.10-33: Another appendix.** Some of these numerical sayings may originally have been

- 18 Three things there are which are too wonderful for me,  
four which I do not understand:  
19 the way of a vulture in the sky,  
the way of a serpent on the rock,  
the way of a ship out at sea,  
and the way of a man with a girl.
- 20 The way of an unfaithful wife is this:  
she eats, then she wipes her mouth  
and says, 'I have done no harm.'
- 21 At three things the earth shakes,  
four things it cannot bear:  
22 a slave turned king,  
a churl gorging himself,  
23 a woman unloved when she is  
married,  
and a slave-girl displacing her  
mistress.
- 24 Four things there are which are  
smallest on earth  
yet wise beyond the wisest:  
25 ants, a people with no strength,  
yet they prepare their store of food  
in the summer;  
26 rock-badgers, a feeble folk,  
yet they make their home among the  
rocks;  
27 locusts, which have no king,  
yet they all sally forth in detachments;  
28 the lizard, which can be grasped in  
the hand,  
yet is found in the palaces of kings.
- 29 Three things there are which are  
stately in their stride,  
four which are stately as they move:  
30 the lion, a hero among beasts,  
which will not turn tail for anyone;  
31 the strutting cock and the he-goat;  
and a king going forth to lead his  
army.<sup>g</sup>
- 32 If you are churlish and arrogant  
and fond of filthy talk, hold your  
tongue;

for wringing out the milk produces 33  
curd  
and wringing the nose produces blood,  
so provocation leads to strife.

Sayings of Lemuel king of Massa, 31  
which his mother taught him:

What, O my son, what shall I say to 2  
you,  
you, the child of my womb and  
answer to my prayers?  
Do not give the vigour of your 3  
manhood to women  
nor consort with those who make  
eyes at<sup>h</sup> kings.  
It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not 4  
for kings to drink wine  
nor for princes to crave strong  
drink;  
if they drink, they will forget rights 5  
and customs  
and twist the law against their  
wretched victims.  
Give strong drink to the desperate 6  
and wine to the embittered;  
such men will drink and forget their 7  
poverty  
and remember their trouble no  
longer.  
Open your mouth and speak up for 8  
the dumb,  
against the suit of any that oppose  
them;  
open your mouth and pronounce 9  
just sentence  
and give judgement for the wretched  
and the poor.

*A capable wife*

Who can find a capable wife? 10  
Her worth is far beyond coral.

<sup>g</sup> going forth to lead his army: *prob. rdg.: Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>h</sup> who make eyes at: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

riddles (e.g. vv. 15b–16). 18–19: The point seems to be the absence of all trace of the movement made. 20: *Eats*: commits adultery. The words are to be taken as symbolic of sex relations.

31.1–9: The advice of the queen mother, here an appendix, is paralleled in Egyptian royal instructions. 1: *Lemuel*: he is unknown. 4–9: Those whose situation is desperate resort to *strong* drink; the king must not imbibe, for he is to vindicate the cause of the *poor* and so is not to impair his *judgement* by strong drink. 8–9: A characteristic Hebrew concern for the lowly.

31.10–31: *A capable wife*. An acrostic poem on the ideal wife, possibly meant as instruction to girls (for other alphabetic poems see Lam. chs. 1–4; Pss. 9–10; 119, etc.). 10: *Who . . . wife*: a rhetorical question, equivalent to the statement, "A man who finds a capable wife . . ."

- 11 Her husband's whole trust is in her,  
and children are not lacking.
- 12 She repays him with good, not evil,  
all her life long.
- 13 She chooses wool and flax  
and toils at her work.
- 14 Like a ship laden with merchandise,  
she brings home food from far off.
- 15 She rises while it is still night  
and sets meat before her household.<sup>i</sup>
- 16 After careful thought she buys a  
field  
and plants a vineyard out of her  
earnings.
- 17 She sets about her duties with  
vigour  
and braces herself for the work.
- 18 She sees that her business goes well,  
and never puts out her lamp at  
night.
- 19 She holds the distaff in her hand,  
and her fingers grasp the spindle.
- 20 She is open-handed to the wretched  
and generous to the poor.
- 21 She has no fear for her household  
when it snows,  
for they are wrapped in two cloaks.
- 22 She makes her own coverings,  
and clothing of fine linen and  
purple.
- 23 Her husband is well known in the  
city gate
- when he takes his seat with the  
elders of the land.
- She weaves linen and sells it, 24  
and supplies merchants with their  
sashes.
- She is clothed in dignity and power 25  
and can afford to laugh at  
tomorrow.
- When she opens her mouth, it is to 26  
speak wisely,  
and loyalty is the theme of her  
teaching.
- She keeps her eye on the doings of 27  
her household  
and does not eat the bread of  
idleness.
- Her sons with one accord call her 28  
happy;  
her husband too, and he sings her  
praises:
- 'Many a woman shows how capable 29  
she is;<sup>j</sup>  
but you excel them all.'
- Charm is a delusion and beauty 30  
fleeting;  
it is the God-fearing woman who is  
honoured.
- Extol her for the fruit of all her toil, 31  
and let her labours bring her honour  
in the city gate.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and a prescribed portion for her maidens.

<sup>j</sup> Or Many daughters show how capable they are.

# ECCLESIASTES

This book stands alone in the Hebrew Bible, both in theology and style. It asserts that God and his ways are inscrutable, and that this recognition is the only valid intellectual stance for man, who cannot comprehend why the same fate befalls the good and the bad, man and beast. Since death ignores all distinctions, life in the long run is empty, profitless.

As in Egyptian royal instructions, the style depends on frequent references to personal experience and reflection. Despair over existence is expressed in repeated refrains and phrases, brief stories and maxims. In service of his basic pessimistic outlook, the author's favorite expressions are "emptiness," "under the sun," "labor and toil," "chasing the wind," "man's portion."

The book predates the entrance of vivid views of afterlife into Jewish thought. However, the Hebrew employed here is a late type (fourth or third century B.C.). The ascription of the book to Solomon is, therefore, unlikely; yet Solomon's name may have opened the way for its inclusion in the canon, while at the same time reinforcing the theme of life's emptiness.

The noun applied to the author, Hebrew *Qoheleth*, here rendered "Speaker," is taken by some to be a proper name. But the noun seems related to a root which means "to assemble," and the Greek name Ecclesiastes derives from the idea of someone addressing an assembly (see 1.1 n.). The place of composition was probably Palestine.

The book moves a step beyond Job in attacking man's overconfidence about his wisdom; yet it encourages man to enjoy life while he has the strength to do so. Glosses which relieve the gloom (and, indeed, the impiety) of the book seem to have been added in later times at 3.17; 7.18; 8.12-13; 11.9b; 12.9-11.

## *The emptiness of all endeavour*

1 **T**HE WORDS OF THE SPEAKER, THE son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Emptiness, emptiness, says the  
3 Speaker, emptiness, all is empty. What  
4 does man gain from all his labour and  
5 his toil here under the sun? Generations  
6 come and generations go, while the  
7 earth endures for ever.

8 The sun rises and the sun goes down;  
9 back it returns to its place<sup>a</sup> and rises  
10 there again. The wind blows south, the  
11 wind blows north, round and round it  
12 goes and returns full circle. All streams  
13 run into the sea, yet the sea never over-  
14 flows; back to the place from which the  
15 streams ran they return to run again.

16 All things are wearisome;<sup>b</sup> no man  
17 can speak of them all. Is not the eye  
18 surfeited with seeing, and the ear sated  
19 with hearing? What has happened will  
20 happen again, and what has been done  
21 will be done again, and there is nothing

new under the sun. Is there anything of  
which one can say, 'Look, this is new'?  
No, it has already existed, long ago  
before our time. The men of old are not  
remembered, and those who follow will  
not be remembered by those who  
follow them.

I, the Speaker, ruled as king over  
Israel in Jerusalem; and in wisdom I  
applied my mind to study and explore  
all that is done under heaven. It is a  
sorry business that God has given men  
to busy themselves with. I have seen all  
the deeds that are done here under the  
sun; they are all emptiness and chasing  
the wind. What is crooked cannot  
become straight; what is not there cannot  
be counted. I said to myself, 'I have  
amassed great wisdom, more than all  
my predecessors on the throne in  
Jerusalem; I have become familiar  
with wisdom and knowledge.' So I

<sup>a</sup> back . . . place: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* to its place panting.  
<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* weary.

1.1-6.12: **The emptiness of all endeavor.** Inasmuch as meaningless repetition characterizes life, there is no profit to toil.

1.1-11: **Title and prologue.** 1: The unusual Heb. form for "the speaker" indicates that an office, not a name, is meant. 2: The Heb. phrase *emptiness, emptiness* is a superlative, just as Song of Songs means "the best song." 3: *Under the sun*: on earth. 4: *Earth endures* while the "lord of the earth," man, passes on; see Gen.1.28. 8: *Things*: or words.

1.12-2.26: **Neither wisdom nor pleasure is profitable.** Since one fate comes to all, there is no gain in work, knowledge, or sensuality. 13: The occupation of the wise man is dismissed as *sorry business*, even if a gift of God. 14: *Chasing*: with nothing to show for one's effort (Hos. 12.1). 16: *Predecessors*: the fiction of Solomonic authorship is here abandoned; Solomon had



applied my mind to understand wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, and I came to see that this too is chasing  
18 the wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and the more a man knows, the more he has to suffer.

2 I said to myself, 'Come, I will plunge into pleasures and enjoy myself'; but  
2 that too was emptiness. Of laughter I said, 'It is madness!' And of pleasure,  
3 'What is the good of that?' So I sought to stimulate myself with wine, in the hope of finding out what was good for men to do under heaven throughout the brief span of their lives. But my mind was guided by wisdom, not blinded by<sup>c</sup> folly.

4 I undertook great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards;  
5 I made myself gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit-trees in them;  
6 I made myself pools of water to irrigate  
7 a grove of growing trees; I bought slaves, male and female, and I had my home-born slaves as well; I had possessions, more cattle and flocks than any  
8 of my predecessors in Jerusalem; I amassed silver and gold also, the treasure of kings and provinces; I acquired singers, men and women, and  
9 all that man delights in.<sup>d</sup> I was great, greater than all my predecessors in Jerusalem; and my wisdom stood me  
10 in good stead. Whatever my eyes coveted, I refused them nothing, nor did I deny myself any pleasure. Yes indeed, I got pleasure from all my labour, and for all my labour this was  
11 my reward. Then I turned and reviewed all my handiwork, all my labour and toil, and I saw that everything was emptiness and chasing the wind, of no profit under the sun.

12 I set myself to look at wisdom and  
13 at madness and folly.<sup>e</sup> Then I perceived that wisdom is more profitable than folly, as light is more profitable than  
14 darkness: the wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in the dark. Yet I saw also that one and the same  
15 fate overtakes them both. So I said to

myself, 'I too shall suffer the fate of the fool. To what purpose have I been wise? What<sup>f</sup> is the profit of it? Even this', I said to myself, 'is emptiness. The wise man is remembered no longer  
16 than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply,<sup>g</sup> all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!' So I came to hate life, since everything  
17 that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind. So I came to hate all  
18 my labour and toil here under the sun, since I should have to leave its fruits to my successor. What sort of a man will he be who succeeds me, who inherits what others have acquired?<sup>h</sup> Who  
19 knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will be master of all the fruits of my labour and skill here under the sun. This too is emptiness.

Then I turned and gave myself up to  
20 despair, reflecting upon all my labour and toil here under the sun. For anyone  
21 who toils with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must leave it all to a man who has spent no labour on it. This too is emptiness and utterly wrong. What  
22 reward has a man for all his labour, his scheming, and his toil here under the sun? All his life long his business is  
23 pain and vexation to him; even at night his mind knows no rest. This too is emptiness. There is nothing better for a  
24 man to do than to eat and drink and enjoy himself in return for his labours. And yet I saw that this comes from the hand of God. For without him who can  
25 enjoy his food, or who can be anxious? God gives wisdom and knowledge  
26 and joy to the man who pleases him, while to the sinner is given the trouble of gathering and amassing wealth only to hand it over to someone else who pleases God. This too is emptiness and chasing the wind.

<sup>c</sup> not blinded by: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* to grasp.

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds two unintelligible words.

<sup>e</sup> The rest of verse 12 transposed to follow verse 18.

<sup>f</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Then.

<sup>g</sup> for . . . multiply: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* because already.

<sup>h</sup> What sort . . . acquired: see note on verse 12.

only one predecessor in Jerusalem (contrast 2.7,9). 2.10: The author intends his readers to assume that the king possessed the means and power of fulfilling his will, yet at the same time he renders a negative judgment on "Solomon and all his glory." 23: Rest is forbidden even the good man. 24: Similar advice is given in the Babylonian text, Gilgamesh Epic; see also Isa.22.13. 26: Except for the refrain this may be a pious gloss, or a quotation to be refuted.

3 FOR EVERYTHING ITS SEASON, AND FOR every activity under heaven its time:

- 2 a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to uproot;
- 3 a time to kill and a time to heal;  
a time to pull down and a time to build up;
- 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time for mourning and a time for dancing;
- 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them;  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 a time to seek and a time to lose;  
a time to keep and a time to throw away;
- 7 a time to tear and a time to mend;  
a time for silence and a time for speech;
- 8 a time to love and a time to hate;  
a time for war and a time for peace.

9 What profit does one who works get  
10 from all his labour? I have seen the business that God has given men to  
11 keep them busy. He has made everything to suit its time; moreover he has given men a sense of time past and future, but no comprehension of God's work from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing good for man<sup>i</sup> except to be happy and live the best life he can while he is alive. Moreover, that a man should eat and drink and enjoy himself, in return for all his labours, is a gift of God. I know that whatever God does lasts for ever; to add to it or subtract from it is impossible. And he has done it all in such a way that men must feel awe in his presence. Whatever is has been already,<sup>j</sup> and whatever is to come has been already, and God summons each event back in its turn.  
16 Moreover I saw here under the sun that, where justice ought to be, there was wickedness, and where righteous-

ness ought to be, there was wickedness. I said to myself, 'God will judge the just man and the wicked equally; every activity and<sup>k</sup> every purpose has its proper time.' I said to myself, 'In dealing with men it is God's purpose<sup>l</sup> to test them and to see what they truly are.<sup>m</sup> For man is a creature of chance and the beasts are creatures of chance, and one mischance awaits them all: death comes to both alike. They all draw the same breath. Men have no advantage over beasts; for everything is emptiness. All go to the same place: all came from the dust, and to the dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit<sup>n</sup> of man goes upward or whether the spirit<sup>n</sup> of the beast goes downward to the earth?' So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, since that is his lot. For who can bring him through to see what will happen next?

Again, I considered all the acts of oppression here under the sun; I saw the tears of the oppressed, and I saw that there was no one to comfort them. Strength was on the side of their oppressors, and there was no one to avenge them. I counted the dead happy because they were dead, happier than the living who are still in life. More fortunate than either I reckoned the man yet unborn, who had not witnessed the wicked deeds done here under the sun. I considered all toil and all achievement and saw that it comes from rivalry between man and man. This too is emptiness and chasing the wind. The fool folds his arms and wastes away. Better one hand full and peace of mind, than both fists full and toil that is chasing the wind.

*i* for man: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 2. 24; *Heb.* in them.  
*j* Or Whatever has been already is.  
*k* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and upon.  
*l* it is God's purpose: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
*m* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds they to them.  
*n* Or breath.

3.1-15: **On timeliness.** Every deed, thought, or feeling has an appropriate moment, but man cannot discover it. 11: *Time past and future:* man can know the facts of history and in a sense the events of the immediate future, yet can fail to grasp God's role in history.

3.16-4.3: **Tears of the oppressed.** Injustice abounds, and none comes to the defense of the weak, so that death is to be preferred to life. 16: *Wickedness:* perhaps bribery at the court. 19: Although man rules the beast, *death* strikes both man and beast indiscriminately. 21: The sage is agnostic, recognizing that life after death is problematic. 4.1: Compare Isa.25.8 for the prophetic word of comfort to the fearful.

4.4-16: **Advantages of community.** Concerted effort is better than solitary endeavor. 5-6: Two

7 Here again, I saw emptiness under  
 8 the sun: a lonely man without a friend,  
 without son or brother, toiling endlessly  
 yet never satisfied with his wealth—  
 'For whom', he asks, 'am I toiling and  
 denying myself the good things of life?'  
 This too is emptiness, a sorry business.  
 Two are better than one; they receive a  
 good reward for their toil, because, if one  
 falls, the other<sup>o</sup> can help his companion up  
 again; but alas for the man who falls  
 alone with no partner to help him up.  
 And, if two lie side by side, they keep  
 each other warm; but how can one  
 keep warm by himself? If a man is  
 alone, an assailant may overpower him,  
 but two can resist; and a cord of three  
 strands is not quickly snapped.  
 Better a young man poor and wise  
 than a king old and foolish who will  
 listen to advice no longer. A man who  
 leaves prison may well come to be king,  
 though born a pauper in his future  
 kingdom. But I have studied all life  
 here under the sun, and I saw his place  
 taken by yet another young man, and  
 no limit set to the number of the subjects  
 whose master he became. And he in  
 turn will be no hero to those who  
 come after him. This too is emptiness  
 and chasing the wind.  
 5 Go carefully when you visit the  
 house of God. Better draw near in  
 obedience than offer the sacrifice of  
 2 fools, who sin without a thought. Do  
 not rush into speech, let there be no  
 hasty utterance in God's presence. God  
 is in heaven, you are on earth; so let  
 3 your words be few. The sensible man  
 has much business on his hands; the  
 fool talks and it is so much chatter.  
 4 When you make a vow to God, do not  
 be slow to pay it, for he has no use for  
 5 fools; pay whatever you vow. Better  
 not vow at all than vow and fail to pay.  
 6 Do not let your tongue lead you into  
 sin, and then say before the angel of  
 God that it was a mistake; or God will

be angry at your words, and all your  
 achievements will be brought to nothing.<sup>p</sup>  
 You must fear God.

If you witness in some province the  
 oppression of the poor and the denial of  
 right and justice, do not be surprised at  
 what goes on, for every official has a  
 higher one set over him, and the highest<sup>q</sup>  
 keeps watch over them all. The best  
 thing for a country is a king whose<sup>r</sup>  
 own lands are well tilled.

The man who loves money can never  
 have enough, and the man who is in  
 love with great wealth enjoys no return  
 from it. This too is emptiness. When  
 riches multiply, so do those who live off  
 them; and what advantage has the owner,  
 except to look at them? Sweet is the  
 sleep of the labourer whether he eats  
 little or much; but the rich man owns  
 too much and cannot sleep. There is a  
 singular evil here under the sun which  
 I have seen: a man hoards wealth to  
 his own hurt, and then that wealth is  
 lost through an unlucky venture, and  
 the owner's son left with nothing. As  
 he came from the womb of mother earth,  
 so must he return, naked as he came;  
 all his toil produces nothing which he  
 can take away with him. This too is a  
 singular evil: exactly as he came, so  
 shall he go, and what profit does he  
 get when his labour is all for the wind?  
 What is more, all his days are  
 overshadowed; gnawing anxiety and  
 great vexation are his lot, sickness<sup>s</sup>  
 and resentment. What I have seen is  
 this: that it is good and proper for a  
 man to eat and drink and enjoy himself  
 in return for his labours here under the  
 sun, throughout the brief span of life  
 which God has allotted him. Moreover,  
 it is a gift of God that every man to

<sup>o</sup> if one falls, the other; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>p</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds for in a multitude of dreams and empty things and many words.*

<sup>q</sup> for every . . . the highest; or though every . . . over him, the Highest . . .

<sup>r</sup> whose; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. for.*

<sup>s</sup> sickness; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. and his sickness.*

proverbs are employed in a didactic setting. 9–10: In companionship there is *reward*, some profit to one's action. 16: Since memory is short, the *hero* is soon forgotten.

5.1–7: *Passive ethics.* Act so as not to call God's attention to you. 6: *Angel*: that is, the angel responsible for collecting what was vowed. 7: The wise man's motto was *fear* of God according to Prov.1.7 and 9.10.

5.8–6.12: *Oppression and anxiety.* Society is so ordered that injustice will be observed by high officials; in money there is no profit, only sleeplessness. 15: This verse may be a citation

## Wisdom and folly compared

whom he has granted wealth and riches and the power to enjoy them should accept his lot and rejoice in his labour. 20 He will not dwell overmuch upon the passing years; for God fills his<sup>4</sup> time with joy of heart.

6 Here is an evil under the sun which I have seen, and it weighs heavy upon 2 men. Consider the man to whom God grants wealth, riches, and substance,<sup>u</sup> and who lacks nothing that he has set his heart on: if God has not given him the power to enjoy these things, but a stranger enjoys them instead, that is 3 emptiness and a grave disorder. A man may have a hundred children and live a long life; but however many his days may be, if he does not get satisfaction from the good things of life and in the end receives no burial, then I maintain 4 that the still-born child is in better case than he. Its coming is an empty thing, it departs into darkness, and in darkness 5 its name is hidden; it has never seen the sun or known anything,<sup>v</sup> yet its state is 6 better than his. What if a man should live a thousand years twice over, and never prosper? Do not both go to one place?

7 The end of all man's toil is but to fill his belly, yet his appetite is never satisfied. What advantage then in facing life has the wise man over the fool, or the 9 poor man for all his experience? It is better to be satisfied with what is before your eyes than give rein to desire; this too is emptiness and chasing the wind. 10 Whatever has already existed has been given a name, its nature is known; a man cannot contend with what is 11 stronger than he. The more words one uses the greater is the emptiness of it all; and where is the advantage to a man? 12 For who can know what is good for a man in this life, this brief span of empty existence through which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what is to happen next here under the sun?

A GOOD NAME SMELLS SWEETER THAN 7 the finest ointment, and the day of death is better than the day of birth. Better to visit the house of mourning 2 than the house of feasting; for to be mourned is the lot of every man, and the living should take this to heart. Grief is better than laughter: a sad face 3 may go with a cheerful heart. Wise 4 men's thoughts are at home in the house of mourning, but a fool's thoughts in the house of mirth. It is better to listen 5 to a wise man's rebuke than to the praise of fools. For the laughter of a 6 fool is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. This too is emptiness. Slander 7 drives a wise man crazy and breaks a strong man's<sup>w</sup> spirit. Better the end of 8 anything than its beginning; better patience than pride. Do not be quick 9 to show resentment; for resentment is nursed by fools. Do not ask why the 10 old days were better than these; for that is a foolish question. Wisdom is better 11 than possessions and an advantage to all who see the sun. Better have wisdom 12 behind you than money; wisdom profits men by giving life to those who know her.

Consider God's handiwork; who can 13 straighten what he has made crooked? When things go well, be glad; but when 14 things go ill, consider this: God has set the one alongside the other in such a way that no one can find out what is to happen next.<sup>x</sup> In my empty existence I 15 have seen it all, from a righteous man perishing in his righteousness to a wicked man growing old in his wickedness. Do not be over-righteous and do 16 not be over-wise. Why make yourself a laughing-stock? Do not be over-wicked 17 and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good to hold 18

t his: prob. rdg.; Heb. om. u Or honour. v Or it.  
w strong man's; prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.  
x find out . . . next: or hold him responsible.

of Job 1.21. 19: *Lot*: fate; lot and fate are close in idea. 6.3: *Long life* and many children were signs of God's favor and hence sources of happiness. A lack of proper burial was considered a curse. 4: On the advantage of the *still-born*, see Job 3.11.

7.1-12: *Seven proverbs on relative value*. The task of the wise man was to evaluate various alternatives, in essence, to make distinctions as to better options. 12b: This part of the verse may be a gloss, inasmuch as the author elsewhere (7.23-24) denies that Wisdom can be known or that she profits man.

7.13-29: *On premature death*. Man should not so behave as to bring about an early death, despite the fact that no woman is trustworthy (and few men!). 14: The practice of divining

on to the one thing and not lose hold of the other; for a man who fears God will  
 19 succeed both ways. Wisdom makes the  
 20 wise man stronger than the ten rulers of  
 21 a city. The world contains no man so  
 22 righteous that he can do right always  
 23 and never do wrong.<sup>y</sup> Moreover, do  
 24 not pay attention to everything men  
 25 say, or you may hear your servant  
 26 disparage you; for you know very well  
 27 how many times you yourself have  
 28 disparaged others. All this I have put to  
 29 the test of wisdom. I said, 'I am resolved  
 30 to be wise', but wisdom was beyond my  
 31 grasp—whatever has happened lies  
 32 beyond our grasp, deep down, deeper  
 33 than man can fathom.

34 I went on to reflect, I set my mind<sup>z</sup>  
 35 to inquire and search for wisdom and  
 36 for the reason in things, only to discover  
 37 that it is folly to be wicked and madness  
 38 to act like a fool. The wiles of a woman  
 39 I find mightier<sup>a</sup> than death; her heart  
 40 is a trap to catch you and her arms are  
 41 fetters. The man who is pleasing to God  
 42 may escape her, but she will catch a  
 43 sinner. 'See,' says the Speaker, 'this is  
 44 what I have found, reasoning things  
 45 out one by one, after searching long  
 46 without success: I have found one man  
 47 in a thousand worth the name, but I  
 48 have not found one woman among  
 49 them all. This alone I have found, that  
 50 God, when he made man, made him  
 51 straightforward, but man invents end-  
 52 less subtleties of his own.'

53 **8** Who is wise enough for all this? Who  
 54 knows the meaning of anything? Wis-  
 55 dom lights up a man's face, but grim  
 56 looks make a man hated.<sup>b</sup> Do as the  
 57 king commands you, and if you have to  
 58 swear by God, do not be precipitate.  
 59 Leave the king's presence and do not  
 60 persist in a thing which displeases him;  
 61 he does what he chooses. For the king's  
 62 word carries authority. Who can  
 63 question what he does? Whoever obeys  
 64 a command will come to no harm. A  
 65 wise man knows in his heart the right

66 time and method for action. There is a  
 67 time and a method for every enterprise,  
 68 although man is greatly troubled by  
 69 ignorance of the future; who can tell  
 70 him what it will bring? It is not in man's  
 71 power to restrain the wind,<sup>c</sup> and no one  
 72 has power over the day of death. In  
 73 war no one can lay aside his arms, no  
 74 wealth will save its possessor. All this  
 75 I have seen, having applied my mind to  
 76 everything done under the sun. There  
 77 was a time when one man had power  
 78 over another and could make him  
 79 suffer. It was then that I saw wicked  
 80 men approaching and even entering<sup>d</sup>  
 81 the holy place; and they went about the  
 82 city priding themselves on having done  
 83 right. This too is emptiness. It is be-  
 84 cause sentence upon a wicked act is not  
 85 promptly carried out that men do evil  
 86 so boldly. A sinner may do wrong<sup>e</sup> and  
 87 live to old age, yet I know that it will  
 88 be well with those who fear God: their  
 89 fear of him ensures this, but it will not  
 90 be well with a wicked man nor will he  
 91 live long; the man who does not fear  
 92 God is a mere shadow. There is an  
 93 empty thing found on earth: when the  
 94 just man gets what is due to the unjust,  
 95 and the unjust what is due to the just.  
 96 I maintain that this too is emptiness.

97 So I commend enjoyment, since there is  
 98 nothing good for a man to do here  
 99 under the sun but to eat and drink and  
 100 enjoy himself; this is all that will  
 101 remain with him to reward his toil  
 102 throughout the span of life which God  
 103 grants him here under the sun. I  
 104 applied my mind to acquire wisdom  
 105 and to observe the business which goes  
 106 on upon earth, when man never closes  
 107 an eye in sleep day or night; and always  
 108 I perceived that God has so ordered it  
 109 that man should not be able to discover  
 110 <sup>y</sup> can do . . . wrong: or prospers without ever making a  
 111 mistake.

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds to know and.

<sup>a</sup> Or more bitter.

<sup>b</sup> make . . . hated; prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>c</sup> Or to retain the breath of life.

<sup>d</sup> approaching . . . entering; prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds an unintelligible word.

the future is attacked. 26: See Prov.7.10–27, 28: Eccus.25.13–24 advances this misogynistic attitude considerably (see also Zech.5.7–8). 29: This verse affirms the goodness of man at creation.

8.1–9.6: The king and his subjects. Respect for royal authority is prudent, even though injustice prevails. 12–13: These verses seem to be a gloss affirming divine justice. 17: God has sealed off from the wise man the object of his inquiry; hence the sage may be deceived because of the partial knowledge permitted him.

what is happening here under the sun. However hard a man may try, he will not find out; the wise man may think that he knows, but he will be unable to find the truth of it.

9 I applied my mind to all this, and I understood that the righteous and the wise and all their doings are under God's control; but is it love or hatred? No man knows. Everything that confronts him, everything is empty, since one and the same fate befalls every one, just and unjust alike, good and bad, clean and unclean, the man who offers sacrifice and the man who does not. Good man and sinner fare alike, the man who can take an oath and the man who dares not. This is what is wrong in all that is done here under the sun: that one and the same fate befalls every man. The hearts of men are full of evil; madness fills their hearts all through their lives, and after that they go down to join the dead. But for a man who is counted among the living there is still hope: remember, a live dog is better than a dead lion. True, the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing. There are no more rewards for them; they are utterly forgotten. For them love, hate, ambition,<sup>f</sup> all are now over. Never again will they have any part in what is done here under the sun.

7 Go to it then, eat your food and enjoy it, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for already God has accepted what you have done. Always be dressed in white and never fail to anoint your head. Enjoy life with a woman you love all the days of your allotted span here under the sun, empty as they are;<sup>g</sup> for that is your lot while you live and labour here under the sun. Whatever task lies to your hand, do it with all your might; because in Sheol, for which you are bound, there is neither doing nor thinking, neither understanding nor wisdom. One more thing I have

observed here under the sun: speed does not win the race nor strength the battle. Bread does not belong to the wise, nor wealth to the intelligent, nor success to the skilful; time and chance govern all. Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come; like fish caught in a net, like a bird taken in a snare, so men are trapped when bad times come suddenly.

This too is an example of wisdom as I have observed it here under the sun, and notable I find it. There was a small town with few inhabitants, and a great king came to attack it; he besieged it and constructed great siege-works against it. There was in it a poor wise man, and he alone might have saved the town by his wisdom, but no one remembered that poor wise man. 'Surely', I said to myself, 'wisdom is better than strength.' But the poor man's wisdom was despised, and his words went unheeded. A wise man who speaks his mind calmly is more to be heeded than a commander shouting orders among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, and one mistake can undo many things done well.

Dead flies make the perfumer's sweet ointment turn rancid and ferment; so can a little folly make wisdom lose its worth. The mind of the wise man faces right, but the mind of the fool faces left. Even when he walks along the road, the fool shows no sense and calls everyone else<sup>h</sup> a fool. If your ruler breaks out in anger against you, do not resign your post; submission makes amends for great mistakes. There is an evil that I have observed here under the sun, an error for which a ruler is responsible: the fool given high office, but<sup>i</sup> the great and the rich in humble posts. I have seen slaves on horseback and men of high rank going on foot like slaves.

<sup>f</sup> Or passion.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds all your days, empty as they are.

<sup>h</sup> calls everyone else: or tells everyone he is.

<sup>i</sup> but: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

9.7-12: The wise man's counsel. Enjoy your wife, since time and chance befall everyone. 8: The festive garment and the anointed head are signs of the good life. 10: Sheol: the land of the dead, of shadowy existence, but not, in Hebrew thought, of punishment.

9.13-18: The waste of wisdom. The point of this passage is that a ready means of deliverance, the wisdom of a poor man, was not called on. 18: The sense of and here is equivalent to "but."

10.1-20: Maxims derived from experience. The whole of life is brought under Wisdom's control. 2: Right and left are to be understood here in a moral sense. For a somewhat different use of right and left, see Mt.25.33-46.

- 8 The man who digs a pit may fall into it, and he who pulls down a wall may be  
 9 bitten by a snake. The man who quarries stones may strain himself, and the woodcutter runs a risk of injury.  
 10 When the axe is blunt and has not first<sup>j</sup> been sharpened, then one must use more force; the wise man has a better  
 11 chance of success. If a snake bites before it is charmed, the snake-charmer loses his fee.  
 12 A wise man's words win him favour, but a fool's tongue is his undoing. He begins by talking nonsense and ends in mischief run mad. The fool talks on and on; but no man knows what is coming, and who can tell him what will come after that? The fool wears himself to death<sup>k</sup> with all his labour, for he does not know the way to town.  
 16 Woe betide the land when a slave has become its king, and its princes feast in the morning. Happy the land when its king is nobly born, and its princes feast at the right time of day, with self-control, and not as drunkards. If the owner is negligent the rafters collapse, and if he is idle the house crumbles away. The table has its pleasures, and wine makes a cheerful life; and money is behind it all. Do not speak ill of the king in your ease, or of a rich man in your bedroom; for a bird may carry your voice, and a winged messenger may repeat what you say.  
 11 Send your grain across the seas, and in time you will get a return. Divide your merchandise among seven ventures, eight maybe, since you do not know what disasters may occur on earth.<sup>l</sup> If the clouds are heavy with rain, they will discharge it on the earth; whether a tree falls south or north, it must lie as it falls. He who watches the wind will never sow, and he who keeps an eye on the clouds will never reap.  
 5 You do not know how a pregnant woman comes to have a body and a

living spirit in her womb; nor do you know how God, the maker of all things, works. In the morning sow your seed betimes, and do not stop work until evening, for you do not know whether this or that sowing will be successful, or whether both alike will do well.

### Advice to a young man

THE LIGHT OF DAY IS SWEET, AND 7 pleasant to the eye is the sight of the sun; if a man lives for many years, he 8 should rejoice in all of them. But let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. Everything that is to come will be emptiness. Delight in your 9 boyhood, young man, make the most of the days of your youth; let your heart and your eyes show you the way; but remember that for all these things God will call you to account. Banish discontent from your mind, and shake off the troubles of the body; boyhood and the prime of life are mere emptiness.

Remember your Creator in the days 12 of your youth, before the time of trouble comes and the years draw near when you will say, 'I see no purpose in them.'<sup>m</sup> Remember him before the sun 2 and the light of day give place to darkness, before the moon and the stars grow dim, and the clouds return with the rain—when the guardians of the 3 house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the women grinding the meal cease work because they are few, and those who look through the windows look no longer, when the street- 4 doors are shut, when the noise of the mill is low, when the chirping of the sparrow grows faint<sup>n</sup> and the songbirds fall silent;<sup>o</sup> when men are afraid 5

<sup>j</sup> first: prob. rdg.; Heb. face.

<sup>k</sup> fool . . . death: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>l</sup> Or on land.

<sup>m</sup> Or I have no pleasure in them.

<sup>n</sup> grows faint: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. sink low.

11.1-10: **Admonitions.** One cannot foresee the result of a course of action, but he must be willing to take the risk of failure. Youth is to be especially prized. 8: *Darkness*: Sheol; see 9.10 n.

12.1-8: **An allegory on old age.** By means of a rich store of metaphors, not all of them fully clear, the author characterizes the twilight years. 1: The unusual Heb. word translated *Creator* can have a double meaning, one, "cistern," referring to one's wife (as in Prov.5.15,18-19), the other "grave," thus hinting at the positive and negative themes of the book. 2: *Clouds* may refer to poor eyesight. 3: The *guardians* . . . are the arms; the *strong men* are the knees; the *women grinding* are the teeth; and the *windows* are the eyes. 4: The *doors* are the ears, the *chirping* . . . is sleeplessness, the *songbirds* are the voice. 5: *Almond* . . . : gray hair; *locust*, creaking of bones.

of a steep place and the street is full of  
 terrors, when the blossom whitens on  
 the almond-tree and the locust's paunch  
 is swollen and caper-buds have no more  
 zest. For man goes to his everlasting  
 home, and the mourners go about the  
 6 streets. Remember him before the silver  
 cord is snapped<sup>p</sup> and the golden bowl  
 is broken, before the pitcher is shattered  
 at the spring and the wheel broken at  
 7 the well, before the dust returns to the  
 earth as it began and the spirit<sup>q</sup> returns  
 to God who gave it. Emptiness, empti-  
 8 ness, says the Speaker, all is empty.  
 9 So the Speaker, in his wisdom,  
 continued to teach the people what he  
 knew. He turned over many maxims in  
 10 his mind and sought how best to set  
 them out. He chose his words to give  
 pleasure, but what he wrote was the  
 honest truth. The sayings of the wise 11  
 are sharp as goads, like nails driven  
 home; they lead the assembled people,  
 for they come from one shepherd. One 12  
 further warning, my son: the use of  
 books is endless, and much study is  
 wearisome.  
 This is the end of the matter: you 13  
 have heard it all. Fear God and obey  
 his commands; there is no more to  
 man than this. For God brings every- 14  
 thing we do to judgement, and every  
 secret, whether good or bad.

*p* is snapped: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

*q* Or breath.

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6: *Cord and bowl*: life, and when broken, death. 7: *Spirit*: breath; see Tfn. *q*; Gen.3.19. 8: See 1.2.

12.9-14: **Postscript.** One addition (vv. 9-12) praises the author for his integrity, and even suggests that the wisdom set forth is sufficient; hence *the use of books is endless*. Earlier translations read, "of making many books there is no end." 13-14: A second addition reflects a usual piety, and is in tension with the rest of the book.



# THE SONG OF SONGS

Unique in the Bible, this collection of songs sensitively touches several major chords in the love life of a young man and a maiden. It is an anthology which plays on a wide range of themes: love's awakening, the description of the beloved, the enticement, the surrender of the embrace, the pain of separation, the joy of coming together again, the wedding ceremony. The book was early regarded as fully allegorical, a view not surprising because of the presence of some obvious symbolism, as is noted.

In its own way, the book extols the virtues of deep rather than transient love. There is no discernible overall flow of action or plot, although the positioning of the various songs creates a definite dramatic effect.

The traditional ascription of authorship to King Solomon (1.1) may have come about because of the several appearances of his name in the text. Scholars have dated the songs as early as the tenth century B.C. and as late as the Greek period, the fourth century B.C., with a postexilic date at least for the final redaction the usual view. There are no historical allusions; the geographical ones are mainly from the Northern Kingdom (see 1.14 n.); the images are decidedly rural. The book is often referred to as Canticles.

## *Bride<sup>a</sup>*

- 1 I will sing the song of all songs to  
Solomon  
2 that he may<sup>b</sup> smother me with kisses.

- Your love is more fragrant than wine,  
3 fragrant is<sup>c</sup> the scent of your perfume,  
and your name like perfume poured  
out;<sup>d</sup>  
for this the maidens love you.  
4 Take me with you, and we will run  
together;  
bring me into your chamber, O king.

## *Companions*

Let us rejoice and be glad for you;  
Let us praise your love more than  
wine,  
and your caresses more than any  
song.

## *Bride*

- 5 I am dark but lovely, daughters of  
Jerusalem,  
like the tents of Kedar  
or the tent-curtains of Shalmah.  
6 Do not look down on me; a little  
dark I may be  
because I am scorched by the sun.

My mother's sons were displeased  
with me,  
they sent me to watch over the  
vineyards;  
so I did not watch over my own  
vineyard.

- Tell me, my true love, 7  
where you mind your flocks,  
where you rest them at midday,  
that I may not be left picking lice  
as I sit among your companions'  
herds.

## *Bridegroom*

If you yourself do not know, 8  
O fairest of women,  
go, follow the tracks of the sheep  
and mind your kids by the shepherds'  
huts.

I would compare you, my dearest, 9  
to Pharaoh's chariot-horses.  
Your cheeks are lovely between 10  
plaited tresses,  
your neck with its jewelled chains.

*a* The Hebrew text implies, by its pronouns, different speakers, but does not indicate them; they are given, however, in two MSS. of Sept.

*b* I will . . . that he may: or The song of all songs which was Solomon's; may he . . .

*c* Or more fragrant than.

*d* poured out: prob. rdg.; Heb. word uncertain.

1.1-11: Opening songs of man and woman, telling of their love. *Bride* (Tfn. *a*): the maiden appears more like a young lover than a bride, but the songs would be appropriate for a wedding, recalling early love and courtship. 1: *Song of all songs*: Heb. idiom for the best of songs. 4: The girl is often portrayed as taking the initiative. *King*: bridegroom; see 3.11 n. 5: *Dark but lovely*: she is more sunburned than city girls, but no less pretty. *Daughters of Jerusalem*: used in 2.7 and passim. This is an answer to the chorus-companions of v. 4 where the chorus is female, perhaps consisting of wedding guests (see 5.1 n.); in 8.8-9 the chorus is male. *Kedar*: in northern Arabia. *Shalmah*: a frequent correction of the text, which reads Solomon; possibly it was near Kedar. 7: *That . . . lice*: the Heb. text here is obscure.

*Companions*

- 11 We will make you braided plaits of  
gold  
set with beads of silver.

*Bride*

- 12 While the king reclines on his  
couch,  
my spikenard gives forth its scent.  
13 My beloved is for me a bunch of  
myrrh  
as he lies on my breast,  
14 my beloved is for me a cluster of  
henna-blossom  
from the vineyards of En-gedi.

*Bridegroom*

- 15 How beautiful you are, my dearest,  
O how beautiful,  
your eyes are like doves!

*Bride*

- 16 How beautiful you are, O my love,  
and how pleasant!

*Bridegroom*

- 17 Our couch is shaded with branches;  
the beams of our house are of  
cedar,  
our ceilings are all of fir.

*Bride*

- 2 I am an asphodel in Sharon,  
a lily growing in the valley.

*Bridegroom*

- 2 No, a lily among thorns  
is my dearest among girls.

*Bride*

- 3 Like an apricot-tree among the  
trees of the wood,  
so is my beloved among boys.  
To sit in its shadow was my  
delight,  
and its fruit was sweet to my taste.  
4 He took me into the wine-garden  
and gave me loving glances.  
5 He refreshed me with raisins, he  
revived me with apricots;  
for I was faint with love.

- His left arm was under my head, his 6  
right arm was round me.

*Bridegroom*

- I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, 7  
by the spirits and the goddesses<sup>e</sup> of  
the field:  
Do not rouse her, do not disturb my  
love  
until she is ready.<sup>f</sup>

*Bride*

- Hark! My beloved! Here he comes, 8  
bounding over the mountains, leaping  
over the hills.  
My beloved is like a gazelle 9  
or a young wild goat:  
there he stands outside our wall,  
peeping in at the windows, glancing  
through the lattice.

- My beloved answered, he said to me: 10  
Rise up, my darling;  
my fairest, come away.  
For now the winter is past, 11  
the rains are over and gone;  
the flowers appear in the country- 12  
side;  
the time is coming when the birds  
will sing,  
and the turtle-dove's cooing will be  
heard in our land;  
when the green figs will ripen on the 13  
fig-trees  
and the vines<sup>g</sup> give forth their  
fragrance.  
Rise up, my darling;  
my fairest, come away.

*Bridegroom*

- My dove, that hides in holes in the 14  
cliffs  
or in crannies on the high  
ledges,  
let me see your face, let me hear  
your voice;  
for your voice is pleasant, your face  
is lovely.

<sup>e</sup> by . . . goddesses: or by the gazelles and the hinds.  
<sup>f</sup> until . . . ready: or while she is resting.  
<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds blossom.

1.12-2.7: The lovers together. 14: *En-gedi*: on the western edge of the Dead Sea, the only southern Israelite reference, except for Jerusalem, in the book. 2.1: *Asphodel*: a flower; perhaps a daffodil. *Sharon*: the coastal plain in north central Israel. 7: A refrain (see 3.5; 8.4), perhaps marking the end of a section. *Goddesses*: see Tfn. e.

2.8-17: The season for love. 11: It is spring, which is the time for love the world over.

## Companions

- 15 Catch for us the jackals, the little  
jackals,<sup>h</sup>  
that spoil our vineyards, when the  
vines are in flower.

## Bride

- 16 My beloved is mine and I am his;  
he delights in the lilies.
- 17 While the day is cool and the shadows  
are dispersing,  
turn, my beloved, and show yourself  
a gazelle or a young wild goat  
on the hills where cinnamon  
grows.<sup>i</sup>
- 3 Night after night on my bed  
I have sought my true love;  
I have sought him but not found  
him,  
I have called him but he has not  
answered.
- 2 I said, 'I will rise and go the rounds of  
the city,  
through the streets and the squares,  
seeking my true love.'  
I sought him but I did not find him,  
I called him but he did not answer.
- 3 The watchmen, going the rounds of  
the city, met me,  
and I asked, 'Have you seen my true  
love?'
- 4 Scarcely had I left them behind me  
when I met my true love.  
I seized him and would not let him go  
until I had brought him to my  
mother's house,  
to the room of her who conceived  
me.

## Bridegroom

- 5 I charge you, daughters of  
Jerusalem,  
by the spirits and the goddesses<sup>j</sup> of  
the field:

Do not rouse her, do not disturb my  
love  
until she is ready.<sup>k</sup>

## Companions

- What is this coming up from the 6  
wilderness  
like a column of smoke  
from burning myrrh or  
frankincense,  
from all the powdered spices that  
merchants bring?  
Look; it is Solomon carried in 7  
his litter;  
sixty of Israel's chosen warriors  
are his escort,  
all of them skilled swordsmen, 8  
all trained to handle arms,  
each with his sword ready at his side  
to ward off the demon of the night.
- The palanquin which King Solomon 9  
had made for himself  
was of wood from Lebanon.  
Its poles he had made of silver, 10  
its head-rest of gold;  
its seat was of purple stuff,  
and its lining was of leather.
- Come out, daughters of Jerusalem; 11  
you daughters of Zion, come out and  
welcome King Solomon,  
wearing the crown with which his  
mother has crowned him,  
on his wedding day, on his day of joy.

## Bridegroom

- How beautiful you are, my dearest, 4  
how beautiful!  
Your eyes behind your veil are like  
doves,

<sup>h</sup> Or fruit-bats.

<sup>i</sup> on . . . grows: or on the rugged hills or on the hills of  
Bethel.

<sup>j</sup> by . . . goddesses: or by the gazelles and the hinds.

<sup>k</sup> until . . . ready: or while she is resting.

15: The import of the verse is unclear; it is directed against someone or something interfering with the lovers. The image of the *vineyards* is used for the maiden's physical charms; see 7.12, and, in 6.2, gardens.

3.1-5: Separation and reunion. Here the maiden finds her beloved; in a similar passage, 5.2-8, she does not. 4: *I seized him*: see 1.4 n. *Mother's . . . room*: to bind symbolically her love making to that of her parents; see 8.2,5. 5: See 2.7 n.

3.6-11: Solomon's wedding procession. The legendary style of Solomon was perhaps the model for every groom to aspire to, the way he would want a poet to picture his wedding. For another description of a royal wedding, see Ps.45. 6: *What is this*: the rhetorical question is used often as a stylistic device; see 5.9; 6.10. 11: Perhaps the *crown* the groom wears as "king" on his wedding day in the Near East today still accounts for the allusions to the king and Solomon in the book; the maiden is nowhere referred to as queen.

4.1-12: The lover's description of the maiden. See also 6.4-10; 7.1-9 for similar endearments.

- your hair like a flock of goats  
streaming down Mount Gilead.
- 2 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
just shorn  
which have come up fresh from  
the dipping;  
each ewe has twins and none has cast  
a lamb.
- 3 Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
and your words are delightful;<sup>l</sup>  
your parted lips behind your veil  
are like a pomegranate cut open.
- 4 Your neck is like David's tower,  
which is built with winding  
courses;  
a thousand bucklers hang upon it,  
and all are warriors' shields.
- 5 Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
twin fawns of a gazelle.<sup>m</sup>
- 6 While the day is cool and the  
shadows are dispersing,  
I will go to the mountains of myrrh  
and to the hills of frankincense.
- 7 You are beautiful, my dearest,  
beautiful without a flaw.
- 8 Come from Lebanon, my bride;  
come with me from Lebanon.  
Hurry down from the top of  
Amana,  
from Senir's top and Hermon's,  
from the lions' lairs, and the hills  
the leopards haunt.
- 9 You have stolen my heart,<sup>n</sup> my  
sister,  
you have stolen it,<sup>o</sup> my bride,  
with one of your eyes, with one  
jewel of your necklace.
- 10 How beautiful are your breasts, my  
sister, my bride!  
Your love is more fragrant than  
wine,  
and your perfumes sweeter than any  
spices.
- 11 Your lips drop sweetness like the  
honeycomb, my bride,  
syrup and milk are under your  
tongue,
- and your dress has the scent of  
Lebanon.
- Your two cheeks<sup>p</sup> are an orchard 13<sup>q</sup>  
of pomegranates,  
an orchard full of rare fruits:<sup>r</sup>  
spikenard and saffron, sweet-cane 14  
and cinnamon  
with every incense-bearing tree,  
myrrh and aloe  
with all the choicest spices.  
My sister, my bride, is a garden 12  
close-locked,  
a garden close-locked, a fountain  
sealed.
- Bride*  
The fountain in my garden<sup>s</sup> is a 15  
spring of running water  
pouring down from Lebanon.  
Awake, north wind, and come, south 16  
wind;  
blow upon my garden that its  
perfumes may pour forth,  
that my beloved may come to his  
garden  
and enjoy its rare fruits.
- Bridegroom*  
I have come to my garden, my sister 5  
and bride,  
and have plucked my myrrh with  
my spices;  
I have eaten my honey and my syrup,  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends, and drink,  
until you are drunk with love.
- Bride*  
I sleep but my heart is awake. 2  
Listen! My beloved is knocking:  
'Open to me, my sister, my dearest,  
my dove, my perfect one;

<sup>l</sup> Or and your mouth is lovely.

<sup>m</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds which delight in the lilies.

<sup>n</sup> stolen my heart; or put heart into me.

<sup>o</sup> stolen it; or put heart into me.

<sup>p</sup> Your two cheeks; prob. rdg.; Heb. Your shoots.

<sup>q</sup> Verse 12 transposed to follow verse 14.

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds henna with spikenard.

<sup>s</sup> my garden; prob. rdg.; Heb. gardens.

6: *Mountains . . . hills*: breasts. 8: Many commentators hold that this is an old poem from Lebanon, and hence the mention of Lebanese mountaintops. 9: *My sister*: a term of endearment as in ancient Egypt, and used in 4.9-5.2; compare Prov.7.4. *Bride*: See 1.1-11 n. 12: *Garden close-locked*: her charms are closed to all but her beloved.

4.15-5.1: *Sensitive metaphors*. The maiden invites her young man to make love and he responds. 5.1: *Friends*: the wedding guests; compare 8.13 n.

5.2-8: *The maiden's dream song*. A short dramatic dream sequence. It is kindred to 3.1-5, both passages dealing with the pain of separation and the search for the lover, here fruitless.

- for my head is drenched with dew,  
my locks with the moisture of the  
night.<sup>7</sup>
- 3 'I have stripped off my dress; must I  
put it on again?  
I have washed my feet; must I soil  
them again?'
- 4 When my beloved slipped his hand  
through the latch-hole,  
my bowels stirred within me.
- 5 When I arose to open for my  
beloved,  
my hands dripped with myrrh;  
the liquid myrrh from my fingers  
ran over the knobs of the bolt.
- 6 With my own hands I opened to my  
love,  
but my love had turned away and  
gone by;  
my heart sank when he turned his  
back.  
I sought him but I did not find him,  
I called him but he did not answer.
- 7 The watchmen, going the rounds of  
the city, met me;  
they struck me and wounded me;  
the watchman on the walls took away  
my cloak.
- 8 I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
if you find my beloved, will you not  
tell him<sup>f</sup>  
that I am faint with love?
- Companions*
- 9 What is your beloved more than any  
other,  
O fairest of women?  
What is your beloved more than any  
other,  
that you give us this charge?
- Bride*
- 10 My beloved is fair and ruddy,  
a paragon among ten thousand.
- 11 His head is gold, finest gold;  
his locks are like palm-fronds.<sup>u</sup>
- 12 His eyes are like doves beside brooks  
of water,  
splashed by the milky water  
as they sit where it is drawn.
- His cheeks are like beds of spices or 13  
chests full of perfumes;  
his lips are lilies, and 'drop liquid  
myrrh;  
his hands are golden rods set in 14  
topaz;  
his belly a plaque of ivory overlaid  
with lapis lazuli.  
His legs are pillars of marble in 15  
sockets of finest gold;  
his aspect is like Lebanon, noble as  
cedars.  
His whispers are<sup>v</sup> sweetness itself, 16  
wholly desirable.  
Such is my beloved, such is my  
darling,  
daughters of Jerusalem.
- Companions*
- Where has your beloved gone, 6  
O fairest of women?  
Which way did your beloved go,  
that we may help you to seek him?
- Bride*
- My beloved has gone down to his 2  
garden,  
to the beds where balsam grows,  
to delight in the garden<sup>w</sup> and to pick  
the lilies.
- I am my beloved's, and my beloved 3  
is mine,  
he who delights in the lilies.
- Bridegroom*
- You are beautiful, my dearest, as 4  
Tirzah,  
lovely as Jerusalem.<sup>x</sup>  
Turn your eyes away from me; 5  
they dazzle me.  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
streaming down Mount Gilead;  
your teeth are like a flock of ewes 6  
come up fresh from the dipping,  
each ewe has twins and none has cast  
a lamb.  
Your parted lips behind your veil 7  
are like a pomegranate cut open.
- <sup>f</sup> will you . . . him: or what will you tell him?  
<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds black as the raven.  
<sup>v</sup> Or His nature is.  
<sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. gardens.  
<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds majestic as the starry heavens  
(see verse 10).

7: Perhaps they mistook her for a woman of the streets; contrast 3.3. 8: See 2.7; 3.5; 2.5.  
5.9-7.9: Descriptions of the beloved. 10-16: The maiden describes the man, as he has described  
her in 4.1-7. 6.1: The same theme as in 3.3 and 5.6. 4-10: A description of the maiden; see  
4.1-12 n. 4: *Tirzah*: the early residence of the northern kings (1 Kgs.15.33). The maiden is

- 8 There may be sixty princesses,  
eighty concubines, and young women  
past counting,  
9 but there is one alone, my dove, my  
perfect one,  
her mother's only child,  
devoted to the mother who bore her;  
young girls see her and call her happy,  
princesses and concubines praise her.
- 10 Who is this that looks out like the  
dawn,  
beautiful as the moon, bright as the  
sun,  
majestic as the starry heavens?
- 11 I went down to a garden of nut-trees  
to look at the rushes by the stream,  
to see if the vine had budded  
or the pomegranates were in  
flower.
- 12 I did not know myself;  
she made me feel more than a  
prince  
reigning over the myriads<sup>y</sup> of his  
people.
- Companions*  
Come back, come back, Shulammitic  
maiden,  
13 come back, that we may gaze upon you.
- Bridegroom*  
How you love to gaze on the  
Shulammitic maiden,  
as she moves between the lines of  
dancers!
- 7 How beautiful are your sandalled feet,  
O prince's daughter!  
The curves of your thighs are like  
jewels,  
the work of a skilled craftsman.
- 2 Your navel is a rounded goblet  
that never shall want for spiced  
wine.  
Your belly is a heap of wheat  
fenced in by lilies.
- Your two breasts are like two fawns, 3  
twin fawns of a gazelle.  
Your neck is like a tower of ivory. 4  
Your eyes are the pools in Heshbon,  
beside the gate of the crowded  
city.<sup>z</sup>  
Your nose is like towering Lebanon  
that looks towards Damascus.  
You carry your head like Carmel; 5  
the flowing hair on your head is  
lustrous black,  
your tresses are braided with  
ribbons.  
How beautiful, how entrancing 6  
you are,  
my loved one, daughter of delights!  
You are stately as a palm-tree, 7  
and your breasts are the clusters  
of dates.  
I said, 'I will climb up into the palm 8  
to grasp its fronds.'  
May I find your breasts like clusters  
of grapes on the vine,  
the scent of your breath like  
apricots,  
and your whispers like spiced wine 9  
flowing smoothly to welcome my  
caresses,  
gliding down through lips and teeth.
- Bride*  
I am my beloved's, his longing is all 10  
for me.  
Come, my beloved, let us go out into 11  
the fields  
to lie among the henna-bushes;  
let us go early to the vineyards 12  
and see if the vine has budded or its  
blossom opened,  
if the pomegranates are in flower.  
There will I give you my love,  
when the mandrakes give their 13  
perfume,  
and all rare fruits are ready at our  
door,

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. chariots.  
<sup>z</sup> Or the gate of Beth-rabbim.

compared to two capital cities. 8-9: She excels all the women of a king's harem. Perhaps 1 Kgs.11.3, Solomon's harem, is here echoed. 10: The praise spoken by the harem women. 11-12: Perhaps a fragment of a longer poem. V. 12 is obscure. 6.13-7.9: Another praise of the beauty of the maiden. 13: *Shulammitic*: the name occurs only here in the book. It seems related to the Heb. for Solomon. The meaning, often guessed at, is uncertain. The *dancers* are the wedding dancers. 7.4: *Heshbon*: a city in Moab east of the Jordan. 5: *Carmel*: a famous mountain on the coast, in the north.

7.10-8.4: *Love's fulfillment*. 10-13: The flowers are probably all symbols of awakening passion. 12: See 2.15 n. 13: *Mandrakes*: an aphrodisiac; they were also an assurance of fertility (see Gen.30.14-17). 8.2: *Room of [my] mother*: see 3.4 n. 4: See 2.7 n.

fruits new and old  
which I have in store for you, my  
love.

- 8 If only you were my own true  
brother  
that sucked my mother's breasts!  
Then, if I found you outside, I would  
kiss you,  
and no man would despise me.
- 2 I would lead you to the room of the  
mother who bore me,  
bring you to her house for you to  
embrace me;<sup>a</sup>  
I would give you mulled wine to  
drink  
and the fresh juice of pomegranates,  
3 your<sup>b</sup> left arm under my head and  
your<sup>b</sup> right arm round me.

*Bridegroom*

- 4 I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem:  
Do not rouse her, do not disturb my  
love  
until she is ready.<sup>c</sup>

*Companions*

- 5 Who is this coming up from the  
wilderness  
leaning on her beloved?

*Bridegroom*

- Under the apricot-trees I roused  
you,  
there where your mother was in  
labour with you,  
there where she who bore you was  
in labour.
- 6 Wear me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm;  
for love is strong as death,  
passion cruel as the grave;  
it blazes up like blazing fire,  
fiercer than any flame.
- 7 Many waters cannot quench love,  
no flood can sweep it away;  
if a man were to offer for love

the whole wealth of his house,  
it would be utterly scorned.

*Companions*

- We have a little sister 8  
who has no breasts;  
what shall we do for our sister  
when she is asked in marriage?  
If she is a wall, 9  
we will build on it a silver parapet,  
but<sup>d</sup> if she is a door,  
we will close it up with planks of cedar.

*Bride*

- I am a wall and my breasts are like 10  
towers;  
so in his eyes I am as one who brings  
contentment.  
Solomon has a vineyard at Baal- 11  
hamon;  
he has let out his vineyard to  
guardians,  
and each is to bring for its fruit  
a thousand pieces of silver.  
But my vineyard is mine to give; 12  
the thousand pieces are yours,  
O Solomon,  
and the guardians of the fruit shall  
have two hundred.

*Bridegroom*

- My bride, you who sit in my 13  
garden,  
what is it that my friends<sup>e</sup> are  
listening to?  
Let me also hear your voice.

*Bride*

- Come into the open, my beloved, 14  
and show yourself like a gazelle or a  
young wild goat  
on the spice-bearing mountains.

*a* for you to embrace me: or to teach me how to love you.

*b* Prob. rdg.; Heb. his.

*c* until . . . ready: or while she is resting.

*d* Or and.

*e* my garden . . . friends: prob. rdg.; Heb. the gardens, friends.

8.5a: A suggestion of a procession, perhaps the bridal march, using the same words as 3.6.  
8.5b-7: Authentic love. These verses could well be considered the theme of the whole book.  
8.8-12: The little sister. To her brothers who seek to protect her, the maiden responds with a statement of her chastity. 11: *Solomon*: see 3.11 n. *Baal-hamon*: an unknown place. 12: *Vineyard*: see 2.15 n. *Mine to give*: lit. my own before me. The verse perhaps means that the king sells the fruit of his vineyard for whatever he pleases, even great amounts, but her richer love is her own to give to whomever she pleases; see 8.7b. *Two hundred*: possibly the dowry.  
8.13-14: The lovers together. Perhaps a joyous wedding game is reflected. 13: *My bride*: the words are not in the Heb. text, but have been added for clarity. *Friends*: see 5.1 n. The Heb. word here is a synonym of that in 5.1. 14: See 2.9; 4.6 n.

# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

There are three major collections of literature in the book of Isaiah reflecting different periods of Israel's history. Most of the material in chapters 1–39 is related to Isaiah of Jerusalem, the advisor of kings, a poet of genius, and an eloquent religious spokesman whose career coincided with a series of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, 783–742 B.C. (1.1; 6.1), Jotham, 742–735 B.C. (1.1); Ahaz, 735–715 B.C. (1.1; 7.1–12), and Hezekiah, 715–687 B.C. (1.1; 38.1–6).

The advance of the Assyrian Empire toward Egypt disturbed the balance of power in the Near East, causing political intrigue and rebellions that swallowed up the Northern Kingdom of Israel (721 B.C.) and threatened to engulf Judah (see ch. 7). Isaiah spoke out against political involvements which compromised the covenant with the LORD, and against the oppression of the poor by the rich and the mighty. In language that is both powerful and of poetic beauty, he pleaded for a renewed faith in God.

Collections of Isaiah's prophecies seem to have existed separately. When these were gathered into one book, the words of the collector-editors and of later writers (perhaps disciples; see 8.16) seem to have been added. Many units in these chapters, therefore, are easily recognized as not those of Isaiah, but written in a different style and reflecting a later historical situation.

Chapters 40–55 are from an unknown prophet, now called Second Isaiah, active in Babylon toward the end of the Exile (587–539 B.C.), whose words were joined to those of Isaiah. This conclusion is based on the difference in historical situation, namely exiles receiving the promises of a return to their homeland, and not the inhabitants of Palestine threatened with imminent invasion. The glowing promises of this section have led to its often being called the "Book of the Consolation of Israel." One discerns in moving from the first (chs. 1–39) into this section, a change in religious ideas, especially now a clear affirmation, in theological language, of monotheism and a religious universalism. Moreover, a different vocabulary is used, and the style has become more rhetorical and complex.

The final chapters of the book (56–66) reflect for the most part the life and thought of the post-exilic community struggling against discouragement to reestablish its life in the promised land. The varying styles, religious ideas, and historical situations reflect diverse authors writing over a longer period of time. This section is often called "Trito-Isaiah" or "Third Isaiah."

## *Judah arraigned*

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | <p><b>T</b>HE VISION RECEIVED BY ISAIAH SON of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.</p> | <p>and the ass its master's stall;<br/>but Israel, my own people,<br/>has no knowledge, no discernment.</p>  |
| 2 | <p>Hark you heavens, and earth give ear,<br/>for the LORD has spoken:<br/>I have sons whom I reared and brought up,<br/>but they have rebelled against me.</p>  | <p>O sinful nation, people loaded with iniquity,<br/>race of evildoers, wanton destructive children<br/>who have deserted the LORD,<br/>spurned the Holy One of Israel<br/>and turned your backs on him.</p> |
| 3 | <p>The ox knows its owner</p>   | <p>Where can you still be struck if you will be disloyal still?<br/>Your head is covered with sores,<br/>your body diseased;</p>   |

**1.1–5.30: Judah arraigned.** Isaiah's charge is that Israel has rejected her sovereign LORD and loving father.

**1.1: Superscription.** The prophetic message frequently is designated as a *vision* (see 6.1–13; Ezek.1.1–3; Amos 1.1) to indicate that it was a revelation from God. On the *kings of Judah*, see Introduction. *Uzziah*: compare 6.1.

**1.2–31: A collection of speeches.** Diverse speeches from different periods in Isaiah's life. They are a compendium of the prophet's thought. **2–3:** The prophetic message often takes the form of a lawsuit in which God is both plaintiff and judge with the *heavens and earth* as witnesses. The indictment is lack of *knowledge*, i.e. insensitivity to God's benefits. **4–9:** A woe (v. 4) indictment is elaborated into a warning to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. First comes the people's sinfulness, then the results of their rebellion, and finally, they are reminded that the LORD has stopped short of total destruction. **4:** O: lit. "woe" (see 5.8–23 n.). **5:** See 9.13.



- 6 from head to foot there is not a  
sound spot in you—  
nothing but bruises and weals and  
raw wounds  
which have not felt compress or  
bandage  
or soothing oil.
- 7 Your country is desolate, your cities  
lie in ashes.  
Strangers devour your land before  
your eyes;  
it is desolate as Sodom<sup>a</sup> in its  
overthrow.
- 8 Only Zion is left,  
like a watchman's shelter in a  
vineyard,  
a shed in a field of cucumbers,  
a city well guarded.
- 9 If the LORD of Hosts had not left us  
a remnant,  
we should soon have been like  
Sodom,  
no better than Gomorrah.
- 10 Hear the word of the LORD, you  
rulers of Sodom;  
attend, you people of Gomorrah, to  
the instruction of our God:
- 11 Your countless sacrifices, what are  
they to me?  
says the LORD.  
I am sated with whole-offerings of  
rams  
and the fat of buffaloes;  
I have no desire for the blood of  
bulls,  
of sheep and of he-goats.
- 12-13 Whenever you come to enter my  
presence—  
who asked you for this?  
No more shall you trample my  
courts.
- The offer of your gifts is useless,  
the reek of sacrifice is abhorrent to  
me.  
New moons and sabbaths and  
assemblies,  
sacred seasons and ceremonies, I  
cannot endure.
- I cannot tolerate your new moons 14  
and your festivals;  
they have become a burden to me,  
and I can put up with them no  
longer.
- When you lift your hands outspread 15  
in prayer,  
I will hide my eyes from you.  
Though you offer countless prayers,  
I will not listen.  
There is blood on your hands;  
wash yourselves and be clean. 16  
Put away the evil of your deeds,  
away out of my sight.  
Cease to do evil and learn to do right, 17  
pursue justice and champion the  
oppressed;  
give the orphan his rights, plead the  
widow's cause.
- Come now, let us argue it out, 18  
says the LORD.  
Though your sins are scarlet,  
they may become white as snow;  
though they are dyed crimson,  
they may yet be like wool.  
Obey with a will, 19  
and you shall eat the best that  
earth yields;  
but, if you refuse and rebel, 20  
locust-beans shall be your only  
food.<sup>b</sup>
- The LORD himself has spoken.

<sup>a</sup> Sodom: *prob. rdg.*: Heb. strangers.

<sup>b</sup> locust-beans . . . food: *or, with Scroll, you shall be eaten by the sword.*

7-8: This description of the destruction refers either to the invasion of Tiglath-pileser III in 734-732 B.C. (see 7.1-9 n.) or Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (see 36.1). 8: In Palestine stones gathered in a vineyard are made into a small tower from which the *watchman* protects the fruit by warding off thieves and destructive animals. This *shelter* is useless when the vines are destroyed; just so is *Zion*, Jerusalem, in a land which will be devastated. The description here of Jerusalem's isolation is similar to Sennacherib's report of his siege of the city. 9: Judah is compared to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* both in their depravity (Gen.18.20-33) and in their total destruction (Gen.19.24-29), except that God leaves Judah a *remnant*. 10-17: Instructions on the relationship between ritual and social justice (see Amos 5.21-27). 10: *Instruction*: that is, "Torah," or "Law." 11-15: The LORD rejects the rituals of the cult. 11: The *fat* and the *blood* of animals were not to be eaten but used only for sacrifices, the former because it was considered a choice morsel, the latter because it was the vehicle of life; see Lev. 3.12-16. 12: *My presence*: the Temple. 13: *New moons* occurred on the first day of each month; these days, like the *sabbaths*, were days of rest; see Num.28.11-15. 15: *Hide my eyes*: refuse to look at. *Outspread hands* do not draw God's benevolent gaze because there is *blood* on them. 16-17: Instructions concerning the LORD's expectations. 18-20: If Israel repents she will be saved; if she continues to *rebel*, she

21	How the faithful city has played the whore, once the home of justice where righteousness dwelt— but now murderers!	and righteousness her repentant people. Rebels and sinners shall be broken together and those who forsake the LORD shall cease to be.	28
22	Your silver has turned into base metal and your liquor is diluted with water.	For the sacred oaks in which you delighted shall fail you, the garden-shrines of your fancy shall disappoint you.	29
23	Your very rulers are rebels, confederate with thieves; every man of them loves a bribe and itches for a gift; they do not give the orphan his rights, and the widow's cause never comes before them.	You shall be like a terebinth whose leaves have withered, like a garden without water; the strongest tree <sup>c</sup> shall become like tow, and what is made of it <sup>d</sup> shall go up in sparks, and the two shall burst into flames together with no one to quench them.	30 31
24	This therefore is the word of the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:		

Enough! I will secure a respite from my foes  
and take vengeance on my enemies.

This is the word which Isaiah son of 2 Amoz received in a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

25 Once again I will act against you to refine away your base metal as with potash  
and purge all your impurities;  
26 I will again make your judges what once they were  
and your counsellors like those of old.  
Then at length you shall be called the home of righteousness, the faithful city.

In days to come <sup>2e</sup>  
the mountain of the LORD's house shall be set over all other mountains,  
lifted high above the hills.  
All the nations shall come streaming to it,  
and many peoples shall come and say,  
3 'Come, let us climb up on to the mountain of the LORD,

27 Justice shall redeem Zion

<sup>c</sup> Or the strong man.  
<sup>d</sup> Or what he makes.  
<sup>e</sup> Verses 2-4: cp. Mic. 4. 1-3.

will be punished. 21-28: The corruption of Jerusalem (vv. 21-23) and judgment which will purge and purify the city (vv. 24-28). 21-23: These verses are written in a meter used for lamentations and dirges, thus expressing grief over the decay of Judah's religious life as in the metaphor, *silver to base metal*. 21: *The faithful city*: Jerusalem; see also v. 26. 25-27: These verses contain the heart of the message of First Isaiah (see Introduction): after a period of purification Judah will be restored. The last word is hope not doom. *Justice*, the quality by which a king rescues the oppressed, and *righteousness*, the state of right order and harmony in relationships, will be given by God. 27: *Zion* was originally the mount where the Temple was built; it became another name for Jerusalem. 29-31: *The sacred oaks* (lit. "oaks"), the *garden-shrines* (lit. "gardens"), and the *terebinth* are the sacred places and symbols of fertility religion. This is one of the few passages in Isa. chs. 1-39 where judgment is announced on Israel because of pagan practices.

2.1: A second superscription. This verse probably served as the original title to a collection of Isaiah's speeches, perhaps Isa. chs. 2-5. Both the individual utterances of the prophets and the collections of their speeches are characterized as *the word*. *Vision*: see 1.1 n.

2.2-5: An announcement of eternal peace. The new age will begin when Mount Zion is elevated above *all other mountains*, i.e. recognized as the most holy place. The same vision of peace is found in Mic.4.1-4; it is strikingly reversed in Joel 3.9-12. 2: *The mountain is Zion*; the *LORD's house* is the Temple in Jerusalem. On the importance and holiness of Zion, see Pss.48.1-2; 78.69; 87.1-7. 3: As they approach Zion the *peoples* will be singing a pilgrim song (see Ps.122). *Zion* is the source of both *instruction* (or "Torah," or "Law"), ordinarily understood as the

	to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths. For instruction issues from Zion, and out of Jerusalem comes the word of the LORD;	Man's proud eyes shall be humbled, the loftiness of men brought low, and the LORD alone shall be exalted on that day.	11
4	he will be judge between nations, arbiter among many peoples. They shall beat their swords into mattocks and their spears into pruning- knives; <sup>f</sup> nation shall not lift sword against nation nor ever again be trained for war.	For the LORD of Hosts has a day of doom waiting for all that is proud and lofty, for all that is high and lifted up, for all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and high, and for all the oaks of Bashan, for all lofty mountains and for all high hills, for every high tower and for every sheer wall, for all ships of Tarshish and all the dhows of Arabia.	12 13 14 15
5	O people of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.	Then man's pride shall be brought low, and the loftiness of man shall be humbled, and the LORD alone shall be exalted on that day, while the idols shall pass away utterly.	16 17 18
6	Thou hast abandoned thy people the house of Jacob; for they are crowded with traders <sup>g</sup> and barbarians like the Philistines, and with the children of foreigners everywhere.	Get you into caves in the rocks and crevices in the ground from the dread of the LORD and the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to inspire the earth with fear.	19
7	Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasure; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots;	On that day a man shall fling away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which he has made for himself to worship; he shall fling them to the dung- beetles and the bats, and creep into clefts in the rocks	20 21
8	their land is filled with idols, and they bow down to the work of their own hands, to what their fingers have made.		
9	Mankind shall be brought low, all men shall be humbled; and how can they raise themselves? <sup>h</sup>		
10	Get you into the rocks and hide yourselves in the ground from the dread of the LORD and the splendour of his majesty.		

<sup>f</sup> They shall beat . . . pruning-knives: cp. *Joel* 3. 9-12.

<sup>g</sup> Or hawkers.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. and do not forgive them.

responsibility of the priest, and the *word of the LORD*, the message of the prophet. 4: Peace can result because there will be but one *judge* and *arbiter*, namely, Israel's God. See 11.3-4. 5: The language of v. 3 is used in an admonition. On *light* as a symbol of the presence of the LORD, see 60.1-3.

2.6-22: **The coming Day of the LORD.** On the day when the LORD comes to judge pride and idolatry, men will flee from his wrath. The organization of the unit is difficult to discern, but there are refrains throughout (compare vv. 9, 11 with v. 17, and v. 10 with vv. 19, 21). V. 22 is omitted from the Sept. 6-11: An announcement of judgment because of foreign corruption, specifically, idolatry. 6-9: The words are addressed to God. *Barbarians*: the Gk. reads "sooth-sayers"; divination was illegal (see *Lev.* 20.27; *Deut.* 18.10-11), yet was practiced (see 1 *Sam.* 28.3-20). 11: As v. 12 indicates, *that day* is the Day of the LORD, when, in popular expectation (*Amos* 5.18-20), the LORD would punish the enemies of Israel; the prophets of the eighth century declare, rather, that *on that day* the LORD would, instead, judge his own people. (See also 13.6; 4.1; *Amos* 2.16; compare *Jer.* 17.16-18; *Ezek.* 30.3). 12-19: The Day of the LORD is a *day of doom* for all that is proud in man and nature. 13: *Bashan* is a region in northeastern Trans-Jordan, known for its *oaks*. 16: On *ships of Tarshish* see *Isa.* 23.1.14; 60.9; *Ezek.* 27.25;

	and crannies in the cliffs from the dread of the LORD and the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to inspire the earth with fear.		
22	Have no more to do with man, for what is he worth? He is no more than the breath in his nostrils.		Jerusalem is stricken and Judah fallen because they have spoken and acted against the LORD, rebellng against the glance of his glorious eye. The look on their faces testifies against them; like Sodom they proclaim their sins and do not conceal them. <sup>j</sup> Woe upon them! they have earned their own disaster.
3	Be warned: the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, is stripping Jerusalem and Judah of every prop and stay, <sup>i</sup> warrior and soldier, judge and prophet, diviner and elder, captains of companies and men of rank, counsellor, magician, and cunning enchanter.		Happy <sup>k</sup> the righteous man! all goes well with him, for such men enjoy the fruit of their actions. Woe betide the wicked! with him all goes ill, for he reaps the reward that he has earned.
4	Then I will appoint mere boys to be their captains, who shall govern as the fancy takes them;		Money-lenders strip my people bare, 12 and usurers lord it over them. O my people! your guides lead you astray and confuse the path that you should take.
5	the people shall deal harshly each man with his fellow and with his neighbour; children shall break out against their elders, and nobodies against men of substance.		The LORD comes forward to argue 13 his case and stands to judge his people. The LORD opens the indictment 14 against the elders of his people and their officers:
6	If a man takes hold of his brother in his father's house, saying, 'You have a cloak, you shall be our chief; our stricken family shall be under you',		You have ravaged the vineyard, and the spoils of the poor are in your houses. Is it nothing to you that you crush 15 my people and grind the faces of the poor? This is the very word of the Lord, the LORD of Hosts.
7	he will cry out that day and say, 'I will not be your master; there is neither bread nor cloak in my house, and you shall not make me head of the clan.'		

*i* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds all stay of bread and all stay of water.

*j* like... them: or and their sins, like those of Sodom, denounce them; they do not deny them.

*k* Prob. rdg.; Heb. Say.

Ps.48.7. *Dhows*: sailing vessels. 22: *He is . . . the breath in his nostrils*; see Gen. 2.7; Ps.104.29. 3.1-12: A threat of anarchy. The LORD will take away from Jerusalem and Judah all their leaders, and chaos will result. 1: *Be warned*: lit. "for behold." *Prop* and *stay* refer to the leaders of the people. The phrase, "all stay of bread and all stay of water" (Tfn. *i*), interprets the prop and stay as referring to what supports life. 2: The prophet lists all who might give any direction, government officials, military leaders and charismatics. 4: Compare Eccles.10.16. *Captains*: that is, princes. 5: Oppression and disorder result from the removal of leaders. 6-7: When leaders, qualified either because of training or talents, disappear, the only requirement for election as *chief* will be the possession of a decent outer *cloak*. The struggle for individual survival will be so intense that no one will take the responsibility of providing for the welfare of a clan. 8-12: The *guides* who confuse the path are the elders (v. 14) who despoil the food.

3.13-15: The LORD's indictment of the leaders. On the "lawsuit" form of prophecy see 1.2-3 n. 13: Technical legal language is used to describe the LORD's appearance. *People*: The New English Bible reads a singular with the Sept. 14: *Officers*: princes. On the *vineyard* as a figure of speech representing Israel, see 5.1-7.

- 16 Then the LORD said:  
Because the women of Zion hold themselves high  
and walk with necks outstretched  
and wanton glances,  
moving with mincing gait  
and jingling feet,  
17 the Lord will give the women of  
Zion bald heads,  
the LORD will strip the hair from  
their foreheads.
- 18 In that day the Lord will take away  
all finery: anklets, discs, crescents,  
19,20 pendants, bangles, coronets, head-  
bands, armlets, necklaces, lockets,  
21,22 charms, signets, nose-rings, fine dresses,  
23 mantles, cloaks, flounced skirts, scarves  
of gauze, kerchiefs of linen, turbans,  
and flowing veils.
- 24 So instead of perfume you shall  
have the stench of decay,  
and a rope in place of a girdle,  
baldness instead of hair elegantly  
coiled,  
a loin-cloth of sacking instead of a  
mantle,  
and branding instead of beauty.
- 25 Your men shall fall by the sword,  
and your warriors in battle;  
26 then Zion's gates shall mourn and  
lament,  
and she shall sit on the ground  
stripped bare.
- 4 Then on that day  
seven women shall take hold of one  
man and say,
- 'We will eat our own bread and  
wear our own clothes  
if only we may be called by your  
name;  
take away our disgrace.'
- On that day the plant that the LORD 2  
has grown  
shall become glorious in its beauty,  
and the fruit of the land shall be  
the pride and splendour  
of the survivors of Israel.
- Then those who are left in Zion, who 3  
remain in Jerusalem, every one en-  
rolled in the book of life, shall be called  
holy. If the Lord washes away the 4  
filth of the women of Zion and cleanses  
Jerusalem from the blood that is in it  
by a spirit of judgement, a consuming  
spirit, then over every building on 5  
Mount Zion and on all her places of  
assembly the LORD will create a cloud  
of smoke by day and a bright flame of  
fire by night; for glory shall be spread  
over all as a covering and a canopy, a 6  
shade from the heat by day, a refuge  
and a shelter from rain and tempest.
- I will sing for my beloved 5  
my love-song about his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard  
high up on a fertile hill-side.  
He trenched it and cleared it of 2  
stones  
and planted it with red vines;  
he built a watch-tower in the middle  
and then hewed out a winepress  
in it.

**3.16-24: Announcement of judgment against the ladies of Jerusalem.** First, reasons for punishment are given in terms of evil pride of the *women of Zion*; next, sentence is passed which fits the crime (vv. 17-24). **17,24:** The humiliations which the women will suffer are common to military defeat and exile. **18-23:** The list of *finery* is a prose elaboration of vv. 17,24.

**3.25-4.1: Judgment against Jerusalem and her women.** **25:** The repeated pronoun *your* is feminine singular, referring to Jerusalem; compare v. 26. **4.1:** With men killed in war (v. 25), women will be without husbands and children, a reproach in the society of that day. To *take away the disgrace*, women will break all tradition and beg men to marry them. On *disgrace*, see 54.4; Gen.30.23; 2 Sam.13.13.

**4.2-6: A promise of Jerusalem's renewal.** The hope for the future lies in *survivors* who have been purged through punishment. **2:** The *plant* and the *fruit* are the *survivors* or the remnant. See 1.9 n. **3:** *Enrolled in the book of life*: compare Exod.32.32; Mal.3.16; Dan.12.1. **5-6:** The *cloud* and the *fire* were symbols of God's presence and guidance in the Wilderness during the flight from Egypt; see Exod.13.21-22. The *glory* is a technical name for God's protective presence in a perceptible yet hidden manner; compare Exod.40.34-38; Ezek.10.4.

**5.1-7: The parable of the vineyard.** Israel is indicted for her failure to respond to the LORD's nurture. The prophet first sings a love song (vv. 1-2) and then assumes the role of the vineyard's owner presenting a lawsuit (vv. 3-6). **1:** The *vineyard* is a common metaphor in love poetry (see S. of S.1.6; 7.12; 8.12). **2:** The soil in Palestine is shallow and full of *stones*; these the good farmer gathers and makes a *tower* from which he keeps *watch* over the vineyard. The winepress

	He looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.	Shame on you! you who rise early in the morning	11
3	Now, you who live in Jerusalem, and you men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.	to go in pursuit of liquor and draw out the evening inflamed with wine,	
4	What more could have been done for my vineyard that I did not do in it? Why, when I looked for it to yield grapes, did it yield wild grapes?	at whose feasts there are harp and lute, tabor and pipe and wine, who have no eyes for the work of the LORD, and never see the things that he has done.	12
5	Now listen while I tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away its fences and let it be burnt, I will break down its walls and let it be trampled underfoot,	Therefore my people are dwindling away all unawares; the nobles are starving to death, and the common folk die of thirst.	13
6	and so I will leave it derelict; it shall be neither pruned nor hoed, but shall grow thorns and briars. Then I will command the clouds to send no more rain upon it.	Therefore Sheol gapes with straining throat and has opened her measureless jaws: down go nobility and common people,	14
7	The vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is Israel, and the men of Judah are the plant he cherished. He looked for justice and found it denied, for righteousness but heard cries of distress.	their noisy bustling mob. <sup>m</sup> Mankind is brought low, men are humbled, humbled are haughty looks. But the LORD of Hosts sits high in judgement, and by righteousness the holy God shows himself holy.	15
8	Shame on you! you who add house to house and join field to field, until not an acre remains, and you are left to dwell alone in the land.	Young rams shall feed where fat bullocks once pastured, and kids shall graze broad acres where cattle grew fat. <sup>n</sup>	17
9	The LORD of Hosts has sworn <sup>l</sup> in my hearing: Many houses shall go to ruin, fine large houses shall be uninhabited.	Shame on you! you who drag wickedness along like a tethered sheep and sin like a heifer on a rope, who say, 'Let the LORD make haste, let him speed up his work for us to see it,	18
10	Five acres of vineyard shall yield only a gallon, and ten bushels of seed return only a peck.		19

*l* has sworn: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*  
*m* nobility . . . mob: *or* nobility, common people and  
noisy mob, and are restless there.  
*n* Young . . . grew fat: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

is a hollow excavation made in the bedrock in which the grapes are pressed. *Wild*: i.e. sour. 3-6: The vineyard's owner calls for the court to convene (v. 3), argues the reasonableness of his complaint (vv. 4-5), and gives his judgment. 5: From the gathered stones *fences* are built as boundaries and *walls* to retain the terraces. 7: The Heb. contains two plays on words, *mishpat* . . . *mispah* ("justice" . . . "denied") and *tzedakah* . . . *tze'akah* ("righteousness" . . . "cries of distress"). *Justice* and *righteousness* are often used in parallel (see 1.21; Amos 5.24) to characterize the standards of behavior which the LORD expects (see also 1.17,26-27; 9.7; 16.5).

5.8-23: A series of woe indictments. Each accusation begins with the cry *shame on you* (lit. "woe," vv. 8,11,18,20,21,22). Isa.10.1-4 may also belong to this series. Each unit describes a group in terms of its immoral actions. 8-10: Against the rich who take the land of the poor. 11-17: Against those whose pursuit of pleasure obscures their perception of the LORD's activity and the needs of his *people*. 14: *Sheol*: netherworld. 18-19: Against those who dare the LORD

- let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel  
be soon fulfilled, so that we may know it.'
- 20 Shame on you! you who call evil good and good evil,  
who turn darkness into light and light into darkness,  
who make bitter sweet and sweet bitter.
- 21 Shame on you! you who are wise in your own eyes  
and prudent in your own esteem.
- 22 Shame on you! you mighty toppers,  
valiant mixers of drink,
- 23 who for a bribe acquit the guilty  
and deny justice to those in the right.
- 26<sup>o</sup> So he will hoist a signal to a nation far away,  
he will whistle to call them from the end of the earth;  
and see, they come, speedy and swift;
- 27 none is weary, not one of them stumbles,  
not one slumbers or sleeps.  
None has his belt loose about his waist  
or a broken thong to his sandals.
- 28 Their arrows are sharpened and their bows all strung,  
their horses' hooves flash like shooting stars,
- their chariot-wheels are like the whirlwind.  
Their growling is the growling of a lioness,  
they growl like young lions,  
which roar as they seize the prey and carry it beyond reach of rescue.  
They shall roar over it on that day like the roaring of the sea.  
If a man looks over the earth, behold, darkness closing in,  
and the light darkened on the hill-tops<sup>p</sup>!

*The call of Isaiah*

IN THE YEAR OF KING UZZIAH'S DEATH 6  
I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the skirt of his robe filled the temple. About him were 2 attendant seraphim, and each had six wings; one pair covered his face and one pair his feet, and one pair was spread in flight. They were calling 3 ceaselessly to one another,

Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts:  
the whole earth is full of his glory.

*o* Verses 24 and 25 transposed to follow 10. 4.  
*p* hill-tops: or clouds.

to act in demonstration of his power. 20: Against those who distort moral law. 21: Against those who are proud of their wisdom. 22-23: Against drunkards who pervert justice.

5.26-30: An announcement of judgment. The prophet alludes to one of several Assyrian invasions which took place during his career, namely, by Tiglath-pileser III in 734-732 B.C.; Shalmeneser in 722 B.C.; Sargon, 711 B.C.; Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The invaders are regarded as called in by God to punish his people. 26: The invaders obey God as a dog obeys the whistle of his master. 27-28: No comfort should be taken in the wishful thinking that the invaders will become weary or ill-equipped or softened by the long march; compare Jos.9.1-15. 30: *That day*: see 2.11 n. The invaders will leave the land in the same chaos over which, before creation, *darkness and the sea* spread; compare Gen.1.1-2.

6.1-13: *Isaiah's report of his call*. This inaugural vision in which Isaiah receives his call to prophesy should probably be at the beginning of the book as are the calls of other prophets; compare Jer.1.4-9; Ezek. chs. 1-3. It may be at this place either because the following chapters, often known as the "Book of Immanuel," existed as a separate collection which an editor who compiled the whole book put at the wrong place; or because the editor thought the previous chapters (1-5), which magnificently describe the majesty of God, were a better introduction to the whole book. The vision report authenticates that the prophet is commissioned as the LORD's spokesman; also, it justifies the prophet's uncompromising message of doom. 1: *King Uzziah's death* was in 742 B.C. God's *throne* was considered to be above the Ark in the temple; see Exod. 25.16-22; Ezek.10.1-5. The *skirt of his robe* was possibly the cloud of smoke that came from sacrifices and from the incense; compare 2 Chr.7.1-3. 2: The *seraphim* (lit. "fiery ones") perhaps are to be associated with the cherubim who appear as the LORD's attendants in Ezek. ch. 1 and elsewhere are associated with the Ark (Exod.25.18-20). The seraph *covered his face* for fear of seeing God. *Feet* is a euphemism for sexual organs. The triple *holy* is an intensive superlative. Isaiah frequently speaks of the LORD as "the holy one of Israel" (1.4; 5.19,24;

4 And, as each one called, the threshold  
shook to its foundations, while the  
5 house was filled with smoke. Then I  
cried,

Woe is me! I am lost,  
for I am a man of unclean lips  
and I dwell among a people of  
unclean lips;  
yet with these eyes I have seen the  
King, the LORD of Hosts.

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me  
carrying in his hand a glowing coal  
which he had taken from the altar with  
7 a pair of tongs. He touched my mouth  
with it and said,

See, this has touched your lips;  
your iniquity is removed,  
and your sin is wiped away.

8 Then I heard the Lord saying, Whom  
shall I send? Who will go for me?  
And I answered, Here am I; send me.  
9 He said, Go and tell this people:

You may listen and listen, but you  
will not understand.<sup>q</sup>

You may look and look again,  
but you will never know.<sup>r</sup>

10 This people's wits are dulled,  
their ears are deafened and their  
eyes blinded,  
so that they cannot see with their  
eyes  
nor listen with their ears  
nor understand with their wits,  
so that they may turn and be  
healed.

Then I asked, How long, O Lord? And 11  
he answered,

Until cities fall in ruins and are  
deserted,  
houses are left without people,  
and the land goes to ruin and lies  
waste,  
until the LORD has sent all 12  
mankind far away,  
and the whole country is one vast  
desolation.  
Even if a tenth part of its people 13  
remain there,  
they too will be exterminated  
[like an oak or a terebinth,  
a sacred pole thrown out from its  
place in a hill-shrine<sup>s</sup>].

*Prophecies during the  
Syro-Ephraimite war*

WHILE AHAZ SON OF JOTHAM AND 7  
grandson of Uzziah was king of Judah,  
Rezin king of Aram with Pekah son of  
Remaliah, king of Israel, marched on  
Jerusalem, but could not force a battle.  
When the house of David heard that 2  
the Aramaeans had come to terms with  
the Ephraimites, king and people were  
shaken like forest trees in the wind.  
Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out 3  
with your son Shear-jashub<sup>t</sup> to meet  
Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the  
Upper Pool by the causeway leading to

<sup>q</sup> Or but how will you understand?

<sup>r</sup> Or but how will you know?

<sup>s</sup> a sacred pole . . . hill-shrine: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>t</sup> That is A remnant shall return.

10.20). 4: The *smoke* in the *house* (that is, the Temple) should be associated with the "cloud" (Exod.19.9) on Mount Sinai where the "glory of the LORD" was present; compare Ezek.10.1-4. 5: Human lips are deemed *unclean* to speak on behalf of God. Furthermore, according to OT tradition, no one could see God and live (Exod.33.20). 6-7: See Jer.1.9-10; Ezek.3.1-3. 8: *Me*: lit. "us." The questions are not addressed to the prophet; he overhears the LORD speaking to the heavenly council (see Ps.82). 9-10: The Heb. (see Tfn. *q* and *r*) reads literally as a commission to the prophet deliberately to prevent the people from hearing, seeing, understanding, and thus repenting. 11-13: Isaiah's response is a prayer of intercession, but the LORD offers no hope until the land will have been destroyed.

7.1-9: *Assurance given to Ahaz*. Assyria invaded the lands to the west in 735 b.c. The kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and of Aram, i.e. Syria, had tried to organize a coalition of small nations to stop the invasion. When Ahaz, king of Judah, refused to join the coalition, the two kings laid siege to Jerusalem (about 734-732 b.c.). Ahaz decided to ask Assyria for help; thereupon Isaiah emerged to counsel Ahaz neither to fear the besiegers nor to seek the human help of Assyria, but rather to look to the LORD for aid. For the historical context, see 2 Kgs.16.1-20. 1: *Ahaz* reigned 735-715 b.c. *Aram*: Syria, with its capital at Damascus. 2: *The house of David*, i.e. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was *shaken* with fear because it was no military match for either of the attackers. 3: *Shear-jashub*: see Tfn. *r*. Isaiah's son is a living reminder of God's promise to David (2 Sam.7.15-16) that a *remnant will return*; see 10.21-22.



4 the Fuller's Field, and say to him, Be  
on your guard, keep calm; do not be  
frightened or unmanned by these two  
smouldering stumps of firewood, be-  
cause Rezin and his Aramaeans with  
Remaliah's son are burning with rage.  
5 The Aramaeans with Ephraim and  
Remaliah's son have laid their plans  
6 against you, saying, Let us invade  
Judah and break her spirit;<sup>u</sup> let us make  
her join with us, and set the son of  
7 Tabeal on the throne. Therefore the  
Lord GOD has said:

This shall not happen now, and  
never shall,

8 for all that the chief city of Aram  
is Damascus,  
and Rezin is the chief of  
Damascus;  
within sixty-five years  
Ephraim shall cease to be a nation,  
9 for all that Samaria is the chief  
city of Ephraim,  
and Remaliah's son the chief of  
Samaria.  
Have firm faith, or you will not  
stand firm.

10 Once again the LORD spoke to Ahaz  
11 and said, Ask the LORD your God for  
a sign, from lowest Sheol or from  
12 highest heaven. But Ahaz said, No, I  
will not put the LORD to the test by

asking for a sign. Then the answer 13  
came: Listen, house of David. Are you  
not content to wear out men's patience?  
Must you also wear out the patience of 14  
my God? Therefore the Lord himself  
shall give you a sign: A young woman  
is with child, and she will bear a son,  
and will<sup>v</sup> call him Immanuel.<sup>w</sup> By the 15  
time that he has learnt to reject evil  
and choose good, he will be eating  
curds and honey;<sup>x</sup> before that child 16  
has learnt to reject evil and choose  
good, desolation will come upon the  
land before whose two kings you  
cower now. The LORD will bring on 17  
you, your people, and your house, a  
time the like of which has not been  
seen since Ephraim broke away from  
Judah.<sup>y</sup>

On that day the LORD will whistle 18  
for the fly from the distant streams of  
Egypt and for the bee from Assyria.  
They shall all come and settle in the 19  
precipitous ravines and in the clefts of  
the rock; camel-thorn and stinkwood  
shall be black with them. On that day 20  
the Lord shall shave the head and body  
with a razor hired on the banks of the  
Euphrates,<sup>z</sup> and it shall remove the  
beard as well. On that day a man shall 21  
save alive a young cow and two ewes;

*u* Or and parley with her. *v* Or you will.

*w* That is God is with us.

*x* he will; . . . honey; or curds and honey will be eaten.

*y* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the king of Assyria.

*z* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds with the king of Assyria.

**4: Smouldering stumps:** a scornful allusion to the destructive power of the two kings as being already extinguished. **6: The son of Tabeal**—his own name is not given—probably was a rebel in Judah who agreed with the anti-Assyrian policies of the coalition. **8-9:** No *nation*, whatever its *chief city* and whoever its human *chief*, can prevail against Jerusalem, the city of God, whose chief is the LORD. **9: Firm faith** (Heb. *ta aminu*) and *stand firm* (*te amenu*) are different forms of the same verb; this play on words underscores that the only security for Judah is faith in God, not reliance upon human help.

**7.10-17: The sign of Immanuel.** The historical context is the same as in 7.1-9. Here the prophet assures Ahaz that within a short time Aram and Israel will be destroyed. **10: The LORD spoke:** that is, through the prophet. **11-12: A sign** was an event so extraordinary that in it one could recognize the hand of God. *Put the LORD to the test:* i.e. expect God to perform an extraordinary feat on demand. Here Ahaz, by refusing the sign Isaiah offers him, prompts the prophet to conclude that Ahaz prefers to rely on Assyria rather than on God for deliverance from Israel and Aram. **14: A young woman:** lit. "the young woman." The Heb. here, *'almah* (feminine of *'elem*, young man), refers to a girl of marriageable age, or one recently married (see Gen.24.43; Exod.2.8; Prov.30.19; S. of S.6.8). The NT references (Mt.1.23; see also Lk.1.27) to this verse are based on the early Gk. rendering of the passage. Many identifications have been proposed of the *young woman* and her *son*: the wife of Ahaz and her son the future king Hezekiah; the wife of Isaiah; collective Israel personified and sometimes called "virgin"; compare Jer.14.17; Amos 5.2. **15-16: Curds and honey** are simple foods and perhaps contain an allusion to difficult times. Nevertheless, before the child ceases to be a toddler, the threat by the two kings will be ended.

**7.18-25: The Day of the LORD.** Each announcement is introduced by *on that day* (vv. 18,20, 21,23); the phrase is commonly used by the prophets to indicate God's decisive future action in establishing his justice. **20: To shave the head** was a sign of disgrace and/or mourning; see Neh.13.25; Jer.48.37. *Body:* lit. "feet," a euphemism for pubic hair.

22 and he shall get so much milk that he  
eats curds; for all who are left in the  
23 land shall eat curds and honey. On that  
day every place where there used to be  
a thousand vines worth a thousand  
pieces of silver shall be given over to  
24 thorns and briars. A man shall go there  
only to hunt with bow and arrows, for  
thorns and briars cover the whole land;  
25 and no one who fears thorns and briars  
shall set foot on any of those hills once  
worked with the hoe. Oxen shall be  
turned loose on them, and sheep shall  
trample them.

8 The LORD said to me, Take a large  
tablet and write on it in common  
2 writing,<sup>a</sup> Maher-shalal-hash-baz;<sup>b</sup> and  
fetch Uriah the priest and Zechariah  
son of Jeberechiah for me as trust-  
3 worthy witnesses. Then I lay with the  
prophetess, and she conceived and bore  
a son; and the LORD said to me, Call  
4 him Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Before the  
boy can say Father or Mother, the  
wealth of Damascus and the spoils of  
Samaria shall be carried off and  
presented to the king of Assyria.

5 Once again the LORD said to me:

6 Because this nation has rejected  
the waters of Shiloah, which run so  
softly and gently,<sup>c</sup>  
7 therefore the Lord will bring up  
against it  
the strong, flooding waters of the  
Euphrates,  
the king of Assyria and all his glory;  
it shall run up all its channels  
and overflow all its banks;  
8 it shall sweep through Judah in a  
flood,

pouring over it and rising shoulder-  
high.

The whole expanse of the land shall  
be filled,  
so wide he spreads his wings; for  
God is with us.<sup>d</sup>

Take note, you nations, and be 9  
dismayed.

Listen, all you distant parts of the  
earth:

you may arm yourselves but will  
be dismayed;

you may arm yourselves but will  
be dismayed.

Make your plans, but they will be 10  
foiled,

propose what you please, but it  
shall not stand;

for God is with us.<sup>d</sup>

These were the words of the LORD 11  
to me, for his hand was strong upon  
me; and he warned me not to follow<sup>e</sup>  
the ways of this people: You shall not say 12  
'too hard' of everything that this people  
calls hard; you shall neither dread nor  
fear that which they fear. It is the LORD 13  
of Hosts whom you must count 'hard';<sup>f</sup>  
he it is whom you must fear and dread.  
He shall become your 'hardship',<sup>f</sup> a 14  
boulder and a rock which the two  
houses of Israel shall run against and  
over which they shall stumble, a trap  
and a snare to those who live in  
Jerusalem; and many shall stumble 15  
over them, many shall fall and be

<sup>a</sup> in common writing: or with an ordinary stylus.

<sup>b</sup> That is Speed-spoil-hasten-plunder.

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds Rezin and the son of Remaliah.

<sup>d</sup> God is with us: Heb. Immanuel.

<sup>e</sup> Or and he turned me from following . . .

<sup>f</sup> 'hard' and 'hardship': prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible  
in this context.

8.1-4: The sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz (speedy-spoiling-prompt-plundering). The prophet reports two symbolic "sign acts" (see 7.11-12 n.), the writing of the name of a child before his conception, and the name of the child himself. The message of the name is that the threat to Judah (see 7.1-9 n.) will be ended by Assyria; the message of the inscription is that the promise can be trusted as a word of the LORD since it is known in advance. For other "sign acts" see also Hos.1.2; Ezek.4.1,9; 5.1; 37.16; Jer.13.4; etc. 1: Common writing: intelligible to ordinary people. 2: Uriah: see 2 Kgs.16.10-16. 3: The prophetess would have been Isaiah's wife, but elsewhere the term refers to a woman performing some official function; see 2 Kgs.22.14; Exod.15.20; Judg.4.4; Neh.6.14.

8.5-10: Judgments against the enemies of the LORD. 6: This nation: Judah. Waters of Shiloah: the stream fed by the spring Gihon which flowed alongside the hill Ophel and brought clean drinking water into a pool (7.3) in Jerusalem. Flowing softly and gently is meant to signify God's life-giving providence. 7-8: Assyria, whose aid Ahaz unwisely solicited (2 Kgs.16.5-9), will overrun the land like the Euphrates which, unlike Shiloah, overflows all its channels, including those made by man for irrigation. 9-10: Contrary to appearances, the plans of God are being carried out and those of Assyria foiled.

8.11-22: The role of the prophet among people who will not hear. 11-15: The prophet reports a private message concerning his role; he is to fear (v. 13) only the LORD, who causes the unfaith-

broken, many shall be snared and caught.

dealt heavily with Galilee of the Nations on the road beyond Jordan to the sea.

- 16 Fasten up the message,  
 seal the oracle with my teaching;<sup>g</sup>  
 17 and I will wait for the LORD  
 who hides his face from the house  
 of Jacob;  
 I will watch for him.  
 18 See, I and the sons whom the LORD  
 has given me  
 are to be signs and portents in  
 Israel,  
 sent by the LORD of Hosts who  
 dwells on Mount Zion.  
 19 But men will say to you,  
 'Seek guidance of ghosts and  
 familiar spirits  
 who squeak and gibber;  
 a nation may surely seek guidance  
 of its gods,  
 of the dead on behalf of the living,  
 20 for an oracle or a message?'  
 They will surely say some such  
 thing as this;  
 but what they say is futile.  
 21 So despondency and fear will come  
 over them,  
 and then, when they are afraid and  
 fearful,  
 they will turn against their king  
 and their gods.  
 22 Then, whether they turn their gaze  
 upwards or look down,  
 everywhere is distress and darkness  
 inescapable,  
 constraint and gloom that cannot  
 be avoided;  
 9 for there is no escape for an  
 oppressed people.

The people who walked in darkness 2  
 have seen a great light:  
 light has dawned upon them,  
 dwellers in a land as dark as death.  
 Thou hast increased their joy and<sup>h</sup> 3  
 given them great gladness;  
 they rejoice in thy presence as men  
 rejoice at harvest,  
 or as they are glad when they share  
 out the spoil;  
 for thou hast shattered the yoke 4  
 that burdened them,  
 the collar that lay heavy on their  
 shoulders,  
 the driver's goad, as on the day of  
 Midian's defeat.  
 All the boots of trampling soldiers 5  
 and the garments fouled with blood  
 shall become a burning mass, fuel  
 for fire.  
 For a boy has been born for us, a 6  
 son given to us  
 to bear the symbol of dominion on  
 his shoulder;  
 and he shall be called  
 in purpose wonderful, in battle  
 God-like,  
 Father for all time,<sup>i</sup> Prince of  
 peace.  
 Great shall the dominion be, 7  
 and boundless the peace  
 bestowed on David's throne and on  
 his kingdom,  
 to establish it and sustain it  
 with justice and righteousness  
 from now and for evermore.  
 The zeal of the LORD of Hosts shall  
 do this.

For, while the first invader has dealt lightly with the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the second has

<sup>g</sup> Or among my disciples.

<sup>h</sup> their joy and: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the nation, not.

<sup>i</sup> Or of a wide realm.

ful to *stumble* (v. 14; compare 6.9–10 n.). 16–20: These words are addressed to the prophet's disciples (see Tfn. *g*). 17: Since the LORD *hides his face* there is no prophetic word to give. 18: *The sons* are the ones mentioned in 7.3; 8.1–4; and possibly also 7.14. *Sign*: see 7.11–12 n. 19–20: *Squeak and gibber*: probably a mocking imitation of sounds made by necromancers to convey the alleged voice of the dead. When people reject the words of a living prophet, they turn to *ghosts*. For the prohibition of consulting the dead, see Deut. 8.10–15.

9.1–7: **The great light, a new king.** After an introductory note (v. 1), this poem captures the celebration and hope following the birth of a new prince to continue the line of David. Three reasons for celebration are given: (1) the *yoke* of the oppressor has been broken (v. 4), (2) the gear of battle has been destroyed (v. 5), and (3) a new crown prince has been born (vv. 6–7). 1: *Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee* probably refer to territories taken by the Assyrians after 734 b.c. 4: On *Midian's defeat*, see Judg. 7.15–25. 6: The verse begins with a birth announcement (Job 3.3; Jer. 20.15); it closes with a series of four crown names. 7: *Peace* means more than the absence of war; it means the presence of *justice and righteousness*.

## Prophecies addressed to Israel

- 8 The Lord has sent forth his word  
against Jacob  
and it shall fall on Israel;  
9 all the people shall be humbled,  
Ephraim and the dwellers in Samaria,  
though in their pride and arrogance  
they say,  
10 The bricks are fallen, but we will  
build in hewn stone;  
the sycomores are hacked down,  
but we will use cedars instead.  
11 The LORD has raised their foes<sup>j</sup> high  
against them  
and spurred on their enemies,  
12 Aramaeans from the east and  
Philistines from the west,  
and they have swallowed Israel in  
one mouthful.  
For all this his anger has not  
turned back,  
and his hand is stretched out still.  
13 Yet the people did not come back  
to him who struck them,  
or seek guidance of the LORD of  
Hosts;  
14 therefore on one day the LORD cut  
off from Israel  
head and tail, palm and reed.<sup>k</sup>  
16 This people's guides have led them  
astray;  
those who should have been  
guided are in confusion.  
17 Therefore the Lord showed no  
mercy to their young men,  
no tenderness to their orphans and  
widows;  
all were godless and evildoers,  
every one speaking profanity.  
For all this his anger has not  
turned back,  
and his hand is stretched out still.  
18 Wicked men have been set ablaze  
like a fire

- fed with briars and thorns,  
kindled in the forest thickets;  
they are wrapped in a murky  
pall of smoke.  
The land is scorched by the fury of 19  
the LORD of Hosts,  
and the people have become fuel  
for the fire.<sup>l</sup>  
On the right, one man eats his fill 20  
but yet is hungry;  
on the left, another devours but is  
not satisfied;  
each feeds on his own children's  
flesh,  
and neither spares his own  
brother.<sup>m</sup>  
21 For all this his anger has not  
turned back,  
and his hand is stretched out still.  
Shame on you! you who make 10  
unjust laws  
and publish burdensome decrees,  
depriving the poor of justice, 2  
robbing the weakest of my people  
of their rights,  
despoiling the widow and plundering  
the orphan.  
What will you do when called to 3  
account,  
when ruin from afar confronts you?  
To whom will you flee for help  
and where will you leave your  
children,  
so that they do not cower before 4  
the gaoler  
or fall by the executioner's hand?  
For all this his anger has not  
turned back,  
and his hand is stretched out still.

<sup>j</sup> their foes; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the foes of Rezin.

<sup>k</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* (15) The aged and honoured are the head, and the prophet who gives false instruction is the tail.

<sup>l</sup> See note on verse 20.

<sup>m</sup> and neither . . . brother: *transposed from end of verse 19.*

<sup>n</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. prefixes* Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; together they are against Judah.

**9.8–10.4; 5.24–25: The LORD's outstretched hand.** A series of five stanzas (9.8–12, 13–17, 18–21; 10.1–4; 5.24–25), each concluding with the same refrain, announces the LORD's unrelenting judgment upon his people. For a similar series see Amos 4.6–12. Repeated disasters have not brought repentance; therefore the punishment continues. **8:** The *word of the Lord* spoken through a prophet is considered to be God's active power which sets in motion the fulfillment of the prophecy. **9:** *Ephraim* was the Northern Kingdom named after the leading tribe; *Samaria* was the capital city. **10–13:** The destruction of houses made of *bricks* and *sycomores* has not humbled the people who boast that they will build with *hewn stone*, in this way rejecting God's warning and his *guidance*. **14: Head and tail:** rulers and subjects, rich and poor. The MT (see Tfn. *k*) is a gloss interpreting the meaning of head and tail. **18–21:** The disaster is so severe that cannibalism results. See Jer. 19.9. **10.1–4:** This woe indictment (see 5.8–23) explains the

- [24<sup>o</sup>] So, as tongues of fire lick up the stubble  
and the heat of the flame dies down,  
their root shall moulder away,  
and their shoots vanish like dust;  
for they have spurned the instruction  
of the LORD of Hosts  
and have rejected the word of the  
Holy One of Israel.
- [25<sup>o</sup>] So the anger of the LORD is roused  
against his people,  
he has stretched out his hand against  
them and struck them down;  
the mountains trembled,  
and their corpses lay like offal in  
the streets.  
For all this his anger has not  
turned back,  
and his hand is stretched out still.
- 5 The Assyrian! He is the rod that I  
wield in my anger,  
and the staff of my wrath is in his  
hand.<sup>p</sup>
- 6 I send him against a godless nation,  
I bid him march against a people  
who rouse my wrath,  
to spoil and plunder at will  
and trample them down like mud  
in the streets.
- 7 But this man's purpose is lawless,  
lawless are the plans in his mind;  
for his thought is only to destroy  
and to wipe out nation after nation.
- 8 'Are not my officers all kings?' he says;  
9 'see how Calno has suffered the  
fate of Carchemish.  
Is not Hamath like Arpad, and  
Samaria like Damascus?
- 10 Before now I have found kingdoms  
full of idols,  
with more images than Jerusalem  
and Samaria,
- 11 and now, what I have done to  
Samaria and her worthless gods,
- I will do also to Jerusalem and her  
idols.'
- When the Lord has finished all that  
he means to do on Mount Zion and in  
Jerusalem, he will punish the king of  
Assyria for this fruit of his pride and  
for his arrogance and vainglory, be-  
cause he said:
- By my own might I have acted  
and in my own wisdom I have laid  
my schemes;  
I have removed the frontiers of  
nations  
and plundered their treasures,  
like a bull I have trampled on their  
inhabitants.  
My hand has found its way to the  
wealth of nations,  
and, as a man takes the eggs from  
a deserted nest,  
so have I taken every land;  
not a wing fluttered,  
not a beak gaped, no chirp was  
heard.
- Shall the axe set itself up against  
the hewer,  
or the saw claim mastery over the  
sawyer,  
as if a stick were to brandish him  
who wields it,  
or a staff of wood to wield one  
who is not wood?
- Therefore the Lord, the LORD of  
Hosts, will send disease  
on his sturdy frame, from head to  
toe,<sup>q</sup>  
and within his flesh<sup>r</sup> a fever like fire  
shall burn.

<sup>o</sup> These are verses 24 and 25 of ch. 5, transposed to this point.

<sup>p</sup> and . . . hand: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

<sup>q</sup> from . . . toe: transposed from verse 18.

<sup>r</sup> within his flesh: or in his strong body.

punishment as arising from failure to give the *poor* (v. 2) their legal rights. 5.24–25 (see Tfn. o): Punishment will be total. *Stubble* is destroyed completely by a fire, *root and shoots*, unlike a tree which can sprout again.

10.5–19: *Assyria, rod of God's anger*. Assyria is the LORD's means of punishing his people, but she too will be judged for her arrogance. 5: *The Assyrian*: lit. "woe Assyria." 6–7: God's purpose to punish Israel, carried out by Assyria, is just, but Assyria's own purpose to *plunder at will* is lawless. 9: *Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, and Arpad* are cities in northern Syria taken by Tiglath-pileser III in 734 B.C. 13–14: *The king of Assyria* (v. 12) is quoted as boasting that everything he did was his own plan. 13: *Frontiers*: as the Assyrians advanced they included conquered nations as provinces of their empire. They were notorious for their cruelty to conquered *inhabitants*. 15: The question is rhetorical; Assyria is just a tool in the hand of the LORD. 16–19: After the LORD, *the light of Israel*, has used the Assyrians (v. 12) for his purposes, he will destroy them, leaving only a tiny *remnant*.

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|----|---|--|----------------|
| 17 | The light of Israel shall become a fire<br>and his Holy One a flame,<br>which in one day shall burn up and consume<br>his thorns and his briars;  | Oreb, and will lift his staff against the River as he did against Egypt.   |                |
| 18 | the glory of forest and meadow shall be destroyed<br>as when a man falls in a fit;  | On that day<br>the burden they laid on your shoulder shall be removed<br>and their yoke shall be broken from your neck.  | 27             |
| 19 | and the remnant of trees in the forest shall be so few<br>that a child may count them one by one.   | An invader from Rimmon <sup>u</sup> has come to Aiath,<br>has passed by Migron,<br>and left his baggage-train at Michmash;<br>he has passed by Maabarrah<br>and camped for the night at Geba.<br>Ramah is anxious, Gibeah of Saul is in panic.<br>Raise a shrill cry, Bath-gallim;<br>hear it, Laish, and answer her,<br>Anathoth: | 28<br>29       |
| 20 | On that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, shall cease to lean on him that proved their destroyer, but shall loyally lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.  | 'Madmenah is in flight; take refuge, people of Gebim.'<br>Today he is due to pitch his camp in Nob;<br>he gives the signal to advance against the mount of the daughter of Zion,<br>the hill of Jerusalem.   | 30<br>31       |
| 21 | A remnant shall turn again, a remnant of Jacob,<br>to God their champion.   |  |                |
| 22 | Your people, Israel, may be many as the sands of the sea,<br>but only a remnant shall turn again,<br>the instrument of final destruction, justice in full flood; <sup>s</sup>   |  |                |
| 23 | for the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, will bring final destruction upon all the earth.   | Look, the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, cleaves the trees with a flash of lightning,<br>the tallest are hewn down, the lofty laid low,<br>the heart of the forest is felled with the axe,<br>and Lebanon with its noble trees has fallen.<br>Then a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse,   | 33<br>34<br>11 |
| 24 | Therefore these are the words of the Lord, the LORD of Hosts: My people who live in Zion, you must not be afraid of the Assyrians, though they beat you with their rod and lift their staff against you as the Egyptians did; |  |                |
| 25 | for soon, very soon, my anger will come to an end, and my wrath will all be spent. <sup>t</sup> Then the LORD of Hosts will brandish his whip over them as he did when he struck Midian at the Rock of                        |  |                |
| 26 |   |  |                |

<sup>s</sup> the instrument . . . flood: or wasting with sickness, yet overflowing with righteousness.  
<sup>t</sup> will . . . spent: *prob. rdg.: Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>u</sup> and their yoke . . . Rimmon: *prob. rdg.: Heb. and their yoke from upon your neck, and a yoke shall be broken because of oil. He . . .*

10.20-23: A remnant shall return. On the Day of the LORD (*that day*, see 2.11 n.) those who are left in Israel will trust the LORD and not Assyria. 21-22: A remnant shall turn again, or, "a remnant shall return." The sentence is the name of Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub (7.3). The idea of a remnant, a group which would survive the judgment, is very important in Isaiah's thought (see 4.2-3; 11.11,16; 28.5-6; 37.4,31-32).

10.24-27: Deliverance from Assyria. The people of Jerusalem (*Zion*, v. 24) are not to fear the Assyrians, for the LORD will treat them as he did the Egyptians (v. 24). 26: Midian: see Judg. chs. 6-7; Oreb: Judg.7.25. River: the Euphrates, symbolic here of Assyria.

10.28-34: The advance of the Assyrians. The route of the invader (vv. 28-32) is described as he approaches from the north toward Jerusalem. 30-34: The destruction is the work of the LORD.

11.1-9: The appearance of the Davidic king. The prophet first announces the coming of a new king (v. 1), describes him as the perfect king (vv. 2-5), and characterizes the results of his reign as perfect and complete peace throughout all of nature (vv. 6-9). See 9.1-7. 1: Jesse was

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| <p>and a branch shall spring from his roots.</p> <p>2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,<br/>a spirit of wisdom and understanding,<br/>a spirit of counsel<sup>v</sup> and power,<br/>a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.<sup>w</sup></p> <p>3 He shall not judge by what he sees nor decide by what he hears;</p> <p>4 he shall judge the poor with justice<br/>and defend the humble in the land with equity;<br/>his mouth shall be a rod to strike down the ruthless,<sup>x</sup><br/>and with a word he shall slay the wicked.</p> <p>5 Round his waist he shall wear the belt of justice,<br/>and good faith shall be the girdle round his body.</p> <p>6 Then the wolf shall live with the sheep,<br/>and the leopard lie down with the kid;<br/>the calf and the young lion shall grow up together,<br/>and a little child shall lead them;</p> <p>7 the cow and the bear shall be friends,<br/>and their young shall lie down together.<br/>The lion shall eat straw like cattle;</p> <p>8 the infant shall play over the hole of the cobra,<br/>and the young child dance over the viper's nest.</p> <p>9 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;<br/>for as the waters fill the sea,</p> | <p>so shall the land be filled with the knowledge of the LORD.</p> <p>On that day a scion from the root of Jesse shall be set up as a signal to the peoples;<br/>the nations shall rally to it,<br/>and its resting-place shall be glorious.</p> <p>On that day the Lord will make his power more glorious by recovering the remnant of his people, those who are still left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush and Elam, from Shinar, Hamath and the islands of the sea.</p> <p>Then he will raise a signal to the nations<br/>and gather together those driven out of Israel;<br/>he will assemble Judah's scattered people<br/>from the four corners of the earth.<br/>Ephraim's jealousy shall vanish,<br/>and Judah's enmity shall be done away.</p> <p>Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,<br/>nor Judah the enemy of Ephraim.<br/>They shall swoop down on the Philistine flank in the west<br/>and together they shall plunder the tribes of the east;<br/>Edom and Moab shall be within their grasp,<br/>and Ammon shall obey them.</p> |
|--|---|

<sup>v</sup> Or force.  
<sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. <sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. land.

the father of David (1 Sam.16.1–20); the new king continues the dynasty of David in fulfillment of the promise reported in 1 Sam. ch. 7. 2: The same Heb. word (*ruah*) is translated by "spirit" and "breath." The *spirit*, or breath, of the LORD is found throughout the Bible as an active and creative presence of God. It swept over the abyss at creation (Gen.1.2); it inspired his servants (42.1; 61.1), judges (Judg.3.10; 6.34), kings (1 Sam.11.6), and prophets (2 Kgs.2.9, Mic.3.8), enabling them to accomplish deeds beyond their human capacities. The future king would possess the powers of the greatest men of Israel. 3–5: The king was responsible for *justice*, especially the protection of the *poor* and the *humble*. See Ps.72. 6–9: The rise of this messianic ruler has cosmic implications; all creatures, even natural enemies, will be at peace with one another.

11.10–16: **The return of the exiles.** The passage assumes the dispersion of the people of Israel among the nations and looks toward the day of their return. 10: *A scion from the root of Jesse*: lit. "the root of Jesse"; see 11.1 n. 11: Most of the known countries of the civilized world (that is, the Near East) are listed. *Pathros* (see Jer.44.1,15) was a section of upper Egypt; *Cush*, Ethiopia; *Shinar*, a name for Babylonia; *the islands of the Sea* included the islands of the Mediterranean as well as the Aegean coast. 13–14: The kingdom, reunited, will conquer its

15 The LORD will divide the tongue of  
the Egyptian sea  
and wave his hand over the River  
to bring a scorching wind;  
he shall split it into seven channels  
and let men go across dry-shod.  
16 So there shall be a causeway for the  
remnant of his people,  
for the remnant rescued from  
Assyria,  
as there was for Israel when they  
came up out of Egypt.

12 You shall say on that day:  
I will praise thee, O LORD,  
though thou hast been angry  
with me;  
thy anger has turned back,  
and thou hast comforted me.  
2 God is indeed my deliverer.  
I am confident and unafraid;  
for the LORD is my refuge and  
defence  
and has shown himself my  
deliverer.  
3 And so you shall draw water with  
joy  
from the springs of deliverance.  
4 You shall all say on that day:  
Give thanks to the LORD and invoke  
him by name,  
make his deeds known in the world  
around;  
declare that his name is supreme.  
5 Sing psalms to the LORD, for he has  
triumphed,  
and this must be made known in  
all the world.

Cry out, shout aloud, you that  
dwell in Zion,  
for the Holy One of Israel is among  
you in majesty. 6

*Prophecies relating  
to foreign nations*

**BABYLON: AN ORACLE WHICH ISAIAH 13**  
son of Amoz received in a vision.

Raise the standard on a windy  
height,  
roar out your summons,  
beckon with arm upraised to the  
advance,  
draw your swords, you nobles.  
I have given my warriors their  
orders 3  
and summoned my fighting men to  
launch my anger;  
they are eager for my triumph.  
Hark, a tumult in the mountains, 4  
the sound of a vast multitude;  
hark, the roar of kingdoms, of  
nations gathering!  
The LORD of Hosts is mustering a  
host for war,  
men from a far country, from 5  
beyond the horizon.  
It is the LORD with weapons of  
his wrath  
coming to lay the whole land  
waste.  
Howl, for the Day of the LORD is 6  
at hand;  
it comes, a mighty blow from  
Almighty God.

traditional enemies. 15-16: The return of the *remnant* will be a new exodus, with natural phenomena more glorious than the first; see Exod.14.21-22; Josh.3.13-17. 15: *The River*: the Euphrates. *The tongue of the Egyptian Sea*: the modern Gulf of Suez.

12.1-6: Two Thanksgiving hymns. Two brief hymns similar in form to psalms of Enthronement of the LORD (Pss.47; 97) mark the end of the first major section of the book of Isa. Each is introduced by ceremonial instructions to the congregation (vv. 1a and 4a) which link the songs to the previous section (11.11-16). 2b: The language is common in hymns of Thanksgiving; see Exod.15.2; Ps.18.14. 3: The verse can be read with 4a as liturgical instruction to Temple priests. 4-6: Typical invitations to give thanks and to sing; see Pss.105.1; 148.13.

13.1-23.18: Prophecies against foreign nations. Most major sections are introduced with the word *oracle*, or "burden." See 13.1; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1,11,13; 22.1; 23.1; 30.6.

13.1-22: Judgment on Babylon. Since Babylon did not develop into a ruling power until 612 B.C. when it destroyed Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, this oracle is probably later than Isaiah. The Medes, mentioned in v. 17, were united to the Persians under Cyrus in 550 B.C. Together they conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Therefore, the prophecy belongs somewhere between the Exile in 587 B.C. and the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus. The oracle is in the poetic form of a dirge, i.e. a funeral lament, over Babylon. 3: *My warriors*: the Medes (v. 17) and Persians who carry out God's purpose of overthrowing Babylon to bring back the captives from Exile. 5: *Far country*: Persia. *Whole land*: Babylonian empire. 6: *Day of the LORD*: see 2.11 n. Since Israel has been punished by God with the Exile, here the *Day* is a judgment on its



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|----|---|---|----|
| 7  | Thereat shall every hand hang limp,<br>every man's courage shall melt<br>away,  | their infants will be dashed to the<br>ground before their eyes,<br>their houses rifled and their wives<br>ravished.  | 16 |
| 8  | his stomach hollow with fear;<br>anguish shall grip them, like a<br>woman in labour.<br>One man shall look aghast at another<br>and their faces shall burn with<br>shame.           | I will stir up against them the<br>Medes,<br>who care nothing for silver and are<br>not tempted by gold, <sup>z</sup><br>who have no pity on little children<br>and spare no mother's son;  | 17 |
| 9  | The Day of the LORD is coming<br>indeed,<br>that cruel day of wrath and fury,<br>to make the land a desolation<br>and exterminate its wicked people.                                | and Babylon, fairest of kingdoms,<br>proud beauty of the Chaldaeans,<br>shall be like Sodom and Gomorrah<br>when God overthrew them.  | 18 |
| 10 | The stars of heaven in their<br>constellations shall give no light,<br>the sun shall be darkened at its<br>rising,<br>and the moon refuse to shine.                                 | Never again shall she be<br>inhabited,<br>no man shall dwell in her through<br>all the ages;<br>there no Arab shall pitch his tent,<br>no shepherds fold their flocks.  | 19 |
| 11 | I will bring disaster upon the world<br>and their due punishment upon the<br>wicked.<br>I will check the pride of the<br>haughty<br>and bring low the arrogance of<br>ruthless men. | There marmots shall have their<br>lair,<br>and porcupines shall overrun her<br>houses;<br>there desert owls shall dwell,<br>and there he-goats shall gambol;  | 20 |
| 12 | I will make men scarcer than fine<br>gold,<br>rarer than gold of Ophir.   | jackals shall occupy her mansions, <sup>a</sup><br>and wolves her gorgeous palaces.<br>Her time draws very near,<br>and her days have not long to run.  | 21 |
| 13 | Then the heavens shall shudder, <sup>y</sup><br>and the earth shall be shaken from<br>its place<br>at the fury of the LORD of Hosts, on<br>the day of his anger.                    |   | 22 |
| 14 | Then, like a gazelle before the<br>hunter<br>or a flock with no man to round<br>it up,<br>each man will go back to his own<br>people,<br>every one will flee to his own land.       | The LORD will show compassion for<br>Jacob and will once again make Israel<br>his choice. He will settle them on their<br>own soil, and strangers will come to<br>join them and attach themselves to<br>Jacob. Many nations shall escort Israel<br>to her place, and she shall employ them<br>as slaves and slave-girls on the land of<br>the LORD; she shall take her captors<br>captive and rule over her task-masters. | 2  |
| 15 | All who are found will be<br>stabbed,<br>all who are taken will fall by the<br>sword;   |   |    |

<sup>y</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb.* Then I will make the heavens shudder.

<sup>z</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds* bows shall dash young men to the ground.

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb.* her widows.

enemies who afflicted it beyond measure. Before the Exile the Day was a judgment exclusively on Israel; compare Amos 5.18. 10-15: God's decisive judgments are accompanied by a disruption of order in *heaven* as well as the civil order established by man, since he is master of all. 16: Children were treated cruelly in ancient warfare; see Ps.137.8-9. 17: *Medes*: 13.1-22 n. above. 19: *Chaldaeans*: the inhabitants of the southern part of Mesopotamia at the head of the Persian Gulf, who extended their rule over all of Babylonia and Assyria under Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. *Sodom and Gomorrah*: see Gen.19.23-25. 20: The land on which an *Arab* pitched *his tent* was a desert, unsuitable for habitation.

14.1-23: **The return of the exiles and a satire on the fall of their oppressor.** 1-2: Since this unit refers to the return from Exile and the conversion of pagan *nations*, it has affinities with the second part of Isaiah, namely, chs. 40-55, and perhaps its date of composition is the same (see Introduction). *Strangers*: converts to Judaism, a characteristic of postexilic prophecy.

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| <p>3 When the LORD gives you relief<br/>from your pain and your fears and from<br/>4 the cruel slavery laid upon you, you<br/>will take up this song of derision over<br/>the king of Babylon:</p> <p>See how the oppressor has met his<br/>end and his frenzy ceased!</p> <p>5 The LORD has broken the rod of the<br/>wicked,<br/>the sceptre of the ruler<br/>6 who struck down peoples in his rage<br/>with unerring blows,<br/>who crushed nations in anger<br/>and persecuted them unceasingly.<br/>7 The whole world has rest and is at<br/>peace;<br/>it breaks into cries of joy.<br/>8 The pines themselves and the cedars<br/>of Lebanon exult over you:<br/>Since you have been laid low, they<br/>say,<br/>no man comes up to fell us.</p> <p>9 Sheol below was all astir<br/>to meet you at your coming;<br/>she roused the ancient dead to meet<br/>you,<br/>all who had been leaders on<br/>earth;<br/>she made all who had been kings<br/>of the nations<br/>rise from their thrones.</p> <p>10 One and all they greet you with<br/>these words:<br/>So you too are weak as we are,<br/>and have become one of us!</p> <p>11 Your pride and all the music of<br/>your lutes<br/>have been brought down to<br/>Sheol;<sup>b</sup><br/>maggots are the pallet beneath you,<br/>and worms your coverlet.</p> <p>12 How you have fallen from heaven,<br/>bright morning star,</p> | <p>fell to the earth, sprawling<br/>helpless across the nations!<br/>You thought in your own mind,<br/>I will scale the heavens;<br/>I will set my throne high above the<br/>stars of God,<br/>I will sit on the mountain where<br/>the gods meet<br/>in the far recesses of the north.<br/>I will rise high above the cloud-<br/>banks<br/>and make myself like the Most<br/>High.<br/>Yet you shall be brought down to<br/>Sheol,<br/>to the depths of the abyss.<br/>Those who see you will stare at you,<br/>they will look at you and<br/>ponder:<br/>Is this, they will say, the man who<br/>shook the earth,<br/>who made kingdoms quake,<br/>who turned the world into a desert<br/>and laid its cities in ruins,<br/>who never let his prisoners go free<br/>to their homes,<br/>the kings of every land?<br/>Now they lie all of them in honour,<br/>each in his last home.<br/>But you have been flung out<br/>unburied,<br/>mere loathsome carrion,<br/>companion to the slain pierced by<br/>the sword<br/>who have gone down to the stony<br/>abyss.<br/>And you, a corpse trampled<br/>underfoot,<br/>shall not share burial with them,<br/>for you have ruined your land and<br/>slaughtered your people.<br/>Such a brood of evildoers shall<br/>never be seen again.</p> | <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> |
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<sup>b</sup> Or Your pride has been brought down to Sheol to the crowding throng of your dead.

**3-23:** This dirge is referred to the king of Babylon in its prose introduction (vv. 3-4a) and conclusion (vv. 22-23), but it could have been applied to any of Israel's oppressors. **8:** *The cedars of Lebanon* were in great demand for building of palaces (1 Kgs.5.6) and were lavishly cut down as spoils of war. **9:** *Sheol:* the underworld where the "shades" of the dead dwelled. See Ezek.32.17-32; Ps.88. **12-15:** The tyrant placed himself *above the stars* (v. 13) and now lies beneath the earth. **12:** *Bright morning star:* Heb. "Helal son of Shaha," possibly meaning "Day Star, son of Dawn," and reflecting the names of deities. **13:** *Mountain where the gods meet:* lit. "Mountain of assembly"; in Canaanite mythology a place (usually Mount Zaphon, Pss.48.3; 89.12) where the gods met in council. **19-20:** To be left *unburied* as *carrion* was considered to be a *loathsome* curse which pursued and troubled a person even beyond death. Those *pierced by the sword* died an untimely death with their lives unfulfilled and so in some way were cursed

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| <p>21 Make the shambles ready for his sons<br/>butchered for their fathers' sin;<br/>they shall not rise up and possess<br/>the world<br/>nor cover the face of the earth with<br/>cities.</p> <p>22 I will rise against them, says the<br/>LORD of Hosts; I will destroy the name<br/>of Babylon and what remains of her,<br/>her offspring and posterity, says the</p> <p>23 LORD; I will make her a haunt of the<br/>bustard, a waste of fen, and sweep her<br/>with the besom of destruction. This is<br/>the very word of the LORD of Hosts.</p> <p>24 The LORD of Hosts has sworn:<br/>In very truth, as I planned, so shall<br/>it be;<br/>as I designed, so shall it fall out:</p> <p>25 I will break the Assyrian in my<br/>own land<br/>and trample him underfoot upon<br/>my mountains;<br/>his yoke shall be lifted from you,<br/>his burden taken from your shoulders.</p> <p>26 This is the plan prepared for the<br/>whole earth,<br/>this the hand stretched out over all<br/>the nations.</p> <p>27 For the LORD of Hosts has prepared<br/>his plan:<br/>who shall frustrate it?<br/>His is the hand stretched out, and<br/>who shall turn it back?</p> <p>28 In the year that King Ahaz died this<br/>oracle came from God:</p> <p>29 Let none of you rejoice, you<br/>Philistines,</p> | <p>because the rod that chastised<br/>you is broken;<br/>for a viper shall be born of a snake<br/>as a plant from the root,<br/>and its fruit shall be a flying<br/>serpent.</p> <p>But the poor shall graze their<br/>flocks in my meadows, 30<br/>and the destitute shall lie down in<br/>peace;<br/>but the offspring of your roots I<br/>will kill by starvation,<br/>and put the remnant of you to<br/>death.</p> <p>Howl in the gate, cry for help in the 31<br/>city,<br/>let all Philistia be in turmoil;<br/>for a great enemy is coming from<br/>the north,<br/>not a man straying from his<br/>ranks.</p> <p>What answer is there for the 32<br/>envoys of the nation?<br/>This, that the LORD has fixed Zion<br/>in her place,<br/>and the afflicted among his people<br/>shall take refuge there.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Moab: an oracle. 15</p> <p>On the night when Ar is sacked,<br/>Moab meets her doom;<br/>on the night when Kir is sacked,<br/>Moab meets her doom.</p> <p>The people of Dibon go up<sup>c</sup> to the 2<br/>hill-shrines to weep;<br/>Moab howls over Nebo and over<br/>Medeba.</p> |
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<sup>c</sup> The people . . . go up: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* He has gone up to the house and Dibon.

by God. 21: That *sons* be cut off from life at an early age was considered to be a particularly heavy punishment for the *sin* of a father.

14.24-27: **Judgment against Assyria.** 24: *The LORD . . . planned* to act against Assyria; in doing so he will deliver his people. 27: *God's hand is stretched out* in punishment of Assyria.

14.28-32: **Judgment against the Philistines.** 28: *Ahaz died* about 715 B.C. 29: Although the Philistines ceased to be a power in the time of David, they continued to exist as a thorn in Israel's side, rejoicing in her misfortunes and taking advantage of them; see Ezek.25.15-17. The *rod that chastised* the Philistines probably was Sargon II, who died in 705 B.C. The *snake* is probably the Assyrian nation that will give birth to another tyrant ruler, or *viper*. 32: *Zion* was deemed to be impregnable and inviolable.

15.1-16.14: **Lament over Moab.** Moab was the country immediately to the east of the Dead Sea. According to Gen.19.36-38, the Moabites are descended from Lot and so related to the Israelites. The relations between the two peoples vacillated between close friendship and bitter hostility; see Ruth 1.1-2; 1 Sam.22.3-4; 2 Sam.8.2. This song at points carries a tone of authentic lament, but at others (16.6,12) shows no regret over Moab's destruction. See Jer. ch. 48. 2-3: *weep, howls, hair torn, beard shaved, sackcloth*: these were conventional signs of mourning.

The hair is torn from every head,  
and every beard shaved off.  
3 In the streets men go clothed with  
sackcloth,  
they cry out on the roofs;  
in the public squares every man  
howls,  
weeping as he goes through them.  
4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry for help,  
their voices are heard as far as  
Jahaz.  
Thus Moab's stoutest warriors  
become cowards,  
and her courage ebbs away.  
5 My heart cries out for Moab,  
whose nobles have fled<sup>d</sup> as far as  
Zoar.<sup>e</sup>  
On the ascent to Luhith men go up  
weeping;  
on the road to Horonaim there are  
cries of 'Disaster!'  
6 The waters of Nimrim are desolate  
indeed;  
the grass is parched, the herbage  
dead,  
not a green thing is left;  
7 and so the people carry off across  
the gorge of the Arabim  
their hard-earned wealth and all  
their savings.  
8 The cry for help echoes round the  
frontiers of Moab,  
their howling reaches Eglaim and  
Beer-elim.  
9 The waters of Dimon already run  
with blood;  
yet I have more troubles in store for  
Dimon,  
for I have a vision<sup>f</sup> of the  
survivors of Moab,  
of the remnant of Admah.  
16 The rulers of the country send a  
present of lambs  
from Sela in the wilderness  
to the hill of the daughter of Zion;  
2 the daughters of Moab at the fords  
of the Arnon  
shall be like fluttering birds, like  
scattered nestlings.  
3 'Take up our cause with all your  
might;  
let your shadow shield us at high  
noon, dark as night.

Shelter the homeless, do not betray  
the fugitive;  
let the homeless people of Moab 4  
find refuge with you;  
hide them from the despoiler.'

When extortion has done its work  
and the looting is over,  
when the heel of the oppressor has  
vanished from the land,  
a throne shall be set up in mutual 5  
trust in David's tent,  
and on it there shall sit a true judge,  
one who seeks justice and is swift  
to do right.

We have heard tell of Moab's pride, 6  
how great it is,  
we have heard of his pride, his  
overweening pride;  
his talk is full of lies.

For this all Moab shall howl; 7  
Moab shall howl indeed;  
he<sup>g</sup> shall mourn for the prosperous  
farmers of Kir-hareseth,  
utterly ruined;

the orchards of Heshbon, 8  
the vines of Sibmah languish,  
though their red grapes once laid  
low the lords of the nations,  
though they reached as far as Jazer  
and trailed out to the wilderness,  
though their branches spread abroad  
and crossed the sea.

Therefore I will weep for Sibmah's 9  
vines as I weep for Jazer.  
I will drench you with my tears,  
Heshbon and Elealeh;  
for over your summer-fruits and  
your harvest  
the shouts of the harvesters are  
ended.

Joy and gladness shall be banished 10  
from the meadows,  
no more shall men shout and sing  
in the vineyards,  
no more shall they tread wine in  
the winepresses;  
I have silenced the shouting of  
the harvesters.

*d* have fled: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
*e* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* Eglath Shelishiya.  
*f* I have a vision: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. a lion.*  
*g* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. you.*

9: The Heb. words for *Dimon* and *blood* are very similar; hence the play on words. 16.4: *David's tent*: the dynasty of David. 8: *Wilderness*: the Arabian desert to the east of Moab. *Sea*: the Dead Sea.

11 Therefore my heart throbs  
like a harp for Moab,  
and my very soul for Kir-hareseth.<sup>h</sup>  
12 When Moab comes to worship  
and wearies himself at the hill-  
shrines,  
when he enters his sanctuary to pray,  
he will gain nothing.  
13 These are the words which the LORD  
14 spoke long ago about Moab; and now  
he says, In three years, as a hired  
labourer counts them off, the glory of  
Moab shall become contemptible for  
all his vast numbers; a handful shall  
be left and those of no account.

17 Damascus: an oracle.

Damascus shall be a city no longer,  
she shall be but a heap of ruins.  
2 For ever desolate, flocks shall have  
her for their own,  
and lie there undisturbed.  
3 No longer shall Ephraim boast a  
fortified city,  
or Damascus a kingdom;  
the remnant of Aram and the glory  
of Israel, their fate is one.  
This is the very word of the LORD  
of Hosts.  
4 On that day Jacob's weight shall  
dwindle  
and the fat on his limbs waste  
away,  
5 as when the harvester gathers up the  
standing corn  
and reaps the ears in armfuls,  
or as when a man gleans the ears in  
6 the Vale of Rephaim,  
or as when one beats an olive-tree  
and only gleanings are left on it,  
two or three berries on the top of a  
branch,

four or five on the boughs of the  
fruiting tree.  
This is the very word of the LORD  
the God of Israel.

On that day men shall look to their 7  
Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy  
One of Israel; they shall not look to the 8  
altars made by their own hands nor to  
anything that their fingers have made,  
sacred poles or incense-altars.  
On that day their strong cities shall 9  
be deserted like the cities of the Hivites  
and the Amorites, which they aban-  
doned when Israel came in; all shall be  
desolate.

For you forgot the God who 10  
delivered you,  
and did not remember the rock,  
your stronghold.  
Plant them, if you will, your gardens  
in honour of Adonis,  
strike your cuttings for a foreign  
god;  
protect your gardens on the day you 11  
plant them,  
and next day make the seed sprout.  
But the crop will be scorched when  
wasting disease comes  
in the day of incurable pain.

Listen! it is the thunder of many 12  
peoples,  
they thunder with the thunder of  
the sea.  
Listen! it is the roar of nations  
roaring with the roar of mighty  
waters.  
When he rebukes them, away they 13  
fly,  
driven like chaff on the hills before  
the wind,  
like thistledown before the storm.  
At evening all is confusion, 14

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. Kir-hares.

17.1-6: Judgment on the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. In the context of the threat to Judah from Syria (*Aram*, v. 3) and Israel (*Ephraim*, v. 3), the prophet announces judgment on these enemies. The date is 734-732 B.C.; see 7.1-9 n. 1: *Damascus*: capital of Syria. 3: *The glory of Israel* perhaps refers to her capital, Samaria. 5: *The Vale of Rephaim* was northwest of Jerusalem; see Josh.15.8; 18.16.

17.7-11: Concerning idolatry. 7-8: One day men will choose their *Maker* over what they have made. 8: *Sacred poles*: lit. "Asherim," cultic objects representing a Canaanite goddess. 9-11: Idolatry results in desolation. 10: *Adonis* (lit. "pleasant plants") was a god of vegetation.

17.12-14: The thunder of the enemy. While the passage may refer to the unsuccessful Assyrian attack on Jerusalem (2 Kgs.19.35-36) in 701 B.C., the language and concepts are common enough to lack a direct reference.

and before morning they are gone.  
Such is the fate of our plunderers,  
the lot of those who despoil us.

in summer the birds shall make  
their home there,  
in winter every beast of the earth.

- 18 There is a land of sailing ships,  
a land beyond the rivers of Cush  
2 which sends its envoys by the  
Nile,  
journeying on the waters in vessels  
of reed.  
Go, swift messengers,  
go to a people tall and smooth-  
skinned,  
to a people dreaded near and far,  
a nation strong and proud,  
whose land is scoured by rivers.  
3 All you who dwell in the world,  
inhabitants of earth,  
shall see when the signal is hoisted  
on the mountains  
and shall hear when the trumpet  
sounds.
- 4 These were the words of the LORD to  
me:  
From my dwelling-place I will look  
quietly down  
when the heat shimmers in the  
summer sun,  
when the dew is heavy at harvest  
time.  
5 Before the vintage, when the  
budding is over  
and the flower ripens into a berry,  
the shoots shall be cut down with  
knives,  
the branches struck off and cleared  
away.  
6 All shall be left to birds of prey on  
the hills  
and to beasts of the earth;

At that time tribute shall be brought 7  
to the LORD of Hosts from a people  
tall and smooth-skinned, dreaded near  
and far, a nation strong and proud,  
whose land is scoured by rivers. They  
shall bring it to Mount Zion, the place  
where men invoke the name of the  
LORD of Hosts.

Egypt: an oracle. 19

See how the LORD comes riding  
swiftly upon a cloud,  
he shall descend upon Egypt;  
the idols of Egypt quail before him,  
Egypt's courage melts within her.  
I will set Egyptian against Egyptian, 2  
and they shall fight one against  
another,  
neighbour against neighbour,  
city against city and kingdom  
against kingdom.  
Egypt's spirit shall sink within her, 3  
and I will throw her counsels  
into confusion.  
They may resort to idols and  
oracle-mongers,  
to ghosts and spirits,  
but I will hand Egypt over to a 4  
hard master,  
and a cruel king shall rule over  
them.  
This is the very word of the Lord,  
the LORD of Hosts.  
The waters of the Nile shall drain 5  
away,

**18.1-20.6: Relations with Egypt.**

**18.1-7: The proposal of the envoys.** This section ensues on an attempt by an Egyptian embassy to establish a coalition against Assyria, about 714 B.C. Isaiah speaks against the attempt, holding that God, not human treaties, controls history. 1: *Beyond . . . Cush*: the Pharaohs of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty who, coming from the area south of Egypt, are regarded as Ethiopians; *Cush* is the ordinary Heb. name for Ethiopia. 2: *Vessels of reed*: the Egyptians used boats made of papyrus, lined with pitch. 4-6: As the seasons turn, the LORD will act in his time.

**19.1-15: Judgment against Egypt.** The LORD will bring internal chaos in Egypt, dry up the Nile, and cause all who depended on it to suffer (vv. 1-10). The crucial decisions in history are made in the *counsels* of the LORD to which the prophets are privy and the wise *counsellors* of kings are not (vv. 11-15). 1: In Canaanite mythology too the god Baal often is called "cloud rider"; see Pss. 104.3; 68.4 n. 2: *Egyptian against Egyptian* may allude to the turbulent period at the beginning of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty begun by the Ethiopian king Piankhi, or else to an invasion of Egypt by the Assyrians (under Sargon II in 711 B.C. or Esarhaddon in 671 B.C.) which some Egyptians may have welcomed as liberation from the Ethiopian rule. 4: *The hard master* may be one of the rulers mentioned in v. 2. 5-6: Egypt depended upon the regular floods

- the river shall be parched and run dry;  
 6 its channels shall stink, the streams of Egypt shall be parched and dry up, reeds and rushes shall wither away;  
 7 the lotus too beside the Nile<sup>f</sup> and all that is sown along the Nile shall dry up, shall be blown away and vanish.  
 8 The fishermen shall groan and lament, all who cast their hooks into the Nile and those who spread nets on the water shall lose heart.  
 9 The flax-dressers shall hang their heads, the women carding and the weavers shall grow pale,  
 10 Egypt's spinners shall be downcast, and all her artisans sick at heart.  
 11 Fools that you are, you princes of Zoan!  
 Wisest of Pharaoh's counsellors you may be, but stupid counsellors you are. How can you say to Pharaoh, 'I am the heir of wise men and spring from ancient kings'?'  
 12 Where are your wise men, Pharaoh, to teach you and make known to you what the LORD of Hosts has planned for Egypt?  
 13 Zoan's princes are fools, the princes of Noph are dupes; the chieftains of her clans have led Egypt astray.  
 14 The LORD has infused into them a spirit that warps their judgement; they make Egypt miss her way in all she does,
- as a drunkard will miss his footing as he vomits.  
 There shall be nothing in Egypt that 15 any man can do, head or tail, palm or rush.
- When that day comes the Egyptians 16 shall become weak as women; they shall fear and tremble when they see the LORD of Hosts raise his hand against them, as raise it he will. The land of 17 Judah shall strike terror into Egypt; its very name shall cause dismay, because of the plans that the LORD of Hosts has laid against them.
- When that day comes there shall be 18 five cities in Egypt speaking the language of Canaan and swearing allegiance to the LORD of Hosts, and one of them shall be called the City of the Sun.<sup>j</sup>
- When that day comes there shall be 19 an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a sacred pillar set up for the LORD upon her frontier. It shall stand 20 as a token and a reminder to the LORD of Hosts in Egypt, so that when they appeal to him against their oppressors, he may send a deliverer to champion their cause, and he shall rescue them. The LORD will make himself known to 21 the Egyptians; on that day they shall acknowledge the LORD and do him service with sacrifice and grain-offering, make vows to him and pay them. The LORD will strike down 22 Egypt, healing as he strikes; then they will turn back to him and he will hear their prayers and heal them.
- When that day comes there shall be 23 a highway between Egypt and Assyria; Assyrians shall come to Egypt and Egyptians to Assyria: then Egyptians shall worship with<sup>k</sup> Assyrians.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds on the mouth of the Nile.

<sup>j</sup> the City of the Sun: or Heliopolis.

<sup>k</sup> Or shall be slaves to.

of the Nile. The anticipated disaster is more serious than a mere drought. 11: *Zoan*: the Greek Tanis, a city on the Nile delta; see Num.13.22; Ezek.30.14. The wise men of Egypt were renowned; see 1 Kgs.4.30. 13: *Noph*: Memphis, one of the ancient capitals of Egypt. 15: Everyone in Egypt, from the highly placed (the *head*, the *palm*) to the lowest (the *tail*, *rush* in the water) will be helpless.

19.16-25: *Hope for the salvation of Egypt*. Five paragraphs, each beginning with the same phrase (*When that day comes*), have been appended to the poem against Egypt. 16: *That day*: Day of the LORD; see 2.11 n. 18: *City of the Sun*: the translation and identification are problematic. *Heliopolis* (Tfn. *j*) was a later name for the city of On, center of sun worship and renowned as an educational center. 22: The LORD will treat Egypt as he does Israel, i.e. he will strike her with a *healing* punishment, unlike that of the dire punishment visited on Egypt at the

- 24 When that day comes Israel shall rank with Egypt and Assyria, those three, and shall be a blessing in the centre of the world. So the LORD of Hosts will bless them: A blessing be upon Egypt my people, upon Assyria the work of my hands, and upon Israel my possession.
- 20 SARGON KING OF ASSYRIA SENT HIS commander-in-chief<sup>1</sup> to Ashdod, and he took it by storm. At that time the LORD said to Isaiah son of Amoz, Come, strip the sackcloth from your waist and take your sandals off. He did so, and went about naked and barefoot.
- 3 The LORD said, My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a warning to Egypt and Cush; just so shall the king of Assyria lead the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush naked and barefoot, their buttocks shamefully exposed, young and old alike. All men shall be dismayed, their hopes in Cush and their pride in Egypt humbled. On that day those who dwell along this coast will say, So much for all our hopes on which we relied for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria; what escape have we now?
- 21 A wilderness: an oracle.
- Rough weather, advancing like a storm in the south, coming from the wilderness, from a land of terror!
- 2 Grim is the vision shown to me: the traitor betrayed, the spoiler himself despoiled.
- Up, Elam; up, Medes, to the siege, no time for weariness!
- At this my limbs writhe in anguish, I am gripped by pangs like a woman in labour.
- I am distraught past hearing, dazed past seeing, my mind reels, sudden convulsions seize me.
- The cool twilight I longed for has become a terror: the banquet is set out, the rugs are spread; they are eating and drinking—rise, princes, burnish your shields. For these were the words of the Lord to me: Go, post a watchman to report what he sees. He sees chariots, two-horsed chariots, riders on asses, riders on camels. He is alert, alert, always on the alert.
- Then the look-out cried: All day long I stand on the Lord's watch-tower and night after night I keep my station. See, there come men in a chariot, a two-horsed chariot. And a voice calls back: Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground. O my people, once trodden out and winnowed on the threshing-floor, what I have heard from the LORD of Hosts, from the God of Israel, I have told you.

<sup>1</sup> Or sent Tartan.

Exodus. 24-25: *Israel, Egypt, and Assyria*, traditional enemies, will be reconciled on *that day* and the promise of Gen.12.3 to Abraham of *blessing* will be fulfilled.

20.1-6: A sign of Egypt's humiliation. When Egypt attempted to unite the small states of Palestine against Assyria (714-711 B.C.; see 14.28-32; 18.1-7), Isaiah walked naked and barefoot, proclaiming himself as a sign of Egypt's failure. 1: *Sargon*: Sargon II (722-705 B.C.). *Ashdod* was one of the Philistine cities taken by the Assyrians in 711 B.C. 3-6: The prophet would have proclaimed these words as the interpretation of his behavior. 3: *Sign*: see 7.11-12 n. 4: See 2 Sam.10.1-5. 6: The Palestinian coastal states which trusted Egypt have no escape.

21.1-10: A vision of the fall of Babylon. The poem was written by an anonymous prophet, active at the time of Babylon's fall in 539 B.C., who awaits a messenger with the news of the oppressor's demise. 2: *Elam* and the *Medes*, powers east of Babylon, together with Persia, overcame Babylon. 5: According to a tradition found in Daniel ch. 5 and in the Gk. historian Herodotus, an orgy of *eating and drinking* was in progress so that Babylon was attacked and fell without a battle. 10: The news is for the *people* of Israel who have experienced the punishment of exile.



11 Dumah: an oracle.

One calls to me from Seir:  
Watchman, what is left of the  
night?

Watchman, what is left?

12 The watchman answered:  
Morning comes, and also night.<sup>m</sup>  
Ask if you must; then come back  
again.

13 With the Arabs: an oracle.

You caravans of Dedan, that camp in  
the scrub with the Arabs,  
14 bring water to meet the thirsty.  
You dwellers in Tema, meet the  
fugitives with food,  
15 for they flee from the sword, the  
sharp edge of the sword,  
from the bent bow, and from the  
press of battle.

16 For these are the words of the Lord  
to me: Within a year, as a hired  
labourer counts off the years, all the  
glory of Kedar shall come to an end;  
17 few shall be the bows left to the  
warriors of Kedar.

The LORD the God of Israel has  
spoken.

22 The Valley of Vision:<sup>n</sup> an oracle.

Tell me, what is amiss  
that you have all climbed on to the  
roofs,

2 O city full of tumult, town in ferment  
and filled with uproar,  
whose slain were not slain with the  
sword  
and did not die in battle?

Your commanders are all in flight, 3  
huddled together out of bowshot;  
all your stoutest warriors are  
huddled together,  
they have taken to their heels.  
Then I said, Turn your eyes away 4  
from me;  
leave me to weep in misery.  
Do not thrust consolation on me  
for the ruin of my own people.

For the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, 5  
has ordained a day of tumult, a day of  
trampling and turmoil in the Valley of  
Vision,<sup>n</sup> rousing cries for help that  
echo among the mountains.

Elam took up his quiver, 6  
horses were harnessed to the  
chariots of Aram,<sup>o</sup>  
Kir took the cover from his shield.  
Your fairest valleys were overrun by 7  
chariots and horsemen,  
the gates were hard beset,  
the heart of Judah's defence was 8  
laid open.

On that day you looked to the  
weapons stored in the House of the  
Forest; you filled all the many pools in 9  
the City of David, collecting water from  
the Lower Pool.<sup>p</sup> Then you surveyed 10  
the houses in Jerusalem, tearing some  
down to make the wall inaccessible,  
and between the two walls you made a 11  
cistern for the Waters of the Old Pool;  
but you did not look to the  
Maker of it all  
or consider him who fashioned it  
long ago.

*m* and also night: *or* and the night is full spent.

*n* *Or* of Calamity. *o* *Prob. rdg.; Heb. man.*

*p* you filled . . . Lower Pool: *or* you took note of the  
cracks, many as they were, in the wall of the City  
of David, and you collected water from the Lower  
Pool.

21.11-17: *Speeches concerning Arabia.* With the exception of *Seir* (Edom), the places mentioned are in Arabia.

22.1-14: *The LORD's Day of judgment upon his people.* The events here probably occurred in 701 B.C. when Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem, but left without destroying the city (2 Kgs.19.35-36). 1: *Valley of Vision*: the allusion is uncertain; some interpret it as a euphemism for the Valley of Slaughter, spoken of in Jer.7.30-32. 2: The *tumult* may have been the cries of alarm as the siege began, or the celebration when the siege was lifted. 5-13: The prophet sees the approach of the enemy as the coming *day* of the LORD's judgment. 6: *Elam, Aram* (the text is uncertain), and *Kir* (an unknown locality in Mesopotamia) may represent troops in the Assyrian army. 8-13: The people of Jerusalem trusted in their siege preparations instead of the LORD; they ate and drank (v. 13) instead of praying and lamenting. 8: *The House of the Forest* was an armory built by Solomon (1 Kgs.7.2; 10.17). 9-11: According to 2 Kgs.20.20 (which see) Hezekiah built a reservoir and water conduit; such water systems were common in Palestinian cities, built in such a way as to provide water

12 On that day the Lord, the LORD of Hosts,  
called for weeping and beating the breast,  
for shaving the head and putting on sackcloth;  
13 but instead there was joy and merry-making,  
slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep,  
eating of meat and drinking of wine,  
as you thought,  
Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.

14 The LORD of Hosts has revealed himself to me; in my hearing he swore:  
Your wickedness shall never be purged until you die.  
This is the word of the Lord, the LORD of Hosts.

15 These were the words of the Lord, the LORD of Hosts.  
Go to this steward,  
to Shebna, comptroller of the household, and say:

16 What right, what business, have you here,  
that you have dug yourself a grave here,  
cutting out your grave on a height and carving yourself a resting-place in the rock?

17 The LORD will shake you out, shake you as a garment<sup>q</sup> is shaken out  
to rid it of lice;  
18 then he will bundle you tightly and throw you  
like a ball into a great wide land.  
There you shall die,  
and there shall lie your chariot of honour,

an object of contempt to your master's household.  
I will remove you from office and drive you from your post. 19

On that day I will send for my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah; I will invest him with your robe, gird him with your sash; and hand over your authority to him. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the people of Judah. I will lay the key of the house of David on his shoulder; what he opens no man shall shut, and what he shuts no man shall open. He shall be a seat of honour for his father's family; I will fasten him firmly in place like a peg. On him shall hang all the weight of the family, down to the lowest dregs—all the little vessels, both bowls and pots. On that day, says the LORD of Hosts, the peg which was firmly fastened in its place shall be removed; it shall be hacked out and shall fall, and the load of things hanging on it shall be destroyed. The LORD has spoken.

Tyre: an oracle. 23

The ships of Tarshish howl, for the harbour is sacked;  
the port of entry from Kittim is swept away.  
The people of the sea-coast, the merchants of Sidon, wail,  
whose agents cross the great waters,  
whose harvest<sup>r</sup> is the grain of the Shihor  
and their revenue the trade of nations.

<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. man.  
<sup>r</sup> whose harvest: prob. rdg.; Heb. the harvest of the Nile.

in case of siege. 12-13: The city celebrates the completion of fortifications with sacrifices, the slaughtering of cattle, instead of seeing the impending siege as a call to repentance.

22.15-25: Against an arrogant official. *Shebna*, the highest government official under the king (Jer.20.1-6), has behaved arrogantly; he will not be buried in the magnificent grave he has prepared for himself, but will be exiled after losing his office (vv. 15-19). He will be replaced by *Eliakim* (vv. 20-25; see 36.3,11,22; 37.2). 15: The *comptroller of the household* (lit. "the one over the household") was the prime minister (see Gen.41.40). 21-24: The symbols of authority and the duties of the prime minister are described. 25: The verse is enigmatic; it suggests that Eliakim himself eventually will be removed from office.

23.1-18: Judgment against Tyre and Sidon. These were Phoenician seaports. 1-7: The location of *Tarshish* is uncertain; it was a distant Mediterranean port, perhaps on the southern coast

- 4 Sidon, the sea-fortress,<sup>s</sup> cries in her  
disappointment,<sup>t</sup>  
I no longer feel the anguish of labour  
or bear children;  
I have no young sons to rear, no  
daughters to bring up.
- 5 When the news is confirmed in Egypt  
her people sway in anguish at the  
fate of Tyre.
- 6 Make your way to Tarshish, they  
say,  
howl, you who dwell by the sea-  
coast.
- 7 Is this your busy city, ancient in  
story,  
on whose voyages you were carried  
to settle far away?
- 8 Whose plan was this against Tyre,  
the city of battlements,  
whose merchants were princes  
and her traders the most  
honoured men on earth?
- 9 The LORD of Hosts planned it to  
prick every noble's pride  
and bring all the most honoured  
men on earth into contempt.
- 10 Take to the tillage of your fields,  
you people of Tarshish;  
for your market<sup>u</sup> is lost.
- 11 The LORD has stretched out his hand  
over the sea  
and shaken kingdoms,  
he has given his command to  
destroy the marts of Canaan;  
12 and he has said, You shall busy  
yourselves no more,  
you, the sorely oppressed virgin  
city of Sidon.  
Though you arise and cross over to  
Kittim,  
even there you shall find no rest.
- 13 Look at this land, the destined home  
of ships<sup>v</sup>! The Chaldaeans<sup>w</sup> erected  
their<sup>x</sup> siege-towers, dismantled its pal-  
aces and laid it in ruins.
- Howl, you ships of Tarshish; 14  
for your haven is sacked.
- From that day Tyre shall be for- 15  
gotten for seventy years, the span of  
one king's life. At the end of the  
seventy years her plight shall be that of  
the harlot in the song:
- Take your harp, go round the city, 16  
poor forgotten harlot;  
touch the strings sweetly, sing all  
your songs,  
make them remember you again.
- At the end of seventy years, the LORD 17  
will turn again to Tyre; she shall go  
back to her old trade and hire herself  
out to every kingdom on earth. The 18  
profits of her trading will be dedicated  
to the LORD; they shall not be hoarded  
or stored up, but shall be given to those  
who worship the LORD, to purchase  
food in plenty and fine attire.
- The LORD's judgement on the earth*
- Beware, the LORD will empty the 24  
earth,  
split it open and turn it upside down,  
and scatter its inhabitants.  
Then it will be the same for priest 2  
and people,  
the same for master and slave,  
mistress and slave-girl,  
seller and buyer,  
borrower and lender, debtor and  
creditor.  
The earth is emptied clean away 3  
and stripped clean bare.
- <sup>s</sup> the sea-fortress: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the sea, sea-fortress, saying.  
<sup>t</sup> in her disappointment: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* be dis-appointed.  
<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* girdle.  
<sup>v</sup> *Or* marmots.  
<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds this was the people; it was not Assyria.  
<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his.

of Spain and so a symbol for the end of the earth. *Kittim*: probably Cyprus. 13: This verse, the text of which is corrupt, relates the destruction to the Babylonian period (see Ezek. chs. 27–28). 15: *Seventy years* is symbolic of a long time.

24.1–27.13: **The new age.** The diverse materials collected in this section are strongly eschatological in character, looking toward the final triumph of the LORD. There are announcements of the final judgment, prayers of petition, and hymns. The literary style with the tendency toward apocalyptic (vv. 21–23) and the theological perspective of final judgment (v. 21) indicate that this collection originated long after Isaiah of Jerusalem (see Introduction).

24.1–23: **The LORD's judgment on the earth.** The first (vv. 1–6) and final (vv. 18b–23) sections of this chapter constitute a single announcement of the LORD's intervention against all of

<p>For this is the word that the LORD has spoken.</p> <p>4 The earth dries up and withers, the whole world withers and grows sick; the earth's high places sicken, 5 and earth itself is desecrated by the feet of those who live in it, because they have broken the laws, and violated the eternal covenant.</p> <p>6 For this a curse has devoured the earth and its inhabitants stand aghast. For this those who inhabit the earth dwindle and only a few men are left.</p> <p>7 The new vine dries up, the vines sicken, and all the revellers turn to sorrow.</p> <p>8 Silent the merry beat of tambourines, hushed the shouts of revelry, the merry harp is silent.</p> <p>9 No one shall drink wine to the sound of song; the liquor will be bitter to the man who drinks it.</p> <p>10 The city of chaos is a broken city, every house barred, that no one may enter.</p> <p>11 Men call for wine in the streets; all revelry is darkened, and mirth is banished from the land.</p> <p>12 Desolation alone is left in the city and the gate is broken into pieces.</p> <p>13 So shall it be in all the world, in every nation, as when an olive-tree is beaten and stripped, as when the vintage is ended.</p> <p>14 Men raise their voices and cry aloud, they shout in the west,<sup>y</sup> so great is the LORD's majesty.</p>	<p>Therefore let the LORD be glorified 15 in the regions of the east, and the name of the LORD the God of Israel in the coasts and islands of the west.</p> <p>From the ends of the earth we have 16 heard them sing, How lovely is righteousness! But I thought, Villainy, villainy! Woe to the traitors and their treachery! Traitors double-dyed they are indeed! The hunter's scare, the pit, and the 17 trap threaten all who dwell in the land; if a man runs from the rattle of the 18 scare he will fall into the pit; if he climbs out of the pit he will be caught in the trap. When the windows of heaven above are opened and earth's foundations shake, the earth is utterly shattered, 19 it is convulsed and reels wildly. The earth reels to and fro like a 20 drunken man and sways like a watchman's shelter; the sins of men weigh heavy upon it, and it falls to rise no more.</p> <p>On that day the LORD will punish 21 the host of heaven in heaven, and on earth the kings of the earth, herded together, close packed like 22 prisoners in a dungeon; shut up in gaol, after a long time they shall be punished. The moon shall grow pale and the 23 sun hide its face in shame; for the LORD of Hosts has become king</p>
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<sup>y</sup> in the west: or more loudly than the sea.

creation. The remainder of the chapter (vv. 7-18a) consists of additions to that poem. **5:** *The eternal covenant* may allude to the one with Noah (Gen.9.1-17), but in view of the reference to the *laws and statutes*, may well reflect the covenant on Sinai (Exod. chs. 19-24). **7-13:** As nature suffers, *the city* (vv. 10,12), probably Jerusalem, will become desolate; the same tragedy will occur throughout the earth (v. 13). **14-18a:** Some are heard to praise the LORD and *righteousness* (v. 16), or "the righteous one," but this is deceptive. **17-18a:** There is no escape from God's judgment; compare Amos 5.18-20. **18b-23:** The judgment has cosmic dimensions; afterward the LORD will become king in Jerusalem. **18b:** *Windows of heaven:* see Gen.7.11. **21:** *Host of heaven:* the stars, here conceived of as deities. See Jer.19.13; Zeph.1.5; Ps.82.1,6-7. **23:** On the enthronement of the LORD, see Pss.47,93,96.

on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,  
and shows his glory before their  
elders.

*The deliverance and  
ingathering of Judah*

- 25 O LORD, thou art my God;  
I will exalt thee and praise thy name;  
for thou hast accomplished a  
wonderful purpose,  
certain and sure, from of old.  
2 For thou hast turned cities into  
heaps of ruin,  
and fortified towns into rubble;  
every mansion in the cities is swept  
away,  
never to be rebuilt.  
3 For this a cruel nation holds thee  
in honour,  
the cities of ruthless nations fear thee.  
4 Truly thou hast been a refuge to  
the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in his trouble,  
shelter from the tempest and shade  
from the heat.  
For the blast of the ruthless is like  
an icy storm  
5 or a scorching drought;  
thou subduest the roar of the  
foe,<sup>z</sup>  
and the song of the ruthless dies  
away.  
6 On this mountain the LORD of Hosts  
will prepare  
a banquet of rich fare for all the  
peoples,  
a banquet of wines well matured  
and richest fare,  
well-matured wines strained clear.

On this mountain the LORD will 7  
swallow up  
that veil that shrouds all the peoples,  
the pall thrown over all the nations;  
he will swallow up death for ever. 8  
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away  
the tears

from every face  
and remove the reproach of his people  
from the whole earth.  
The LORD has spoken.

On that day men will say, 9  
See, this is our God  
for whom we have waited to deliver us;  
this is the LORD for whom we have  
waited;  
let us rejoice and exult in his  
deliverance.

For the hand of the LORD will rest 10  
on this mountain,  
but Moab shall be trampled under  
his feet  
as straw is trampled into a midden.  
In it Moab shall spread out his 11  
hands  
as a swimmer spreads his hands to  
swim,  
but he shall sink his pride with every  
stroke of his hands.

The LORD has thrown down the 12  
high defences of your walls,  
has levelled them to the earth  
and brought them down to the dust.

On that day this song shall be sung in 26  
Judah:

We have a strong city  
whose walls and ramparts are our  
deliverance.

<sup>z</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* heat in the shadow of a cloud.

25.1-5: A hymn of thanksgiving. Compare Ps.145. 2-4: God, and not man's fortified towns and cities, is the ultimate source of security and he is especially a refuge to the poor. 5: The dominance of the ruthless is as fleeting as a song.

25.6-12: Promise of the LORD's banquet. The unit is an announcement of salvation, with strong eschatological tones. The inclusion of Moab (vv. 10b-12) seems out of place and may be an addition, a symbol for all of Israel's enemies. 6: This mountain: Zion. Shared-offering sacrifices were those in which a part of the animal was burned on the altar to God, a part given to the priests, and a part eaten at the shrine by the offerer and his family as a sign of a loving communion with the deity; see Num.7.16-36; 1 Sam.9.12. Here this cultic feast is extended to symbolize the great, universal banquet given by God in which man and God will live in communion and harmony; compare Lk.14.12-25; Isa.55.1-3. 8: This is one of the rare OT passages expressing the hope for the end of death.

26.1-6: A hymn of trust. See Ps.24, especially vv. 7-10. The themes of 25.1-5 are resumed: Judah has confidence in the LORD because he has destroyed the enemy and cares for the oppressed and the poor (v. 6). 1-2: An entrance or processional liturgy begins the psalm: see Ps.118.19-20. 1: The strong city is Jerusalem.

- |    |  |  |    |
|----|--|--|----|
| 2  | Open the gates to let a righteous nation in,<br>a nation that keeps faith.   | to this end thou hast punished them<br>and destroyed them,<br>and made all memory of them<br>perish.   |    |
| 3  | Thou dost keep in peace men of constant mind,<br>in peace because they trust in thee.  | Thou hast enlarged the nation, O LORD,   | 15 |
| 4  | Trust in the LORD for ever;<br>for the LORD himself is an everlasting rock.  | enlarged it and won thyself honour,<br>thou hast extended all the frontiers<br>of the land.  |    |
| 5  | He has brought low all who dwell high in a towering city;<br>he levels it to the ground and lays it in the dust,   | In our distress, O LORD, we <sup>b</sup> sought thee out,<br>chastened by the mere whisper of thy rebuke.  | 16 |
| 6  | that the oppressed and the poor may tread it underfoot.  | As a woman with child, when her time is near,  | 17 |
| 7  | The path of the righteous is level,<br>and thou markest out the right way for the upright.   | is in labour and cries out in her pains,<br>so were we in thy presence, O LORD.  |    |
| 8  | We too look to the path prescribed in thy laws, O LORD;<br>thy name and thy memory are our heart's desire.   | We have been with child, we have been in labour,<br>but have brought forth wind.   | 18 |
| 9  | With all my heart I long for thee in the night,<br>I seek thee eagerly when dawn breaks;<br>for, when thy laws prevail in the land,<br>the inhabitants of the world learn justice. | We have won no success for the land,<br>and no one will be born to inhabit the world.  |    |
| 10 | The wicked are destroyed, they have never learnt justice;<br>corrupt in a land of honest ways,<br>they do not regard the majesty of the LORD.                                      | But thy dead live, their bodies will rise again.<br>They that sleep in the earth will awake and shout for joy;<br>for thy dew is a dew of sparkling light,<br>and the earth will bring those long dead to birth again. | 19 |
| 11 | O LORD, thy hand is lifted high,<br>but the bitter enemies of thy people do not see it; <sup>a</sup><br>let the fire of thy enmity destroy them.                                   | Go, my people, enter your rooms<br>and shut your doors behind you;<br>withdraw for a brief while, until wrath has gone by.   | 20 |
| 12 | O LORD, thou wilt bestow prosperity on us;<br>for in truth all our works are thy doing.  | For see, the LORD is coming from his place<br>to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their sins;<br>then the earth shall uncover her blood-stains<br>and hide her slain no more.                                   | 21 |
| 13 | O LORD our God,<br>other lords than thou have been our masters,<br>but thee alone do we invoke by name.  | On that day the LORD will punish with his cruel sword, his mighty and powerful sword,  | 27 |
| 14 | The dead will not live again,<br>those long in their graves will not rise;   |  |    |

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds let them see and be ashamed.  
<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. they.

26.7-19: Prayers of petition and meditations. 8: For the ancients, the *name* somehow contained the reality of a person or thing. 11: The *enemies* of God's *people* do not recognize in their calamity the *hand* of the LORD instructing them to salvation and so they are destroyed by it. 14: *The dead* here seem to be individuals who have died in hostility to God. 19: The words concerning resurrection may refer to individuals; see Dan.12.2; however, they may be only figurative, referring to the restoration of the nation whose suffering has been described in the previous verses; see Ezek. ch. 37.

26.20-27.1: The LORD's judgment on the dragon. 27.1: *Leviathan* and other sea monsters,

Leviathan that twisting<sup>c</sup> sea-serpent,  
that writhing serpent Leviathan,  
and slay the monster of the deep.

- 2 On that day sing to the pleasant  
vineyard,  
3 I the LORD am its keeper,  
moment by moment I water it for  
fear its green leaves fail.  
Night and day I tend it,  
4 but I get no wine;  
I would as soon have briars and thorns,  
then I would wage war upon it and  
burn it all up,  
5 unless it grasps me as its refuge and  
makes peace with me—  
unless it makes peace with me.

- 6 In time to come Jacob's offspring  
shall take root  
and Israel shall bud and blossom,  
and they shall fill the whole earth  
with fruit.

- 7 Has God struck him down as he  
struck others down?  
Has the slayer been slain as he slew  
others?

- 8-10<sup>d</sup> This then purges Jacob's iniquity,  
this<sup>e</sup> has removed his sin;  
that he grinds all altar stones to  
powder like chalk;  
no sacred poles and incense-altars  
are left standing.

The fortified city is left solitary,  
and his quarrel with her ends in  
brushing her away,<sup>f</sup>  
removing her by a cruel blast when

the east wind blows;  
it is a homestead stripped bare,  
deserted like a wilderness;  
there the calf grazes and there lies  
down,  
and crops every twig.  
Its boughs snap off when they grow dry, 11  
and women come and light their  
fires with them.  
For they are a people without sense;  
therefore their maker will show  
them no mercy,  
he who formed them will show  
them no favour.

On that day the LORD will beat out 12  
the grain,  
from the streams of the Euphrates  
to the Torrent of Egypt;  
but you Israelites will be gleaned  
one by one.

On that day 13  
a blast shall be blown on a great  
trumpet,  
and those who are lost in Assyria  
and those dispersed in Egypt will  
come in  
and worship the LORD on the holy  
mountain, in Jerusalem.

### Assyria and Judah

Oh, the proud garlands of the  
drunkards of Ephraim

28

<sup>c</sup> Or primeval.  
<sup>d</sup> Verses 8-10 re-arranged thus: 9, 10a, 8, 10b.  
<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds all fruit.  
<sup>f</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds by dismissing her.

well-known in Canaanite and Mesopotamian mythology, occasionally appear in the OT, especially in Pss., as symbols of the chaos and evil overcome by God; see 51.9-10; Amos 9.3; Ps. 74.13; Job 26.12-13. The struggle against the monster or monsters is usually associated either with creation or with the end of the world.

**27.2-13: Words of salvation and judgment.** The section is not a unified whole, but a collection of various speeches announcing the LORD's intentions. **2-6:** The poem is a reinterpretation of the metaphors of the *vineyard* in 5.1-7; announcement of judgment has become promise of salvation. **7-11:** The New English Bible rearrangement of the verses is an attempt to make sense of a very confusing passage. The first part sees the judgment upon Israel as a purging punishment; the second part is an announcement of total judgment upon an unidentified *fortified city* which symbolizes the forces of evil. **12-13:** The *day* of the LORD will be a day of harvest when the exiles will be brought home. **12: Torrent of Egypt:** a stream, dry except during the rainy season, flowing from the Sinai peninsula into the Mediterranean fifty miles south of Gaza. It was considered to be the southern boundary of Judah. **13: The great trumpet,** the horn which called people to worship, will summon the exiles home to *Jerusalem*.

**28.1-33.24: Assyria and Judah.** The historical context of many of these speeches is the Assyrian crisis of 705-701 B.C. when Hezekiah allied himself with Egypt against Assyria. The prophet criticized those who favored the alliance and warned of disaster. Many of the speeches in this unit begin in Hebrew with a cry "Woe," which the New English Bible translates in various ways; see 28.1; 29.1; 29.15; 30.1; 31.1; 33.1.

<p>and the flowering sprays, so lovely in their beauty, on the heads of revellers dripping with perfumes, overcome with wine!</p> <p>2 See, the Lord has one at his bidding, mighty and strong, whom he sets to work with violence against the land, like a sweeping storm of hail, like a destroying tempest, like a torrent of water in overwhelming flood.</p> <p>3 The proud garlands of Ephraim's drunkards shall be trampled underfoot, and the flowering sprays, so lovely in their beauty on the heads dripping with perfumes, shall be like early figs ripe before summer; he who sees them plucks them, and their bloom is gone while they lie in his hand.</p> <p>5 On that day the LORD of Hosts shall be a lovely garland, a beautiful diadem for the remnant of his people, a spirit of justice for one who presides in a court of justice, and of valour for<sup>g</sup> those who repel the enemy at the gate.</p> <p>7 These too are addicted to wine, clamouring in their cups: priest and prophet are addicted to strong drink and bemused with wine; clamouring in their cups, confirmed topers,<sup>h</sup> hiccuping in drunken stupor; every table is covered with vomit, filth that leaves no clean spot.</p> <p>9 Who is it that the prophet hopes to teach,</p>	<p>to whom will what they hear make sense? Are they babes newly weaned, just taken from the breast? It is all harsh cries and raucous shouts, 'A little more here, a little there!' So it will be with barbarous speech and strange tongue that this people will hear God speaking, this people to whom he once said, 'This is true rest; let the exhausted have rest. This is repose', and they refused to listen. Now to them the word of the LORD will be harsh cries and raucous shouts, 'A little more here, a little there!— and so, as they walk, they will stumble backwards, they will be injured, trapped and caught. Listen then to the word of the LORD, you arrogant men who rule this people in Jerusalem. You say, 'We have made a treaty with Death and signed a pact with Sheol: so that, when the raging flood sweeps by, it shall not touch us; for we have taken refuge in lies and sheltered behind falsehood.' These then are the words of the Lord GOD: Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious corner-stone for a firm foundation;</p>	<p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p>
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<sup>g</sup> for: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*  
<sup>h</sup> These too . . . topers: or These too lose their way through wine and are set wandering by strong drink: priest and prophet lose their way through strong drink and are fuddled with wine; are set wandering by strong drink, lose their way through tipping.

28.1-6: Judgment against the Northern Kingdom. The speech probably dates before the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs.17.6) in 722-721 B.C. which signaled the end of the Northern Kingdom, Ephraim. 2: The one must be an Assyrian king. 5-6: This promise of salvation for the remnant is a later addition.

28.7-22: Judgment because of false prophets, priests, and leaders. The prophet ridicules drunken priests and prophets, holding them responsible for his people's trouble. 9-10: The drunkards mimic the language of the prophet, namely Isaiah, as if his language were the unintelligible babbling of infants, which the Heb. words imitate. 11-13: The leaders refusing to listen to God through Isaiah, will be forced to listen to him through the harsh, unintelligible shouts of the Assyrians, their conquerors. 14: The word is now addressed to those who rule, that is, the king and his advisers. 15: The treaty (or "covenant") which Isaiah ridicules may have been an agreement with Egypt for mutual aid against Assyria. 16: Faith: see 7.9 n.



- he who has faith shall not waver.  
 17 I will use justice as a plumb-line  
 and righteousness as a plummet;  
 hail shall sweep away your refuge  
 of lies,  
 and flood-waters carry away your  
 shelter.  
 18 Then your treaty with Death shall  
 be annulled  
 and your pact with Sheol shall not  
 stand;  
 the raging waters will sweep by,  
 and you will be like land swept by  
 the flood.  
 19 As often as it sweeps by, it will  
 take you;  
 morning after morning it will  
 sweep by,  
 day and night.  
 The very thought of such tidings  
 will bring nothing but dismay;  
 20 for 'The bed is too short for a man  
 to stretch,  
 and the blanket too narrow to  
 cover him.'  
 21 But the LORD shall arise as he rose  
 on Mount Perazim  
 and storm with rage as he did in the  
 Vale of Gibeon  
 to do what he must do—how  
 strange a deed!  
 to perform his work—how outlandish  
 a work!  
 22 But now have done with your  
 arrogance,  
 lest your bonds grow tighter;  
 for I have heard destruction  
 decreed  
 by the Lord GOD of Hosts for the  
 whole land.  
 23 Listen and hear what I say,  
 attend and hear my words.  
 24 Will the ploughman continually  
 plough for the sowing,  
 breaking his ground and harrowing  
 it?  
 Does he not, once he has levelled it, 25  
 broadcast the dill and scatter the  
 cummin?  
 Does he not plant the wheat in rows  
 with barley<sup>i</sup> and spelt along the  
 edge?  
 Does not his God instruct him and 26  
 train him aright?  
 Dill is not threshed with a sledge, 27  
 and the cartwheel is not rolled over  
 cummin;  
 dill is beaten with a rod,  
 and cummin with a flail.  
 Corn is crushed, but not to the 28  
 uttermost,  
 not with a final crushing;  
 his cartwheels rumble over it and  
 break it up,  
 but they do not grind it fine.  
 This message, too, comes from the 29  
 LORD of Hosts,  
 whose purposes are wonderful  
 and his power great.  
 Alas for Ariel! Ariel, 29  
 the city where David encamped.  
 Add year to year,  
 let the pilgrim-feasts run their  
 round,  
 and I will bring Ariel to sore 2  
 straits,  
 when there shall be moaning and  
 lamentation.  
 I will make her my Ariel indeed,  
 my fiery altar.  
 I will throw my army round you 3  
 like a wall;  
 I will set a ring of outposts all  
 round you  
 and erect siege-works against you.  
 You shall be brought low, you will 4  
 speak out of the ground

*i* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds an unintelligible word.

17: *Plumb-line*: see Amos 7.7-9. 20: The proverb cited illustrates the point: the treaty is not sufficient to save Israel. 21: *Mount Perazim* was the site of one of David's victories over the Philistines (2 Sam.5.17-21). *Gibeon* was in Benjamin (Josh.18.25); the allusion is uncertain, though Josh. 10.1-10 may be meant.

28.23-29: The parable of the farmer. No direct interpretation or application, such as in 5.1-7 and 2 Sam.12.1-6, is given here; the point (v. 29) is that the farmer's wisdom symbolizes the divine purposes. 27: In the Near East even today large grains like wheat, barley, etc. (British: *corn*) are threshed under a sledge pulled over the ears by oxen or donkeys. *Dill* and *cummin* are too small and soft and would be lost or crushed in such a process. 28: As *corn* is crushed, but not to the uttermost, neither is Israel's weakness by God.

29.1-8: *Jerusalem under siege*. 1-4: The occasion is probably Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 B.C. (2 Kgs.18.13-35). 1: *Ariel*, which probably means "lion of God," is a special

- and your words will issue from the earth;  
 your voice will come like a ghost's from the ground,  
 and your words will squeak out of the earth.
- 5 Yet the horde of your enemies shall crumble into dust,  
 the horde of ruthless foes shall fly like chaff.  
 Then suddenly, all in an instant,  
 6 punishment shall come from the LORD of Hosts  
 with thunder and earthquake and a great noise,  
 with storm and tempest and a flame of devouring fire;  
 7 and the horde of all the nations warring against Ariel,  
 all their baggage-trains and siege-works,  
 and all her oppressors themselves,  
 shall fade as a dream, a vision of the night.
- 8 Like a starving man who dreams and thinks that he is eating,  
 but wakes up to find himself empty, or a thirsty man who dreams and thinks that he is drinking,  
 but wakes up to find himself thirsty and dry,  
 so shall the horde of all the nations be  
 that war against Mount Zion.
- 9 Loiter and be dazed, enjoy yourselves and be blinded,  
 be drunk but not with wine, reel but not with strong drink;  
 10 for the LORD has poured upon you a spirit of deep stupor;  
 he has closed your eyes, the prophets,  
 and muffled your heads, the seers.
- 11 All prophetic vision has become for you like a sealed book. Give such a book to one who can read and say, 'Come, read this'; he will answer, 'I cannot', because it is sealed. Give it to one who cannot read and say, 'Come, read this'; he will answer, 'I cannot read.'
- Then the Lord said:  
 13 Because this people approach me with their mouths  
 and honour me with their lips while their hearts are far from me,  
 and their religion is but a precept of men, learnt by rote,  
 therefore I will yet again shock this people,  
 14 adding shock to shock:  
 the wisdom of their wise men shall vanish  
 and the discernment of the discerning shall be lost.
- Shame upon those who seek to hide their purpose  
 too deep for the LORD to see, and who, when their deeds are done in the dark,  
 say, 'Who sees us? Who knows of us?'  
 16 How you turn things upside down,  
 as if the potter ranked no higher than the clay!  
 Shall the thing made say of its maker, 'He did not make me'?  
 Shall the pot say of the potter, 'He has no skill'?
- The time is but short  
 17 before Lebanon goes back to grassland  
 and the grassland is no better than scrub.
- On that day deaf men shall hear  
 18 when a book is read,  
 and the eyes of the blind shall see out of impenetrable darkness.  
 19 The lowly shall once again rejoice in the LORD,  
 and the poorest of men exult in the

name for Jerusalem, used only by Isaiah. 5-8: Promises of salvation from the enemy alternate with the promise of punishment, but the final word is that Jerusalem will be delivered. According to his own reports, Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem but left without destroying it. See 37.21-36. 29.9-24: Human ignorance and the LORD's plans. 9-10: The failure to see and hear comes from the LORD; see 6.9-10 n. 11-12: This seems to be a later prose addition to explain vv. 9-10. 13-14: The punishment for religious rites without depth is a loss of wisdom. 13: See Mt.15.8-9; Mk.7.6-7. Religion: lit. "their fear of me." 15-17: Not trusting God's help but seeking instead help from military alliances (as the kings of Judah did) is like the pot accusing the potter of having no skill; see 30.1-2. 17: Lebanon was proverbially very fertile. 18-21: The time will

- Holy One of Israel.
- 20 The ruthless shall be no more, the arrogant shall cease to be; those who are quick to see mischief,
- 21 those who charge others with a sin or lay traps for him who brings the wrongdoer into court or by falsehood deny justice to the righteous— all these shall be exterminated.
- 22 Therefore these are the words of the LORD the God of the house of Jacob, the God who ransomed Abraham:
- This is no time for Jacob to be shamed,  
no time for his face to grow pale;  
23 for his descendants will hallow my name when they see what I have done in their nation. They will hallow the Holy One of Jacob and hold the God of Israel in awe;
- 24 those whose minds are confused will gain understanding, and the obstinate will receive instruction.
- 30 Oh, rebel sons! says the LORD, you make plans, but not of my devising, you weave schemes, but not inspired by me,  
2 you hurry down to Egypt without consulting me, to seek protection under Pharaoh's shelter and take refuge under Egypt's wing.  
3 Pharaoh's protection will bring you disappointment and refuge under Egypt's wing humiliation;
- for, though his officers are at Zoan and his envoys reach as far as Hanes,  
all are left in sorry plight by that unprofitable nation,  
no help they find, no profit, only disappointment and disgrace.
- The Beasts of the South: an oracle.
- Through a land of hardship and distress the tribes of lioness and roaring lion, sand-viper and venomous flying serpent, carry their wealth on the backs of asses and their treasures on camels' humps to an unprofitable people. Vain and worthless is the help of Egypt;
- 7 therefore have I given her this name, Rahab Quelled. Now come and write it on a tablet, engrave it as an inscription before their eyes, that it may be there in future days, a testimony for all time. For they are a race of rebels, disloyal sons, sons who will not listen to the LORD's instruction; they say to the seers, 'You shall not see', and to the visionaries, 'You shall have no true visions; give us smooth words and seductive visions. Turn aside, leave the straight path, and rid us for ever of the Holy One of Israel.'

come when, hearing and sight restored, the *lowly* (v. 19) will have cause for celebration, and the *ruthless and arrogant* (v. 20) will be destroyed.

30.1-18: The fruits of rebellion. These pronouncements are related to the period of Judah's alliance with Egypt against Assyria, 705-701 B.C. 4: *Zoan* and *Hanes* were in the Nile delta. 6-7: It is vain to seek the help of Egypt (*Beasts of the South*). 7: *Rahab Quelled* is a sarcastic title based on one of the names of the chaos dragon slain by the deity. See 27.1 n. Rahab is often a synonym for Egypt. 8-18: Several speeches concerning the danger of rebellion against the LORD support the prophet's warnings against the Egyptian alliance. 8-11: Isaiah is commanded to write down his words so that when they come true it will be known that he was a prophet. 8: See 8.1-4, 16-18. 9: *Disloyal sons* deny the goodness of their father, the LORD, by seeking help from Egypt or Assyria. 10: Seductive visions are false prophecies that confirm

12 These are the words of the Holy One of Israel:

Because you have rejected this warning  
and trust in devious and dishonest practices,  
resting on them for support,

13 therefore you shall find this iniquity will be

like a crack running down a high wall, which bulges and suddenly, all in an instant, comes crashing down,

14 as an earthen jar is broken with a crash,

mercilessly shattered, so that not a shard is found among the fragments

to take fire from the glowing embers,

or to scoop up water from a pool.

15 These are the words of the Lord GOD the Holy One of Israel:

Come back, keep peace, and you will be safe;  
in stillness and in staying quiet, there lies your strength.

16 But you would have none of it; you said, No,

we will take horse and flee; therefore you shall be put to flight: We will ride apace;

therefore swift shall be the pace of your pursuers.

17 When a thousand flee at the challenge of one, you shall all flee at the challenge of five, until you are left like a pole on a mountain-top, a signal post on a hill.

18 Yet the LORD is waiting to show you his favour,

yet he yearns to have pity on you; for the LORD is a God of justice. Happy are all who wait for him!

O people of Zion who dwell in Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. The LORD will show you favour and answer you when he hears your cry for help. The Lord may give you bread of adversity and water of affliction, but he who teaches you shall no longer be hidden out of sight, but with your own eyes you shall see him always. If you stray from the road to right or left you shall hear with your own ears a voice behind you saying, This is the way; follow it. You will reject, as things unclean, your silvered images and your idols sheathed in gold; you will loathe them like a foul discharge and call them ordure.<sup>j</sup> The Lord will give you rain for the seed you sow, and as the produce of your soil he will give you heavy crops of corn in plenty. When that day comes the cattle shall graze in broad pastures; the oxen and asses that work your land shall be fed with well-seasoned fodder, winnowed with shovel and fork. On each high mountain and each lofty hill shall be streams of running water, on the day of massacre when the highest in the land fall. The moon shall shine with a brightness like the sun's, and the sun with seven times his wonted brightness, seven days' light in one, on the day when the LORD binds up the broken limbs of his people and heals their wounds.

See, the name of the LORD comes from afar,  
his anger blazing and his doom heavy.

His lips are charged with wrath and his tongue is a devouring fire.

His breath is like a torrent in spate, rising neck-high,

a yoke to force the nations to their ruin,

a bit in the mouth to guide the peoples astray.

<sup>j</sup> call them ordure: or say to them, Be off.

human wisdom, inclination, whim, or fancy; see 1 Kgs.22.8–28. 13: Lack of faith is like a crack in a high wall which gives way under pressure. 15: See 7.9. 16: See Amos 2.14–16. 17: Signal post: Jerusalem under siege.

30.19–26: Healing beyond punishment. Those who suffer adversity (v. 20) are encouraged to remain faithful by the assurance that a punishment will purge them and by the promise of restored prosperity. The section reflects the circumstances of the Exile; vv. 19–26 may be a late expansion of v. 18.

30.27–33: Judgment against Assyria. The approach of the LORD to punish Assyria is an

- 29 But for you there shall be songs,  
as on a night of sacred pilgrimage,  
your hearts glad, as the hearts of  
men who walk to the sound of  
the pipe  
on their way to the LORD's hill, to  
the rock of Israel.
- 30 Then the LORD shall make his voice  
heard in majesty  
and show his arm sweeping down in  
fierce anger  
with devouring flames of fire,  
with cloudburst and tempests of  
rain and hailstones;
- 31 for at the voice of the LORD  
Assyria's heart fails her,  
as she feels the stroke of his rod.
- 32 Tambourines and harps and shaking  
sistrums  
shall keep time  
with every stroke of his rod,  
of the chastisement which the LORD  
inflicts on her.
- 33 Long ago was Topheth made ready,<sup>k</sup>  
made deep and broad,  
its fire-pit a blazing mass of logs,  
and the breath of the LORD like a  
stream of brimstone  
blazing in it.
- 31 Shame upon those who go down to  
Egypt for help  
and rely on horses,  
putting their trust in chariots many  
in number  
and in horsemen in their thousands,  
but do not look to the Holy One  
of Israel  
or seek guidance of the LORD!
- 2 Yet the LORD too in his wisdom can  
bring about trouble  
and he does not take back his  
words;  
he will rise up against the league of  
evildoers,
- against all who help those who do  
wrong  
The Egyptians are men, not God,<sup>l</sup> 3  
their horses are flesh, not spirit;  
and, when the LORD stretches out  
his hand,  
the helper will stumble and he who  
is helped will fall,  
and they will all vanish together.
- This is what the LORD has said to me: 4
- As a lion or a young lion growls over  
its prey  
when the muster of shepherds is  
called out against it,  
and is not scared at their noise  
or cowed by their clamour,  
so shall the LORD of Hosts come  
down to do battle  
for Mount Zion and her high  
summit.
- Thus the LORD of Hosts, like a bird 5  
hovering over its young,  
will be a shield over Jerusalem;  
he will shield her and deliver her,  
standing over her and delivering  
her.
- O Israel, come back to him whom 6  
you have so deeply offended,  
for on that day when you spurn, 7  
one and all,  
the idols of silver and the idols of  
gold  
which your own sinful hands have  
made,  
Assyria shall fall by the sword, but 8  
by no sword of man;  
a sword that no man wields shall  
devour him.
- He shall flee before the sword,  
and his young warriors shall be  
put to forced labour,

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds is that prepared also for the  
king?  
<sup>l</sup> Or gods.

nounced. 33: The oracle is probably about 701 B.C. *Topheth* was a place just outside of Jerusalem where human sacrifices had been offered to the pagan deity Molech; see Lev.18.21; 2 Kgs.23.10. Assyria apparently will be slaughtered and burned there.

31.1-3: **Against reliance on Egypt.** The prophet again indicts those leaders who made a treaty with Egypt. 2-3: The LORD in his wisdom controls history; it is ridiculous to trust in these mere men. 2: *League*: an allusion to the treaty parties, i.e. Egyptians, who help, and Israel, who do wrong; see 30.1-18 n.

31.4-9: **A promise to protect Jerusalem.** The LORD will come down on Zion and fight against Assyria. The speech should be associated with Sennacherib's invasion of 701 B.C. See 29.1-8; 37.21-38. 5: The LORD will continue his protective role, hovering over Jerusalem like an eagle over its young, picking her up from danger; compare Deut.32.11. 6-7: The verses probably are a late addition.

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|--|--|
| <p>9 his officers shall be helpless from terror<br/>and his captains too dismayed to flee.<br/>This is the very word of the LORD<br/>whose fire blazes in Zion,<br/>and whose furnace is set up in Jerusalem.</p> <p>32 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness<br/>and his rulers rule with justice,<br/>2 and a man shall be a refuge from the wind<br/>and a shelter from the tempest,<br/>or like runnels of water in dry ground,<br/>like the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.</p> <p>3 The eyes that can see will not be clouded,<br/>and the ears that can hear will listen;<br/>4 the anxious heart will understand and know,<br/>and the man who stammers will at once speak plain.</p> <p>5 The scoundrel will no longer be thought noble,<br/>nor the villain called a prince;<br/>6 for the scoundrel will speak like a scoundrel<br/>and will hatch evil in his heart;<br/>he is an impostor in all his actions,<br/>and in his words a liar even to the LORD;<br/>he starves the hungry of their food<br/>and refuses drink to the thirsty.</p> <p>7 The villain's ways are villainous<br/>and he devises infamous plans<br/>to ruin the poor with his lies<br/>and deny justice to the needy.</p> <p>8 But the man of noble mind forms noble designs<br/>and stands firm in his nobility.</p> <p>9 You women that live at ease,<br/>stand up</p> | <p>and hear what I have to say.<br/>You young women without a care,<br/>mark my words.<br/>You have no cares now, but when the year is out, you will tremble,<br/>10 for the vintage will be over and no produce gathered in.<br/>You who are now at ease, be anxious;<br/>11 tremble, you who have no cares.<br/>Strip yourselves bare;<br/>put a cloth round your waists<br/>and beat your breasts<br/>12 for the pleasant fields and fruitful vines.<br/>On the soil of my people shall spring<br/>13 up thorns and briars,<br/>in every happy home and in the busy town,<br/>for the palace is forsaken and the<br/>14 crowded streets deserted;<br/>citadel<sup>m</sup> and watch-tower are turned<br/>into open heath,<br/>the joy of wild asses ever after and<br/>pasture for the flocks,<br/>until a spirit from on high is<br/>15 lavished upon us.<br/>Then the wilderness will become<br/>grassland<br/>and grassland will be cheap as<br/>scrub;<br/>then justice shall make its home in<br/>16 the wilderness,<br/>and righteousness dwell in the<br/>grassland;<br/>when righteousness shall yield<br/>17 peace<br/>and its fruit be quietness and<br/>confidence for ever.<br/>Then my people shall live in a<br/>18 tranquil country,<br/>dwelling in peace, in houses full of<br/>ease;<br/>it will be cool on the slopes of the<br/>19 forest then,<br/>and cities shall lie peaceful in the<br/>plain.</p> |
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*m Or hill; Heb. Ophel.*

**32.1–8: A promise of justice and righteousness.** When Israel's government is based on *justice*, fools will be seen for what they are. See Prov.16.12–15. **1:** See 9.7; 11.3–5. **5:** In Wisdom thought the *scoundrel* is a fool and the *noble* man, especially a ruler, is wise.

**32.9–14: A warning to complacent women.** The women, now carefree (probably at the *vintage* festival, v. 10) will, in a *year*, mourn the destruction of their fields and cities. See 3.16–24; Amos 4.1–3. **14: Citadel:** the fortified hills in the old city of David.

**32.15–20: A promise of peace with justice.** The outpouring of the *spirit* reverses the desolation wrought by human complacency outlined in the previous section.

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|----|---|--|----|
| 20 | Happy shall you be, sowing every man by the water-side, and letting ox and ass run free.  | Now, says the LORD, I will rise up. Now I will exalt myself, now lift myself up.   | 10 |
| 33 | Ah! you destroyer, yourself undestroyed, betrayer still unbetrayed, when you cease to destroy you will be destroyed, after all your betrayals, you will be betrayed yourself. | What you conceive and bring to birth is chaff and stubble; a wind like fire shall devour you. Whole nations shall be heaps of white ash, or like thorns cut down and set on fire.            | 11 |
| 2  | O LORD, show us thy favour; we hope in thee. Uphold us every morning, save us when troubles come.   | You who dwell far away, hear what I have done; acknowledge my might, you who are near.   | 12 |
| 3  | At the roar of the thunder the peoples flee, at thy rumbling nations are scattered;   | In Zion sinners quake with terror, the godless are seized with trembling and ask,  | 13 |
| 4  | their spoil is swept up as if young locusts had swept it, like a swarm of locusts men swarm upon it.  | Can any of us live with a devouring fire? Can any live in endless burning? The man who lives an upright life and speaks the truth,   | 14 |
| 5  | The LORD is supreme, for he dwells on high; if you fill Zion with justice and with righteousness,   | who scorns to enrich himself by extortion, who snaps his fingers at a bribe, who stops his ears to hear nothing of bloodshed,  | 15 |
| 6  | then he will be the mainstay of the age: <sup>n</sup> wisdom and knowledge are the assurance of salvation; the fear of the LORD is her <sup>o</sup> treasure.                 | who closes his eyes to the sight of evil— that is the man who shall dwell on the heights,  | 16 |
| 7  | Hark, how the valiant cry aloud for help and those sent to sue for peace weep bitterly!   | his refuge a fastness in the cliffs, his bread secure and his water never failing.   | 17 |
| 8  | The highways are deserted, no travellers tread the roads. Covenants are broken, treaties are flouted; man is of no account.   | Your eyes shall see a king in his splendour and will look upon a land of far distances.  | 18 |
| 9  | The land is parched and wilting, Lebanon is eaten away and crumbling; Sharon has become a desert, Bashan and Carmel are stripped bare.  | You will call to mind what once you feared: 'Where then is he that counted, where is he that weighed, where is he that counted the treasures?' You will no longer see that barbarous people, | 19 |

*n* the age; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* your times.  
*o* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his.

**33.1–24: An exilic liturgy.** It is impossible to identify the precise historical context of this psalm. The apparently disjointed units in this collection of prayers probably reflect the use of the chapter in worship after the time of Isaiah. **1:** The *destroyer*, Babylon in 21.1–10, is not identified here. **5–6:** A hymn of praise. **7–9:** In the absence of the fear of the LORD the order made by *man is of no account* and nature itself is *wilting*. **10–14:** Announcement of the LORD's intervention. **17–20:** This poem is considered postexilic. *King:* God or a restored Davidic king.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>that people whose speech was so<br/>hard to catch,<br/>whose stuttering speech you could<br/>not understand.</p> <p>20 Look upon Zion, city of our solemn<br/>feasts,<br/>let your eyes rest on Jerusalem,<br/>a land of comfort, a tent that shall<br/>never be shifted,<br/>whose pegs shall never be pulled<br/>up,<br/>not one of its ropes cast loose.</p> <p>21 There we have the LORD's majesty;<sup>p</sup><br/>it will be a place<sup>q</sup> of rivers and<br/>broad streams;<br/>but<sup>r</sup> no galleys shall be rowed<br/>there,<br/>no stately ship sail by.</p> <p>22 For the LORD our judge, the LORD<br/>our law-giver,<br/>the LORD our king—he himself will<br/>save us.</p> <p>23 [Men may say, Your rigging is<br/>slack;<br/>it will not hold the mast firm in its<br/>socket,<br/>nor can the sails be spread.]<br/>Then the blind man shall have a full<br/>share of the spoil<br/>and the lame shall take part in the<br/>pillage;</p> <p>24 no man who dwells there shall say,<br/>'I am sick';<br/>and the sins of the people who live<br/>there shall be pardoned.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Edom and Israel</i></p> <p>34 Approach, you nations, to listen,<br/>and attend, you peoples;<br/>let the earth listen and everything<br/>in it,<br/>the world and all that it yields;</p> <p>2 for the LORD's anger is turned<br/>against all the nations</p> | <p>and his wrath against all the host<br/>of them:<br/>he gives them over to slaughter and<br/>destruction.</p> <p>Their slain shall be flung out, 3<br/>the stench shall rise from their<br/>corpses,<br/>and the mountains shall stream<br/>with their blood.</p> <p>All the host of heaven shall 4<br/>crumble into nothing,<br/>the heavens shall be rolled up like<br/>a scroll,<br/>and the starry host fade away,<br/>as the leaf withers from the vine<br/>and the ripening fruit from the<br/>fig-tree;</p> <p>for the sword of the LORD<sup>s</sup> appears 5<br/>in heaven.</p> <p>See how it descends in judgement<br/>on Edom,<br/>on the people whom he dooms<sup>t</sup> to<br/>destruction.</p> <p>The LORD has a sword steeped in 6<br/>blood,<br/>it is gorged with fat,<br/>the fat of rams' kidneys, and the<br/>blood of lambs and goats;<br/>for he has a sacrifice in Bozrah,<br/>a great slaughter in Edom.</p> <p>Wild oxen shall come down and 7<br/>buffaloes<sup>u</sup> with them,<br/>bull and bison together,<br/>and the land shall drink deep of<br/>blood<br/>and the soil be sated with fat.</p> <p>For the LORD has a day of 8<br/>vengeance,<br/>the champion of Zion has a year<br/>when he will requite.</p> <p>Edom's torrents shall be turned into 9<br/>pitch<br/>and its soil into brimstone,</p> <p><small>p Or threshing-floor.<br/>q it . . . place; or instead.<br/>r Or and.<br/>s the sword of the LORD: prob. rdg.; Heb. my sword.<br/>t Prob. rdg.; Heb. I doom.<br/>u and buffaloes: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.</small></p> |
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*Stuttering speech*: a reversal of the doom pronounced in 28.12–13. 21–24: In the messianic age not man's economy dependent on *stately ships* but one dependent on the LORD's majesty will prevail: *no man* will be *sick* in body or oppressed by want or sins; compare Ezek.34.11–31; 47.1–12; Mt.11.5.

34.1–35.10: *Edom and Israel*. Two poems, both of them exilic or postexilic, are juxtaposed to contrast the expected devastation of *Edom* (34.1–17) with the glorious future in store for the exiles (35.1–10).

34.1–17: *The doom of Edom*. Compare Ps.137.7–9. 5–8: He is coming to destroy *Edom*, as men slaughter animals for sacrifice. 5: *Sword*: see Ezek. ch. 21. 6: *Bozrah* was a major city in northern Edom. 9–15: As the result of divine intervention, *Edom* will return to a state of chaos.



- and the land shall become blazing  
pitch,  
10 which night and day shall never be  
quenched,  
and its smoke shall go up for ever.  
From generation to generation it  
shall lie waste,  
and no man shall pass through it  
ever again.
- 11 Horned owl and bustard shall make  
their home in it,  
screech-owl and raven shall haunt it.  
He has stretched across it a  
measuring-line of chaos,  
12 and its frontiers shall be a jumble  
of stones.  
No king shall be acclaimed there,  
and all its princes shall come to  
nought.
- 13 Thorns shall sprout in its palaces;  
nettles and briars shall cover its  
walled towns.  
It shall be rough land fit for wolves,  
a haunt of desert-owls.
- 14 Marmots shall consort with jackals,  
and he-goat shall encounter he-goat.  
There too the nightjar shall rest  
and find herself a place for repose.
- 15 There the sand-partridge shall  
make her nest,  
lay her eggs and hatch them  
and gather her brood under her  
wings;  
there shall the kites gather,  
one after another.
- 16 Consult the book of the LORD and  
read it;  
not one of these shall be lacking,  
not one miss its fellow,  
for with his own mouth he has  
ordered it  
and with his own breath he has  
brought them together.
- 17 He it is who has allotted each its  
place,  
and his hand has measured out  
their portions;  
they shall occupy it for ever  
and dwell there from generation  
to generation.
- Let the wilderness and the thirsty 35  
land be glad,  
let the desert rejoice and burst into  
flower.  
Let it flower with fields of asphodel, 2  
let it rejoice and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon is given to it,  
the splendour too of Carmel and  
Sharon;  
these shall see the glory of the LORD,  
the splendour of our God.
- Strengthen the feeble arms, 3  
steady the tottering knees;  
say to the anxious, Be strong and 4  
fear not.  
See, your God comes with  
vengeance,  
with dread retribution he comes to  
save you.
- Then shall blind men's eyes be 5  
opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
Then shall the lame man leap like 6  
a deer,  
and the tongue of the dumb  
shout aloud;  
for water springs up in the  
wilderness,  
and torrents flow in dry land.  
The mirage becomes a pool, 7  
the thirsty land bubbling springs;  
instead of reeds and rushes, grass  
shall grow  
in the rough land where wolves  
now lurk.
- And there shall be a causeway there 8  
which shall be called the Way of  
Holiness,  
and the unclean shall not pass  
along it;  
it shall become a pilgrim's way,<sup>v</sup>  
no fool shall trespass on it.  
No lion shall come there, 9  
no savage beast climb on to it;  
not one shall be found there.  
By it those he has ransomed shall  
return  
and the LORD's redeemed come 10  
home;

<sup>v</sup> a pilgrim's way: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

**11:** *Chaos*: see Jer.4.23–28. **16–17:** The announcement is trustworthy, for it is written in the *book of the LORD* (probably prophetic books).

**35.1–10:** God comes in judgment to save the exiles. This poem of the return from Exile resembles Second Isaiah; see 40.1–11; 42.17–18. **4:** *The anxious*: those discouraged by the long captivity. **7:** Like a *mirage* turned into a real *pool* of water was the announcement of the return from Exile; compare Ps.126.1. **8:** *Causeway*: highway.

they shall enter Zion with shouts of triumph,  
 crowned with everlasting gladness.  
 Gladness and joy shall be their escort,  
 and suffering and weariness shall flee away.

*Jerusalem delivered from Sennacherib*

36:1<sup>w</sup> IN THE FOURTEENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN of Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked and took all the  
 2 fortified cities of Judah. From Lachish he sent the chief officer<sup>x</sup> with a strong force to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem; and he halted by the conduit of the  
 3 Upper Pool on the causeway which leads to the Fuller's Field. There Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the comp-  
 4 troller of the household, came out to him, with Shebna the adjutant-general and Joah son of Asaph, the secretary  
 5 of state. The chief officer said to them, "Tell Hezekiah that this is the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria:  
 6 "What ground have you for this confidence of yours? Do you think fine words can take the place of skill and numbers? On whom then do you rely for support in your rebellion against  
 7 me? On Egypt? Egypt is a splintered cane that will run into a man's hand and pierce it if he leans on it. That is what Pharaoh king of Egypt proves to  
 8 all who rely on him. And if you tell me that you are relying on the LORD your God, is he not the god whose hill-shrines and altars Hezekiah has suppressed, telling Judah and Jerusalem that they must prostrate themselves before this altar alone?"  
 9 "Now, make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses if you can find  
 10 riders for them. Will you reject the authority of even the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt

for chariots and horsemen? Do you think that I have come to attack this land and destroy it without the consent of the LORD? No; the LORD himself said to me, "Attack this land and destroy it.""

Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the chief officer, "Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak Hebrew to us within earshot of the people on the city wall." The chief officer answered, "Is it to your master and to you that my master has sent me to say this? Is it not to the people sitting on the wall who, like you, will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?" Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew, "Hear the message of the Great King, the king of Assyria. These are the king's words: "Do not be taken in by Hezekiah. He cannot save you. Do not let him persuade you to rely on the LORD, and tell you that the LORD will save you and that this city will never be surrendered to the king of Assyria." Do not listen to Hezekiah; these are the words of the king of Assyria: "Make peace with me. Come out to me, and then you shall each eat the fruit of his own vine and his own fig-tree, and drink the water of his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own, a land of grain and new wine, of corn and vineyards. Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by telling you that the LORD will save you. Did the god of any of these nations save his land from the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Where are the gods of Samaria? Did they save Samaria from me? Among all the gods of these nations is there one who saved his land from me? And how is the LORD to save Jerusalem?"

The people were silent and answered not a word, for the king had given

<sup>w</sup> Verses 1-22: cp. 2 Kgs. 18. 13-37; 2 Chr. 32. 1-19.  
<sup>x</sup> Or sent Rab-shakeh.

36.1-39.8: An appendix. With some variants, this material, with the exception of 38.9-20, is found in 2 Kgs.18.13-20.19. The main theme is the relationship between Isaiah and King Hezekiah through several crises.

36.1-22: First account of Sennacherib's attack. See 2 Kgs.18.13-27. This account omits the report in 2 Kgs.18.14-16 of Hezekiah's submission and tribute to the Assyrians. 1: The fourteenth year of Hezekiah was 701 B.C. 2: See 7.3. 3: See 22.15-25. 6: A reference to the alliance with Egypt; see 31.1-3. 11: Aramaic: the international language of the Assyrian empire. 13: In Hebrew: lit. "in Jewish" or "in the Judean language."

orders that no one was to answer him.  
 22 Eliakim son of Hilkiah, comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and Joah son of Asaph, secretary of state, came to Hezekiah with their clothes rent and reported what the chief officer had said.  
 37<sup>1y</sup> When King Hezekiah heard their report, he rent his clothes and wrapped himself in sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. He sent Eliakim comptroller of the household, Shebna the adjutant-general, and the senior priests, all covered in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, to give him this message from the king: 'This day is a day of trouble for us, a day of reproof and contempt. We are like a woman who has no strength to bear the child that is coming to the birth.  
 4 It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the chief officer whom his master the king of Assyria sent to taunt the living God, and will confute what he, the LORD your God, heard. Offer a prayer for those who still survive.' King Hezekiah's servants came to Isaiah, and he told them to say this to their master: 'This is the word of the LORD: "Do not be alarmed at what you heard when the lackeys of the king of Assyria blasphemed me. I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumour and withdraw to his own country; and there I will make him fall by the sword."  
 8 So the chief officer withdrew. He heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, and he found him attacking  
 9 Libnah. But when the king learnt that Tirhakah king of Cush was on the way to make war on him, he sent messengers again<sup>z</sup> to Hezekiah king of Judah, to say to him, 'How can you be deluded by your god on whom you rely when he promises that Jerusalem shall not fall into the hands of the king of

Assyria? Surely you have heard what 11 the kings of Assyria have done to all countries, exterminating their people; can you then hope to escape? Did their 12 gods save the nations which my forefathers destroyed, Gozan, Harran, Rezep, and the people of Beth-eden living in Telassar? Where are the kings 13 of Hamath, of Arpad, and of Lahir, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

Hezekiah took the letter from the 14 messengers and read it; then he went up into the house of the LORD, spread it out before the LORD and offered this 15 prayer: 'O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, enthroned on the cherubim, thou alone art God of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Turn thy ear to me, O LORD, 17 and listen; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see; hear the message that Sennacherib has sent to taunt the living God. It is true, O LORD, that the kings of 18 Assyria have laid waste every country, that they have consigned their gods to 19 the fire and destroyed them; for they were no gods but the work of men's hands, mere wood and stone. But now, 20 O LORD our God, save us from his power, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou, O LORD, alone art God.'

Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah 21 and said, 'This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel: I have heard your prayer to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word which 22 the LORD has spoken concerning him:

The virgin daughter of Zion disdains  
 you,  
 she laughs you to scorn;  
 the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her  
 head  
 as you retreat.

<sup>y</sup> Verses 1-38: cp. 2 Kgs. 19, 1-37; 2 Chr. 32, 20-22.  
<sup>z</sup> again: prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 19, 9; Heb. and he heard.

37.1-7: Hezekiah turns to Isaiah. See 2 Kgs. 19.1-7. The king and his officials, afraid and in mourning, consult Isaiah who announces the end of the siege and the death of Sennacherib. 1: Rent his clothes: sign of consternation and despair. Sackcloth: symbol of mourning and repentance.

37.8-20: A second account of Sennacherib's attack. See 2 Kgs. 19.9-19. This narrative is another tradition of the events reported in 36.1-37.7. 9: Tirhakah was a member of the royal house of Ethiopia, Cush, which gained control over Egypt to become the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. 12: Nations: places in Mesopotamia. 14-20: Instead of summoning Isaiah, Hezekiah goes to the Temple to pray for help.

37.21-38: Isaiah's intervention. See 2 Kgs. 19.20-34. 22: Virgin daughter of Zion: prophetic

23 Whom have you taunted and blasphemed?  
 Against whom have you clamoured,  
 casting haughty glances at the Holy One of Israel?  
 24 You have sent your servants to taunt the Lord,  
 and said:  
 With my countless chariots I have gone up  
 high in the mountains, into the recesses of Lebanon.  
 I have cut down its tallest cedars,  
 the best of its pines,  
 I have reached its highest limit of forest and meadow.<sup>a</sup>  
 25 I have dug wells  
 and drunk the waters of a foreign land,  
 and with the soles of my feet I have dried up  
 all the streams of Egypt.  
 26 Have you not heard long ago?  
 I did it all.  
 In days gone by I planned it  
 and now I have brought it about,  
 making fortified cities tumble down  
 into heaps of rubble.  
 27 Their citizens, shorn of strength,  
 disheartened and ashamed,  
 were but as plants in the field, as green herbs,  
 as grass on the roof-tops blasted  
 before the east wind.  
 28 I know your rising up and your sitting down,  
 your going out and your coming in.  
 29 The frenzy of your rage against me  
 and your arrogance  
 have come to my ears.  
 I will put a ring in your nose  
 and a hook in your lips,  
 and I will take you back by the road  
 on which you have come.

This shall be the sign for you: this 30  
 year you shall eat shed grain and in the  
 second year what is self-sown; but in  
 the third year sow and reap, plant  
 vineyards and eat their fruit. The sur- 31  
 vivors left in Judah shall strike fresh  
 root under ground and yield fruit  
 above ground, for a remnant shall come 32  
 out of Jerusalem and survivors from  
 Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of  
 Hosts will perform this.  
 'Therefore, this is the word of the 33  
 LORD concerning the king of Assyria:

He shall not enter this city  
 nor shoot an arrow there,  
 he shall not advance against it with  
 shield  
 nor cast up a siege-ramp against it.  
 By the way on which he came he 34  
 shall go back;  
 this city he shall not enter.  
 This is the very word of the  
 LORD.  
 I will shield this city to deliver it, 35  
 for my own sake and for the sake  
 of my servant David.'

The angel of the LORD went out and 36  
 struck down a hundred and eighty-five  
 thousand men in the Assyrian camp;  
 when morning dawned, they all lay  
 dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria 37  
 broke camp, went back to Nineveh and  
 stayed there. One day, while he was 38  
 worshipping in the temple of his god  
 Nisroch, Adrammelech and Sharezer  
 his sons murdered him and escaped to  
 the land of Ararat. He was succeeded  
 by his son Esarhaddon.

At this time Hezekiah fell dan- 38<sup>b</sup>  
 gerously ill and the prophet Isaiah son  
 of Amoz came to him and said, 'This  
 is the word of the LORD: Give your

<sup>a</sup> and meadow; *prob. rdg.; Heb.* its meadow.  
<sup>b</sup> Verses 1-8, 21, 22: cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 1-11.

term for Jerusalem. *Tosses her head*: gesture of contempt. 24: *Tallest cedars of Lebanon*: the most powerful and exalted kings; compare Ezek.31.3-14. 25: To dry up *streams . . . with the soles of the feet* is a figure of speech for easy victory over Egypt whose power is in the Nile River. 26: Achievements claimed by Assyria were *planned* and *brought about* by God. 27: Grass sprang up on the mud *roof-tops* of Palestinian houses but dried up quickly in the *east wind* from the desert. 29: Under God's power Sennacherib is as helpless as a prisoner led into captivity with a *hook in his lips*. 30: Either the sign is that after two years conditions of life will be normal; or it may be a proverb that the change from adversity to prosperity is gradual. 32: *Remnant*: see 10.21-22 n. 36: An *angel of the LORD* appears in the Bible either as the LORD himself (Exod.3.2-6) or as a messenger or agent of God's will in some event.

38.1-22: *Hezekiah's illness*. See 2 Kgs.20.1-11. 3: Hezekiah uses the language of the Lament;

last instructions to your household, for you are a dying man and will not recover.' Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and offered this prayer to the LORD: 'O LORD, remember how I have lived before thee, faithful and loyal in thy service, always doing what was good in thine eyes.' And he wept bitterly. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: 'Go and say to Hezekiah: "This is the word of the LORD the God of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city from the king of Assyria and will protect this city."' Then Isaiah told them to apply a fig-plaster; so they made one and applied it to the boil, and he recovered. Then Hezekiah said, 'By what sign shall I know that I shall go up into the house of the LORD?' And Isaiah said,<sup>d</sup> 'This shall be your sign from the LORD that he will do what he has promised. Watch the shadow cast by the sun on the stairway of Ahaz: I will bring backwards ten steps the shadow which has gone down on the stairway.' And the sun went back ten steps on the stairway down which it had gone.

9 A poem of Hezekiah king of Judah after his recovery from his illness, as it was written down:

10 I thought: In the prime of life I must pass away;  
for the rest of my years I am consigned to the gates of Sheol.

11 I said: I shall no longer see the LORD  
in the land of the living;  
never again, like those who live in the world,  
shall I look on a man.

12 My dwelling is taken from me,  
pulled up like a shepherd's tent;  
thou hast cut short my life like a weaver  
who severs the web from the thrum.

From morning to night thou tormentest me,  
then I am racked with pain till the morning.

All my bones are broken, as a lion would break them;  
from morning to night thou tormentest me.  
I twitter as if I were a swallow,  
I moan like a dove.  
My eyes falter as I look up to the heights;  
O Lord, pay heed, stand surety for me.

How can I complain, what can I say to the LORD  
when he himself has done this?  
I wander to and fro all my life long in the bitterness of my soul.

Yet, O Lord, my soul shall live with thee;  
do thou give my spirit rest.<sup>e</sup>  
Restore me and give me life.  
Bitterness had indeed been my lot in place of prosperity;  
but thou by thy love hast brought me back  
from the pit of destruction;  
for thou hast cast all my sins behind thee.

Sheol cannot confess thee,  
Death cannot praise thee,  
nor can they who go down to the abyss  
hope for thy truth.

The living, the living alone can confess thee  
as I do this day,  
as a father makes thy truth known,  
O God, to his sons.

The LORD is at hand to save me;  
so let us sound the music of our praises  
all our life long in the house of the LORD.<sup>f</sup>

At this time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent

<sup>c</sup> Verses 21, 22 transposed.

<sup>d</sup> And Isaiah said: *prob. rdg., cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 9; Heb. om.*

<sup>e</sup> Yet . . . rest: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>f</sup> Verses 21, 22 transposed to follow verse 6.

<sup>g</sup> Verses 1-8: *cp. 2 Kgs. 20. 12-19.*

see Introduction to Pss. 9-20: The song ascribed here to Hezekiah is a typical individual thanksgiving psalm, used in the Temple service of thanksgiving for deliverance from suffering. See Pss. 32; 116. 11: *See the LORD: visit the Temple.* 18-19: According to Hebrew thought, it was impossible to *confess*, i.e. *praise*, God or relate to him, after death.

39.1-8: Hezekiah and ambassadors from Babylon. See 2 Kgs. 20.12-19. The Babylonian king

envoys with a gift to Hezekiah; for he had heard that he had been ill and was well again. Hezekiah welcomed them and showed them all his treasury, silver and gold, spices and fragrant oil, his entire armoury and everything to be found among his treasures; there was nothing in his house and in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and asked him, 'What did these men say and where have they come from?' 'They have come from a far-off country,' Hezekiah answered, 'from Babylon.' Then Isaiah asked, 'What did they see in your house?' 'They saw everything,' Hezekiah replied; 'there was nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.' Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD of Hosts: The time is coming, says the LORD, when everything in your house, and all that your forefathers have amassed till the present day, will be carried away to Babylon; not a thing shall be left. And some of the sons who will be born to you, sons of your own begetting, shall be taken and shall be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' Hezekiah answered, 'The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good'; thinking to himself that peace and security would last out his lifetime.

*News of the returning exiles*

40 Comfort, comfort my people;<sup>h</sup>  
—it is the voice of your God;  
2 speak tenderly to Jerusalem<sup>i</sup>  
and tell her this,  
that she has fulfilled her term of  
bondage,  
that her penalty is paid;

she has received at the LORD's hand  
double<sup>j</sup> measure for all her sins.

There is a voice that cries: 3  
Prepare a road for the LORD  
through the wilderness,  
clear a highway across the desert for  
our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, 4  
every mountain and hill brought  
down;  
rugged places shall be made smooth  
and mountain-ranges become a  
plain.

Thus shall the glory of the LORD 5  
be revealed,  
and all mankind together shall see it;  
for the LORD himself has spoken.

A voice says, 'Cry', 6  
and another asks, 'What shall I cry?'  
'That all mankind is grass,  
they last no longer than a flower of  
the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, 7  
when the breath of<sup>k</sup> the LORD blows  
upon them;<sup>l</sup>

the grass withers, the flowers fade, 8  
but the word of our God endures  
for evermore.<sup>m</sup>

You who bring Zion good news,<sup>n</sup> up 9  
with you to the mountain-top;  
lift up your voice and shout,  
you who bring good news to  
Jerusalem,<sup>n</sup>  
lift it up fearlessly;  
cry to the cities of Judah, 'Your  
God is here.'

*h* Comfort . . . people: or Comfort, O my people, comfort.

*i* speak . . . Jerusalem: or bid Jerusalem be of good heart.

*j* double: or full.

*k* the breath of: or a wind from.

*l* Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds surely the people are grass.

*m* You . . . news: or O Zion, bringer of good news.

*n* you . . . Jerusalem: or O Jerusalem, bringer of good news.

sent envoys to Hezekiah, ostensibly to inquire about his health, but probably to encourage rebellion against Assyria. The date is probably 705–703 B.C. Isaiah criticizes the welcome given the Babylonians and announces judgment against Hezekiah.

40.1–55.13: Words of hope. On Second Isaiah, see Introduction.

40.1–11: The prophet's commission. 1: This second part of Isaiah is known as "The Consolation of Israel" because the prophet brings *comfort* to the captives in the Exile. 2: *Fulfilled . . . bondage*: the Exile is over. 3: The *voice that cries*, here and in v. 6, is that of the LORD giving the prophet his mission (6.8; Jer.1.7–10; Ezek.2.1–3) to prepare the return from the captivity across the desert as in the Exodus. 4: God will eliminate all difficulties from the path of the returning captives. 5: *The glory of the LORD*, i.e. the presence and power of God, will become manifest to all nations in the restoration of Israel. 6–8: Like First Isaiah (6.1–13), this prophet overhears the discussion in the heavenly council. 6: *Another*: the prophet.

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|---|---|---|
| <p>10 Here is the Lord GOD coming in<br/>might,<br/>coming to rule with his right arm.<br/>His recompense comes with him,<br/>he carries his reward before him.</p> <p>11 He will tend his flock like a<br/>shepherd<br/>and gather them together with<br/>his arm;<br/>he will carry the lambs in his bosom<br/>and lead the ewes to water.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Israel delivered and redeemed</i></p> <p>12 Who has gauged the waters in the<br/>palm of his hand,<br/>or with its span set limits to the<br/>heavens?<br/>Who has held all the soil of earth<br/>in a bushel,<br/>or weighed the mountains on a<br/>balance<br/>and the hills on a pair of scales?<br/>13 Who has set limits to the spirit of<br/>the LORD?<br/>What counsellor stood at his side<br/>to instruct him?<br/>14 With whom did he confer to gain<br/>discernment?<br/>Who taught him how to do justice<br/>or gave him lessons in wisdom?<br/>15 Why, to him nations are but drops<br/>from a bucket,<br/>no more than moisture on the<br/>scales;<br/>coasts and islands weigh as light as<br/>specks of dust.<br/>16 All Lebanon does not yield wood<br/>enough for fuel<br/>or beasts enough for a sacrifice.<br/>17 All nations dwindle to nothing<br/>before him,<br/>he reckons them mere nothings, less<br/>than nought.</p> <p>18 What likeness will you find for God<br/>or what form to resemble his?<br/>19 Is it an image which a craftsman<br/>sets up,</p> | <p>and a goldsmith covers with plate<br/>and fits with studs of silver as a<br/>costly gift?<br/>Or is it mulberry-wood that will<br/>not rot which a man chooses,<br/>seeking out a skilful craftsman for it,<br/>to mount an image that will not fall?<br/>Each workman helps the others,<br/>each man encourages his fellow.<br/>The craftsman urges on the<br/>goldsmith,<br/>the gilder urges the man who beats<br/>the anvil,<br/>he declares the soldering to be<br/>sound;<br/>he fastens the image with nails<br/>so that it will not fall down.</p> <p>Do you not know, have you not<br/>heard,<br/>were you not told long ago,<br/>have you not perceived ever since<br/>the world began,<br/>that God sits throned on the vaulted<br/>roof of earth,<br/>whose inhabitants are like<br/>grasshoppers?<br/>He stretches out the skies like a<br/>curtain,<br/>he spreads them out like a tent to<br/>live in;<br/>he reduces the great to nothing<br/>and makes all earth's princes less<br/>than nothing.<br/>Scarcely are they planted, scarcely<br/>sown,<br/>scarcely have they taken root in the<br/>earth,<br/>before he blows upon them and<br/>they wither away,<br/>and a whirlwind carries them off<br/>like chaff.<br/>To whom then will you liken me,<br/>whom set up as my equal?<br/>asks the Holy One.<br/>Lift up your eyes to the heavens;<br/>consider who created it all,</p> <p><small>o These are verses 6 and 7 of ch. 41, transposed to this point.<br/>p Or locusts.</small></p> | <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> |
|---|---|---|

40.12-31: The majestic Creator. 12-14: Rhetorical questions stress the majesty (v. 12) and the wisdom (vv. 13-14) of God. 15-17: All nations are nothing before him. 15: *Coasts and islands*: lit. "islands." 16: *Lebanon* had the biggest forest of the largest trees known to ancient man. 18-20: Probably an interpolation, with 41.6-7. No *image* resembles God. 21-24: God controls the destinies of men. 22: The *vaulted roof* is the horizon or the dome over the earth. 25-26: *Holy One* of Israel, the characteristic title given to God by Second Isaiah, has its foun-

<p>led out their host one by one and called them all by their names; through his great might, his might and power, not one is missing.</p> <p>27 Why do you complain, O Jacob, and you, Israel, why do you say, 'My plight is hidden from the LORD and my cause has passed out of God's notice'?</p> <p>28 Do you not know, have you not heard? The LORD, the everlasting God, creator of the wide world, grows neither weary nor faint; no man can fathom his understanding.</p> <p>29 He gives vigour to the weary, new strength to the exhausted.</p> <p>30 Young men may grow weary and faint, even in their prime they may stumble and fall; 31 but those who look to the LORD will win new strength, they will grow wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will march on and never grow faint.</p> <p>41 Keep silence before me, all you coasts and islands; let the peoples come to meet me.<sup>q</sup> Let them come near, then let them speak; we will meet at that place of judgement, I and they.</p> <p>2 Tell me, who raised up that one from the east, one greeted by victory wherever he goes? Who is it that puts nations into his power and makes kings go down before him,<sup>r</sup></p>	<p>he scatters them with his sword like dust and with his bow like chaff before the wind; he puts them to flight and passes 3 on unscathed, swifter than any traveller on foot? Whose work is this, I ask, who has 4 brought it to pass? Who has summoned the generations from the beginning? It is I, the LORD, I am the first, and to the last of them I am He. Coasts and islands saw it and were 5 afraid, the world trembled from end to end.<sup>s</sup></p> <p>But you, Israel my servant, 8<sup>t</sup> you, Jacob whom I have chosen, race of Abraham my friend, I have taken you up, 9 have fetched you from the ends of the earth, and summoned you from its farthest corners, I have called you my servant, have chosen you and not cast you off; fear nothing, for I am with you; 10 be not afraid, for I am your God. I strengthen you, I help you, I support you with my victorious right hand.</p> <p>Now shall all who defy you 11 be disappointed and put to shame; all who set themselves against you shall be as nothing; they shall vanish.</p>
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*q* come to meet me: *prob. rdg., transposing, with slight change, from end of verse 5; Heb. win new strength (repeated from 40. 31).*

*r* before him: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

*s* See note on verse 1.

*t* Verses 6 and 7 transposed to follow 40. 20.

dation in the inaugural vision of Isaiah of Jerusalem; see 6.3. It signifies that God is and acts beyond all earthly and/or profane causality and motivation. Hence, the terms "creator" and *created* are used more frequently by Second Isaiah than by any other OT writer; see 41.20, 42.5, etc. 28: See Pss. 90.2; 147.5. 31: See Pss. 103.5.

41.1-29: **The LORD in court.** The framework of the chapter is a courtroom scene (*place of judgement, v. 1*) in which the LORD himself argues the case that he controls historical events. 1: *Coasts and islands*: all the earth to the farthest reaches of the Mediterranean Sea, the then known world. 2: The *one from the east* of whom these first four verses speak is Cyrus, whom the ancient world welcomed as a benevolent liberator from the harsh Babylonians. 4: God will be there when the *last generations* of men will cease to be. 8: In Second Isaiah, Israel is represented as a *servant chosen* anew by God, never to be *cast off* again to the mercy of the nations. The title *servant* was applied to the patriarchs, *Abraham* and *Jacob* (Gen.26.24; 28.25), and to prophets



- 12 You will look for your assailants  
but not find them;  
all who take up arms against you  
shall be as nothing, nothing at all.
- 13 For I, the LORD your God,  
take you by the right hand;  
I say to you, Do not fear;  
It is I who help you,
- 14 fear not, Jacob you worm and  
Israel poor louse.  
It is I who help you, says the LORD,  
your ransom, the Holy One of  
Israel.
- 15 See, I will make of you a sharp  
threshing-sledge,  
new and studded with teeth;  
you shall thresh the mountains and  
crush them  
and reduce the hills to chaff;  
16 you shall winnow them, the wind  
shall carry them away  
and a great gale shall scatter them.  
Then shall you rejoice in the LORD  
and glory in the Holy One of  
Israel.
- 17 The wretched and the poor look for  
water and find none,  
their tongues are parched with  
thirst;  
but I the LORD will give them an  
answer,  
I, the God of Israel, will not  
forsake them.
- 18 I will open rivers among the sand-  
dunes  
and wells in the valleys;  
I will turn the wilderness into pools  
and dry land into springs of water;
- 19 I will plant cedars in the wastes,  
and acacia and myrtle and wild  
olive;  
the pine shall grow on the barren  
heath  
side by side with fir and box,  
20 that men may see and know,  
may once for all give heed and  
understand
- that the LORD himself has done this,  
that the Holy One of Israel has  
performed it.
- Come, open your plea, says the LORD, 21  
present your case, says Jacob's King;  
let them come forward, these idols, 22  
let them foretell the future.  
Let them declare the meaning of  
past events  
that we may give our minds to it;  
let them predict things that are to be  
that we may know their outcome.  
Declare what will happen hereafter; 23  
then we shall know you are gods.  
Do what you can, good or ill,  
anything that may grip us with  
fear and awe.  
You cannot! You are sprung from 24  
nothing,  
your works are rotten;  
whoever chooses you is vile as you  
are.  
I roused one from the north, and 25  
he obeyed;  
I called one from the east,  
summoned him in<sup>u</sup> my name,  
he marches over viceroys as if they  
were mud,  
like a potter treading his clay.  
Tell us, who declared this from the 26  
beginning, that we might know  
it,  
or told us beforehand so that we  
could say, 'He was right'?
- Not one declared, not one foretold,  
not one heard a sound from you.  
Here is one who will speak first as 27  
advocate for Zion,  
here I appoint defending counsel  
for Jerusalem;  
but from the other side no advocate 28  
steps forward  
and, when I look, there is no one  
there.  
I ask a question and no one answers;  
see what empty things they are! 29

<sup>u</sup> summoned him in: or who will call on.

and kings, especially David. 14: The *ransomer* (Heb. *goel*) was the closest relative, whose duty it was to be the "avenger of blood" (Num.35.19-29) in a murder, or to buy back a kinsman from slavery (Lev.25.48), or to pay his debt. The LORD is Israel's nearest kin who first ransomed them from Egypt by his mighty deeds of the Exodus and now will repeat the wonders. 18: The return from captivity will be more wonderful than the Exodus because the LORD will not only furnish water in the desert (Num.20.8-12) but will transform it into *pools*. 21: *Plea . . . case*: language of a juridical process. 25: *One from the north . . . east*: Cyrus from Persia. 27: The LORD is the *one* who speaks as the *advocate* (lawyer) for Israel, 28-29: On the expression of monotheism, see Introduction. 29: A final sarcastic denial of the existence of other gods.

	Nothing that they do has any worth, their effigies are wind, mere nothings.		I am the LORD; the LORD <sup>z</sup> is my name; I will not give my glory to another god, nor my praise to any idol.	8
42	Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, I have bestowed my spirit upon him, and he will make justice shine on the nations.		See how the first prophecies have come to pass, and now I declare new things; before they break from the bud I announce them to you.	9
2	He will not call out or lift his voice high, or <sup>v</sup> make himself heard in the open street.		Sing a new song to the LORD, sing his praise throughout the earth, you that sail the sea, and all sea-creatures, and you that inhabit the coasts and islands.	10
3	He will not break a bruised reed, or snuff out a smouldering wick; he will make justice shine on every race, <sup>w</sup>		Let the wilderness and its towns rejoice, and the villages of the tribe of Kedar.	11
4	never faltering, never breaking down, <sup>x</sup> he will plant justice on earth, while coasts and islands wait for his teaching.		Let those who live in Sela shout for joy and cry out from the hill-tops. You coasts and islands, all uplift his praises; let all ascribe glory to the LORD.	12
5	Thus speaks the LORD who is God, he who created the skies and stretched them out, who fashioned the earth and all that grows in it, who gave breath to its people, the breath of life to all who walk upon it:		The LORD will go forth as a warrior, he will rouse the frenzy of battle like a hero; he will shout, he will raise the battle-cry and triumph over his foes.	13
6	I, the LORD, have called you with righteous purpose and taken you by the hand; I have formed you, and appointed you to be a light <sup>y</sup> to all peoples, a beacon for the nations,		I kept silence and held myself in check; now I will cry like a woman in labour,	14
7	to open eyes that are blind, to bring captives out of prison, out of the dungeons where they lie in darkness.			

<sup>v</sup> He will not . . . or: *or* In very truth he will call out and lift his voice high, and . . .  
<sup>w</sup> on every race: *or* in truth.  
<sup>x</sup> never faltering . . . down: *or* he will neither rebuke nor wound.  
<sup>y</sup> *Or* a covenant. <sup>z</sup> the LORD: *or* He.

42.1–43.7: **Israel, the servant of God.** These poems (except possibly the hymn in 42.10–13) speak of the relationship between God and his servant, and of the role of that servant.

42.1–4: **First servant song.** This and three other passages in Second Isaiah are generally acknowledged to have a unique orientation; the other three are 49.1–6; 50.4–11; 52.13–53.12. Here God himself speaks to introduce his *servant*. Some scholars argue that the servant is a particular individual but without agreement concerning his identity; both the language and context of this song, however, urge that he is Israel. 1: *Spirit*: see 11.2 n. 2–4: The servant will be gentle of *voice* and sympathetic to those in desperate spiritual straits, the *bruised reed* and *smouldering wick*. 4: *Teaching*, or “Law” (Heb. *Torah*), parallels *justice*. The servant will bring it to all peoples, the *coasts and islands*.

42.5–43.7: **The Creator and his servant Israel.** 6: *With righteous purpose*: according to the divine plan. *Formed* is the same word used in Gen.2.7 for the making of man, i.e. a potter molding clay. 10–11: *Kedar* and *Sela*, remote inhabited places in the desert of Arabia, the former to the north and the latter to the south, will praise the LORD along with the remote

whimpering, panting and gasping.  
 15 I will lay waste mountains and hills  
 and shrivel all their green herbs;  
 I will turn rivers into desert  
 wastes<sup>a</sup>  
 and dry up all the pools.  
 16 Then will I lead blind men on their  
 way<sup>b</sup>  
 and guide them by paths they do  
 not know;  
 I will turn darkness into light before  
 them  
 and straighten their twisting  
 roads.  
 All this I will do and leave nothing  
 undone.  
 17 Those who trust in an image,  
 those who take idols for their gods  
 turn tail in bitter shame.  
 18 Hear now, you that are deaf;  
 you blind men, look and see:  
 19 yet who is blind but my servant,  
 who so deaf as the messenger whom  
 I send?  
 Who so blind as the one who holds  
 my commission,  
 so deaf as the servant of the  
 LORD?  
 20 You have seen much but  
 remembered little,  
 your ears are wide open but nothing  
 is heard.  
 21 It pleased the LORD, for the  
 furtherance of his justice,  
 to make his law a law of surpassing  
 majesty;  
 22 yet here is a people plundered and  
 taken as prey,  
 all of them ensnared, trapped in  
 holes,  
 lost to sight in dungeons,  
 carried off as spoil without hope of  
 rescue,  
 as plunder with no one to say,  
 'Give it back.'  
 23 Hear this, all of you who will,  
 listen henceforward and give me a  
 hearing:  
 24 who gave away Jacob for plunder,  
 who gave Israel away for spoil?

Was it not the LORD? They sinned  
 against him,  
 they would not follow his ways  
 and refused obedience to his law;  
 so in his anger he poured out upon 25  
 Jacob  
 his wrath and the fury of battle.  
 It wrapped him in flames, yet still  
 he did not learn the lesson,  
 scorched him, yet he did not lay it  
 to heart.

But now this is the word of the 43  
 LORD,  
 the word of your creator, O Jacob,  
 of him who fashioned you, Israel:  
 Have no fear; for I have paid your  
 ransom;  
 I have called you by name and you  
 are my own.  
 When you pass through deep waters, 2  
 I am with you,  
 when you pass through rivers,  
 they will not sweep you away;  
 walk through fire and you will not  
 be scorched,  
 through flames and they will not  
 burn you.  
 For I am the LORD your God, 3  
 the Holy One of Israel, your  
 deliverer;  
 for your ransom I give Egypt,  
 Nubia and Seba are your price.  
 You are more precious to me than 4  
 the Assyrians,  
 you are honoured and I have loved  
 you,  
 I would give the Edomites in  
 exchange for you,  
 and the Leummim for your life.

Have no fear; for I am with you; 5  
 I will bring your children from the  
 east  
 and gather you all from the west.  
 I will say to the north, 'Give them 6  
 up',  
 and to the south, 'Do not hold  
 them back.'

<sup>a</sup> desert wastes: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* coasts and islands.  
<sup>b</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds which they do not know.

places to the west, the *coasts and islands*. 18-19: God heals the deaf and blind Israelites, his *servant*, thereby reversing the action performed by Isaiah at his command in 6.10. 22: *People . . . taken as prey*: Israel in the Exile. No human power, but only God will say to Babylon: "Give back the captives." 43.3: God gave *Egypt* and *Nubia* (in Africa) and *Seba* (in Arabia) into the hands of the Persians so that Israel might be allowed to return from the Exile. 6-7: Israel

	Bring my sons and daughters from afar, bring them from the ends of the earth;		For your sakes I have sent to Babylon;	
7	bring every one who is called by my name, all whom I have created, whom I have formed, all whom I have made for my glory.'		I will lay the Chaldaeans prostrate as they flee, and their cry of triumph will turn to groaning.	
8	Bring out this people, a people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.		I am the LORD, your Holy One, your creator, Israel, and your King.	15
9	All the nations are gathered together and the peoples assembled. Who amongst them can expound this thing and interpret for us all that has gone before? Let them produce witnesses to prove their case, or let them listen and say, 'That is the truth.'		Thus says the LORD, who opened a way in the sea and a path through mighty waters, who drew on chariot and horse to their destruction, a whole army, men of valour; there they lay, never to rise again; they were crushed, snuffed out like a wick:	16 17
10	My witnesses, says the LORD, are you, my servants, you whom I have chosen to know me and put your faith in me and understand that I am He. Before me there was no god fashioned nor ever shall be after me.		Cease to dwell on days gone by and to brood over past history. Here and now I will do a new thing; this moment it will break from the bud. Can you not perceive it? I will make a way even through the wilderness and paths in the barren desert; the wild beasts shall do me honour, the wolf and the ostrich; for I will provide water in the wilderness and rivers in the barren desert, where my chosen people may drink.	18 19
11	I am the LORD, I myself, and none but I can deliver.		I have formed this people for myself and they shall proclaim my praises.	21
12	I myself have made it known in full, and declared it, I and no alien god amongst you, and you are my witnesses, says the LORD.		Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob; much less did you weary yourself in my service, O Israel.	22
13	I am God; from this very day I am He. What my hand holds, none can snatch away; what I do, none can undo.		You did not bring me sheep as whole-offerings	23
14	Thus says the LORD your ransomer, the Holy One of Israel:			

brought back from Exile is a people newly *created* by God—begotten by him, they are his *sons* and *daughters* and can be called by his *name*.

**43.8–44.8:** Israel can witness that the LORD is God. As in 41.1–29, the framework of these poems is the legal process; the court will decide who is God and whether the LORD is a just God. **8–10:** In this court scene God calls *blind* and *deaf* Israel as *witnesses* to prove that he alone is God. **14:** *Ransomer*: see 41.14 n. The LORD has *sent* his power to *Babylon* to act on behalf of Israel. *Holy One*: see 40.25–26 n. **15:** The *King* in the Ancient Near East was an absolute ruler having the power of life and death. Only the LORD has such power in Israel because he was her *creator*. **19–21:** The return from Exile is a creative act by which a *new thing*, i.e. the redeemed people of Israel, is *formed*. **23:** The Law did require *sacrifices*, but neither the

- or honour me with sacrifices;  
I asked you for no burdensome offerings  
and wearied you with no demands for incense.
- 24 You did not buy me sweet-cane with your money  
or glut me with the fat of your sacrifices;  
rather you burdened me with your sins  
and wearied me with your iniquities.
- 25 I alone, I am He,  
who for his own sake wipes out your transgressions,  
who will remember your sins no more.
- 26 Cite me by name, let us argue it out;  
set forth your pleading and justify yourselves.
- 27 Your first father transgressed,  
your spokesmen rebelled against me,  
28 and your princes profaned my sanctuary;  
so I sent Jacob to his doom  
and left Israel to execration.
- 44 Hear me now, Jacob my servant,  
hear me, my chosen Israel.
- 2 Thus says the LORD your maker,  
your helper, who fashioned you from birth:  
have no fear, Jacob my servant,  
Jeshurun whom I have chosen,  
3 for I will pour down rain on a thirsty land,  
showers on the dry ground.  
I will pour out my spirit on your offspring  
and my blessing on your children.
- 4 They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,  
like poplars by a flowing stream.
- This man shall say, 'I am the LORD's man',  
that one shall call himself a son of Jacob,  
another shall write the LORD's name on his hand  
and shall add the name of Israel to his own.
- Thus says the LORD, Israel's King, the LORD of Hosts, his ransomers:  
I am the first and I am the last,  
and there is no god but me.  
Who is like me? Let him stand up,  
let him declare himself and speak and show me his evidence,  
let him announce beforehand<sup>c</sup> things to come,  
let him<sup>d</sup> declare what is yet to happen.
- Take heart, do not be afraid. 8  
Did I not foretell this long ago?  
I declared it, and you are my witnesses.  
Is there any god beside me,  
or any creator, even one I do not know?
- Those who make idols are less than 9  
nothing;  
all their cherished images profit nobody;  
their worshippers are blind,  
sheer ignorance makes fools of them.
- If a man makes a god or casts an 10  
image,  
his labour is wasted.  
Why! its votaries show their folly; 11  
the craftsmen too are but men.  
Let them all gather together and confront me,  
all will be afraid and look the fools they are.

<sup>c</sup> let him announce beforehand: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* since my appointing an ancient people and . . .  
<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.*

Law nor the prophets looked upon these as the basic bonds in Israel's relation to her God (see 1.11; Exod.20.23-23.19; Jer.7.21-23). 24: *Sweet-cane*: an aromatic plant used in making incense and sacred anointing oil; see Exod.30.23-25. 26: The LORD wants Israel (compare Job 13.15-27; 16.21) to cite him to a lawsuit, if it feels unjustly oppressed. 27: *First father*: Jacob (Gen.27.1-29; Hos.12.2-4). *Your spokesmen*: rulers, priests, and prophets. 44.2: *Jeshurun*: a name for Israel; it appears also in Deut.32.15; 33.5,26. 3: *Spirit*: see 11.1 n. 5: The name of his owner was tattooed on the hand of a Babylonian slave (see Rev.13.16). 6: *Ransomers*: see 41.14 n.

44.9-20: *Idols and idolaters are ridiculous*. This biting satire on idolatry appears to be an addition to the preceding verses as a commentary on them. In the MT, the entire unit is understood as prose. 9-11: *All who make idols are fools*. 10: See 41.29; 45.20. 11: See 1.29; 42.17.

- 12 The blacksmith sharpens a graving tool and hammers out his work<sup>e</sup> hot from the coals and shapes it with his strong arm; when he grows hungry his strength fails, if he has no water to drink he tires. The woodworker draws his line taut and marks out a figure with a scribe; he planes the wood and measures it with callipers, and he carves it to the shape of a man, comely as the human form, to be set up presently in a house.<sup>f</sup>
- 14 A man plants a cedar and the rain makes it grow, so that later on he will have cedars to cut down; or he chooses an ilex or an oak to raise a stout tree for himself in the forest. It becomes fuel for his fire: some of it he takes and warms himself, some he kindles and bakes bread on it, and some he makes into a god and prostrates himself, shaping it into an idol and bowing down before it. The one half of it he burns in the fire and on this he roasts meat, so that he may eat his roast and be satisfied; he also warms himself at it and he says, 'Good! I can feel the heat, I am growing warm.' Then what is left of the wood he makes into a god by carving it into shape; he bows down to it and prostrates himself and prays to it, saying, 'Save me; for thou art my god.' Such people neither know nor understand, their eyes made too blind to see, their minds too narrow to discern. Such a man will not use his reason, he has neither the wit nor the sense to say, 'Half of it I have burnt, yes, and used its embers to bake bread; I have roasted meat on them too and eaten it; but the rest of it I turn into this abominable thing and so I am worshipping a log of wood.' He feeds on ashes indeed! His own deluded mind has misled him, he cannot recollect himself so far as to say, 'Why! this thing in my hand is a sham.'
- 21 Remember all this, Jacob, remember, Israel, for you are my servant,
- I have fashioned you, and you are to serve me;  
you shall not forget me, Israel.  
I have swept away your sins like a dissolving mist,  
and your transgressions are dispersed like clouds;  
turn back to me; for I have ransomed you.  
Shout in triumph, you heavens, for it is the LORD's doing;  
cry out for joy, you lowest depths of the earth;  
break into songs of triumph, you mountains,  
you forest and all your trees;  
for the LORD has ransomed Jacob and made Israel his masterpiece.
- Thus says the LORD, your ransomer,  
who fashioned you from birth:  
I am the LORD who made all things,  
by myself I stretched out the skies,  
alone I hammered out the floor of the earth.  
I frustrate false prophets and their signs  
and make fools of diviners;  
I reverse what wise men say  
and make nonsense of their wisdom.  
I make my servants' prophecies come true  
and give effect to my messengers' designs.  
I say of Jerusalem,  
'She shall be inhabited once more',  
and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt;  
all their ruins I will restore.'  
I say to the deep waters, 'Be dried up;  
I will make your streams run dry.'  
I say to Cyrus, 'You shall be my shepherd  
to carry out all my purpose,  
so that Jerusalem may be rebuilt  
and the foundations of the temple may be laid.'

<sup>e</sup> his work: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* he works. <sup>f</sup> Or a shrine.

12-20: The procedures for making idols are reviewed to show that they are nothing but human creations.

44.21-45.17: The election of Cyrus. The LORD announces that his means of ransoming Israel is through a foreign king. 24: *Ransomer*: see 41.14 n. 25: *Signs*: see 7.11-12 n. 28: *Cyrus*, king of Persia (559-529 B.C.) and victor over Babylon (539 B.C.), issued the edict that *Jerusalem* and

- 45 Thus says the LORD to Cyrus his  
 anointed,  
 Cyrus whom he has taken by the  
 hand  
 to subdue nations before him  
 and undo the might of kings;  
 before whom gates shall be opened  
 and no doors be shut:
- 2 I will go before you  
 and level the swelling hills;  
 I will break down gates of bronze  
 and hack through iron bars.
- 3 I will give you treasures from dark  
 vaults,  
 hoarded in secret places,  
 that you may know that I am the  
 LORD,  
 Israel's God who calls you by  
 name.
- 4 For the sake of Jacob my servant  
 and Israel my chosen  
 I have called you by name  
 and given you your title, though  
 you have not known me.
- 5 I am the LORD, there is no other;  
 there is no god beside me.  
 I will strengthen you though you  
 have not known me,
- 6 so that men from the rising and the  
 setting sun  
 may know that there is none but I:  
 I am the LORD, there is no other;
- 7 I make the light, I create  
 darkness,  
 author alike of prosperity and  
 trouble.  
 I, the LORD, do all these things.
- 8 Rain righteousness, you heavens,  
 let the skies above pour down;  
 let the earth open to receive it,  
 that it may bear the fruit of  
 salvation  
 with righteousness in blossom at its  
 side.  
 All this I, the LORD, have created.
- 9 Will the pot contend<sup>g</sup> with the  
 potter,  
 or the earthenware<sup>h</sup> with the hand  
 that shapes it?  
 Will the clay ask the potter what he  
 is making?  
 or his<sup>i</sup> handiwork say to him, 'You  
 have no skill'?
- Will the babe say<sup>j</sup> to his father,  
 'What are you begetting?',  
 or to his mother, 'What are you  
 bringing to birth'?
- Thus says the LORD, Israel's Holy  
 One, his maker:  
 Would you dare question me  
 concerning my children,  
 or instruct me in my handiwork?  
 I alone, I made the earth  
 and created man upon it;  
 I, with my own hands, stretched out  
 the heavens  
 and caused all their host to shine.  
 I alone have roused this man in  
 righteousness,  
 and I will smooth his path before  
 him;  
 he shall rebuild my city  
 and let my exiles go free—  
 not for a price nor for a bribe,  
 says the LORD of Hosts.
- Thus says the LORD:  
 Toilers of Egypt and Nubian  
 merchants  
 and Sabaeans bearing tribute<sup>k</sup>  
 shall come into your power and be  
 your slaves,  
 shall come and march behind you in  
 chains;  
 they shall bow down before you in  
 supplication, saying,  
 'Surely God is among you and there  
 is no other,  
 no other god.  
 How then canst thou be a god that  
 hasten thyself,  
 O God of Israel, the deliverer?' 10 11 12 13 14 15

<sup>g</sup> Will . . . contend: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Ho! he has contended.

<sup>h</sup> Or shard.

<sup>i</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* your.

<sup>j</sup> Will . . . say: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Ho! you that say.

<sup>k</sup> bearing tribute: or men of stature.

the temple be rebuilt; see Ezra 1.1-4. *Shepherd*: king; see Ezek. ch. 34. 45.1: *Anointed* is the English equivalent of the Heb. *mashiah* (from which the word "Messiah" comes) and of the Gk. *christos* from which "Christ" is derived. Hebrew priests (Lev.8.12-13) and kings (1 Sam. 6.12-13) were anointed with oil, signifying a special gift of the spirit to carry out a commission given them by God. Cyrus is the only non-Israelite called "anointed" because he carried out God's purpose of liberating his people. God himself leads Cyrus *by the hand* so that he may accomplish his task without fail. 4: *Your title*: "anointed." 13: *This man*: Cyrus.

- 16 Those who defy him are confounded  
and brought to shame,  
those who make idols perish in  
confusion.
- 17 But Israel has been delivered by  
the LORD,  
delivered for all time to come;  
they shall not be confounded or put  
to shame for all eternity.
- 18 Thus says the LORD, the creator of  
the heavens,  
he who is God,  
who made the earth and fashioned it  
and himself fixed it fast,  
who created it no empty void,  
but made it for a place to dwell in:  
I am the LORD, there is no other.
- 19 I do not speak in secret, in realms  
of darkness,  
I do not say to the sons of Jacob,  
'Look for me in the empty void.'  
I the LORD speak what is right,  
declare what is just.
- 20 Gather together, come, draw near,  
all you survivors of the nations,  
you fools, who carry your wooden  
idols in procession  
and pray to a god that cannot save  
you.
- 21 Come forward and urge your case,  
consult together:  
who foretold this in days of old,  
who stated it long ago?  
Was it not I the LORD?  
There is no god but me;  
there is no god other than I,  
victorious and able to save.
- 22 Look to me and be saved,  
you peoples from all corners of  
the earth,  
for I am God, there is no other.
- 23 By my life I have sworn,  
I have given a promise of victory,  
a promise that will not be broken,  
that to me every knee shall bend  
and by me every tongue shall  
swear.
- In the LORD alone, men shall say,  
are victory and might  
and all who defy him  
shall stand ashamed in his presence,  
but all the sons of Israel shall stand  
victorious  
and find their glory in the LORD.
- Bel has crouched down, Nebo has  
stooped low:  
their images, once carried in your  
processions,  
have been loaded on to beasts and  
cattle,  
a burden for the weary creatures;  
they stoop and they crouch;  
not for them to bring the burden to  
safety;  
the gods themselves go into captivity.  
Listen to me, house of Jacob  
and all the remnant of the house  
of Israel,  
a load on me from your birth,  
carried by me from the womb:  
till you grow old I am He,  
and when white hairs come, I will  
carry you still;  
I have made you and I will bear the  
burden,  
I will carry you and bring you to  
safety.  
To whom will you liken me? Who  
is my equal?  
With whom can you compare me?  
Where is my like?  
Those who squander their bags of  
gold  
and weigh out their silver with a  
balance  
hire a goldsmith to fashion them  
into a god;  
then they worship it and fall  
prostrate before it;  
they hoist it shoulder-high and carry  
it home;  
they set it down on its base;  
there it must stand, it cannot stir  
from its place.

45.16–25: Lawsuit against idolators. 18: The *empty void* (better, “chaos”) preceded, and is the alternative to, creation. 20–21a: Idolators are summoned as if to a court; see 41.21. 21b–25: Note the clear statement of monotheism.

46.1–13: The LORD and the gods of Babylon. 1–7: The downfall of the Babylonian gods. 1: *Bel* (“lord”) is one of the titles of Marduk, the main Babylonian deity; *Nebo* (Babylonian Nabu), the god of wisdom, was considered Marduk’s son. The liturgies of Babylonian cultic festivities, among them the New Year’s celebration, included *processions of their images*. See also v. 7. 2–4: Babylon’s gods had to be carried to *safety* when Cyrus captured the city. In contrast the LORD has *carried* Israel from the time of her *birth* at the Exodus. 6–7: See 44.9–20.



- Let a man cry to it as he will, it  
never answers him;  
it cannot deliver him from his  
troubles.
- 8 Remember this, you rebels,  
consider it well, and abandon hope,  
9 remember all that happened long  
ago;  
for I am God, there is no other,  
I am God, and there is no one like  
me;
- 10 I reveal the end from the beginning,  
from ancient times I reveal what is  
to be;  
I say, 'My purpose shall take effect,  
I will accomplish all that I please.'
- 11 I summon a bird of prey<sup>l</sup> from the  
east,  
one from a distant land to fulfil my  
purpose.  
Mark this; I have spoken, and I  
will bring it about,  
I have a plan to carry out, and  
carry it out I will.
- 12 Listen to me, all you stubborn  
hearts,  
for whom victory is far off:  
13 I bring my victory near, it is not  
far off,  
and my deliverance shall not be  
delayed;  
I will grant deliverance in Zion  
and give my glory to Israel.<sup>m</sup>
- 47 Down with you, sit in the dust,  
virgin daughter of Babylon.  
Down from your throne, sit on the  
ground,  
daughter of the Chaldaeans;  
never again shall men call you  
soft-skinned and delicate.
- 2 Take up the millstone, grind meal,  
uncover your tresses;  
strip off your skirt, bare your thighs,  
wade through rivers,  
3 so that your nakedness may be  
plain to see
- and your shame exposed.  
I will take vengeance, I will treat  
with none of you,  
says the Holy One of Israel, our  
ransomer,  
whose name is the LORD of Hosts.
- Sit silent,  
be off into the shadows, daughter  
of the Chaldaeans;  
for never again shall men call you  
queen of many kingdoms.  
When I was angry with my  
people,  
I dishonoured my own possession  
and gave them into your power.  
You showed them no mercy,  
you made your yoke weigh heavy on  
the aged.  
You said then, 'I shall reign a queen  
for ever',  
while<sup>n</sup> you gave no thought to this  
and did not consider how it would  
end.  
Now therefore listen to this,  
you lover of luxury, carefree on  
your throne.  
You say to yourself,  
'I am, and who but I?  
No widow's weeds for me, no deaths  
of children.'  
Yet suddenly, in a single day,  
these two things shall come upon  
you;  
they shall both come upon you in  
full measure:<sup>o</sup>  
children's deaths and widowhood,  
for all your monstrous sorceries,  
your countless spells.  
Secure in your wicked ways you  
thought, 'No one is looking.'  
Your wisdom betrayed you,  
omniscient as you were,  
and you said to yourself,  
'I am, and who but I?'

<sup>l</sup> a bird of prey: or a massed host.

<sup>m</sup> and give my glory to Israel: or for Israel my glory.

<sup>n</sup> for ever', while: or of a wide realm, for all time' but.

<sup>o</sup> in full measure: or at random.

11: The one *from the east* is Cyrus; see 41.2; in 44.28 he is "my shepherd"; in 45.1, "his anointed." 47.1-15: A funeral song for Babylon. The city of Babylon, personified as a dethroned queen reduced to slavery, is commanded to mourn, for nothing can stop the punishment the LORD plans for her. The poem is a taunt song in *qinah* ("dirge") form. 1: *Daughter of Babylon*: better, "daughter Babylon." 2: To *grind meal* was the work of slaves whose task required them to strip off outer clothes, especially in working around irrigation rivers, i.e. canals. 4: *Holy One*: see 40.25-26 n. *Ransomer*: see 41.14 n. 8: Babylon describes herself in the same terms as did the LORD; see 43.13. 9-12: Magic, divination, and rituals for warding off evil were important elements in Babylonian religion. 10: Her famous *wisdom* was not able to reveal to Babylon her

- |    |  |  |             |
|----|--|--|-------------|
| 11 | Therefore evil shall come upon you,<br>and you will not know how to<br>master it;<br>disaster shall befall you,<br>and you will not be able to charm<br>it away;<br>ruin all unforeseen<br>shall come suddenly upon you.   | suddenly I acted and it came about.<br>I knew that you were stubborn,<br>your neck stiff as iron, your brow<br>like bronze,<br>therefore I told you of these things<br>long ago,<br>and declared them before they<br>came about,   | 4<br>5<br>6 |
| 12 | Persist in your spells and your<br>monstrous sorceries, <sup>p</sup><br>maybe you can get help from them,<br>maybe you will yet inspire awe.   | so that you could not say, 'This<br>was my idol's doing;<br>my image, the god that I fashioned,<br>he ordained them.'  | 6           |
| 13 | But no! in spite of your many wiles<br>you are powerless.<br>Let your astrologers, your star-<br>gazers<br>who foretell your future month by<br>month,<br>persist, and save you!   | You have heard what I said;<br>consider it well,<br>and you must admit the truth of it.<br>Now I show you new things,<br>hidden things which you did not<br>know before.   | 7           |
| 14 | But look, they are gone like chaff;<br>fire burns them up;<br>they cannot snatch themselves from<br>the flames;<br>this is no glowing coal to warm<br>them,<br>no fire for them to sit by.   | They were not created long ago,<br>but in this very hour;<br>you had never heard of them<br>before today.<br>You cannot say, 'I know them<br>already.'   | 8           |
| 15 | So much for your magicians<br>with whom you have trafficked all<br>your life:<br>they have stumbled off, each his<br>own way,<br>and there is no one to save you.  | You neither heard nor knew,<br>long ago your ears were closed;<br>for I knew that you were<br>untrustworthy, treacherous,<br>a notorious rebel from your birth.<br>For the sake of my own name I<br>was patient, <sup>q</sup><br>rather than destroy you I held<br>myself in check.    | 9           |
| 48 | Hear this, you house of Jacob,<br>you who are called by the name<br>of Israel,<br>you who spring from the seed of<br>Judah;<br>who swear by the name of the<br>LORD<br>and boast in the God of Israel,<br>but not in honesty or sincerity,<br>although you call yourselves citizens<br>of a holy city<br>and lean for support on the God<br>of Israel;<br>his name is the LORD of Hosts. | See how I tested you, not as silver<br>is tested,<br>but in the furnace of affliction;<br>there I purified you.<br>For my honour, for my own<br>honour I did it;<br>let them disparage my past<br>triumphs <sup>r</sup> if they will:<br>I will not give my glory to any<br>other god. | 10<br>11    |
| 2  | Long ago I announced what would<br>first happen,<br>I revealed it with my own mouth;   | Hear me, Jacob,<br>and Israel whom I called:<br>I am He; I am the first,   | 12          |

*p* Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds with which you have trafficked all your life (cp. verse 15).  
*q* See note on verse 11.  
*r* my past triumphs: transposed from verse 9.

basic weakness and consequent fall. 13: Astrology was a sophisticated art in Mesopotamia. 48.1–22: Hear what the LORD will do. Just as he controlled the past, so the God of Israel controls the future. 3: *With my own mouth*: that is, through the prophets. 4–5: The purpose of prophecy was to show that the LORD alone controls history. 6: *New things*: the message of deliverance in Second Isaiah. 10: See 1.25. *The furnace of affliction* was the Babylonian Exile. 12–16: The LORD promises to call Cyrus (*he whom I love*, v. 14) to destroy Babylon. 12: See 41.4.

I am the last also.  
 13 With my own hands I founded the earth,  
 with my right hand I formed the expanse of sky;  
 when I summoned them,  
 they sprang at once into being.  
 14 Assemble, all of you, and listen to me;  
 which of you has declared what is coming,  
 that he whom I love shall wreak my<sup>g</sup> will on Babylon  
 and the Chaldaeans shall be scattered?  
 15 I, I myself, have spoken, I have called him,  
 I have made him appear, and wherever he goes he shall prosper.  
 16 Draw near to me and hear this:  
 from the beginning I have never spoken in secret;  
 from the moment of its first happening I was there.<sup>h</sup>  
 17 Thus says the LORD your ransomer,  
 the Holy One of Israel:  
 I am the LORD your God:  
 I teach you for your own advantage  
 and lead you in the way you must go.  
 18 If only you had listened to my commands,  
 your prosperity would have rolled on like a river in flood  
 and your just success like the waves of the sea;  
 19 in number your children would have been like the sand  
 and your descendants countless as its grains;  
 their name would never be erased or blotted from my sight.  
 20 Come out of Babylon, hasten away from the Chaldaeans;  
 proclaim it with loud songs of triumph,  
 crying the news to the ends of the earth;

tell them, 'The LORD has ransomed his servant Jacob.'  
 Though he led them through desert places they suffered no thirst,  
 21 for them he made water run from the rock,  
 for them he cleft the rock and streams gushed forth.

There is no peace for the wicked,  
 22 says the LORD.

*Israel a light to the nations*

Listen to me, you coasts and islands,  
 49 pay heed, you peoples far away:  
 from birth the LORD called me,  
 he named me from my mother's womb.  
 He made my tongue his sharp sword 2  
 and concealed me under cover of his hand;  
 he made me a polished arrow  
 and hid me out of sight in his quiver.  
 He said to me, 'You are my servant, 3  
 Israel through whom I shall win glory';  
 so I rose to honour in the LORD's sight  
 and my God became my strength.<sup>u</sup>  
 Once I said, 'I have laboured in vain; 4  
 I have spent my strength for nothing, to no purpose';  
 yet in truth my cause is with the LORD  
 and my reward is in God's hands.  
 And now the LORD who formed me 5  
 in the womb to be his servant,  
 to bring Jacob back to him  
 that Israel should be gathered to him,<sup>v</sup>  
 now the LORD calls me again:<sup>w</sup>  
 it is too slight a task for you, as 6  
 my servant,

<sup>s</sup> Or his.<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and now the Lord God has sent me, and his spirit.<sup>u</sup> so I rose . . . strength: transposed from end of verse 5.<sup>v</sup> be gathered to him: or not be swept away.<sup>w</sup> See note on verse 3.

20: *Servant Jacob*: see 41.8 n. 18: *Your prosperity*: welfare, well-being. 22: Probably a gloss. 49.1-6: *Second servant song*. See 42.1-4 n. The servant himself speaks concerning his call and mission. In vv. 1-4, though the servant speaks as an individual, he is identified as Israel; however, in vv. 5-6 his mission is to *restore* Israel. Hence, he is identified by some as the ideal Israel or the faithful Israel, the remnant. 1,5: *Mother's womb*: see Jer.1.5. *Named me*: see 43.1.

- to restore the tribes of Jacob,  
to bring back the descendants of  
Israel:  
I will make you a light to the  
nations,  
to be my salvation<sup>x</sup> to earth's  
farthest bounds.
- 7 Thus says the Holy One, the LORD  
who ransoms Israel,  
to one who thinks little of himself,  
whom every nation abhors,  
the slave of tyrants:  
When they see you kings shall rise,  
princes shall rise and bow down,  
because of the LORD who is faithful,  
because of the Holy One of Israel  
who has chosen you.
- 8 Thus says the LORD:  
In the hour of my favour I  
answered you,  
and I helped you on the day of  
deliverance,<sup>y</sup>  
putting the land to rights  
and sharing out afresh its desolate  
fields;
- 9 I said to the prisoners, 'Go free',  
and to those in darkness, 'Come  
out and be seen.'  
They shall find pasture in the  
desert sands<sup>z</sup>  
and grazing on all the dunes.
- 10 They shall neither hunger nor  
thirst,  
no scorching heat or sun shall  
distress them;  
for one who loves them shall  
lead them  
and take them to water at  
bubbling springs.
- 11 I will make every hill a path  
and build embankments for my  
highways.
- 12 See, they come; some from far  
away,  
these from the north and these from  
the west  
and those from the land of Syene.
- 13 Shout for joy, you heavens, rejoice,  
O earth,
- you mountains, break into songs of  
triumph,  
for the LORD has comforted his  
people  
and has had pity on his own in  
their distress.
- But Zion says,  
"The LORD has forsaken me; my  
God has forgotten me."  
Can a woman forget the infant at  
her breast,  
or a loving mother the child of her  
womb?  
Even these forget, yet I will not  
forget you.  
Your walls are always before my  
eyes,  
I have engraved them on the palms  
of my hands.  
Those who are to rebuild you make  
better speed  
than those who pulled you down,  
while those who laid you waste depart.  
Raise your eyes and look around  
you:  
see how they assemble, how they are  
flocking back to you.  
By my life I, the LORD, swear it,  
you shall wear them proudly as  
your jewels,  
and adorn yourself with them  
like a bride;
- I did indeed make you waste and  
desolate,  
I razed you to the ground,  
but your boundaries<sup>a</sup> shall now be  
too narrow  
for your inhabitants—  
and those who laid you in ruins  
are far away.
- The children born in your  
bereavement shall yet say in  
your hearing,  
'This place is too narrow; make  
room for me to live in.'  
Then you will say to yourself,

<sup>x</sup> to be my salvation: or that my salvation may reach.  
<sup>y</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* I have formed you, and appointed you to be a light to all peoples (*cp.* 42. 6).  
<sup>z</sup> desert sands: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* ways.  
<sup>a</sup> I did . . . boundaries: or your wasted and desolate land, your ruined countryside.

49.7-26: The glorious return. 9a: Prisoners . . . darkness: the exiles in Babylon. 9b-10: The desert between Babylon and Israel will provide water and food as Israel returns, as did the desert at the Exodus. 12: Syene: a town at the southern end of Egypt; see Ezek.29.10. 14-26: The LORD has not forgotten Jerusalem; Israel will return and rebuild it. 18: By my life: an oath formula; see Amos 4.2. 19-21: The city cannot contain the enlarged population. 20: In

- 'All these children, how did I come  
by them,  
bereaved and barren as I was?  
Who reared them  
when I was left alone, left by myself;  
where did I get them all?'
- 22 The LORD God says,  
Now is the time: I will beckon to  
the nations  
and hoist a signal to the peoples,  
and they shall bring your sons in  
their arms  
and carry your daughters on their  
shoulders;  
23 kings shall be your foster-fathers  
and their princesses shall be your  
nurses.  
They shall bow to the earth before you  
and lick the dust from your feet;  
and you shall know that I am the LORD  
and that none who look to me will  
be disappointed.
- 24 Can his prey be taken from the  
strong man,  
or the captive be rescued from the  
ruthless?
- 25 And the LORD answers,  
The captive shall be taken even  
from the strong,  
and the prey of the ruthless shall  
be rescued;  
I will contend with all who contend  
against you  
and save your children from them.
- 26 I will force your oppressors to feed  
on their own flesh  
and make them drunk with their own  
blood as if with fresh wine,  
and all mankind shall know  
that it is I, the LORD, who save you,  
I your ransomer, the Mighty One  
of Jacob.
- 50 The LORD says,  
Is there anywhere a deed of divorce  
by which I have put your mother  
away?  
Was there some creditor of mine  
to whom I sold you?  
No; it was through your own  
wickedness that you were sold  
and for your own misconduct that  
your mother was put away.  
Why, then, did I find no one when  
I came? 2  
Why, when I called, did no one  
answer?  
Did you think my arm too short to  
redeem,  
did you think I had no power to  
save?  
Not so. By my rebuke I dried up the sea  
and turned rivers into desert;  
their fish perished for lack of water  
and died on the thirsty ground;  
I clothed the skies in mourning 3  
and covered them with sackcloth.
- The Lord GOD has given me 4  
the tongue of a teacher  
and skill to console the weary  
with a word in the morning;  
he sharpened my hearing  
that I might listen like one who is  
taught.
- The Lord GOD opened my ears 5  
and I did not disobey or turn back  
in defiance.
- I offered my back to the lash, 6  
and let my beard be plucked  
from my chin,  
I did not hide my face from spitting  
and insult;  
but the Lord GOD stands by to help 7  
me;  
therefore no insult can wound me.  
I have set my face like flint,  
for I know that I shall not be put  
to shame,  
because one who will clear my name 8  
is at my side.

*bereavement*: in Exile, separated from the Temple, the special presence of God. 22: The *signal*, formerly a sign of danger (5.26; 13.2; 18.3; compare Jer.6.1), is now a call for the return. 23: See 49.7. 26: *Ransomer*: see 41.14 n.

50.1-3: *Separation, not divorce*. The Exile did not mark the end of the LORD's relationship with Israel, as some say; he can do what he wills. 1: *Put your mother away*: see Hos.2.2-13; Jer.3.1-10. *Deed of divorce*: see Deut.24.1-4. The covenant is not broken since no *creditor* takes precedence over God. 2: See Exod. chs. 14-15.

50.4-9: *Third servant song*. See 42.1-4 n. The servant speaks concerning his mission (v. 4) and his response to suffering (vv. 5-9). 4: The prophet perhaps identifies himself with the servant, but it is still possible to regard the servant as Israel, or at least faithful Israel. *Teacher*: or "disciple." 8: The language comes from the court process.

- Who dare argue against me? Let us confront one another.  
 Who will dispute my cause? Let him come forward.
- 9 The Lord GOD will help me; who then can prove me guilty? They will all wear out like a garment, the moths will eat them up.
- 10 Which of you fears the LORD and obeys his servant's commands? The man who walks in dark places with no light, yet trusts in the name of the LORD and leans on his God.
- 11 But you who kindle a fire and set fire-brands alight, go, walk into your own fire and among the fire-brands you have set ablaze.  
 This is your fate at my hands: you shall lie down in torment.
- 51 Listen to me, all who follow the right and seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were dug;
- 2 look to your father Abraham and to Sarah who gave you birth: when I called him he was but one, I blessed him and made him many.
- 3 The LORD has indeed comforted Zion, comforted all her ruined homes, turning her wilderness into an Eden, her thirsty plains into a garden of the LORD.  
 Joy and gladness shall be found in her, thanksgiving and melody.
- 4 Pay heed to me, my people, and hear me, O my nation; for my law shall shine forth and I will flash the light of my judgement over the nations.
- 5 My victory is near, my deliverance has gone<sup>b</sup> forth
- and my arm shall rule the nations; for me coasts and islands shall wait and they shall look to me for protection.  
 Lift your eyes to the heavens, 6 look at the earth beneath: the heavens grow murky as smoke; the earth wears into tatters like a garment, and those who live on it die like maggots; but my deliverance is everlasting and my saving power shall never wane.
- Listen to me, my people who know 7 what is right, you who lay my law to heart: do not fear the taunts of men, let no reproaches dismay you; for the grub will devour them like 8 a garment and the moth as if they were wool, but my saving power shall last for ever and my deliverance to all generations.
- Awake, awake, put on your strength, 9 O arm of the LORD, awake as you did long ago, in days gone by.  
 Was it not you who hanked the Rahab in pieces and ran the dragon through?  
 Was it not you 10 who dried up the sea, the waters of the great abyss, and made the ocean depths a path for the ransomed?  
 So the LORD's people shall come 11 back, set free, and enter Zion with shouts of triumph, crowned with everlasting joy; joy and gladness shall overtake them as they come,

*b Or shone.*

**50.10–11:** Follow the servant. Israel is admonished to be obedient like the servant, trusting in the LORD and not in herself.

**51.1–16:** Comfort to Zion. Several poems of different types present a common theme, Zion's salvation. 1–2: *Abraham and Sarah, the rock from which Israel was hewn, were made many* in accord with God's promise (Gen.12.1–3); the same promise and power are still active. 3: The restoration of *Zion* will be like the creation of *Eden* out of the primeval desert; see Gen.2.5–9; Ezek.36.35. 5: Israel's restoration will inaugurate a new era for all *nations* who will look to the LORD for *protection*. 9: *Rahab, the dragon*: see 30.7 n. 10: The crossing of the sea at the Exodus was also a new creation, like the slaying of the dragon of the great abyss at the original creation.

- and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- 12 I, I myself, am he that comforts you.  
Why then fear man, man who must die,  
man frail as grass?
- 13 Why have you forgotten the LORD your maker,  
who stretched out the skies and founded the earth?  
Why are you continually afraid, all the day long,  
why dread the fury of oppressors ready to destroy you?  
Where is that fury?
- 14 He that cowers under it shall soon stand upright and not die,  
he shall soon reap the early crop and not lack bread.
- 15 I am the LORD your God, the LORD of Hosts is my name. I cleft the sea and  
16 its waves roared, that I might fix the heavens in place and form the earth and say to Zion, 'You are my people.'  
I have put my words in your mouth and kept you safe under the shelter of my hand.
- 17 Awake, awake; rise up, Jerusalem.  
You have drunk from the LORD's hand  
the cup of his wrath,  
drained to its dregs the bowl of drunkenness;
- 18 of all the sons you have borne there is not one to guide you,  
of all you have reared, not one to take you by the hand.
- 19 These two disasters have overtaken you;  
who can console you?—  
havoc and ruin, famine and the sword;  
who can comfort you?
- 20 Your sons are in stupor, they lie at  
the head of every street,  
like antelopes caught in the net,  
glutted with the wrath of the LORD,  
the rebuke of your God.  
Therefore listen to this, in your affliction,  
drunk that you are, but not with wine:  
thus says the LORD, your Lord and your God,  
who will plead his people's cause:  
Look, I take from your hand the cup of drunkenness;  
you shall never again drink from the bowl of my wrath,  
I will give it instead to your tormentors and oppressors,  
those who said to you, 'Lie down and we will walk over you';  
and you made your backs like the ground beneath them,  
like a roadway for passers-by.
- Awake, awake, put on your strength, **52**  
O Zion,  
put on your loveliest garments, holy city of Jerusalem;  
for never shall the uncircumcised and the unclean enter you again.  
Rise up, captive Jerusalem, shake **2**  
off the dust;  
loose your neck from the collar that binds it,  
O captive daughter of Zion.
- The LORD says, You were sold but **3**  
no price was paid, and without payment you shall be ransomed. The Lord **4**  
GOD says, At the beginning my people went down into Egypt to live there,  
and at the end it was the Assyrians who oppressed them; but now what do I **5**  
find here? says the LORD. My people carried off and no price paid, their rulers derided, and my name reviled all

**14:** The *early crop* was the result of the "blessing" of an early rain. **16:** *You are my people:* see Hos.1.8; 2.23.

**51.17–52.2:** *Awake, Jerusalem.* The holy city earlier had been drunk with the LORD's wrath. Compare Jer.13.13; 25.15–18; Ezek.23.32–34; Lam.4.21. **17:** Pleasure and pain are pictured in the Bible as a *cup* that is offered to a person by God, emphasizing God's control of man's destiny; compare Pss.11.6; 16.5–6; Mk.10.38–39. **18:** *Take you by the hand:* give guidance and support. **52.1–2:** The opening call to *awake* is reiterated, now looking to the future instead of the past. **1:** *Uncircumcised:* foreigners. *Unclean:* Jews who do not observe the ritual laws of cleanliness.

**52.3–6:** *Israel sold and ransomed without money.* A prose insertion. **4–5:** *Egypt* paid the price

6	day long, says the LORD. But on that day my people shall know my name; they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.	Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be lifted up, exalted to the heights.	13
7	How lovely on the mountains are the feet of the herald who comes to proclaim prosperity and bring good news, the news of deliverance, calling to Zion, 'Your God is king.'	Time was when many <sup>c</sup> were aghast at you, my people; <sup>d</sup> so now many nations <sup>e</sup> recoil at sight of him, and kings curl their lips in disgust. For they see what they had never been told and things unheard before fill their thoughts.	14 15
8	Hark, your watchmen raise their voices and shout together in triumph; for with their own eyes they shall see the LORD returning in pity to Zion.	Who could have believed what we have heard, and to whom has the power of the LORD been revealed?	53
9	Break forth together in shouts of triumph, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has taken pity on his people and has ransomed Jerusalem.	He grew up before the LORD like a young plant whose roots are in parched ground; he had no beauty, no majesty to draw our eyes, no grace to make us delight in him; his form, disfigured, lost all the likeness of a man, his beauty changed beyond human semblance. <sup>f</sup>	2
10	The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all nations, and the whole world from end to end shall see the deliverance of our God.	He was despised, he shrank from the sight of men, tormented and humbled by suffering; we despised him, we held him of no account, a thing from which men turn away their eyes.	3
11	Away from Babylon; come out, come out, touch nothing unclean. Come out from Babylon, keep yourselves pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD.	Yet on himself he bore our sufferings,	4
12	But you shall not come out in urgent haste nor leave like fugitives; for the LORD will march at your head, your rearguard will be Israel's God.		

<sup>c</sup> Or the great. <sup>d</sup> See note on 53. 2.  
<sup>e</sup> Or great nations.  
<sup>f</sup> his form . . . semblance: transposed from end of 52. 14.

of Israel's slavery by the plagues and death of its firstborn, but Babylon paid no price when it carried them off into Exile. 6: *That day*: see 7.18-25 n. *Know my name*: see 43.1.

52.7-12: A pilgrim victory hymn. This is a continuation of the song, interrupted after v. 2, which celebrates the joyful return of the LORD and his people to the holy city. 7: *God is king*: see 43.15 n. 8-9: *Watchmen* are the people left in the ruins of Jerusalem at the time of its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (2 Kgs.25.8-12). They look for the return of the LORD who was considered to have gone to Babylon with the captives; compare Ezek.11.22-25; 43.1-7. 12: The Israelites on their return from Babylon did not ask for an escort of soldiers but trusted that the LORD would be their guard: see Ezra 8.21-23.

52.13-53.12: Fourth servant song. The suffering servant. See 42.1-4 n. Israel, the servant of God, has suffered as a humiliated individual. However, the servant endured without complaint because it was vicarious suffering (suffering for others). 13-15: *Nations and kings* will be surprised to see the servant exalted. 53.1: The crowds, pagan nations, among whom the servant (Israel) lived, speak here (through v. 9), saying that the significance of Israel's humiliation and exaltation is hard to believe. 2: In traditional Hebrew thought, the good man prospers like a tree by water but the wicked is like a plant growing in parched ground; see Ps.1.3-6. 3: *Turn away their eyes*: lit. hide their faces, an expression used in relation to lepers, whose sickness, considered a sign of sin, made them despised. 4-5: The vicarious suffering expressed here is in



- our torments he endured,  
 while we counted him smitten by  
 God,  
 struck down by disease and  
 misery;  
 5 but he was pierced for our  
 transgressions,  
 tortured for our iniquities;  
 the chastisement he bore is health  
 for us  
 and by his scourging we are healed.  
 6 We had all strayed like sheep,  
 each of us had gone his own way;  
 but the LORD laid upon him  
 the guilt of us all.  
 7 He was afflicted, he submitted to  
 be struck down  
 and did not open his mouth;  
 he was led like a sheep to the  
 slaughter,  
 like a ewe that is dumb before the  
 shearers.<sup>g</sup>  
 8 Without protection, without justice,<sup>h</sup>  
 he was taken away;  
 and who gave a thought to his fate,  
 how he was cut off from the  
 world of living men,  
 stricken to the death for my people's  
 transgression?  
 9 He was assigned a grave with the  
 wicked,  
 a burial-place among the refuse of  
 mankind,  
 though he had done no violence  
 and spoken no word of treachery.  
 10 Yet the LORD took thought for his  
 tortured servant  
 and healed him who had made  
 himself<sup>i</sup> a sacrifice for sin;  
 so shall he enjoy long life and see  
 his children's children,  
 and in his hand the LORD's cause  
 shall prosper.  
 11 After all his pains he shall be  
 bathed in light,  
 after his disgrace he shall be fully  
 vindicated;  
 so shall he, my servant, vindicate  
 many,  
 himself bearing the penalty of their  
 guilt.  
 Therefore I will allot him a portion 12  
 with the great,  
 and he shall share the spoil with  
 the mighty,  
 because he exposed himself to face  
 death<sup>j</sup>  
 and was reckoned among  
 transgressors,  
 because he bore the sin of many  
 and interceded for their  
 transgressions.  
 Sing aloud, O barren woman who 54  
 never bore a child,  
 break into cries of joy, you who  
 have never been in labour;  
 for the deserted wife has more sons  
 than she who lives in wedlock,  
 says the LORD.  
 Enlarge the limits of your home, 2  
 spread wide the curtains of your  
 tent;  
 let out its ropes to the full  
 and drive the pegs home;  
 for you shall break out of your 3  
 confines right and left,  
 your descendants shall dispossess  
 wide regions,<sup>k</sup>  
 and re-people cities now desolate.  
 Fear not; you shall not be put to 4  
 shame,  
 you shall suffer no insult, have no  
 cause to blush.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and he would not open his mouth.

<sup>h</sup> Without protection, without justice: or After arrest and sentence.

<sup>i</sup> healed . . . himself: prob. rdg.; Heb. he made sick, if you make.

<sup>j</sup> Or because he poured out his life to the death.

<sup>k</sup> wide regions: or the nations.

contrast both to the traditional solidarity in guilt of Exod.20.5 and to individual responsibility proposed by the prophets at the time of the Exile; see Jer.31.30; Ezek. ch. 18. 5: *Health for us*: lit. "our peace," which means "general welfare." 6-7: The servant is *led like a sheep* in contrast to the peoples going their *own way*. 8: Although some legal process seems to be involved, the servant does not receive *justice*; see Jer.39.5-6. 9: The death probably refers to the destruction and Exile of Israel. Compare Ezek. ch. 37. 10-12: The theme of 52.13 is resumed. Israel, which has suffered for all mankind, will now be granted her rightful place. 10: *Long life and children's children* are the signs of a final vindication before God; see Job 42.16-17. 11: *Bathed in light*: enjoying God's favor; see Ps.80.3.

54.1-17: *Reassurance to Israel*. A series of metaphors is used to repeat the promise that the nation will be rebuilt and Israel's relationship to the LORD restored. 1: The *deserted wife* represents Israel in Exile; the one *in wedlock* represents preexilic Israel. 4: *Shame of your*

<p>It is time to forget the shame of your younger days and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood; 5 for your husband is your maker, whose name is the LORD of Hosts; your ransom is the Holy One of Israel who is called God of all the earth. 6 The LORD has acknowledged you a wife again, once deserted and heart-broken, your God has called you a bride still young though once rejected. 7 On the impulse of a moment I forsook you, but with tender affection I will bring you home again. 8 In sudden anger I hid my face from you for a moment; but now have I pitied you with a love which never fails, says the LORD who ransoms you. 9 These days recall for me the days of Noah: as I swore that the waters of Noah's flood should never again pour over the earth, so now I swear to you never again to be angry with you or reproach you. 10 Though the mountains move and the hills shake, my love shall be immovable and never fail, and my covenant of peace shall not be shaken. So says the LORD who takes pity on you. 11 O storm-battered city, distressed and disconsolate, now I will set your stones in the finest mortar and your foundations in lapis lazuli;</p>	<p>I will make your battlements of red jasper<sup>l</sup> and your gates of garnet;<sup>m</sup> all your boundary-stones shall be jewels. Your masons shall all be instructed by the LORD, and your sons shall enjoy great prosperity; and in triumph<sup>n</sup> shall you be restored. You shall be free from oppression and have no fears, free from terror, and it shall not come near you; should any attack you, it will not be my doing, the aggressor, whoever he be, shall perish for his attempt. It was I who created the smith to fan the coals in the furnace and forge weapons each for its purpose, and I who created the destroyer to lay waste; but now no weapon made to harm you shall prevail, and you shall rebut every charge brought against you. Such is the fortune of the servants of the LORD; their vindication comes from me. This is the very word of the LORD. Come, all who are thirsty, come, fetch water; come, you who have no food, buy corn and eat; come and buy, not for money, not for a price.<sup>o</sup> Why spend money and get what is not bread, why give the price of your labour and go unsatisfied? Only listen to me and you will have good food to eat,</p>	<p>12 13 14 15 16 17 2 2</p>
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*l* Or carbuncle. *m* Or firestone.  
*n* Or in righteousness.  
*o* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds wine and milk.

*younger days*: see Ezek. ch. 16. *7: Tender affection*: lit. the affection of a mother for the child of her womb. *8: Love which never fails* is the covenant love based on the bond of parent and child between the LORD and Israel; see 43.6-7 n. *Ransoms*: see 41.14 n. *9*: See Gen.9.8-17; compare Gen.8.21-22. *10: Covenant of peace*: see Ezek.34.25.

*55.1-13: Admonitions and reassurance*. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (chs. 40-55) concludes with this poem celebrating God's liberality (vv. 1-2), faithfulness (vv. 3-5), transcendence (vv. 6-9), and power (vv. 10-13). *1-2*: See 25.6-12 n. All are invited to the LORD's table. The language is both metaphorical and literal; those who *listen* (vv. 2-3) to the LORD

and you will enjoy the fat of the land.  
 3 Come to me and listen to my words,  
 hear me, and you shall have life:  
 I will make a covenant with you,  
 this time for ever,  
 to love you faithfully as I loved David.  
 4 I made him a witness to all races,  
 a prince and instructor of peoples;  
 5 and you in turn shall summon  
 nations you do not know,  
 and nations that do not know you  
 shall come running to you,  
 because the LORD your God,  
 the Holy One of Israel, has glorified  
 you.  
 6 Inquire of the LORD while he is  
 present,  
 call upon him when he is close at  
 hand.  
 7 Let the wicked abandon their ways  
 and evil men their thoughts:  
 let them return to the LORD, who will  
 have pity on them,  
 return to our God, for he will freely  
 forgive.  
 8 For my thoughts are not your  
 thoughts,  
 and your ways are not my ways.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
 9 For as the heavens are higher than  
 the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways  
 and my thoughts than your  
 thoughts;  
 10 and as the rain and the snow come  
 down from heaven  
 and do not return until they have  
 watered the earth,  
 making it blossom and bear fruit,  
 and give seed for sowing and bread  
 to eat,  
 11 so shall the word which comes from  
 my mouth prevail;  
 it shall not return to me fruitless  
 without accomplishing my purpose  
 or succeeding in the task I gave it.  
 12 You shall indeed go out with joy  
 and be led forth in peace.

Before you mountains and hills shall  
 break into cries of joy,  
 and all the trees of the wild shall  
 clap their hands,  
 pine-trees shall shoot up in place of 13  
 camel-thorn,  
 myrtles instead of briars;  
 all this shall win the LORD a great  
 name,  
 imperishable, a sign for all time.

*Warnings to keep the moral law*

These are the words of the LORD: 56  
 Maintain justice, do the right;  
 for my deliverance is close at hand,  
 and my righteousness will show  
 itself victorious.  
 Happy is the man who follows these 2  
 precepts,  
 happy the mortal who holds them  
 fast,  
 who keeps the sabbath undefiled,  
 who refrains from all wrong-doing!  
 The foreigner who has given his 3  
 allegiance to the LORD must  
 not say,  
 'The LORD will keep me separate  
 from his people for ever';  
 and the eunuch must not say,  
 'I am nothing but a barren tree.'  
 For these are the words of the 4  
 LORD:  
 The eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,  
 who choose to do my will and hold  
 fast to my covenant,  
 shall receive from me something 5  
 better than sons and daughters,  
 a memorial and a name in my own  
 house and within my walls;  
 I will give them an everlasting name,  
 a name imperishable for all time.  
 So too with the foreigners who give 6  
 their allegiance to me, the LORD,  
 to minister to me and love my name  
 and to become my servants,  
 all who keep the sabbath undefiled  
 and hold fast to my covenant:

will be fed. 3-5: The words of the LORD give life. 3: The irrevocable covenant with David (2 Sam. ch. 7) is extended to the people as a whole. 6: Inquire: to request an oracle. See Amos 5.5-6,14. Call upon him: to pray. 12-13: Nature will celebrate as Israel comes out of Babylon. 56.1-66.24: A collection of postexilic poems. See Introduction. 56.1-8: The house of prayer for all nations. Converts to Judaism are welcomed and encouraged to obey the ritual laws. 3: Barren tree: no offspring to give to the community of God's people. 4-5: The law of Deut.23.1-6 is superseded. 5: Inscription and service among God's people will earn a name more lasting

- 7 them will I bring to my holy hill  
and give them joy in my house of  
prayer.  
Their offerings and sacrifices shall be  
acceptable on my altar;  
for my house shall be called  
a house of prayer for all nations.
- 8 This is the very word of the Lord  
GOD,  
who brings home the outcasts of  
Israel:  
I will yet bring home all that remain  
to be brought in.
- 9 Come, beasts of the plain, beasts of  
the forest,  
come, eat your fill,  
10 for Israel's watchmen are blind, all  
of them unaware.  
They are all dumb dogs who cannot  
bark,  
stretched on the ground, dreaming,  
lovers of sleep,  
11 greedy dogs that can never have  
enough.  
They are shepherds who understand  
nothing,  
absent each of them on his own  
pursuits,  
each intent on his own gain wherever  
he can find it.
- 12 'Come,' says each of them, 'let me  
fetch wine,  
strong drink, and we will drain  
it down;  
let us make tomorrow like today,  
or greater far!'  
57 The righteous perish,  
and no one takes it to heart;  
men of good faith are swept away,  
but no one cares,  
the righteous are swept away before  
the onset of evil,  
2 but they enter into peace;  
they have run a straight course  
and rest in their last beds.
- Come, stand forth, you sons of a  
soothsayer. 3  
You spawn of an adulterer and a  
harlot,  
who is the target of your jests?  
4 Against whom do you open your  
mouths  
and wag your tongues,  
children of sin that you are, spawn  
of a lie,  
5 burning with lust under the  
terebinths,  
under every spreading tree,  
and sacrificing children in the gorges,  
under the rocky clefts?  
6 And you, woman,  
your place is with the creatures of  
the gorge;  
that is where you belong.  
To them you have dared to pour a  
libation  
and present an offering of grain.<sup>p</sup>  
7 On a high mountain-top  
you have made your bed;  
there too you have gone up to offer  
sacrifice.  
In spite of all this am I to relent?<sup>q</sup>  
8 Beside door and door-post you have  
put up your sign.  
Deserting me, you have stripped  
and lain down  
on the wide bed which you have  
made,  
and you drove bargains with men  
for the pleasure of sleeping  
together,  
and you have committed countless  
acts of fornication  
in the heat of your lust.  
9 You drenched your tresses in oil  
blended with many perfumes;  
you sent out your procurers far and  
wide  
even down to the gates of Sheol.

<sup>p</sup> See note on verse 7.

<sup>q</sup> Line transposed from end of verse 6.

than begetting *sons and daughters*. 7: *Holy hill*: Mount Zion, on which the Temple was built. The future community of God will exclude no one because of arbitrary physical or ethnic conditions but will include all nations. 8: *Who brings home the outcasts of Israel*: see 11.12; 27.12; Ps.147.2.

56.9-57.13: *Against corruption*. 56.9-57.2: Israel's leaders fail in their duty. 9: *Beasts*: the hostile nations; see Ezek.34.5-6; 39.17. 11: *Shepherds*: rulers; see Ezek. ch. 34. 57.3: Idolatry was considered adultery against God. The Israelites practicing idolatry are not children of the LORD but *spawn of an adulterer*. 5: *Terebinths*: trees used in pagan fertility cults. *Sacrificing children*: see 30.33. 7-11: This alludes either literally to sexual immorality connected with the fertility cult sacrifice or figuratively to the courting of foreign alliances and friendships with pagan nations, as in Ezek. ch. 16. 7: See Ezek.16.16; 23.41. 8: *Sign*: idol placed at the en-

- 10 Worn out by your unending  
excesses,  
even so you never said, 'I am past  
hope.'  
You earned a livelihood  
and so you had no anxiety.
- 11 Whom do you fear so much, that  
you should be false,  
that you never remembered me or  
gave me a thought?  
Did I not hold my peace and seem  
not to see  
while you showed no fear of me?
- 12 Now I will denounce your conduct  
that you think so righteous.
- 13 These idols of yours shall not help  
when you cry;  
no idol shall save you.  
The wind shall carry them off, one  
and all,  
a puff of air shall blow them away;  
but he who makes me his refuge  
shall possess the earth  
and inherit my holy hill.
- 14 Then a voice shall be heard:  
Build up a highway, build it and  
clear the track,  
sweep away all that blocks my  
people's path.
- 15 Thus speaks the high and exalted  
one,  
whose name is holy, who lives forever:  
I dwell in a high and holy place  
with him who is broken and  
humble in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
to revive the courage of the  
broken.
- 16 I will not be always accusing,  
I will not continually nurse my  
wrath.  
For a breath of life passed out from  
me,  
and by my own act I created living  
creatures.
- For a time I was angry at the guilt  
of Israel;  
I smote him in my anger and  
withdrew my favour.  
But he ran wild and went his wilful  
way.  
Then I considered his ways,  
I cured him and gave him relief,  
and I brought him comfort in full  
measure,  
brought peace to those who  
mourned for him,  
by the words that issue from my lips,  
peace for all men, both near and far,  
and so I cured him, says the LORD.  
But the wicked are like a troubled  
sea,  
a sea that cannot rest,  
whose troubled waters cast up mud  
and filth.
- There is no peace for the wicked,  
says the LORD.
- Shout aloud without restraint;  
lift up your voice like a trumpet.  
Call my people to account for their  
transgression  
and the house of Jacob for their  
sins,  
although they ask counsel of me  
day by day  
and say they delight in knowing  
my ways,  
although, like nations which have  
acted rightly  
and not forsaken the just laws of  
their gods,  
they ask me for righteous laws  
and say they delight in  
approaching God.
- Why do we fast, if thou dost not  
see it?  
Why mortify ourselves, if thou  
payest no heed?

trace of a house as an invitation to wanton pleasure seekers. 13: *Holy hill*: Zion, Jerusalem; see 56.7 n.; 65.10.

57.14–21: *Consolation to the humble*. God addresses the *broken and humble in spirit* (v. 15) to assure them that they will be healed. 15: *Name is holy*: see 40.25–26 n. 18: Those *who mourned* for Israel are either the repentant Israelites or peoples sympathetic to Israel's tragedy, like the Persians. 19: *Men . . . near*: proselytes.

58.1–12: *The true fasts, a prophetic Torah*. This is a postexilic oracle (v. 12). Its insistence on justice along with outward religious acts is in the tradition of the great prophets (Jer.7.21–28). 1: *A voice like a trumpet* is that of the prophet to warn people of danger; see Ezek.33.3–4. 3: A *fast* was prescribed by the Law only on the Day of Atonement (Lev.23.26–32). Later other fasts were added to commemorate public calamities (e.g. destruction of the Temple in the fifth month; Zech.8.18–19) or to beg God's mercy when disaster threatened (Joel 2.1–15). There

- Since you serve your own interest  
only on your fast-day  
and make all your men work the  
harder,
- 4 since your fasting leads only to  
wrangling and strife  
and dealing vicious blows with the  
fist,  
on such a day you are keeping no fast  
that will carry your cry to heaven.
- 5 Is it a fast like this that I require,  
a day of mortification such as this,  
that a man should bow his head  
like a bulrush  
and make his bed on sackcloth and  
ashes?  
Is this what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?
- 6 Is not this what I require of you  
as a fast:  
to loose the fetters of injustice,  
to untie the knots of the yoke,  
to snap every yoke  
and set free those who have been  
crushed?
- 7 Is it not sharing your food with the  
hungry,  
taking the homeless poor into your  
house,  
clothing the naked when you meet  
them  
and never evading a duty to your  
kinsfolk?
- 8 Then shall your light break forth like  
the dawn  
and soon you will grow healthy like  
a wound newly healed;  
your own righteousness shall be  
your vanguard  
and the glory of the LORD your  
rearguard.
- 9 Then, if you call, the LORD will  
answer;  
if you cry to him, he will say,  
'Here I am.'  
If you cease to pervert justice,  
to point the accusing finger and lay  
false charges,
- 10 if you feed the hungry from your  
own plenty  
and satisfy the needs of the  
wretched,  
then your light will rise like dawn  
out of darkness  
and your dusk be like noonday;  
the LORD will be your guide 11  
continually  
and will satisfy your needs in the  
shimmering heat;  
he will give you strength of limb;  
you will be like a well-watered  
garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.  
The ancient ruins will be restored 12  
by your own kindred  
and you will build once more on  
ancestral foundations;  
you shall be called Rebuilder of  
broken walls,  
Restorer of houses in ruins.
- If you cease to tread the sabbath 13  
underfoot,  
and keep my holy day free from  
your own affairs,  
if you call the sabbath a day of joy  
and the LORD's holy day a day to  
be honoured,  
if you honour it by not plying  
your trade,  
not seeking your own interest  
or attending to your own affairs,  
then you shall find your joy in the 14  
LORD,  
and I will set you riding on the  
heights of the earth,  
and your father Jacob's patrimony  
shall be yours to enjoy;  
the LORD himself has spoken it.
- The LORD's arm is not so short that 59  
he cannot save  
nor his ear too dull to hear;  
it is your iniquities that raise a 2  
barrier  
between you and your God,  
because of your sins he has hidden  
his face  
so that he does not hear you.  
Your hands are stained with blood 3

were also fasts out of private devotion; see Mt.6.16; Lk.18.12. 5: *Bow his head*: sign of sadness; *sackcloth and ashes*: sign of mortification and mourning.

58.13-14: **The rewards of observing the Sabbath.** See Exod.20.8-11; Deut.5.12-15.

59.1-21: **A liturgy of repentance.** The parts which comprise this unit may have once existed separately, but together they are the words of a liturgical act of confession and forgiveness. 1-9: *It is your iniquities*: the prophet begins the service by indicting Israel for her sins.

- and your fingers with crime;  
 your lips speak lies  
 and your tongues utter injustice.
- 4 No man sues with just cause,  
 no man goes honestly to law;  
 all trust in empty words, all tell lies,  
 conceive mischief and give birth to  
 trouble.
- 5 They hatch snakes' eggs, they weave  
 cobwebs;  
 eat their eggs and you will die,  
 for rotten eggs hatch only  
 rottenness.
- 6 As for their webs, they will never  
 make cloth,  
 no one can use them for clothing;  
 their works breed trouble  
 and their hands are busy with  
 deeds of violence.
- 7 They rush headlong into crime  
 in furious haste to shed innocent  
 blood;  
 their schemes are schemes of mischief  
 and leave a trail of ruin and  
 devastation.
- 8 They do not know the way to  
 peace,  
 no justice guides their steps;  
 all the paths they follow are  
 crooked;  
 no one who walks in them enjoys  
 true peace.
- 9 Therefore justice is far away from us,  
 right does not reach us;  
 we look for light but all is darkness,  
 for the light of dawn, but we walk  
 in deep gloom.
- 10 We grope like blind men along a  
 wall,  
 feeling our way like men without  
 eyes;  
 we stumble at noonday as if it were  
 twilight,  
 like dead men in the ghostly  
 underworld.
- 11 We growl like bears,  
 like doves we moan incessantly,  
 waiting for justice, and there is  
 none;  
 for deliverance, but it is still far  
 away.
- Our acts of rebellion against thee 12  
 are past counting  
 and our sins bear witness against us;  
 we remember our many rebellions,  
 we know well our guilt:  
 we have rebelled and broken faith 13  
 with the LORD,  
 we have relapsed and forsaken our  
 God;  
 we have conceived lies in our hearts  
 and repeated them  
 in slanderous and treacherous words.  
 Justice is rebuffed and flouted 14  
 while righteousness stands aloof;  
 truth stumbles in the market-place  
 and honesty is kept out of court,  
 so truth is lost to sight, 15  
 and whoever shuns evil is thought  
 a madman.
- The LORD saw, and in his eyes it  
 was an evil thing,  
 that there was no justice;  
 he saw that there was no man to help 16  
 and was outraged that no one  
 intervened;  
 so his own arm brought him victory  
 and his own integrity upheld him. 17  
 He put on integrity as a coat of  
 mail  
 and the helmet of salvation on his  
 head;  
 he put on garments of vengeance  
 and wrapped himself in a cloak of  
 jealous anger.  
 High God of retribution that he is, 18  
 he pays in full measure,  
 wreaking his anger on his foes,  
 retribution on his enemies.  
 So from the west men shall fear his 19  
 name,  
 fear his glory from the rising of  
 the sun;  
 for it shall come like a shining river,  
 the spirit of the LORD hovering  
 over it,  
 come as the ransom of Zion 20  
 and of all in Jacob who repent of  
 their rebellion.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.
- This, says the LORD, is my covenant, 21

**5-6:** This is probably a proverb. *Snakes' eggs:* malicious evil deeds; *weave cobwebs:* useless, unproductive schemes and plans. **10:** The *dead in the underworld* were thought to be weak and in a state of torpor. **19:** *Spirit of the LORD:* see 11.2 n. **20:** *Ransom:* see 41.14 n. **21:** This verse, which is a later addition, affirms a *covenant* which shall not end.

which I make with them: My spirit which rests on you and my words which I have put into your mouth shall never fail you from generation to generation of your descendants from now onward for ever. The LORD has said it.

*Promise of the new Jerusalem*

**60** Arise, Jerusalem,  
rise clothed in light; your light has  
come  
and the glory of the LORD shines  
over you.

**2** For, though darkness covers the  
earth  
and dark night the nations,  
the LORD shall shine upon you  
and over you shall his glory appear;

**3** and the nations shall march towards  
your light  
and their kings to your sunrise.

**4** Lift up your eyes and look all around:  
they flock together, all of them,  
and come to you;  
your sons also shall come from  
afar,  
your daughters walking beside them  
leading the way.

**5** Then shall you see, and shine with  
joy,  
then your heart shall thrill with  
pride;  
the riches of the sea shall be lavished  
upon you  
and you shall possess the wealth of  
nations.

**6** Camels in droves shall cover the  
land,  
dromedaries of Midian and Ephah,  
all coming from Sheba  
laden with golden spice<sup>r</sup> and  
frankincense,  
heralds of the LORD's praise.

**7** All Kedar's flocks shall be gathered  
for you,

rams of Nebaioth shall serve your  
need,  
acceptable offerings on my altar,  
and glory shall be added to glory  
in my temple.

Who are these that sail along like **8**  
clouds,  
that fly like doves to their  
dovecotes?  
They are vessels assembling from **9**  
the coasts and islands,  
ships from Tarshish leading the  
convoy;  
they bring your sons from afar,  
their gold and their silver with  
them,  
to the honour of the LORD your  
God,  
the Holy One of Israel;  
for he has made you glorious.

Foreigners shall rebuild your walls **10**  
and their kings shall be your  
servants;  
for though in my wrath I struck  
you down,  
now I have shown you pity and  
favour.  
Your gates shall be open **11**  
continually,  
they shall never be shut day or  
night,  
that through them may be brought  
the wealth of nations  
and their kings under escort.

For the nation or kingdom which **12**  
refuses to serve you shall perish, and  
wide regions shall be laid utterly waste.

The wealth of Lebanon shall come **13**  
to you,  
pine, fir,<sup>s</sup> and boxwood,<sup>t</sup> all together,  
to bring glory to my holy sanctuary,  
to honour the place where my  
feet rest.

<sup>r</sup> golden spice: or gold.  
<sup>s</sup> Or elm.  
<sup>t</sup> Or cypress.

**60.1-22: The new Jerusalem.** The LORD addresses the holy city, promising restoration and a glory greater than in the past. The style and thought here resemble the Book of the Consolation of Israel, i.e. chs. 40-55. **1-3:** *Jerusalem will shine with the glory of the LORD.* **6-7:** The riches of Arabia come by camels across the desert. **8-9:** The riches of the west, *coasts and islands*, will come by ship. *Like clouds . . . doves:* white sails of ships from Tarshish. **10:** The great reversal: walls destroyed by foreigners will be rebuilt by them; their kings, once tyrants, will now be servants. **13: Wealth of Lebanon:** the cedar trees used by Solomon to build the first Temple;



- 14 The sons of your oppressors shall  
 come forward to do homage,  
 all who reviled you shall bow low at  
 your feet;  
 they shall call you the City of the  
 LORD,  
 the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
- 15 No longer will you be deserted,  
 a wife hated and unvisited;<sup>u</sup>  
 I will make you an eternal pride  
 and a never-ending joy.
- 16 You shall suck the milk of nations  
 and be suckled at the breasts of  
 kings.  
 So you shall know that I the LORD  
 am your deliverer,  
 your ransom the Mighty One of  
 Jacob.
- 17 For bronze<sup>v</sup> I will bring you gold  
 and for iron I will bring silver,  
 bronze<sup>v</sup> for timber and iron for stone;  
 and I will make your government  
 be peace  
 and righteousness rule over you.
- 18 The sound of violence shall be heard  
 no longer in your land,  
 or ruin and devastation within your  
 borders;  
 but you shall call your walls  
 Deliverance  
 and your gates Praise.
- 19 The sun shall no longer be your  
 light by day,  
 nor the moon shine on you when  
 evening falls;  
 the LORD shall be your everlasting  
 light,  
 your God shall be your glory.
- 20 Never again shall your sun set  
 nor your moon withdraw her  
 light;  
 but the LORD shall be your  
 everlasting light  
 and the days of your mourning  
 shall be ended.
- Your people shall all be righteous 21  
 and shall for ever possess the land,  
 a shoot of my own planting,  
 a work of my own hands to bring  
 me glory.  
 The few shall become ten thousand, 22  
 the little nation great.  
 I am the LORD;  
 soon, in the fullness of time, I will  
 bring this to pass.
- The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon 61  
 me  
 because the LORD has anointed me;  
 he has sent me to bring good news  
 to the humble,  
 to bind up the broken-hearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to captives  
 and release to those in prison;  
 to proclaim a year of the LORD's 2  
 favour  
 and a day of the vengeance of  
 our God;  
 to comfort all who mourn,<sup>w</sup>  
 to give them garlands instead of 3  
 ashes,  
 oil of gladness instead of  
 mourners' tears,  
 a garment of splendour for the  
 heavy heart.  
 They shall be called Trees of  
 Righteousness,  
 planted by the LORD for his glory.  
 Ancient ruins shall be rebuilt 4  
 and sites long desolate restored;  
 they shall repair the ruined cities  
 and restore what has long lain  
 desolate.  
 Foreigners shall serve as shepherds 5  
 of your flocks,  
 and aliens shall till your land and  
 tend your vines;  
 but you shall be called priests of 6  
 the LORD  
 and be named ministers of our  
 God;

<sup>u</sup> Or divorced and unmarried.

<sup>v</sup> Or copper.

<sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds to appoint to Zion's mourners.

1 Kgs.5.6-10. 16: *Ransom*: see 41.14 n. 18: Ancient as well as modern *walls* and *gates* of Jerusalem had names. Here they are symbolic, *Deliverance* being God's action protecting the city, and *Praise* being the people's action in entering God's protection. The life of the city will be completely changed. 19-20: The LORD will be a *light* of the city; compare vv. 1-3. 21-22: The *people* shall be reestablished in the *land*. 21: Jerusalem is a new plant, a new creation, at the LORD's *hands*; see 43.6-7 n. 22: *Fullness of time*: lit. "its time."

61.1-11: *Good news to the exiles*. A prophetic voice proclaims consolation and salvation. 1: *Spirit of the LORD*: see 11.2 n. 3: *Righteousness*: see 5.7 n. 4-9: The prophet announces the restoration and return. 4: See Amos 9.14. 5-6: Since *foreigners* will do the secular work, the

- you shall enjoy the wealth of  
other nations  
and be furnished<sup>x</sup> with their  
riches.
- 7 And so, because shame in double  
measure  
and jeers and insults<sup>y</sup> have been  
my people's lot,  
they shall receive in their own land  
a double measure of wealth,  
and everlasting joy shall be theirs.
- 8 For I, the LORD, love justice  
and hate robbery and wrong-doing;  
I will grant them a sure reward  
and make an everlasting covenant  
with them;
- 9 their posterity will be renowned  
among the nations  
and their offspring among the  
peoples;  
all who see them will acknowledge  
in them  
a race whom the LORD has blessed.
- 10 Let me rejoice in the LORD with all  
my heart,  
let me exult in my God;  
for he has robbed me in salvation  
as a garment  
and clothed me in integrity as a  
cloak,  
like a bridegroom with his priestly  
garland,  
or a bride decked in her jewels.
- 11 For, as the earth puts forth her  
blossom  
or bushes in the garden burst into  
flower,  
so shall the Lord GOD make  
righteousness and praise  
blossom before all the nations.
- 62 For Zion's sake I will not keep  
silence,  
for Jerusalem's sake I will speak  
out,  
until her right shines forth like the  
sunrise,  
her deliverance like a blazing torch,
- until the nations see the triumph of  
your right  
and all kings see your glory.  
Then you shall be called by a new  
name  
which the LORD shall pronounce  
with his own lips;  
you will be a glorious crown in the  
LORD's hand,  
a kingly diadem in the hand of  
your God.
- No more shall men call you Forsaken,  
no more shall your land be called  
Desolate,  
but you shall be named Hephzi-bah<sup>z</sup>  
and your land Beulah;<sup>a</sup>  
for the LORD delights in you  
and to him your land is wedded.  
For, as a young man weds a  
maiden,  
so you shall wed him who  
rebuilds you,  
and your God shall rejoice over you  
as a bridegroom rejoices over the  
bride.
- I have posted watchmen on your  
walls, Jerusalem,  
who shall not keep silence day or  
night:  
'You who invoke the LORD's name,  
take no rest, give him no rest  
until he makes Jerusalem  
a theme of endless praise on earth.'
- The LORD has sworn with raised  
right hand and mighty arm:  
Never again will I give your grain  
to feed your foes  
or let foreigners drink the new wine  
for which you have toiled;  
but those who bring in the corn  
shall eat and praise the LORD,  
and those who gather the grapes  
shall drink in my holy courts.
- Go out of the gates, go out,  
prepare a road for my people;

<sup>x</sup> be furnished: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>y</sup> and insults: *prob. rdg.; Heb. they shout in triumph.*  
<sup>z</sup> That is My delight is in her. <sup>a</sup> That is Wedded.

Israelites will be their *priests*, i.e. intermediaries between them and the LORD, offering sacrifices for them and giving them the Torah, or teaching; see Exod.19.5-6. 10-11: The prophet (or perhaps Israel) responds to the promises with a hymn.

62.1-12: New names for Jerusalem. See 60.1-22; 51.1-52.12. 1: *New name*: signifies a new status; see 43.1; Ezek.48.35. 4: Israel's *land* is an integral part of the promise and covenant with God; Gen.15.18-20; Deut.6.10-24. 6-7: Compare 21.12-13. The *watchmen* (prophets) must keep praying, giving God *no rest* until he fulfills his promises. 10-12: 60.1-62.9 are summarized here.

- build a highway, build it up,  
clear away the boulders;  
raise a signal to the peoples.
- 11 This is the LORD's proclamation  
to earth's farthest bounds:  
Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Behold, your deliverance has come.  
His recompense comes with him;  
he carries his reward before him;
- 12 and they shall be called a Holy People,  
the Ransomed of the LORD,  
a People long-sought, a City not  
forsaken.
- 63 'Who is this coming from Edom,  
coming from Bozrah, his garments  
stained red?  
Under his clothes his muscles stand  
out,  
and he strides, stooping in his  
might.'  
It is I, who announce that right has  
won the day,  
I, who am strong to save.
- 2 'Why is your clothing all red,  
like the garments of one who treads  
grapes in the vat?'
- 3 I have trodden the winepress alone;  
no man, no nation was with me.  
I trod them down in my rage,  
I trampled them in my fury;  
and their life-blood spurted over my  
garments  
and stained all my clothing.
- 4 For I resolved on a day of  
vengeance;  
the year for ransoming my own  
had come.
- 5 I looked for a helper but found  
no one,  
I was amazed that there was no  
one to support me;  
yet my own arm brought me  
victory,  
alone my anger supported me.
- 6 I stamped on nations in my fury,  
I pierced them in my rage
- and let their life-blood run out upon  
the ground.
- I will recount the LORD's acts of 7  
unfailing love  
and the LORD's praises as High  
God,  
all that the LORD has done for us  
and his great goodness to the house  
of Israel,  
all that he has done for them in  
his tenderness  
and by his many acts of love.  
He said, 'Surely they are my people, 8  
my sons who will not play me  
false';  
and he became their deliverer in all 9  
their troubles.
- It was no envoy, no angel, but he  
himself that delivered them;  
he himself ransomed them by his  
love and pity,  
lifted them up and carried them  
through all the years gone by.
- Yet they rebelled and grieved his 10  
holy spirit;  
only then was he changed into their  
enemy  
and himself fought against them.  
Then men remembered days long 11  
past  
and him who drew out<sup>b</sup> his people:  
Where is he who brought them up  
from the Nile  
with the shepherd<sup>c</sup> of his flock?  
Where is he who put within him  
his holy spirit,  
who made his glorious power march 12  
at the right hand of Moses,  
dividing the waters before them,  
to win for himself an everlasting name,  
causing them to go through the 13  
depths  
sure-footed as horses in the  
wilderness,

<sup>b</sup> That is Moses whose name resembles the Heb. verb meaning draw out. cp. Exod. 2. 10 and the note there.  
<sup>c</sup> Or shepherds.

63.1-6: **The approach of the divine warrior.** The prophet as watchman (62.6) asks a question (v. 1a) and the LORD, as a figure covered with the blood of his enemies, responds (1b-6). He alone has destroyed the nations in order to save his people; see ch. 34. 1: *Bozrah*; see 34.6 n. 2-3: As one treading *grapes* to squeeze out the juice for wine stains his *garments*, so the LORD *trampled on the nations* and *stained his clothing* with their *blood*. 63.7-64.12: **Praise and petition.** This prayer begins with an emphasis upon praising God for his saving acts (63.7-14) and turns to pleas that he act again to restore Jerusalem and the Temple (63.15-64.12). 7: Hymns often begin with an expression of the intention to praise. See Ps.89.1. 9-14: The account of God's acts corresponds to Israel's history. 11: *Spirit*: see 11.2 n.; Ps.106.4. 12: See Exod. chs. 14-15, especially 14.21 and 15.6. 13: See also Ps. 106.9.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>14 like cattle moving down into a valley without stumbling, guided by the spirit of the LORD? So didst thou lead thy people to win thyself a glorious name.</p> <p>15 Look down from heaven and behold from the heights where thou dwellest holy and glorious. Where is thy zeal, thy valour, thy burning and tender love?</p> <p>16 Stand not aloof;<sup>d</sup> for thou art our father, though Abraham does not know us nor Israel acknowledge us. Thou, LORD, art our father; thy name is our Ransomer<sup>e</sup> from of old.</p> <p>17 Why, LORD, dost thou let us wander from thy ways and harden our hearts until we cease to fear thee? turn again for the sake of thy servants, the tribes of thy patrimony.</p> <p>18 Why have wicked men trodden down thy sanctuary,<sup>f</sup> why have our enemies trampled on thy shrine?</p> <p>19 We have long been reckoned as beyond thy sway, as if we had not been named thy own.</p> <p>64 Why didst thou not rend the heavens and come down, and make the mountains shudder before thee</p> <p>2 as when fire blazes up in brushwood or fire makes water boil? then would thy name be known to thy enemies and nations tremble at thy coming.</p> <p>3 When thou didst terrible things that we did not look for, the mountains shuddered before thee.</p> <p>4 Never has ear heard<sup>g</sup> or eye seen any other god taking the part of those who wait for him.</p> | <p>Thou dost welcome him who rejoices to do what is right, who remembers thee in thy ways. Though thou wast angry, yet we sinned, in spite of it we have done evil from of old, we all became like a man who is unclean and all our righteous deeds like a filthy rag; we have all withered<sup>h</sup> like leaves and our iniquities sweep us away like the wind. There is no one who invokes thee by name or rouses himself to cling to thee; for thou hast hidden thy face from us and abandoned us to our iniquities. But now, LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, thou the potter, and all of us are thy handiwork. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever; look on us all, look on thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem desolate; our sanctuary, holy and glorious, where our fathers praised thee, has been burnt to the ground and all that we cherish is a ruin. After this, O LORD, wilt thou hold back, wilt thou keep silence and punish us beyond measure?</p> <p>I was there to be sought by a people who did not ask, to be found by men who did not seek me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I',</p> | <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>65</p> |
|---|--|--|

*d* Stand not aloof: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure in context.*  
*e* Or our Kinsman.  
*f* Why . . . sanctuary: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* For a little while they possessed thy holy people.  
*g* Never . . . heard: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* They have never heard or listened.  
*h* have all withered: *or* are all carried away.

15-19: The petitioner asks for reasons for God's absence. 16: *Ransomer*: see 41.14 n. 17: *Harden our hearts*: since God controls all things, he must have caused Israel to go astray. Compare Exod.14.4. 19: *Named*: see 43.6-7 n. 64.12: When the LORD answers man with *silence* he leaves him to his own resources, i.e. doom, which is punishment *beyond measure*; see Ps.28.1. 65.1-25: **The answer to the prayer.** In the inherited organization of the book, this chapter appears as God's response to the previous petition; sinners will be judged but the faithful redeemed. 1-2: Far from keeping silence, God makes his presence known by shouting "*Here am*

- to a nation that did not invoke me  
by name.
- 2 I spread out my hands all day  
appealing to an unruly people  
who went their evil way,  
following their own devices,
- 3 a people who provoked me  
continually to my face,  
offering sacrifice in gardens, burning  
incense on brick altars,
- 4 crouching among graves, keeping  
vigil all night long,  
eating swine's flesh, their cauldrons  
full of a tainted brew.
- 5 'Stay where you are,' they cry,  
'do not dare touch me; for I am too  
sacred for you.'
- Such people are a smouldering fire,  
smoking in my nostrils all day long.
- 6 All is on record before me: I will not  
keep silence;
- 7 I will repay<sup>i</sup> your iniquities,  
yours and your fathers', all at once,  
says the LORD,  
because they burnt incense<sup>j</sup> on the  
mountains  
and defied me on the hills;  
I will first measure out their reward  
and then pay them in full.
- 8 These are the words of the LORD:  
As there is new wine in a cluster of  
grapes  
and men say, 'Do not destroy it;  
there is a blessing in it',  
so will I do for my servants' sake:  
I will not destroy the whole nation.
- 9 I will give Jacob children to come  
after him  
and Judah heirs who shall possess  
my mountains;  
my chosen shall inherit them  
and my servants shall live there.
- 10 Flocks shall range over Sharon,  
and the Vale of Achor be a  
pasture for cattle;  
they shall belong to my people  
who seek me.
- 11 But you that forsake the LORD and  
forget my holy mountain,  
who spread a table for the god of  
Fate,
- and fill bowls of spiced wine in  
honour of Fortune,  
I will deliver you to your fate, to  
execution,  
and you shall all bend the neck to  
the sword,  
because I called and you did not  
answer,  
I spoke and you did not listen;  
and you did what was wrong in my  
eyes  
and you chose what was against my  
will.
- Therefore these are the words of the  
LORD GOD:  
My servants shall eat but you shall  
starve;  
my servants shall drink but you  
shall go thirsty;  
my servants shall rejoice but you  
shall be put to shame;  
my servants shall shout in triumph  
in the gladness of their hearts,  
but you shall cry from sorrow  
and wail from anguish of spirit;  
your name shall be used as an oath  
by my chosen,  
and the Lord GOD shall give you  
over to death;  
but his servants he shall call by  
another name.
- He who invokes a blessing on  
himself in the land  
shall do so by the God whose  
name is Amen,  
and he who utters an oath in the  
land  
shall do so by the God of Amen;  
the former troubles are forgotten  
and they are hidden from my  
sight.
- For behold, I create  
new heavens and a new earth.  
Former things shall no more be  
remembered  
nor shall they be called to mind.  
Rejoice and be filled with delight,  
you boundless realms which I  
create;  
for I create Jerusalem to be a delight

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg., transposing and then pay to follow reward.  
<sup>j</sup> Or sacrifices.

*I'* and stretching out his hands to a *people* that is silent. **3:** *Sacrifice . . . incense:* that is, participation in fertility cults. **4:** *Crouching among graves* probably refers to consulting the spirits of the dead. *Keeping vigil:* awaiting a dream revelation; see Jer.23.25-32. *Eating swine's flesh* was a violation of dietary law; see Deut.14.8. **11:** *Fate, Fortune:* Aramaean gods. **15:** *Oath:* i.e.

and her people a joy;  
 19 I will take delight in Jerusalem and  
 rejoice in my people;  
 weeping and cries for help  
 shall never again be heard in her.  
 20 There no child shall ever again die an  
 infant,  
 no old man fail to live out his life;  
 every boy shall live his hundred  
 years before he dies,  
 whoever falls short of a hundred  
 shall be despised.<sup>k</sup>  
 21 Men shall build houses and live to  
 inhabit them,  
 plant vineyards and eat their fruit;  
 22 they shall not build for others to  
 inhabit  
 nor plant for others to eat.  
 My people shall live the long life of  
 a tree,  
 and my chosen shall enjoy the fruit  
 of their labour.  
 23 They shall not toil in vain or raise  
 children for misfortune.  
 For they are the offspring of the  
 blessed of the LORD  
 and their issue after them;  
 24 before they call to me, I will answer,  
 and while they are still speaking I  
 will listen.  
 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed  
 together  
 and the lion shall eat straw like  
 cattle.<sup>l</sup>  
 They shall not hurt or destroy in all  
 my holy mountain,  
 says the LORD.

66 These are the words of the LORD:  
 Heaven is my throne and earth my  
 footstool.  
 Where will you build a house for me,  
 where shall my resting-place be?  
 2 All these are of my own making  
 and all these are mine.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.

The man I look to is a man down-  
 trodden and distressed,  
 one who reveres my words.  
 3 But to sacrifice an ox or to<sup>m</sup> kill a  
 man,

slaughter a sheep or break a dog's  
 neck,  
 offer grain or offer pigs' blood,  
 burn incense as a token and worship  
 an idol—  
 all these are the chosen practices of  
 men  
 who<sup>n</sup> revel in their own loathsome  
 rites.  
 I too will practise those wanton rites 4  
 of theirs  
 and bring down on them the very  
 things they dread;  
 for I called and no one answered,  
 I spoke and no one listened.  
 They did what was wrong in my eyes  
 and chose practices not to my liking.

Hear the word of the LORD, you who 5  
 revere his word:  
 Your fellow-countrymen who  
 hate you,  
 who spurn you because you bear  
 my name, have said,  
 'Let the LORD show his glory,  
 then we shall see you rejoice';  
 but they shall be put to shame.  
 That roar from the city, that uproar 6  
 in the temple,  
 is the sound of the LORD dealing  
 retribution to his foes.

Shall a woman bear a child without 7  
 pains?  
 give birth to a son before the onset  
 of labour?  
 Who has heard of anything like 8  
 this?  
 Who has seen any such thing?  
 Shall a country be born after one  
 day's labour,  
 shall a nation be brought to birth  
 all in a moment?  
 But Zion, at the onset of her pangs,  
 bore her sons.  
 Shall I bring to the point of birth 9  
 and not deliver?

*k* Or cursed.  
*l* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and the food of the snake shall be dust.  
*m* to sacrifice an ox or to: or those who sacrifice an ox and . . .  
*n* are the chosen practices of men who: or have chosen their own devices and . . .

curse. 21: See Amos 9.14. See also Ezek.28.26; 45.4; Hos.11.11. 25: Isa.11.9 is quoted at the end. 66.1-24: A collection of speeches. 1-2a: The LORD, who speaks, cannot be confined to one place. 2b-4: Those who sacrifice to idols will themselves be sacrificed. 5-9: God's intervention has already begun and will soon be evident. 5-6: He is dealing with his foes. 7-9: Israel is

- the LORD says;  
shall I who deliver close the womb?  
your God has spoken.
- 10 Rejoice with Jerusalem and exult in her,  
all you who love her;  
share her joy with all your heart,  
all you who mourn over her.
- 11 Then you may suck and be fed from the breasts that give comfort,  
delighting in her plentiful milk.
- 12 For thus says the LORD:  
I will send peace flowing over her like a river,  
and the wealth of nations like a stream in flood;  
it shall suckle you,  
and you shall be carried in their arms  
and dandled on their knees.
- 13 As a mother comforts her son,  
so will I myself comfort you,  
and you shall find comfort in Jerusalem.
- 14 This you shall see and be glad at heart,  
your limbs shall be as fresh as grass in spring;  
the LORD shall make his power known among his servants  
and his indignation felt among his foes.
- 15 For see, the LORD is coming in fire,  
with his chariots like a whirlwind,  
to strike home with his furious anger  
and with the flaming fire of his reproof.
- 16 The LORD will judge by fire,  
with fire he will test all living men,  
and many will be slain by the LORD;
- 17 those who hallow and purify themselves in garden-rites,  
one after another in a magic ring,  
those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats<sup>o</sup> and all vile vermin,  
shall meet their end, one and all,  
says the LORD,  
for I know their deeds and their thoughts. 18
- Then I myself will come to gather all nations and races,  
and they shall come and see my glory;  
and I will perform a sign among them. 19
- I will spare some of them and send them to the nations,  
to Tarshish, Put, and Lud,<sup>p</sup>  
to Meshek, Rosh,<sup>q</sup> Tubal, and Javan,<sup>r</sup>  
distant coasts and islands which have never yet heard of me  
and have not seen my glory;  
these shall announce that glory among the nations.  
From every nation they shall bring your countrymen 20  
on horses, in chariots and wagons,  
on mules and dromedaries,  
as an offering to the LORD,  
on my holy mountain Jerusalem,  
says the LORD,  
as the Israelites bring offerings in pure vessels to the LORD's house;  
and some of them I will take for priests, for Levites, 21  
says the LORD.
- For, as the new heavens and the new earth 22  
which I am making shall endure in my sight,  
says the LORD,  
so shall your race and your name endure;

<sup>o</sup> Or jerboas.

<sup>p</sup> Or Lydia.

<sup>q</sup> Meshek, Rosh: *prob. rdg.*; Heb. those who draw the bow.

<sup>r</sup> Or Greece.

being reborn. Unlike the *labour* of childbirth, God will deliver the new Israel without prolonged *birth pangs* of further calamity and Israel will continue to be fruitful in bearing children. **10-16:** God is coming to bring *peace* (v. 12) to his people and punishment to his enemies. **18-24:** God will *gather all nations and races* to Jerusalem. **18:** Not only Israel but all nations will see the *glory* of the LORD; see v. 5. **19:** *Sign:* see 7.11-12 n. The glory of the LORD will be made known to the nations farthest west, *coasts and islands* of the Mediterranean world, by non-Israelites, since the Jews were not a seafaring people. *Tarshish:* possibly Spain, at the extreme edge of the then known world; *Put* and *Lud:* northern Africa; *Javan:* Ionia; *Meshek, Rosh, Tubal:* at the extremities of Asia Minor to the north of Palestine. **20-21:** All peoples will be the *countrymen* of the Jews in the new Israel, some of them even becoming *priests*. **22:** The *race and name* of Israel will *endure* forever as a *new* creation in a new world; see also 65.17.

23 and month by month at the new  
moon,  
week by week on the sabbath,  
all mankind shall come to bow  
down before me,  
says the LORD;  
24 and they shall come out and see

the dead bodies of those who have  
rebelled against me;  
their worm shall not die nor their  
fire be quenched,  
and they shall be abhorred by all  
mankind.

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**24:** The punishment of the wicked shall not end. Outside the city there will be a place of refuse, *dead bodies* and smoldering *fire*, as it was in the Valley of Hinnom outside of the old Jerusalem.



# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem mostly before the Babylonians destroyed the Temple there in 587 B.C. but also for a short while after that event, and even, briefly, in Egypt among the fugitives from Judah. He foresaw this fall of the Southern Kingdom which occurred something over a century after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. He was no uninvolved spectator; loving his people, compelled by his God and undeterred either by ridicule or by persecution, he sought to salvage what he could from the national calamity. His major accomplishment as a prophet was his contribution to his people's maturation: Judah could survive, he knew, even without the Jerusalem sanctuary.

Chapters 1 to 20 contain two related types of matter: the tender prophet pleads with Israel for an appropriately loyal response, one that would enable a pardoning God to withhold a merited punishment; and he also reveals his dismay and sorrow at her stubbornly heedless behavior and rebels against his need to pursue his seemingly futile mission to her. In chapters 21 to 45 a biographer, probably the prophet's disciple Baruch, records the dramatic course of Jeremiah's frustrating ministry. Both here and in the remaining section (chs. 46-52), messages of hope and consolation occasionally relieve the dreary forebodings.

Persons other than the prophet and his biographer may be responsible for certain passages, especially within the "prophecies against the nations" (chs. 46-51), but also elsewhere in the book. Some of the passages are written after the manner of Deuteronomy or in the style of the later chapters of Isaiah.

1 **T**HE WORDS OF JEREMIAH SON OF  
Hilkiah, one of the priests at  
2 Anathoth in Benjamin. The word  
of the LORD came to him in the thir-  
teenth year of the reign of Josiah son  
3 of Amon, king of Judah; also during  
the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah,  
king of Judah, until the eleventh year of  
Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah,  
was completed. In the fifth month the  
people of Jerusalem were carried away  
into exile.

### *Jeremiah's call and two visions*

4 THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO ME:  
5 'Before I formed you in the womb I  
knew you for my own; before you were  
born I consecrated you, I appointed  
6 you a prophet to the nations.' 'Ah!  
Lord God,' I answered, 'I do not know

how to speak; I am only a child.' But 7  
the LORD said, 'Do not call yourself a  
child; for you shall go to whatever  
people I send you and say whatever I  
tell you to say. Fear none of them, for 8  
I am with you and will keep you safe.'  
This was the very word of the LORD.  
Then the LORD stretched out his hand 9  
and touched my mouth, and said to me,  
'I put my words into your mouth. This 10  
day I give you authority over nations  
and over kingdoms, to pull down and to  
uproot, to destroy and to demolish, to  
build and to plant.'

The word of the LORD came to me: 11  
'What is it that you see, Jeremiah?' 'An  
almond in early bloom,'<sup>a</sup> I answered.  
'You are right,' said the LORD to me, 12  
'for I am early on the watch<sup>b</sup> to carry

<sup>a</sup> Heb. shaked.  
<sup>b</sup> Heb. shoked.

1.1-3: A title page. 1: *Anathoth*: about three miles north of Jerusalem. *One of the priests*: a member of a priestly family (see 1 Kgs. 2.26-27) though seemingly not of the Jerusalem priesthood. 2: *Thirteenth year of Josiah*: 627 B.C. 3: *Eleventh year of Zedekiah*: 587 B.C. *In the fifth month*: see 2 Kgs. 25.8,11. But chs. 40-44 imply that Jeremiah's activity actually extended into later years.

1.4-19: *The beginning of Jeremiah's career*: 5: *I consecrated you*: set you apart. *To the nations*: chs. 46-51 are against the nations. 6: *I am only a child* suggests inadequacy, not early youth. 7: *Say whatever I tell you to say*: the thought is dramatized in v. 9. 8: *Fear none of them*: God fortifies his prophet in advance against his people's opposition, a thought which is developed in vv. 17-19. 10: *To pull down . . . uproot . . . build . . . plant*: God's message has two aspects, the threat of disaster and consolation after calamity. 11-12: What God threatens through his prophet he brings to sure fulfillment. The early blooming *almond* (*shaked*) reminds Jeremiah

13 out my purpose.' The word of the LORD came to me a second time: 'What is it that you see?' 'A cauldron', I said, 'on a fire, fanned by the wind; it is tilted away from the north.' The LORD said:

From the north disaster shall flare up against all who live in this land;  
 15 for now I summon all peoples and kingdoms of the north, says the LORD.  
 Their kings shall come and each shall set up his throne before the gates of Jerusalem, against her walls on every side, and against all the cities of Judah.  
 16 I will state my case against my people for all the wrong they have done in forsaking me, in burning sacrifices to other gods, worshipping the work of their own hands.  
 17 Brace yourself, Jeremiah; stand up and speak to them. Tell them everything I bid you, do not let your spirit break at sight of them, or I will break you before their eyes.  
 18 This day I make you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of bronze, to stand fast against the whole land, against the kings and princes of Judah, its priests and its people.  
 19 They will make war on you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you and will keep you safe.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.

*Exhortations to Israel and Judah*

2 THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO ME:  
 2 Go, make a proclamation that all

Jerusalem shall hear: These are the words of the LORD:

I remember the unflinching devotion of your youth, the love of your bridal days, when you followed me in the wilderness, through a land unsown. Israel then was holy to the LORD, 3 the firstfruits of his harvest; no one who devoured her went unpunished, evil always overtook them.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.

Listen to the word of the LORD, 4 people of Jacob, families of Israel, one and all. These are the words of the LORD: 5

What fault did your forefathers find in me, that they wandered far from me, pursuing empty phantoms and themselves becoming empty; that they did not ask, 'Where is the LORD, 6 who brought us up from Egypt, and led us through the wilderness, through a country of deserts and shifting sands, a country barren and ill-omened, where no man ever trod, no man made his home?' I brought you into a fruitful land 7 to enjoy its fruit and the goodness of it; but when you entered upon it you defiled it and made the home I gave you loathsome. The priests no longer asked, 'Where is the LORD?' 8 Those who handled the law had no thought of me, the shepherds of the people rebelled against me;

that God is "watchful" (*shoked*) to carry out his purpose. 13–16: Disaster looms from the north. 13: In steam from a boiling cauldron the prophet sees an omen of national calamity. 15: *Peoples and kingdoms of the north*: the enemy, Babylon, is not directly identified until 20.4. While some, indeed, speculate that the distant Scythians are intended, more probably Jeremiah had in mind the Babylonians, the currently dominant Mesopotamian power. Similarly, in Amos 6.14, an unnamed nation can be identified as Assyria.

2.1–37: *Israel's apostasy a fateful error*, 2–3: *In the wilderness . . . a land unsown*: before the entry into Canaan, Israel served God with undivided loyalty, and he protected her. 5–8: In agricultural Canaan, the *fruitful land*, Israel forgot God's solicitude, confused him with the god

- the prophets prophesied in the  
name of Baal  
and followed gods powerless to help.
- 9 Therefore I will bring a charge  
against you once more,  
says the LORD,  
against you and against your  
descendants.
- 10 Cross to the coasts and islands of  
Kittim and see,  
send to Kedar and consider well,  
see whether there has been anything  
like this:
- 11 has a nation ever changed its gods,  
although they were no gods?  
But my people have exchanged their  
Glory  
for a god altogether powerless.
- 12 Stand aghast at this, you heavens,  
tremble in utter despair,  
says the LORD.
- 13 Two sins have my people committed:  
they have forsaken me,  
a spring of living water,  
and they have hewn out for  
themselves cisterns,  
cracked cisterns that can hold no  
water.
- 14 Is Israel a slave? Was he born in  
slavery?  
If not, why has he been despoiled?
- 15 Why do lions roar and growl at  
him?  
Why has his land been laid waste,  
why are his cities razed to the ground  
and abandoned?
- 16 Men of Noph and Tahpanhes  
will break your heads.
- 17 Is it not your desertion of the LORD  
your God  
that brings all this upon you?
- 18 And now, why should you make off  
to Egypt  
to drink the waters of the Shihor?
- Or why make off to Assyria  
to drink the waters of the River?  
It is your own wickedness that will  
punish you,  
your own apostasy that will  
condemn you.
- See for yourselves how bitter a thing  
it is and how evil,  
to forsake the LORD your God and  
revere me no longer.
- This is the very word of the Lord  
GOD of Hosts.
- Ages ago you broke your yoke and  
snapped your traces,  
crying, 'I will not be your slave';  
and you sprawled in promiscuous  
vice  
on all the hill-tops, under every  
spreading tree.
- I planted you as a choice red vine,  
true stock all of you,  
yet now you are turned into a vine  
debased and worthless!
- The stain of your sin is still there and  
I see it,  
though you wash with soda and do  
not stint the soap.
- This is the very word of the Lord  
GOD.
- How can you say, 'I am not polluted,  
not I!  
I have not followed the Baalim'?  
Look how you conducted yourself in  
the valley;  
remember what you have done.  
You have been like a she-camel,  
twisting and turning as she runs,  
rushing alone into<sup>c</sup> the wilderness,  
snuffing the wind in her lust;  
who can restrain her in her heat?  
No one need tire himself out in  
pursuit of her;

<sup>c</sup> rushing alone into: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a wild-ass  
taught in.

Baal, and forfeited his care. **8:** *Priests . . . shepherds* (rulers), and *prophets* all went astray. **9–13:** It was wholly unnatural behavior in that not even worshipers of idols, *no gods*, exchange those phantoms for others. **10:** *Kittim*: Cyprus. *Kedar*: in Arabia, east of Edom. **11:** *Their glory*: God. **13:** Water sources were either a *spring* flowing from underground, or *cisterns*, dug out and plastered to collect and hold rainwater. **14–15:** The consequences of Israel's apostasy already in evidence. *Despoiled . . . razed . . . abandoned*: the allusions are either to the ruin wrought by Assyria about 721 B.C. in the Northern Kingdom, or else to the effects of some more recent invasion, possibly Necho's in 609 B.C.; see 22.10 n. **16:** *Noph and Tahpanhes*: Memphis and Daphne in Lower Egypt. **18:** *Shihor*: a branch of the Nile. *The River*: the Euphrates. Playing international politics is also disloyalty to God. **20:** *Promiscuous vice*: an example of, and a metaphor for, religious apostasy. **21:** Compare the vineyard parable in Isa.5.1–7. **23:** *Baalim*: the gods of the Canaanites. *The valley*: its name was Ben-hinnom; see

- she is easily found at mating time.  
 25 Why not save your feet from stony ground  
 and your throats from thirst?  
 But you said, 'No; I am desperate.  
 I love foreign gods and I must go  
 after them.'
- 26 As a thief is ashamed when he is  
 found out,  
 so the people of Israel feel ashamed,  
 they, their kings, their princes,  
 their priests and their prophets;  
 27 they say 'You are our father' to a  
 block of wood  
 and cry 'Mother' to a stone.  
 But on me they have turned their  
 backs  
 and averted their faces from me.  
 And now on the day of disaster they  
 say,  
 'Rise up and save us.'
- 28 Where are they, those gods you made  
 for yourselves?  
 Let them come and save you in the  
 day of disaster.  
 For you, Judah, have as many gods  
 as you have towns.<sup>d</sup>
- 29 The LORD answers,  
 Why argue your case with me?  
 You are rebels, every one of you.  
 30 In vain I struck down your sons,  
 the lesson was not learnt;  
 still your own sword devoured your  
 prophets  
 like a ravening lion.
- 31 'Have I shown myself inhospitable  
 to Israel  
 like some wilderness or waterless  
 land?  
 Why do my people say, 'We have  
 broken away;  
 we will never come back to thee?'
- 32 Will a girl forget her finery  
 or a bride her ribbons?  
 Yet my people have forgotten  
 me  
 over and over again.
- 33 How well you pick your way in
- search of lovers!  
 Why! even the worst of women can  
 learn from you.  
 Yes, and there is blood on the  
 corners of your robe— 34  
 the life-blood of the innocent poor.  
 You did not get it by  
 housebreaking  
 but by your sacrifices under every  
 oak.  
 You say, 'I am innocent;  
 surely his anger has passed away.' 35  
 But I will challenge your claim  
 to have done no sin.  
 Why do you so lightly change your 36  
 course?  
 Egypt will fail you as Assyria did;  
 you shall go out from here, 37  
 each of you with his hands above  
 his head,  
 for the LORD repudiates those in  
 whom you trusted,  
 and from them you shall gain nothing.
- If a man puts away his wife 3  
 and she leaves him,  
 and if she then becomes another's,  
 may he go back to her again?  
 Is not that woman defiled,  
 a forbidden thing?  
 You have played the harlot with  
 many lovers;  
 can you come back to me?  
 says the LORD.
- Look up to the high bare places 2  
 and see:  
 where have you not been  
 ravished?  
 You sat by the wayside to catch  
 lovers,  
 like an Arab lurking in the desert,  
 and defiled the land  
 with your fornication and your  
 wickedness.  
 Therefore the showers were 3  
 withheld

<sup>d</sup> towns: or blood-spattered altars.

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. prefixes You, O generation, see the word of the LORD.

7.31. 27: *Block of wood . . . a stone*: idols. 30: *In vain I struck down your sons*: brought defeat to your armies. *The lesson that I was displeased was not learned*; see 3.3 n. *Your prophets*, e.g. Uriah (26.20–23). 34: *The life-blood of the innocent poor*: see 5.28. Social injustice too is infidelity. 36: *Egypt . . . Assyria*: see vv. 16 and 18. 37: *His hands above his head*: disgraced; see 2 Sam.13.19. *Those in whom you trusted*: possibly Egypt; see 37.7.

3.1–10: **A persistently inconstant people.** Jeremiah condemns Judah, the wife faithless to God. 1: **A twice divorced woman may not remarry her first husband**; see Deut.24.1–4. 3: *Showers*

and the spring rain failed.  
But yours was a harlot's brow,  
and you were resolved to show no  
shame.

- 4 Not so long since, you called me  
'Father,  
dear friend of my youth',  
5 thinking, 'Will he be angry for ever?  
Will he rage eternally?'  
This is how you spoke; you have  
done evil  
and gone unchallenged.

- 6 In the reign of King Josiah, the LORD  
said to me, Do you see what apostate  
Israel did? She went up to every hill-top  
and under every spreading tree, and  
7 there she played the whore. Even after  
she had done all this, I said to her,  
Come back to me, but she would not.  
That faithless woman, her sister Judah,  
8 saw it all; she saw too that I had put  
apostate Israel away and given her a  
note of divorce because she had com-  
mitted adultery. Yet that faithless  
woman, her sister Judah, was not  
afraid; she too has gone and played the  
9 whore. She defiled the land with her  
thoughtless harlotry and her adulterous  
10 worship of stone and wood. In spite of  
all this that faithless woman, her sister  
Judah, has not come back to me in good  
faith, but only in pretence. This is the  
very word of the LORD.

- 11 The LORD said to me, Apostate Israel  
is less to blame than that faithless  
12 woman Judah. Go and proclaim this  
message to the north:

Come back to me, apostate Israel,  
says the LORD,  
I will no longer frown on you.  
For my love is unailing, says the  
LORD,

- I will not be angry for ever.  
13 Only you must acknowledge your  
wrongdoing,  
confess your rebellion against the

LORD your God.  
Confess your promiscuous traffic  
with foreign gods  
under every spreading tree,  
confess that you have not obeyed  
me.

This is the very word of the LORD.

Come back to me, apostate children, 14  
says the LORD, for I am patient with  
you, and I will take you, one from a  
city and two from a clan, and bring you  
to Zion. There will I give you shepherds 15  
after my own heart, and they shall lead  
you with knowledge and understand-  
ing. In those days, when you have in- 16  
creased and become fruitful in the land,  
says the LORD, men shall speak no more  
of the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD;  
they shall not think of it nor remember  
it nor resort to it; it will be needed no  
more. At that time Jerusalem shall be 17  
called the Throne of the LORD. All  
nations shall gather in Jerusalem to  
honour the LORD's name; never again  
shall they follow the promptings of  
their evil and stubborn hearts. In those 18  
days Judah shall join Israel, and to-  
gether they shall come from a northern  
land into the land I gave their fathers  
as their patrimony.

I said, How gladly would I treat you 19  
as a son,  
giving you a pleasant land,  
a patrimony fairer than that of  
any nation!

I said, You shall call me Father  
and never cease to follow me.  
But like a woman who is unfaithful 20  
to her lover,  
so you, Israel, were unfaithful to me.  
This is the very word of the LORD.  
Hark, a sound of weeping on the 21  
bare places,  
Israel's people pleading for mercy!  
For they have taken to crooked ways  
and ignored the LORD their God.

were withheld but this proved ineffective as discipline (see Amos 4.7-8). 6: *The reign of King Josiah*: 640-609 B.C., in Jeremiah's earlier period. 7-9: *Judah saw that I had delivered Israel over to the armies of Assyria* (2 Kgs.18.9-12) but did not learn from that early example. 10: *Has . . . come back . . . but only in pretence*: this may refer to the reformation under Josiah in 621 B.C. (2 Kgs.22.8-23.25); if so, the reformation is judged as halfhearted.

3.11-4.2: *An invitation to return, coupled with gleaming messianic promise*. 11: *Apostate Israel is less to blame*: the Northern Kingdom had no such earlier example to learn from (vv. 7-9 n.). 12: *To the north*: in the Assyrian captivity, Israel still survives as the ten tribes. (Later these

- 22 Come back to me, wayward<sup>f</sup> sons;  
I will heal your apostasy.
- O LORD, we come! We come to thee;  
for thou art our God.
- 23 There is no help in worship on the hill-tops,  
no help from clamour on the heights;  
truly in the LORD our God is Israel's only salvation.
- 24 From our early days Baal, god of shame, has devoured the fruits of our fathers' labours, their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters.
- 25 Let us lie down in shame, wrapped round by our dishonour, for we have sinned against the LORD our God, both we and our fathers, from our early days till now, and we have not obeyed the LORD our God.
- 4 If you will but come back, O Israel, if you will but come back to me, says the LORD, if you will banish your loathsome idols from my sight, and stray no more,
- 2 if you swear by the life of the LORD, in truth, in justice and uprightness, then shall the nations pray to be blessed like you<sup>g</sup> and in you<sup>g</sup> shall they boast.
- 3 These are the words of the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:
- Break up your fallow ground,  
do not sow among thorns,  
4 circumcise yourselves to the service of the LORD,
- circumcise your hearts,  
men of Judah and dwellers in Jerusalem,  
lest the fire of my fury blaze up and burn unquenched,  
because of your evil doings.
- Tell this in Judah,  
5 proclaim it in Jerusalem,  
blow the trumpet throughout the land,  
sound the muster,  
give the command, Stand to!—and let us fall back on the fortified cities.
- Raise the signal—To Zion!  
6 make for safety, lose no time,  
for I bring disaster out of the north, and dire destruction.
- A lion has come out from his lair,  
7 the destroyer of nations;  
he has struck his tents, he has broken camp,  
to harry your land  
and lay your cities waste and unpeopled.
- 8 Well may you put on sackcloth,  
beat the breast and wail,  
for the anger of the LORD is not averted from us.
- 9 On that day, says the LORD, the hearts of the king and his officers shall fail them,  
priests shall be struck with horror and prophets dumbfounded.
- And I said, O Lord GOD, thou surely 10 didst deceive this people and Jerusalem in saying, 'You shall have peace', while the sword is at our throats.
- At that time this people and Jeru- 11 salem shall be told:
- A scorching wind from the high bare places in the wilderness sweeps down upon my people,

<sup>f</sup> Or apostate. <sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. him.

were deemed "lost.") 22–25: Jeremiah imagines the response he desires. 22: *Come back*: reconciliation was still possible.

4.3–4: **The peril of stubborn disobedience.** Ancient psychology located the emotions in the lower viscera, and the mind in the heart; "uncircumcised heart" means a stubbornly closed mind. Jeremiah pleads for open minds. The thought of v. 4 is repeated with a different symbol in v. 14.

4.5–31: **More about the devastating foe from the north.** See 1.13–16. Mostly the prophet speaks for God, but in v. 13 (end), in vv. 19–21, and in v. 31 (end), he puts the words of anguished lamentation into the mouths of his people, while in v. 10 and vv. 23–26 he breaks in with his own exclamations of dismay. 6: God names himself as the moving force behind the invading armies. 9: *Prophets*: these claim, like Jeremiah, to speak for God, but, unlike

- no breeze for winnowing or for  
cleansing;
- 12 a wind too strong for these  
will come at my bidding,  
and now I will state my case  
against them.
- 13 Like clouds the enemy advances  
with a whirlwind of chariots;  
his horses are swifter than eagles—  
alas, we are overwhelmed!
- 14 O Jerusalem, wash the wrongdoing  
from your heart  
and you may yet be saved;  
how long will you cherish  
your evil schemes?
- 15 Hark, a runner from Dan,  
tidings of evil from Mount  
Ephraim!
- 16 Tell all this to the nations,  
proclaim the doom of Jerusalem:  
hordes of invaders come from a  
distant land,  
howling against the cities of Judah.
- 17 Their pickets are closing in all  
round her,  
because she has rebelled against me.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- 18 Your own ways, your own deeds  
have brought all this upon you;  
this is your punishment,  
and all this comes of your  
rebellion.<sup>h</sup>
- 19 Oh, the writhing of my bowels  
and the throbbing of my heart!  
I cannot keep silence.  
I hear the sound of the trumpet,  
the sound of the battle-cry.
- 20 Crash upon crash,  
the land goes down in ruin,  
my tents are thrown down,  
their coverings torn to shreds.
- 21 How long must I see the standard  
raised  
and hear the trumpet call?
- 22 My people are fools, they know  
nothing of me;  
silly children, with no understanding,  
they are clever only in wrongdoing,
- and of doing right they know  
nothing.
- I saw the earth, and it was without  
form and void;  
the heavens, and their light was  
gone.
- I saw the mountains, and they  
reeled;  
all the hills rocked to and fro.
- I saw, and there was no man,  
and the very birds had taken  
flight.
- I saw, and the farm-land was  
wilderness,  
and the towns all razed to the  
ground,  
before the LORD in his anger.  
These are the words of the LORD:
- The whole land shall be desolate,  
though I will not make an end  
of it.
- Therefore the earth will mourn  
and the heavens above turn black.  
For I have made known my purpose;  
I will not relent or change my mind.
- At the sound of the horsemen and  
archers  
the whole country is in flight;  
they creep into caves, they hide in  
thickets,  
they scramble up the crags.  
Every town is forsaken,  
no one dwells there.
- And you, what are you doing?  
When you dress yourself in scarlet,  
deck yourself out with golden  
ornaments,  
and make your eyes big with  
antimony,  
you are beautifying yourself to  
no purpose.  
Your lovers spurn you  
and are out for your life.  
I hear a sound as of a woman in  
labour,

<sup>h</sup> your rebellion: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

Jeremiah, say: "You shall have peace" (v. 10). 14: *Heart*: see vv. 3–4 n. 15: *Dan . . . Mount Ephraim*: places north of Jerusalem, the first to fall to the invader. 22: *My people*: after the imagined lamentation Jeremiah speaks again as if for God; in vv. 23–26, the prophet puts his vision of the event in "apocalyptic" terms, depicting a catastrophe whereby all becomes void as things were before creation. 27–28: Here again appear *the words of the LORD*, followed in v. 29 with another reference to the invader. 27: Some regard the last clause as one of several comforting additions, like 5.10,18; 48.47a. 30: *To no purpose*: flirtation with prospective military allies (*your lovers*) will not avail.

<p>the sharp cry of one bearing her first child.          It is Zion, gasping for breath, clenching her fists.          Ah me! I am weary, weary of slaughter.</p> <p>5 Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem          and see for yourselves;          search her wide squares:          can you find any man who acts justly,          who seeks the truth,          that I may forgive that city?</p> <p>2 Men may swear by the life of the LORD,          but they only perjure themselves.</p> <p>3 O LORD, are thine eyes not set upon the truth?          Thou didst strike them down,          but they took no heed;          didst pierce them to the heart,          but they refused to learn.          They set their faces harder than flint          and refused to come back.</p> <p>4 I said, 'After all, these are the poor,          these are stupid folk,          who do not know the way of the LORD,          the ordinances of their God.</p> <p>5 I will go to the great          and speak with them;          for they will know the way of the LORD,          the ordinances of their God.'          But they too have broken the yoke          and snapped their traces.</p> <p>6 Therefore a lion out of the scrub          shall strike them down,          a wolf from the plains shall ravage them;          a leopard shall prowl about their cities          and maul any who venture out.          For their rebellious deeds are many,          their apostasies past counting.</p> <p>7 How can I forgive you for all this?</p>	<p>Your sons have forsaken me and sworn by gods          that are no gods.          I gave them all they needed, yet they preferred adultery,          and haunted the brothels;          each neighs after another man's wife, 8          like a well-fed and lusty stallion.          Shall I not punish them for this? 9          the LORD asks.          Shall I not take vengeance          on such a people?          Go along her rows of vines and slash them, 10          yet do not make an end of them.          Hack away her green branches,          for they are not the LORD's.          Faithless are Israel and Judah, 11          both faithless to me.          This is the very word of the LORD.          They have denied the LORD, 12          saying, 'He does not exist.          No evil shall come upon us;          we shall never see sword or famine.          The prophets will prove mere wind, 13          the word not in them.'</p> <p>And so, because you talk in this way, 14          these are the words of the LORD the God of Hosts to me:</p> <p>I will make my words a fire in your mouth;          and it shall burn up this people like brushwood.</p> <p>I bring against you, Israel, a nation 15          from afar,          an ancient people established long ago,          says the LORD.          A people whose language you do not know,          whose speech you will not understand;          they are all mighty warriors, 16          their jaws are a grave, wide open,          to devour your harvest and your 17          bread,</p>
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5.1-31: **Deserved calamities.** The people are at fault. 1: The merit of even a few who act justly would enable God to *forgive* Jerusalem; compare Gen.18.28,32. 3: *Refused to learn:* disciplinary punishment had gone unheeded (see 2.30 n.). 10: *Go:* here and in v. 14 God seems to be making Jeremiah himself his own executioner. The *vines* are figurative; see 2.21 n. *Yet do make an end of them:* possibly a comforting addition; see 4.27 n. 11: *Israel and Judah:* both kingdoms are mentioned, though Israel has already long been in captivity. 12-13: A challenge and a retort. *He does not exist* is to be understood as denying the authenticity of the prophet's threatening words. "Atheism" in the Bible is largely a denial of divine activity, not of God's existence. 14: *To me:* to the prophet. *Fire in your mouth:* see v. 10 n. 15: *From afar:* see 1.15 n.



- to devour your sons and your daughters,  
to devour your flocks and your herds,  
to devour your vines and your fig-trees.  
They shall batter down the cities in which you trust,<sup>f</sup>  
walled though they are.
- 18 But in those days, the LORD declares,  
I will still not make an end of you.  
19 When you ask, 'Why has the LORD our God done all this to us?' I shall answer, 'As you have forsaken me and served alien gods in your own land, so shall you serve foreigners<sup>g</sup> in a land that is not yours.'
- 20 Tell this to the people of Jacob,  
proclaim it in Judah:  
21 Listen, you foolish and senseless people,  
who have eyes and see nothing,  
ears and hear nothing.  
22 Have you no fear of me? says the LORD;  
will you not shiver before me,  
before me, who made the shivering sand to bound the sea,  
a barrier it never can pass?  
Its waves heave and toss but they are powerless;  
roar as they may, they cannot pass.  
23 But this people has a rebellious and defiant heart,  
rebels they have been and now they are clean gone.  
24 They did not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God,  
who gives us the rains of autumn and spring showers in their turn,  
who brings us unfailingly fixed seasons of harvest.'  
25 But your wrongdoing has upset nature's order,  
and your sins have kept from you her kindly gifts.
- For among my people there are wicked men,  
who lay snares like a fowler's net<sup>k</sup>  
and set deadly traps to catch men.  
Their houses are full of fraud,  
as a cage is full of birds.  
They grow rich and grand,  
bloated and rancorous;  
their thoughts are all of evil,  
and they refuse to do justice,  
the claims of the orphan they do not put right  
nor do they grant justice to the poor.  
Shall I not punish them for this?  
says the LORD;  
shall I not take vengeance on such a people?
- An appalling thing, an outrage,  
has appeared in this land:  
prophets prophesy lies and priests go hand in hand with them,  
and my people love to have it so.  
How will you fare at the end of it all?
- Save yourselves, men of Benjamin,  
6 come out of Jerusalem,  
blow the trumpet in Tekoa,  
fire the beacon on Beth-hakkerem,  
for calamity looms from the north and great disaster.  
Zion, delightful and lovely:  
2 her end is near—  
she to whom the shepherds come  
3 and bring their flocks with them.  
There they pitch their tents all round her,  
each grazing his own strip of pasture.  
Declare war solemnly against her;  
4 come, let us attack her at noon.  
Too late! the day declines  
and the shadows lengthen.  
Come then, let us attack her by night  
5 and destroy her palaces.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds with the sword.

<sup>j</sup> Or foreign gods.

<sup>k</sup> who . . . net: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

18: A comforting addition; see 4.27 n. 21–23: See nothing . . . hear nothing . . . rebellious and defiant heart. They are a people ignorant of the LORD of creation and willfully obtuse; see vv. 30–31 and 4.3–4 n. 22: Shiver . . . shivering sand. The translation imitates a play on words in the Hebrew original; shiver is *taḥīlu*, and sand *ḥōl*, the pun associating *hīl* and *hōl*. 27: Full of fraud: full of possessions obtained by fraud. 29: A refrain, see v. 9. 30–31: These verses resume the thought of vv. 21–23. A similar theme is found in 6.13–15.

6.1–30: Calamity is near. 1: Jerusalem is no refuge for the tribe of Benjamin, and when Zion (Jerusalem) falls, Tekoa and Beth-hakkerem to the south will be exposed to attack. 3: Shepherds . . . their flocks: used ironically for the hostile kings with their armies. 4–5: These words

- 6 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts:  
Cut down the trees of Jerusalem and raise siege-ramps against her, the city whose name is Licence, oppression is rampant in her.
- 7 As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps her evil fresh. Violence and outrage echo in her streets; sickness and wounds stare me in the face.
- 8 Learn your lesson, Jerusalem, lest my love for you be torn from my heart, and I leave you desolate, a land where no one can live.
- 9 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts:  
Glean the remnant of Israel like a vine, pass your hand like a vintager one last time over the branches.
- 10 To whom can I address myself, to whom give solemn warning? Who will hear me? Their ears are uncircumcised; they cannot listen; they treat the LORD's word as a reproach; they show no concern with it.
- 11 But I am full of the anger of the LORD, I cannot hold it in. I must pour it out on the children in the street and on the young men in their gangs. Man and wife alike shall be caught in it, the greybeard and the very old.
- 12 Their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and their women alike. For I will raise my hand, says the LORD,
- against the people of the country. For all, high and low, are out for ill-gotten gain; prophets and priests are frauds, every one of them; they dress my people's wound, but skin-deep only, with their saying, 'All is well.' All well? Nothing is well! Are they ashamed when they practise their abominations? Ashamed? Not they! They can never be put out of countenance. Therefore they shall fall with a great crash,<sup>1</sup> and be brought to the ground on the day of my reckoning. The LORD has said it.
- These are the words of the LORD: Stop at the cross-roads; look for the ancient paths; ask, 'Where is the way that leads to what is good?' Then take that way, and you will find rest for yourselves. But they said, 'We will not.' Then I will appoint watchmen to direct you; listen for their trumpet-call. But they said, 'We will not.' Therefore hear, you nations, and take note, all you who witness it, of the plight of this people. Listen, O earth, I bring ruin on them, the harvest of all their scheming; for they have given no thought to my words and have spurned my instruction. What good is it to me if frankincense is brought from Sheba and fragrant spices from distant lands? I will not accept your whole-offerings, your sacrifices do not please me. Therefore these are the words of the LORD:
- I will set obstacles before this people which shall bring them to the ground;

<sup>1</sup> with a great crash: or where they fall or among the fallen.

are placed in the mouths of these "shepherds." 6-8: *Oppression . . . evil . . . violence and outrage* will bring on the city's fate, unless she heeds the *lesson*; see 2.30 n. 10-12: The prophet has no choice but to speak, while his people, unconcerned, cover their ears. 10: *Their ears are uncircumcised*; see 4.4. 11: The prophet's *anger* is a part of God's anger, and beyond the prophet's control; it spills over, causing havoc. 13-15: *Prophets and priests are frauds*: the thought of 5.31 is more fully developed here; see 5.30-31 n. 16-21: The fate of an unheeding people, for God asks obedience more than incense and offerings. Israel spurns his *instruction* (v. 19) and will perish. 16: *Ancient paths*: Jeremiah does not claim to be proposing a new doctrine. *Find rest*: he shares the common human yearning for security. 17: *Watchmen*: prophets. 20: *Sheba* was in Arabia. 22-26: Another dramatic projection of the northern foe (see 1.13-16;

fathers and sons, friends and  
neighbours  
shall all perish together.

22 These are the words of the LORD:

See, a people is coming from a  
northern land,  
a great nation rouses itself from  
earth's farthest corners.

23 They come with bow and sabre,  
cruel men and pitiless,  
bestriding their horses, they sound  
like the thunder of the sea,  
they are like men arrayed for battle  
against you, Zion.

24 We have heard tell of them  
and our hands hang limp,  
agony grips us, the anguish of a  
woman in labour.

25 Do not go out into the country;  
do not walk by the high road;  
for the foe, sword in hand,  
is a terror let loose.

26 Daughter of my people, wrap  
yourself in sackcloth,  
sprinkle ashes over yourself, wail  
bitterly,  
as one who mourns an only son;  
in an instant shall the marauder be  
upon us.

27 I have appointed you an assayer of  
my people;  
you will know how to test them and  
will assay their conduct;

28 arch-rebels all of them,  
mischief-makers, corrupt to a man.

29 The bellows puff and blow, the  
furnace glows;  
in vain does the refiner smelt the  
ore,  
lead, copper and iron<sup>m</sup> are not  
separated out.

30 Call them spurious silver;  
for the LORD has spurned them.

*False religion and its punishment*

THIS WORD CAME FROM THE LORD TO 7  
Jeremiah. Stand at the gate of the 2  
LORD's house and there make your  
proclamation: Listen to the words of  
the LORD, all you men of Judah who  
come in through these gates to worship  
him. These are the words of the LORD 3  
of Hosts the God of Israel: Mend your  
ways and your doings, that I may let  
you live in this place. You keep saying, 4  
"This place" is the temple of the LORD,  
the temple of the LORD, the temple of  
the LORD! This catchword of yours is  
a lie; put no trust in it. Mend your ways 5  
and your doings, deal fairly with one  
another, do not oppress the alien, the 6  
orphan, and the widow, shed no in-  
nocent blood in this place, do not run  
after other gods to your own ruin.  
Then will I let you live in this place, in 7  
the land which I gave long ago to your  
forefathers for all time. You gain noth- 8  
ing by putting your trust in this lie.  
You steal, you murder, you commit 9  
adultery and perjury, you burn sacri-  
fices to Baal, you run after other gods  
whom you have not known; then you 10  
come and stand before me in this house,  
which bears my name, and say, "We  
are safe"; safe, you think, to indulge in  
all these abominations. Do you think 11  
that this house, this house which bears  
my name, is a robbers' cave? I myself  
have seen all this, says the LORD. Go 12  
to my shrine at Shiloh, which once I  
made a dwelling for my Name, and  
see what I did to it because of the  
wickedness of my people Israel. And 13  
now you have done all these things,  
says the LORD; though I took pains to  
speak to you, you did not listen, and  
though I called, you gave no answer.

<sup>m</sup> copper and iron: *transposed from after mischief-makers in verse 28.*

<sup>n</sup> This place: *prob. rdg.; Heb. Those.*

4.5-31); vv. 24 and 25 are exclamations of the dismayed Judeans. 27-30: God speaks to Jeremiah. The prophet, like an *assayer*, tests his people, and finds them to be utterly lacking in value.

**7.1-10.25: False religion and its punishment.**

**7.1-8.3: The Temple sermon** (vv. 1-15), with supplements. To the Judeans assembled for worship at the Jerusalem Temple Jeremiah brings the alarming message that their confidence is misplaced, for God rejects their worship and will reduce his Temple and their land to ruins. The thought is expanded in vv. 21-26, 29-34, and 8.1-3. **1:** *The LORD's house*: the Jerusalem Temple. **3:** *Mend your ways . . . that I may*: he appeals for repentance. **9-10:** You break half of the Ten Commandments, and yet say, "We are safe," because you are in the sanctuary. **12:** *Shiloh*: an earlier sanctuary. It was probably destroyed by the Philistines after the battle of

14 Therefore what I did to Shiloh I will do to this house which bears my name, the house in which you put your trust, the place I gave to you and your fore-  
 15 fathers; I will fling you away out of my sight, as I flung away all your kinsfolk, the whole brood of Ephraim.

16 Offer up no prayer, Jeremiah, for this people, raise no plea or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me; 17 for I will not listen to you. Do you not see what is going on in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 Children are gathering wood, fathers lighting fires, women kneading dough to make crescent-cakes in honour of the queen of heaven; and drink-offerings are poured out to other gods than me— 19 all to provoke and hurt me. But is it I, says the LORD, whom they hurt? No; it is themselves, covering their own 20 selves with shame. Therefore, says the Lord GOD, my anger and my fury shall fall on this place, on man and beast, on trees and crops, and it shall burn un-  
 quenched.

21 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: Add whole-offerings to sacrifices and eat the flesh 22 if you will. But when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt, I gave them no commands about whole-offering and sacrifice; I said not a word about them. 23 What I did command them was this: If you obey me, I will be your God and you shall be my people. You must conform to all my commands, if you would 24 prosper. But they did not listen; they paid no heed, and persisted in disobedience with evil and stubborn hearts; they looked backwards and not 25 forwards, from the day when your forefathers left Egypt until now. I took pains to send to them all my servants 26 the prophets; they did not listen to me,

they paid no heed, but were obstinate and proved even more wicked than their forefathers. When you tell them this, 27 they will not listen to you; if you call them, they will not answer. Then you 28 shall say to them, This is the nation that did not obey the LORD its God nor accept correction; truth has perished, it is heard no more on their lips.

O Jerusalem, cut off your hair, 29 the symbol of your dedication, and throw it away; raise up a lament on the high bare 30 places.

For the LORD has spurned the generation which has roused his wrath, and has abandoned them. For the men of Judah have done what is wrong in my eyes, says the LORD. They have defiled with their loathsome idols the house that bears my name, they have built a 31 shrine of Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, at which to burn their sons and daughters; that was no command of mine, nor did it ever enter my thought. Therefore a time is coming, 32 says the LORD, when it shall no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for the dead shall be buried in Topheth because there is no room elsewhere. So 33 the bodies of this people shall become food for the birds of the air and the wild beasts, and there will be no one to scare them away. From the cities of 34 Judah and the streets of Jerusalem I will banish all sounds of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the bride; for the land shall become desert.

At that time, says the LORD, men 8 shall bring out from their graves the bones of the kings of Judah, of the

Eben-ezer (1 Sam. ch. 4). 15: *Ephraim*: the Northern Kingdom, Israel (compare 2 Kgs. 18.9-12), of which Ephraim was the leading tribe. 16: *Offer up no prayer* (see 14.12) suggests that Jeremiah would have done so if it were not prohibited, and that God would have found it hard to refuse him (see 15.1-2 n.). 17-18; 30-31: These verses enlarge on the offensive acts listed briefly in v. 9, of running "after other gods." 18: *Queen of heaven* was an astral deity variously identified as Ishtar, Venus, or some other love goddess of the Ancient Near East. See also 44.17-19 and 32.29. 22: *No commands about . . . sacrifice*: Jeremiah seems to reflect a tradition at direct variance with much of the Pentateuch. 23: *I will be your God . . . you . . . my people*; the covenant arrangement is contingent, not on the temple cult, but on obedience to such ethical demands as those in vv. 5 and 6. 29: *Your hair . . . symbol of . . . dedication*: see Num. 6.1-8. 30-31: *The house*: the Temple. *Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom* was outside the south wall of Jerusalem. 7.33-8.3: For those long dead to lie unburied constituted a grave indignity to the person and a defilement of the land (see 22.19).

- officers, priests, and prophets, and of  
 2 all who lived in Jerusalem. They shall  
 expose them to the sun, the moon, and  
 all the host of heaven, whom they loved  
 and served and adored, to whom they  
 resorted and bowed in worship. Those  
 bones shall not be gathered up nor  
 buried but shall become dung on the  
 3 ground. All the survivors of this wicked  
 race, wherever I have banished them,  
 would rather die than live. This is the  
 very word of the LORD of Hosts.  
 4 You shall say to them, These are the  
 words of the LORD:
- If men fall, can they not also rise?  
 If a man breaks away, can he not  
 return?
- 5 Then why are this people so wayward,  
 incurable in their waywardness?  
 Why have they clung to their  
 treachery  
 and refused to return to their  
 obedience?
- 6 I have listened to them  
 and heard not one word of truth,  
 not one sinner crying remorsefully,  
 'Oh, what have I done?'  
 Each one breaks away<sup>o</sup> in headlong  
 career  
 as a war-horse plunges in battle.
- 7 The stork in the sky  
 knows the time to migrate,  
 the dove and the swift and the  
 wryneck  
 know the season of return;  
 but my people do not know the  
 ordinances of the LORD.
- 8 How can you say, 'We are wise,  
 we have the law of the LORD',  
 when scribes with their lying pens  
 have falsified it?
- 9 The wise are put to shame, they are  
 dismayed and have lost their wits.  
 They have spurned the word of the  
 LORD,  
 and what sort of wisdom is theirs?
- 10 Therefore will I give their wives to  
 other men
- and their lands to new owners.  
 For all, high and low,  
 are out for ill-gotten gain;  
 prophets and priests are frauds,  
 every one of them;  
 they dress my people's wound, but 11  
 skin-deep only,  
 with their saying, 'All is well.'  
 All well? Nothing is well!  
 Are they ashamed when they 12  
 practise their abominations?  
 Ashamed? Not they!  
 They can never be put out of  
 countenance.  
 Therefore they shall fall with a great  
 crash,<sup>p</sup>  
 and be brought to the ground on the  
 day of my reckoning.  
 The LORD has said it.  
 I would gather their harvest, says 13  
 the LORD,  
 but there are no grapes on the vine,  
 no figs on the fig-tree;  
 even their leaves are withered.  
 Why do we sit idle? Up, all of you 14  
 together,  
 let us go into our walled cities and  
 there meet our doom.  
 For the LORD our God has struck  
 us down,  
 he has given us a draught of bitter  
 poison;  
 for we have sinned against the  
 LORD.  
 Can we hope to prosper when 15  
 nothing goes well?  
 Can we hope for respite when the  
 terror falls suddenly?  
 The snorting of his horses is heard 16  
 from Dan;  
 at the neighing of his stallions the  
 whole land trembles.  
 The enemy come; they devour the  
 land and all its store,  
 city and citizens alike.  
 Beware, I am sending snakes against 17  
 you,

<sup>o</sup> breaks away: or is wayward.

<sup>p</sup> with a great crash: or where they fall or among the fallen.

8.4-13: Unnatural conduct and its consequence. 8-9: They allow themselves to be misled by scribes with . . . lying pens: a possible disparaging reference to Josiah's reform; see 3.10 n. 10-12: These verses repeat 6.12-15 almost verbatim.

8.14-17: Consternation at the destroyer's approach. The people, or some among them, are speaking in vv. 14-16; God speaks in v. 17. 16: Dan was in the north, at the headwaters of the Jordan. 17: Vipers: figurative for irretrievable disaster.

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| <p>vipers, such as no man can charm,<br/>and they shall bite you.<br/>This is the very word of the LORD.</p> <p>18 How can I bear my sorrow?<sup>q</sup><br/>I am sick at heart.</p> <p>19 Hark, the cry of my people<br/>from a distant land:<br/>'Is the LORD not in Zion?<br/>Is her King no longer there?'<br/>Why do they provoke me with their<br/>images<br/>and foreign gods?</p> <p>20 Harvest is past, summer is over,<br/>and we are not saved.<br/>I am wounded at the sight of my<br/>people's wound,</p> <p>21 I go like a mourner, overcome with<br/>horror.</p> <p>22 Is there no balm in Gilead,<br/>no physician there?<br/>Why has no new skin grown over<br/>their wound?</p> <p>9 Would that my head were all water,<br/>my eyes a fountain of tears,<br/>that I might weep day and night<br/>for my people's dead!</p> <p>2 Oh that I could find in the wilderness<br/>a shelter by the wayside,<br/>that I might leave my people and<br/>depart!<br/>Adulterers are they all, a mob of<br/>traitors.</p> <p>3 The tongue is their weapon, a bow<br/>ready bent.<br/>Lying, not truth, is master in the<br/>land.<br/>They run from one sin to another,<br/>and for me they care nothing.<br/>This is the very word of the LORD.</p> <p>4 Be on your guard, each man against<br/>his friend;<br/>put no trust even in a brother.</p> | <p>Brother supplants brother,<sup>r</sup><br/>and friend slanders friend.<br/>They make game of their friends 5<br/>but never speak the truth;<br/>they have trained their tongues to lies;<br/>deep in their sin, they cannot<br/>retrace their steps.<br/>Wrong follows wrong, deceit follows 6<br/>deceit;<br/>they refuse to acknowledge me.<br/>This is the very word of the LORD.<br/>Therefore these are the words of the 7<br/>LORD of Hosts:<br/>I am their refiner and will assay them.<br/>How can I disregard my people?<br/>Their tongue is a cruel arrow, 8<br/>their mouths speak lies.<br/>One speaks amicably to another,<br/>while inwardly he plans a trap for<br/>him.<br/>Shall I not punish them for this? 9<br/>says the LORD;<br/>shall I not take vengeance<br/>on such a people?</p> <p>Over the mountains will I raise 10<br/>weeping and wailing,<br/>and over the desert pastures will I<br/>chant a dirge.<br/>They are scorched and untrodden,<br/>they hear no lowing of cattle;<br/>birds of the air and beasts have fled<br/>and are gone.</p> <p>I will make Jerusalem a heap of 11<br/>ruins, a haunt of wolves,<br/>and the cities of Judah an unpeopled<br/>waste.</p> <p>What man is wise enough to under- 12<br/>stand this, to understand what the LORD<br/>has said and to proclaim it? Why has<br/>the land become a dead land, scorched<br/>like the desert and untrodden? The 13</p> |
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<sup>q</sup> How . . . sorrow?: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>r</sup> Brother supplants brother; or Every brother is a  
supplanter like Jacob (*cp. Gen. 27. 35 and note*).

**8.18-9.1: An elegy.** Jeremiah envisions his people in captivity and laments. God interrupts the captives' dismayed exclamation with a challenge: *Why do they provoke me?* 22: *Is there no balm in Gilead?* This was probably a proverbial expression. Gilead was perhaps a distribution point for the healing balm.

**9.2-22: The fate in store for a chaotic society caring nothing for God.** Cheating, treachery, slander, and deceit are deeply engrained (vv. 2-6 and 8); therefore God will assay and punish them (vv. 7,9,11). 2: Repelled by his people's corruption, Jeremiah would find a refuge in the wilderness. 9: See 5.29 n. 10: Jeremiah bemoans the envisioned fate of his people as in 8.21 and 9.1. 13: *My law*; perhaps an allusion to Deut., which formed the basis of Josiah's reform; see 3.10 n. If so, unlike 3.10 and 8.8, this passage (vv. 12-16) urges compliance with that law. It is often suggested that this and similar passages are a later editor's attempt to make of

- LORD said, It is because they forsook my law which I set before them; they neither obeyed me nor conformed to it.
- 14 They followed the promptings of their own stubborn hearts, they followed the Baalim as their forefathers had taught
- 15 them. Therefore these are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: I will feed this people with wormwood and give them bitter poison to drink.
- 16 I will scatter them among nations whom neither they nor their forefathers have known; I will harry them with the sword until I have made an end of them.
- 17 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts:
- Summon the wailing women to come, send for the women skilled in keening
- 18 to come quickly and raise a lament for us, that our eyes may run with tears and our eyelids be wet with weeping.
- 19 Hark, hark, lamentation is heard in Zion:  
How fearful is our ruin! How great our shame!  
We have left our lands, our houses have been pulled down.
- 20 Listen, you women, to the words of the LORD,  
that your ears may catch what he says.  
Teach your daughters the lament, let them teach one another this dirge:
- 21 Death has climbed in through our windows,  
it has entered our palaces,  
it sweeps off the children in the open air  
and drives the young men from the streets.
- This is the word of the LORD: 22
- The corpses of men shall fall and lie like dung in the fields,  
like swathes behind the reaper, but no one shall gather them.
- These are the words of the LORD: 23
- Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom  
nor the valiant of his valour;  
let not the rich man boast of his riches;  
but if any man would boast, let him 24  
boast of this,  
that he understands and knows me.  
For I am the LORD, I show unfailing love,  
I do justice and right upon the earth;  
for on these I have set my heart.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- The time is coming, says the LORD, 25  
when I will punish all the circumcised,  
Egypt and Judah, Edom and Ammon, 26  
Moab, and all who haunt the fringes of the desert;<sup>s</sup> for all alike, the nations and Israel, are uncircumcised in heart.  
Listen, Israel, to this word that the LORD 10  
has spoken against you:
- Do not fall into the ways of the 2  
nations,  
do not be awed by signs in the heavens;  
it is the nations who go in awe of these.  
For the carved images of the nations 3  
are a sham,  
they are nothing but timber cut from the forest,

<sup>s</sup> who . . . desert: or the dwellers in the desert who clip the hair on their temples.

Jeremiah a supporter of the reform. 14: *Baalim*: gods (5.19). 15: *Wormwood*: a bitter drug 17–21: A continuation of the lament begun in v. 10. 17: *Women skilled in keening*: professionally trained for ritual weeping and wailing. 19: *How fearful . . . pulled down*: words attributed to the stricken inhabitants of Zion.

9.23–26: *Closed minds*. 23–24: To “know” God is to do as he does (22.16). 25–26: The thought of 4.3–4, there applied to Judah alone, is here generalized to include all the willfully obtuse. *Egypt . . . Edom, Ammon, Moab*: except for the Philistines, all of Israel’s neighbors practiced circumcision, but, like *Judah*, were also *uncircumcised in heart*.

10.1–16: *The folly of idolatry and of other “ways of the nations.”* This passage is closely related in thought to the satiric attack on the Babylonian gods and their deluded “witnesses” in Isa. chs. 40–48 (see especially Isa.44.9–20). 1–2: *Do not be awed by signs in the heavens*. “Omens” were connected with the prohibited worship of astral deities. 3–5: See Isa.40.18–20;

- worked with his chisel by a craftsman;  
 4 he adorns it with silver and gold, fastening them on with hammer and nails so that they do not fall apart.  
 5 They can no more speak than a scarecrow in a plot of cucumbers; they must be carried, for they cannot walk.  
 Do not be afraid of them: they can do no harm, and they have no power to do good.  
 6 Where can one be found like thee, O LORD?  
 Great thou art and great the might of thy name.  
 7 Who shall not fear thee, king of the nations?  
 for fear is thy fitting tribute.  
 Where among the wisest of the nations and all their royalty can one be found like thee?  
 8 They are fools and blockheads one and all, learning their nonsense from a log of wood.  
 9 The beaten silver is brought from Tarshish and the gold from Ophir; all are the work of craftsmen and goldsmiths.  
 They are draped in violet and purple, all the work of skilled men.  
 10 But the LORD is God in truth, a living god, an eternal king.  
 The earth quakes under his wrath, nations cannot endure his fury.  
 11 [You shall say this to them: The gods who did not make heaven and earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.]  
 12<sup>t</sup> God made the earth by his power, fixed the world in place by his wisdom,
- unfurled the skies by his understanding.  
 At the thunder of his voice the waters in heaven are amazed;<sup>u</sup>  
 he brings up the mist from the ends of the earth,  
 he opens rifts<sup>v</sup> for the rain and brings the wind out of his storehouses.  
 All men are brutish and ignorant; every goldsmith is discredited by his idol;  
 for the figures he casts are a sham, there is no breath in them.  
 They are worth nothing, mere mockeries,  
 which perish when their day of reckoning comes.  
 God, Jacob's creator, is not like these;  
 for he is the maker of all.  
 Israel is the people he claims as his own;  
 the LORD of Hosts is his name.  
 Put your goods together and carry them out of the country, living as you are under siege.  
 For these are the words of the LORD:  
 This time I will uproot the whole population of the land, and I will press them hard and squeeze them dry.  
 O the pain of my wounds!  
 Cruel are the blows I suffer.  
 But this is my plight, I said, and I must endure it.  
 My home is ruined, my tent-ropes all severed,  
 my sons have left me and are gone, there is no one to pitch my tent again,  
 no one to put up its curtains.

<sup>t</sup> Verses 12-16: cp. 51. 15-19.

<sup>u</sup> At the thunder . . . amazed: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* At the sound of his giving tumult of waters in heaven.  
<sup>v</sup> rifts: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* lightnings.

46.1-7. **9:** *Tarshish . . . Ophir:* regions not clearly identifiable, proverbially a source of precious metals. Tarshish is identified by some as in Spain; Ophir as in India, Arabia, or Africa. **11:** The verse is bracketed because it appears to be a later addition. Jer. is in Heb. except for this one verse in Aram. **16:** The climactic point of the passage is made in this verse.

**10.17-25:** The threat of total captivity, the distress of the victims, and a plea for equity. **17-18:** It is uncertain which of two sieges is meant, the first (597) or the second (587). *This time* suggests the latter. **19-20:** The heartfelt words *this is my plight, I said, and I must endure it*, seem to be spoken by Jeremiah himself. The subsequent words of v. 20 are the imagined anguished cry of his collective people, personified as an individual. Jeremiah had no *sons*: see 16.2. The



21 The shepherds of the people are mere brutes;  
they never consult the LORD,  
and so they do not prosper,  
and all their flocks at pasture are scattered.

22 Hark, a rumour comes flying,  
then a mounting uproar from the  
land of the north,  
an army to make Judah's cities  
desolate, a haunt of wolves.

23 I know, O LORD,  
that man's ways are not of his own  
choosing;  
nor is it for a man to determine his  
course in life.

24 Correct us, O LORD, but with  
justice, not in anger,  
lest thou bring us almost to  
nothing.

25 Pour out thy fury on nations  
that have not acknowledged thee,  
on tribes that have not invoked thee  
by name;  
for they have devoured Jacob and  
made an end of him  
and have left his home a waste.

that I would give them a land flowing  
with milk and honey, the land you now  
possess. I answered, 'Amen, LORD.'  
Then the LORD said: Proclaim all these  
terms in the cities of Judah and in the  
streets of Jerusalem. Say, Listen to the  
terms of this covenant and carry them  
out. I have protested to your forefathers  
since I brought them out of Egypt, till  
this day; I took pains to warn them:  
Obey me, I said. But they did not obey;  
they paid no attention to me, but each  
followed the promptings of his own  
stubborn and wicked heart. So I  
brought on them all the penalties laid  
down in this covenant by which I had  
bound them, whose terms they did not  
observe.

The LORD said to me, The men of  
Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem  
have entered into a conspiracy: they  
have gone back to the sins of their  
earliest forefathers and refused to listen  
to me. They have followed other gods  
and worshipped them; Israel and Judah  
have broken the covenant which I  
made with their fathers. Therefore these  
are the words of the LORD: I now bring  
on them disaster from which they can-  
not escape; though they cry to me for  
help I will not listen. The inhabitants of  
the cities of Judah and of Jerusalem  
may go and cry for help to the gods to  
whom they have burnt sacrifices; they  
will not save them in the hour of disas-  
ter. For you, Judah, have as many gods  
as you have towns; you have set up as  
many altars to burn sacrifices to Baal  
as there are streets in Jerusalem. So  
offer up no prayer for this people; raise  
no cry or prayer on their behalf, for I  
will not listen when they call to me in  
the hour of disaster.

What right has my beloved in my  
house  
with her shameless ways?

#### Warnings and punishment

11 THE WORD WHICH CAME TO JEREMIAH  
2 from the LORD: Listen to the terms of  
this covenant and repeat them to the  
men of Judah and the inhabitants of  
3 Jerusalem. Tell them, These are the  
words of the LORD the God of Israel:  
A curse on the man who does not ob-  
4 serve the terms of this covenant by  
which I bound your forefathers when  
I brought them out of Egypt, from the  
smelting-furnace. I said, If you obey  
me and do all that I tell you, you shall  
become my people and I will become  
5 your God. And I will thus make good  
the oath I swore to your forefathers,

people speak again in v. 24. 21: *Shepherds*: kings. 23–25: *Jacob*: the collective people. See Ps. 79.6–7 which may be the source of this verse.

#### 11.1–15.9: Warnings and punishment.

11.1–17: The penalty of a breach of faith. Some scholars deny this section to Jeremiah because of its conventional style and substance. 3: The terms of a covenant include the penalty (*curse*) which the party incurs who fails to meet his obligations. 5: *Amen*: Heb. for "so be it." 8: *All the penalties*: the "curse" in v. 3. 9: *The men of Judah*: your own generation. 11–14: *I will not listen . . . offer up no prayer*: see 7.16 n. 15–16: A metaphor of irrevocable doom. The offerings brought to the Temple will not avail, for Judah, the choice *olive-tree*, is to be utterly consumed.

- Can the flesh of fat offerings on the altar ward off the disaster that threatens you?
- 16 Once the LORD called you an olive-tree, leafy and fair; but now with a great roaring noise you will feel sharp anguish;<sup>w</sup> fire sets its leaves alight and consumes<sup>x</sup> its branches.
- 17 The LORD of Hosts who planted you has threatened you with disaster, because of the harm Israel and Judah brought on themselves when they provoked me to anger by burning sacrifices to Baal.
- 18 It was the LORD who showed me, and so I knew; he opened my eyes to what they were doing. I had been like a sheep led obedient to the slaughter; I did not know that they were hatching plots against me and saying, 'Let us cut down the tree while the sap is in it; let us destroy him out of the living, so that his very name shall be forgotten.'
- 20 O LORD of Hosts who art a righteous judge, testing the heart and mind, I have committed my cause to thee; let me see thy vengeance upon them.
- 21 Therefore these are the words of the LORD about the men of Anathoth who seek to take my life, and say, 'Prophesy no more in the name of the LORD or we will kill you'—these are his words: I will punish them: their young men shall die by the sword, their sons and daughters shall die by famine. Not one of them shall survive; for in the year of their reckoning I will bring ruin on the men of Anathoth.
- O LORD, I will dispute with thee, for thou art just; yes, I will plead my case before thee. Why do the wicked prosper and traitors live at ease? Thou hast planted them and their roots strike deep, they grow up and bear fruit. Thou art ever on their lips, yet far from their hearts. But thou knowest me, O LORD, thou seest me; thou dost test my devotion to thyself. Drag them away like sheep to the shambles; set them apart for the day of slaughter.
- How long must the country lie parched and its green grass wither? No birds and beasts are left, because its people are so wicked, because they say, 'God will not see what we are doing.'
- If you have raced with men and the runners have worn you down, how then can you hope to vie with horses? If you fall headlong in easy country, how will you fare in Jordan's dense thickets? All men, your brothers and kinsmen, are traitors to you, they are in full cry after you; trust them not, for all the fine words they give you.
- I have forsaken the house of Israel, I have cast off my own people. I have given my beloved into the power of her foes.

<sup>w</sup> you will feel sharp anguish: *transposed from end of verse 15.*

<sup>x</sup> consumes: *prob. rdg.; Heb. they consume.*

**11.18–12.6:** A prayer of Jeremiah and what he learns. Jeremiah hears of plots against his life, seeks God's help, and is reassured. **18–19:** A narrative preamble. **20:** The prayer itself. **21–23:** The answer. **20: Heart:** lit. "kidneys," see 4.3–4 n. **21:** It is the people of his own village, *Anathoth* (1.1), who have threatened to kill him for his prophesying.

**12.1–6:** Prayer and response. This passage, related in form and substance to 11.18–23, is in some disorder. Vv. 1–3 and the end of v. 4 are Jeremiah's prayer; v. 5 is what he takes to be the answer to his prayer. In v. 4 *How long . . . wicked* concerns "the drought"; see 14.1–6. V. 6 would follow best on 11.18. 1–2: Jeremiah is not here asking the broader question about the suffering of the righteous raised in Job; here the *wicked, the traitors* are specifically the men who hatch plots against him; see v. 6 and 11.19. **4:** *God will not see:* see 5.12–13 n. **5:** *If you:* you, Jeremiah. You have proved too soft for your task (see 20.14–18; 15.19–21 n.); but weightier challenges lie ahead.

**12.7–13:** God explains the lamentable disaster. The conduct of his *own people* left him no

- 8 My own people have turned on me  
like a lion from the scrub,  
roaring against me; therefore I hate  
them.
- 9 Is this land of mine a hyena's  
lair,  
with birds of prey hovering all  
around it?  
Come, you wild beasts; come, all of  
you, flock to the feast.
- 10 Many shepherds have ravaged my  
vineyard  
and trampled down my field,  
they have made my pleasant field a  
desolate wilderness,
- 11 made it a waste land, waste and  
waterless, to my sorrow.  
The whole land is waste, and no one  
cares.
- 12 Plunderers have swarmed across the  
high bare places in the wilderness, a  
sword of the LORD devouring the land  
from end to end; no creature can find  
peace.
- 13 Men sow wheat and reap thistles;  
they sift but get no grain.  
They are disappointed of their<sup>y</sup>  
harvest  
because of the anger of the  
LORD.
- 14 These are the words of the LORD  
about all those evil neighbours who are  
laying hands on the land which I gave  
to my people Israel as their patrimony:
- 16<sup>z</sup> I will uproot them from that<sup>a</sup> soil. Yet,  
if they will learn the ways of my people,  
swearing by my name, 'By the life of  
the LORD', as they taught my people to  
swear by the Baal, they shall form
- 17 families among my people. But if they  
will not listen, I will uproot that people,

uproot and destroy them. Also I will  
uproot Judah from among them; but 15  
after I have uprooted them, I will have  
pity on them again and will bring each  
man back to his patrimony and his  
land. This is the very word of the  
LORD.

These were the words of the LORD to 13  
me: Go and buy yourself a linen girdle  
and put it round your waist, but do not  
let it come near water. So I bought it 2  
as the LORD had told me and put it  
round my waist. The LORD spoke to 3  
me a second time: Take the girdle 4  
which you bought and put round your  
waist; go at once to Perath and hide it  
in a crevice among the rocks. So I went 5  
and hid the girdle at<sup>b</sup> Perath, as the  
LORD had told me. After a long time the 6  
LORD said to me: Go at once to Perath  
and fetch back the girdle which I told  
you to hide there. So I went to Perath 7  
and looked for the place where I had  
hidden it, but when I picked it up, I  
saw that it was spoilt, and no good for  
anything. Again the LORD spoke to me 8  
and these were his words: Thus will I 9  
spoil the gross pride of Judah, the gross  
pride of Jerusalem. This wicked nation 10  
has refused to listen to my words; they  
have followed other gods, serving them  
and bowing down to them. So it shall  
be<sup>c</sup> like this girdle, no good for any-  
thing. For, just as a girdle is bound 11  
close to a man's waist, so I bound all  
Israel and all Judah to myself, says the  
LORD, so that they should become my  
people to win a name for me, and  
praise and glory; but they did not  
listen.

<sup>y</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. your.

<sup>z</sup> The rest of verse 14 and verse 15 transposed to follow  
destroy them in verse 17.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. their.

<sup>b</sup> Or by.

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. And let it be.

choice but to bring on the enemy and lay waste the land. 9-10: *Many shepherds*: foreign kings and their armies. *Pleasant field*: the land of Judah. God speaks in vv. 7-11; in 12-13 the prophet interprets the events.

12.14-17: **An inclusive covenant.** Were even Israel's *evil neighbours* to learn faithfully to worship God alone, they would form *families* (lit. "be built up") within God's people. Otherwise general havoc must ensue, but the latter would be followed in the end by a reconciled world. The passage is related to the "Prophecies against the nations" in chs. 46-51, and may be an addition here.

13.1-14: **The waistcloth and the wine-jars, two symbols.** 1-11: As Jeremiah bound the *girdle* about his waist, thus intimately God took Israel to himself in covenant. Israel spurned his love and would rot away like that garment. 4-7: *Perath*: usually the river Euphrates, but here perhaps a nearer place with a like-sounding name. 11: *To win a name for me*: for the broad purpose of making God known among the nations; compare Isa.5.55; Ezek.36.23-24.

- 12 You shall say this to them: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: Wine-jars should be filled with wine. They will answer, 'We know quite well that wine-jars should be  
13 filled with wine.' Then you shall say to them, These are the words of the LORD: I will fill all the inhabitants of this land with wine until they are drunk—kings of David's line who sit on his throne, priests, prophets, and all who live in  
14 Jerusalem. I will dash them to pieces one against another, fathers and sons alike, says the LORD, I will show them no compassion or pity or tenderness; nor refrain from destroying them.<sup>d</sup>
- 15 Hear and attend. Be not too proud to listen,  
for it is the LORD who speaks.  
16 Ascribe glory to the LORD your God before the darkness falls,  
before your feet stumble on the twilight hill-sides,  
before he turns the light you look for to deep gloom and thick darkness.
- 17 If in those depths of gloom you will not listen,  
then for very anguish I can only weep and shed tears,<sup>e</sup>  
my eyes must stream with tears;  
for the LORD's flock is carried away into captivity.
- 18 Say to the king and the queen mother:<sup>f</sup>  
Down, take a humble seat,  
for your proud crowns are fallen from your heads.
- 19 Your cities in the Negeb are besieged,  
and no one can relieve them;  
all Judah has been swept into exile, swept clean away.
- 20 Lift up your eyes and see those who are coming from the north.
- Where is the flock that was entrusted to you,  
the flock you were so proud of?  
What will you say when you suffer  
because your leaders<sup>g</sup> cannot be found,  
though it was you who trained them to be your head?  
Will not pangs seize you,  
like the pangs of a woman in labour,  
when you wonder,  
'Why has this come upon me?'  
For your many sins your skirts are torn off you,  
your limbs uncovered.
- Can the Nubian change his skin,  
or the leopard its spots?  
And you? Can you do good,  
you who are schooled in evil?  
Therefore I will scatter you<sup>h</sup> like chaff  
driven by the desert wind.  
This is your lot, the portion of the  
rebel,  
measured out by me, says the  
LORD,  
because you have forsaken me and trusted in false gods.  
So I myself have stripped off your  
skirts  
and laid bare your shame.  
Your adulteries, your lustful  
neighing,  
your wanton lewdness, are an  
offence to me.<sup>i</sup>  
On the hills and in the open  
country  
I have seen your foul deeds.  
Alas, Jerusalem, unclean that you  
are!  
How long, how long will you  
delay?<sup>j</sup>

<sup>d</sup> nor refrain . . . them: or so corrupt are they.

<sup>e</sup> If . . . shed tears: or If you will not listen to this, for very anguish I must weep in secret.

<sup>f</sup> Or queen.

<sup>g</sup> leaders: transposed from next line.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.

<sup>i</sup> an offence to me (Heb. you): transposed from verse 26.

<sup>j</sup> How . . . delay?: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

12-14: A new meaning for an old saying: As wine-jars are filled with wine, so too would the people of Jerusalem, who thereafter would be shattered.

13.15-27: A frantic plea to trust in God. 15-17: Hear before it is too late, or else I must weep for very anguish. The mood is elegiac as in 9.1 and elsewhere. 18-22: One blow has already fallen, and another comes. 18: *The king*: probably Jehoiachin. 19: *Negeb*: southern Judah. 20: *Entrusted to you*: to Jerusalem. 23: The power of habit. *Nubian*: a black-skinned people from the upper Nile region.

- 14 This came to Jeremiah as the word of the LORD concerning the drought:
- 2 Judah droops, her cities languish,  
her men sink to the ground;  
Jerusalem's cry goes up.
- 3 Their flock-masters send their boys  
for water;  
they come to the pools but find no  
water there.  
Back they go, with empty vessels;  
the produce<sup>k</sup> of the land has failed,  
because there is no rain.  
The farmer's hopes are wrecked,  
they uncover their heads for grief.
- 5 The hind calves in the open country  
and forsakes her young  
because there is no grass;
- 6 for lack of herbage, wild asses stand  
on the high bare places  
and snuff the wind for moisture,  
as wolves do, and their eyes begin  
to fail.
- 7 Though our sins testify against us,  
yet act,<sup>l</sup> O LORD, for thy own  
name's sake.  
Our disloyalties indeed are many;  
we have sinned against thee.
- 8 O hope of Israel, their saviour in  
time of trouble,  
must thou be a stranger in the land,  
a traveller pitching his tent for a  
night?
- 9 Must thou be like a man suddenly  
overcome,  
like a man powerless to save himself?  
Thou art in our midst, O LORD,  
and thou hast named us thine; do  
not forsake us.
- 10 The LORD speaks thus of this people:  
They love to stray from my ways, they  
wander where they will. Therefore he  
has no more pleasure in them; he re-  
members their guilt now, and punishes  
11 their sins. Then the LORD said to me,  
Do not pray for the well-being of this  
12 people. When they fast, I will not listen  
to their cry; when they sacrifice whole-  
offering and grain-offering, I will not
- accept them. I will make an end of them  
with sword, with famine and pestilence.  
But I said, O Lord GOD, the prophets 13  
tell them that they shall see no sword  
and suffer no famine; for thou wilt give  
them lasting prosperity in this place.  
The LORD answered me, The prophets 14  
are prophesying lies in my name. I have  
not sent them; I have given them no  
charge; I have not spoken to them.  
The prophets offer them false visions,  
worthless augury, and their own delu-  
ding fancies. Therefore these are the 15  
words of the LORD about the prophets  
who, though not sent by me, prophesy  
in my name and say that neither sword  
nor famine shall touch this land: By  
sword and by famine shall those  
prophets meet their end. The people to 16  
whom they prophesy shall be flung out  
into the streets of Jerusalem, victims  
of famine and sword; they, their wives,  
their sons, and their daughters, with no  
one to bury them: I will pour down  
upon them the evil they deserve.
- So this is what you shall say to 17  
them:  
Let my eyes stream with tears,  
ceaselessly, day and night.  
For the virgin daughter of my people  
has been broken in pieces,  
struck by a cruel blow.  
If I go out into the country, 18  
I see men slain by the sword;  
if I enter the city, I see the ravages  
of famine;  
prophet and priest alike  
go begging round the land and are  
never at rest.  
Hast thou spurned Judah utterly? 19  
Dost thou loathe Zion?  
Why hast thou wounded us, and  
there is no remedy;  
why let us hope for better days, and  
we find nothing good,  
for a time of healing, and all is  
disaster?

<sup>k</sup> the produce: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>l</sup> Or turn away.

14.1-15.9: Concerning the drought and other calamities. 7-9: Public confession and supplication. *For thy own name's sake*: that is, God should act for his own reasons because of who he is, to enhance his glory among men. 12: *Their cry*: the accompaniment of the ritual fasting, for relief from drought. 13: *The prophets tell them*; see 4.9 n. 17-18: *So this is what you shall say to them* is probably not in place, as a result of a copyist's blunder; the rest of vv. 17 and 18 is Jeremiah's private lament. 19-22: Again a public prayer, as in vv. 7-9. 21: *The place where*

- 20 We acknowledge our wickedness,  
the guilt of our forefathers;  
O LORD, we have sinned against  
thee.
- 21 Do not despise the place where thy  
name dwells  
nor bring contempt on the throne  
of thy glory.  
Remember thy covenant with us and  
do not make it void.
- 22 Can any of the false gods of the  
nations give rain?  
Or do the heavens send showers of  
themselves?  
Art thou not God, O LORD,  
that we may hope in thee?  
It is thou only who doest<sup>m</sup> all these  
things.
- 15 The LORD said to me, Even if Moses  
and Samuel stood before me, I would  
not be moved to pity this people.  
Banish them from my presence; let  
2 them be gone. When they ask where  
they are to go, you shall say to them,  
These are the words of the LORD:
- Those who are for death shall go  
to their death,  
and those for the sword to the  
sword;  
those who are for famine to famine,  
and those for captivity to captivity.
- 3 Four kinds of doom do I ordain for  
them, says the LORD: the sword to kill,  
dogs to tear, birds of prey from the  
skies and beasts from their lairs to  
4 devour and destroy. I will make them  
repugnant to all the kingdoms of the  
earth, because of the crimes of Manas-  
seh son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, in  
Jerusalem.
- 5 Who will take pity on you,  
Jerusalem,  
who will offer you consolation?
- Who will turn aside to wish you  
well?  
You cast me off, says the LORD,  
you turned your backs on me. 6  
So I stretched out my hand and  
ruined you;  
I was weary of relenting.  
I winnowed them and scattered 7  
them  
through the cities of the land;  
I brought bereavement on them, I  
destroyed my people,  
for they would not abandon their  
ways.  
I made widows among them more 8  
in number  
than the sands of the sea;  
I brought upon them a horde of  
raiders<sup>n</sup>  
to plunder at high noon.  
I made the terror of invasion fall  
upon them  
all in a moment.  
The mother of seven sons grew 9  
faint,  
she sank into a swoon;  
her light was quenched while it was  
yet day;  
she was left humbled and shamed.  
All the remnant I gave to perish by  
the sword  
at the hand of their enemies.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- Confessions and addresses*
- Alas, alas, my mother, that you ever 10  
gave me birth!  
a man doomed to strife, with the  
whole world against me.  
I have borrowed from no one, I  
have lent to no one,  
yet all men abuse me.

*m* Or madest.  
*n* I brought . . . raiders: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

*thy name dwells*: the usual Deuteronomistic designation of the Temple in Jerusalem. 22: The reference to *rain* ties the prayer in with the context of drought (v. 1). 15.1-2: Because of their reputed success in providing water and calling down a storm, Moses and Samuel (Exod.17.1-7 and 1 Sam.7.7-13) are cited as examples of men who had influence with God. Now not even they, much less Jeremiah, could relieve the drought. 4: The reference to King *Manasseh*, whose evil excesses his grandson Josiah sought to counter, may be a Deuteronomistic addition (see 2 Kgs.21.1-18). 5-9: Probably written after 597 (possibly even after 587) since the calamity has already occurred; compare 9.12. 9: *Mother of seven*: the populous city Jerusalem is here personified.

15.10-21: The prophet's lament and God's response. 10: Jeremiah gives vent to self-pity; see

11 The LORD answered,  
 But I will greatly strengthen you;  
 in time of distress and in time of  
 disaster  
 I will bring the enemy to your feet.  
 12 Can iron break steel from the north?<sup>o</sup>  
 15 LORD, thou knowest;  
 remember me, LORD, and come to  
 visit me,  
 take vengeance for me on my  
 persecutors.  
 Be patient with me and take me not  
 away,  
 see what reproaches I endure for thy  
 sake.  
 16 I have to suffer those who despise  
 thy words,  
 but thy word is joy and happiness to  
 me,  
 for thou hast named me thine,  
 O LORD, God of Hosts.  
 17 I have never kept company with any  
 gang of roisterers,  
 or made merry with them;  
 because I felt thy hand upon me I  
 have sat alone;  
 for thou hast filled me with  
 indignation.  
 18 Why then is my pain unending,  
 my wound desperate and incurable?  
 Thou art to me like a brook that is  
 not to be trusted,  
 whose waters fail.  
 19 This was the LORD's answer:  
 If you will turn back to me, I will  
 take you back  
 and you shall stand before me.  
 If you choose noble utterance and  
 reject the base,  
 you shall be my spokesman.  
 This people will turn again to you,  
 but you will not turn to them.

To withstand them I will make you 20  
 impregnable,  
 a wall of bronze.  
 They will attack you but they will not  
 prevail,  
 for I am with you to deliver you  
 and save you, says the LORD;  
 I will deliver you from the wicked, 21  
 I will rescue you from the ruthless.

The word of the LORD came to me: 16  
 You shall not marry a wife; you shall 2  
 have neither son nor daughter in this  
 place. For these are the words of the 3  
 LORD concerning sons and daughters  
 born in this place, the mothers who  
 bear them and the fathers who beget 4  
 them in this land: When men die, struck  
 down by deadly ulcers, there shall be  
 no weeping for them and no burial; they  
 shall be like dung lying upon the  
 ground. When men perish by sword or  
 famine, their corpses shall become food  
 for birds and for beasts.

For these are the words of the LORD: 5  
 Enter no house where there is a  
 mourning-feast; do not go in to weep  
 or to bring comfort, for I have with-  
 drawn my peace from this people, says 6  
 the LORD, my love and affection. High  
 and low shall die in this land, but there  
 shall be no burial, no weeping for them;  
 no one shall gash himself, or shave his 7  
 head. No one shall give the mourner a  
 portion of bread to console him for the  
 dead, nor give him the cup of consolati-  
 on, even for his father or mother.  
 Nor shall you enter a house where there 8  
 is feasting, to sit eating and drinking  
 there. For these are the words of the 9

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and bronze. Heb. also adds  
 (13) I will give away your wealth as spoil, and your  
 treasure for no payment, because of your sin through-  
 out your country. (14) I will make your enemies  
 pass through a land you do not know; for my anger  
 is a blazing fire and it shall burn for ever (cp. 17. 3, 4).

also 20.14-18. 11: The precise meaning of this is obscure. The verse may belong with the prayer continued in v. 15. 12-14: These verses seem to be a confused intrusion from 17.1-4. 15-18: Jeremiah pleads before God like a man on trial before a judge. 18: *Why . . . ?* Jeremiah charges that God is not being fair, nor even trustworthy, like Judean brooks which disappear in the dry season; see, too, Job 6.15-21. 19-21: *The LORD's answer*: God has not failed him; he has failed God. Jeremiah has been running away (see 12.5 n.) and must *turn back*. 19: *Spokesman*: prophet. 20: *Wall of bronze*: as in 1.18-19.

16.1-9: *Jeremiah the solitary prophet*. With no family of his own (vv. 1-4), alienated from his parental home (11.21; 12.6), renouncing human companionship (vv. 5 and 8), Jeremiah is the figure of a lonely man. 5: Like God, his prophet is to withdraw his *peace, love, and affection*. 6: *Gash himself, or shave his head*: rites of mourning. See 41.5; 47.5. 7: Compare Ezek.24.17; Hos.9.4. 8: See 15.17.

LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: In your own days, in the sight of you all, and in this very place, I will silence all sounds of joy and gladness, and the voice of bridegroom and bride.

10 When you tell this people all these things they will ask you, 'Why has the LORD decreed that this great disaster is to come upon us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?' You shall answer, Because your forefathers forsook me, says the LORD, and followed other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. And you yourselves have done worse than your forefathers; for each of you follows the promptings of his wicked and stubborn heart instead of obeying me. So I will fling you headlong out of this land into a country unknown to you and to your forefathers; there you can serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favour. Therefore, says the LORD, the time is coming when men shall no longer swear, 'By the life of the LORD who brought the Israelites up from Egypt', but, 'By the life of the LORD who brought the Israelites back from a northern land and from all the lands to which he had dispersed them'; and I will bring them back to the soil which I gave to their forefathers.

16 I will send for many fishermen, says the LORD, and they shall fish for them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them out from every mountain and hill and from the crevices in the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my sight, nor is their wrongdoing concealed from me. I will first make them pay in full<sup>p</sup> for the wrong they have done and the sin they have committed by defiling with the dead lumber of their idols the land which belongs to me, and by filling it with their abominations.

O LORD, my strength and my stronghold,  
my refuge in time of trouble,  
to thee shall the nations come  
from the ends of the earth and say,  
Our forefathers inherited only a sham,  
an idol vain and useless.  
Can man make gods for himself? 20  
They would be no gods.  
Therefore I am teaching them, 21  
once for all will I teach them  
my power and my might,  
and they shall learn that my name  
is the LORD.

The sin of Judah is recorded with an iron tool, engraved on the tablet of their heart with a point of adamant and carved on the horns of their altars to bear witness against them.<sup>q</sup> Their altars and their sacred poles stand by every spreading tree, on the heights and the hills in the mountain country. I will give away your wealth as spoil, and all your treasure for no payment,<sup>r</sup> because of your<sup>s</sup> sin throughout your country. You will lose possession<sup>t</sup> of the patrimony which I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies as slaves in a land you do not know; for my anger is a blazing fire<sup>u</sup> and it shall burn for ever.

These are the words of the LORD: 5  
A curse on the man who trusts in man  
and leans for support on human kind,  
while his heart is far from the LORD!  
He shall be like a juniper in the desert; 6

<sup>p</sup> in full: or double.

<sup>q</sup> to bear . . . them: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* as their sons remember.

<sup>r</sup> for no payment: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 15. 13; *Heb.* your hill-shrines.

<sup>s</sup> your: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 15. 13; *Heb. om.*

<sup>t</sup> You . . . possession: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>u</sup> for . . . fire: *prob. rdg.*, cp. 15. 14; *Heb.* for you have kindled a fire in my anger.

16.10–21: Mingled threat and promise. 10–13: The sense and language of threat are Deuteronomic; see 15.4 n. 13: *Serve other gods*: contrast with this verse Jeremiah's message to the exiles in Babylonia in 29.12. 14–15: Restoration promised; as in Isa.52.10–12, the return from Babylonian captivity is equated with the ancient Exodus from Egypt. 16–18: See 10.3–5,8–9,14–16. 19–21: *The nations*: compare the broader purpose of calamity in 12.14–17 n. and 13.11 n.

17.1–18: Observations and prayers. 1–4: Judah, habituated in evil, is doomed. 1: *Their heart*: compare 4.3–4 n. and 31.33. *Horns*: the elevated corners of an altar. 5–8: A clear affirmation



- when good comes he shall not see it.  
He shall dwell among the rocks in  
the wilderness,  
in a salt land where no man can live.
- 7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the  
LORD,  
and rests his confidence upon him.
- 8 He shall be like a tree planted by the  
waterside,  
that stretches its roots along the  
stream.  
When the heat comes it has nothing  
to fear;  
its spreading foliage stays green.  
In a year of drought it feels no care,  
and does not cease to bear fruit.
- 9 The heart is the most deceitful of all  
things,  
desperately sick;<sup>v</sup> who can fathom it?  
10 I, the LORD, search the mind  
and test the heart,  
requiting man for his conduct,  
and as his deeds deserve.
- 11 Like a partridge which gathers  
into its nest  
eggs which it has not laid,  
so is the man who amasses wealth  
unjustly.  
Before his days are half done he  
must leave it,  
and prove but a fool at the last.
- 12 O throne of glory, exalted from the  
beginning,  
the place of our sanctuary,
- 13 O LORD on whom Israel's hope is  
fixed,  
all who reject thee shall be put to  
shame;  
all in this land who forsake thee  
shall be humbled,<sup>w</sup>  
for they have rejected the fountain of  
living water.<sup>z</sup>
- 14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be  
healed,  
save me and I shall be saved;  
for thou art my praise.
- They say to me, 'Where is the word  
of the LORD?  
Let it come if it can!'  
It is not the thought of disaster that  
makes me press after thee;  
never did I desire this day of  
despair.  
Thou knowest all that has passed  
my lips;  
it was approved by thee.  
Do not become a terror to me;  
thou art my only refuge on the day  
of disaster.
- 17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25
- May my persecutors be foiled,  
not I;  
may they be terrified, not I.  
Bring on them the day of disaster;  
destroy them, destroy them utterly.
- These were the words of the LORD to  
me: Go and stand in the Benjamin<sup>y</sup>  
Gate, through which the kings of Judah  
go in and out, and in all the gates of  
Jerusalem. Say, Hear the words of the  
LORD, you princes of Judah, all you  
men of Judah, and all you inhabitants  
of Jerusalem who come in through  
these gates. These are the words of the  
LORD: Observe this with care, that you  
do not carry any load on the sabbath or  
bring it through the gates of Jerusalem.  
You shall not bring any load out of  
your houses or do any work on the  
sabbath, but you shall keep the sabbath  
day holy as I commanded your fore-  
fathers. Yet they did not obey or pay  
attention, but obstinately refused to  
hear or learn their lesson. Now if you  
will obey me, says the LORD, and re-  
frain from bringing any load through  
the gates of this city on the sabbath,  
and keep that day holy by doing no  
work on it, then kings shall come  
through the gates of this city, kings<sup>z</sup>
- <sup>v</sup> the most . . . sick; or too deceitful for any man.  
<sup>w</sup> humbled: prob. rdg.; Heb. written.  
<sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the LORD.  
<sup>y</sup> Benjamin: prob. rdg.; Heb. sons of the people.  
<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and officers.

of individual retribution; compare Ps. 1. 9–10: Only God can clearly know the motives behind a man's conduct; man's organs of thought and feeling are open to him. 10: *As his deeds deserve* connects 9–10 with 5–8. 12–13: A public confession. 12: *The place*: the Temple in Jerusalem; contrast 7.4 with its scorn of the Temple. 13: *Living water*: see, too, 2.13. 14–18: A private prayer. 15: “. . . Let it come if it can!”: see 5.12–13 n. 16: *Never did I desire this day of despair*: see 8.18–9.1 n.

17.19–27: *The importance of Sabbath rest*. The passage seems not to come from Jeremiah, but comes from a time like that of Nehemiah when the Sabbath received particular emphasis; see Neh. 13.15–22. 25: *David's throne*: apparently it is conceived of as vacant at the time.

- who shall sit on David's throne. They shall come riding in chariots or on horseback, escorted by their captains, by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall be inhabited for ever. People shall come from the cities of Judah, the country round Jerusalem, the land of Benjamin, the Shephelah, the hill-country and the Negeb, bringing whole-offerings, sacrifices, grain-offerings, and frankincense, bringing also thank-offerings to the house of the LORD. But if you do not obey me by keeping the sabbath day holy and by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath, then I will set fire to those gates; it shall consume the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be put out.
- 18 These are the words which came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Go down at once to the potter's house, and there I will tell you what I have to say. So I went down to the potter's house and found him working at the wheel. Now and then a vessel he was making out of the clay would be spoilt in his hands, and then he would start again and mould it into another vessel to his liking. Then the word of the LORD came to me: Can I not deal with you, Israel, says the LORD, as the potter deals with his clay? You are clay in his hands like the clay in his, O house of Israel. At any moment I may threaten to uproot a nation or a kingdom, to pull it down and destroy it. But if the nation which I have threatened turns back from its wicked ways, then I shall think better of the evil I had in mind to bring on it. Or at any moment I may decide to build or to plant a nation or a kingdom. But if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, I shall think better of the good I had in mind for it. Go now and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that these are the words of the LORD: I am the potter; I am preparing evil for you and perfecting my designs against
- you. Turn back, every one of you, from his evil course; mend your ways and your doings. But they answer, 'Things are past hope. We will do as we like, and each of us will follow the promptings of his own wicked and stubborn heart.' Therefore these are the words of the LORD:
- Inquire among the nations: who ever heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a thing most horrible. Will the snow cease to fall on the rocky slopes of Lebanon? Will the cool rain streaming in torrents ever fail? No, but my people have forgotten me; they burn sacrifices to a mere idol, so they stumble in their paths, the ancient ways, and they take to byways and unmade roads; their own land they lay waste, and men will jeer at it for ever in contempt. All who go by will be horror-struck and shake their heads. Like a wind from the east I will scatter them before their enemies. In the hour of their downfall I will turn my back towards them and not my face.
- 'Come, let us decide what to do with Jeremiah', men say. 'There will still be priests to guide us, still wise men to advise, still prophets to proclaim the word. Come, let us invent some charges against him; let us pay no attention to his message.'
- But do thou, O LORD, pay attention, and hear what my opponents are saying against me. Is good to be repaid with evil?<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds they have dug a pit for me (cp. verse 22).

18.1-17: A lesson from the potter's shop. A last minute pardon is possible; before 587, an appropriate response could yet avert the doom, and hence the plea (v. 11): *turn back . . . from this evil course*. 12: *Things are past hope*: because of the unnatural conduct of this unfaithful people it is now too late; see vv. 16-17.

18.18-23: A private prayer.

- Remember how I stood before thee,  
pleading on their behalf  
to avert thy wrath from them.
- 21 Therefore give their sons over to  
famine,  
leave them at the mercy of the  
sword.  
Let their women be childless and  
widowed,  
let death carry off their men,  
let their young men be cut down in  
battle.
- 22 Bring raiders upon them without  
warning,  
and let screams of terror ring out  
from their houses.  
For they have dug a pit to catch me  
and have hidden snares for my feet.
- 23 Well thou knowest, O LORD,  
all their murderous plots against me.  
Do not blot out their wrongdoing  
or annul their sin;  
when they are brought stumbling  
into thy presence,  
deal with them on the day of thy  
anger.
- 19 These are the words of the LORD:  
Go and buy an earthenware jar. Then  
take with you some of the elders of the  
2 people and of the priests, and go out  
to the Valley of Ben-hinnom, on which  
the Gate of the Potsherd opens, and  
3 there proclaim what I tell you. Say,  
Hear the word of the LORD, you princes  
of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
These are the words of the LORD of  
Hosts the God of Israel: I will bring on  
this place a disaster which shall ring in  
4 the ears of all who hear of it. For they  
have forsaken me, and treated this place  
as if it were not mine, burning sacrifices  
to other gods whom neither they nor  
their fathers nor the kings of Judah  
have known, and filling this place with  
5 the blood of the innocent. They have  
built shrines to Baal, where they burn  
their sons as whole-offerings to Baal.  
It has no command of mine; I never
- spoke of it; it never entered my  
thought. Therefore, says the LORD, the  
6 time is coming when this place shall no  
longer be called Topheth or the Valley  
of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of  
Slaughter. In this place I will shatter  
7 the plans of Judah and Jerusalem as a  
jar is shattered; I will make the people  
fall by the sword before their enemies,  
at the hands of those who would kill  
them, and I will give their corpses to  
the birds and beasts to devour. I will  
8 make this city a scene of horror and  
contempt, so that every passer-by will  
be horror-struck and jeer in contempt  
at the sight of its wounds. I will compel  
9 men to eat the flesh of their sons and  
their daughters; they shall devour one  
another's flesh in the dire straits to  
which their enemies and those who  
would kill them will reduce them in the  
siege. Then you must shatter the jar  
10 before the eyes of the men who have  
come with you and say to them, These  
are the words of the LORD of Hosts:  
Thus will I shatter this people and this  
city as one shatters an earthen vessel so  
that it cannot be mended, and the dead  
shall be buried in Topheth because  
there is no room elsewhere to bury  
12 them. This is what I will do to this  
place, says the LORD, and to those who  
live there: I will make this city like  
Topheth. Because of their defilement,  
13 the houses of Jerusalem and those of  
the kings of Judah shall be like To-  
pheth, every one of the houses on  
whose roofs men have burnt sacrifices  
to the host of heaven and poured drink-  
offerings to other gods.
- Jeremiah came in from Topheth,  
14 where the LORD had sent him to  
prophecy, and stood in the court of the  
LORD's house. He said to all the people,  
These are the words of the LORD of  
15 Hosts the God of Israel: I am bringing  
on this city and on all its blood-  
spattered altars every disaster with  
which I have threatened it, for its

19.1–20.6: A dramatic pronouncement and its consequences. 1: *An earthenware jar*: it is dramatically reserved for the climax in v. 10. *Elders . . . and . . . priests*: they are both audience and witnesses. 2: *Valley of Ben-hinnom* is chosen for its association with human sacrifice; see 7.30–31 n. *Gate of the Potsherd*: the mention of pottery fragments anticipates the shattering of jars in vv. 10–11. 4–5: *The innocent: their sons* (compare 15.4 and 2 Kgs.21.1–7). 10–11: The shattering of the *jar* could have been interpreted as more than a dramatic gesture, and may have reflected a view that regarded it as a marginal, hostile act. See v. 1 n.; Ps.2.9. 14: See 26.2.

people have remained obstinate and refused to listen to me.

20 When Pashhur son of Immer the priest, the chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, he had him flogged<sup>b</sup> and put him into the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin, in the house of the LORD. The next morning he released him, and Jeremiah said to him, The LORD has called you not Pashhur but Magor-missabib.<sup>c</sup> For these are the words of the LORD: I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; they shall fall by the sword of the enemy before your very eyes. I will hand over all Judah to the king of Babylon, and he will deport them to Babylon and put them to the sword. I will give all this city's store of wealth and riches and all the treasures of the kings of Judah to their enemies; they shall seize them as spoil and carry them off to Babylon. You, Pashhur, and all your household shall go into captivity and come to Babylon. There shall you die and there shall you be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have been a false prophet.

7 O LORD, thou hast duped me, and I have been thy dupe; thou hast outwitted me and hast prevailed. I have been made a laughing-stock all the day long, everyone mocks me.

8 Whenever I speak I must needs cry out and proclaim violence and destruction. I am reproached and mocked all the time for uttering the word of the LORD.

9 Whenever I said, 'I will call him to mind no more, nor speak in his name again', then his word was imprisoned in my body,

like a fire blazing in my heart, and I was weary with holding it under, and could endure no more.

For I heard many whispering,<sup>d</sup> 'Denounce him! we will denounce him.'

All my friends were on the watch for a false step, saying, 'Perhaps he may be tricked, then we can catch him and take our revenge.'

But the LORD is on my side, strong and ruthless, therefore my persecutors shall stumble and fall powerless. Bitter shall be their abasement when they fail, and their shame shall long be remembered.

O LORD of Hosts, thou dost test the righteous and search the depths of the heart; to thee have I committed my cause, let me see thee take vengeance on them.

Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD; for he rescues the poor from those who would do them wrong.

A curse on the day when I was born! Be it for ever unblessed, the day when my mother bore me!

A curse on the man who brought word to my father, 'A child is born to you, a son', and gladdened his heart!

That man shall fare like the cities which the LORD overthrew without mercy.

He shall hear cries of alarm in the morning and uproar at noon, because death did not claim me before birth,

<sup>b</sup> had him flogged; or struck him.

<sup>c</sup> That is Terror let loose.

<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Terror let loose.

20.3-6: When Jeremiah is released he puts an individual curse on his torturer, but without revoking his threat to all Judah.

20.7-13: A personal plaintive prayer. 7-9: God has misused his prophet. He would cease speaking in God's name were the compulsion not beyond his power to resist. 10: Friends: ironic. 11-12: He needs the LORD on his side and is torn between the wish to flee and the need to find refuge with his God.

20.14-18: Inner fury. 14: See Job 3.3. He avoids a curse on his parents. 16: Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen.19.24-25.

and my mother did not become my  
grave,  
her womb great with me for ever.  
18 Why did I come forth from the  
womb  
to know only sorrow and toil,  
to end my days in shame?

*Kings and prophets denounced*

21 THE WORD WHICH CAME FROM THE LORD  
to Jeremiah when King Zedekiah sent  
to him Pashhur son of Malchiah and  
Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah,  
2 with this request: 'Nebuchadrezzar king  
of Babylon is making war on us; inquire  
of the LORD on our behalf. Perhaps the  
LORD will perform a miracle as he has  
done in past times, so that Nebu-  
3 chadrezzar may raise the siege.' But  
Jeremiah answered them, Tell Zede-  
4 kiah, these are the words of the LORD  
the God of Israel: I will turn back upon  
you your own weapons with which you  
are fighting the king of Babylon and  
the Chaldeans besieging you outside  
the wall; and I will bring them into the  
5 heart of this city. I myself will fight  
against you in burning rage and great  
fury, with an outstretched hand and a  
6 strong arm. I will strike down those  
who live in this city, men and cattle  
alike; they shall die of a great pes-  
7 tilence. After that, says the LORD, I will  
take Zedekiah king of Judah, his cour-  
tiers and the people, all in this city who  
survive pestilence, sword, and famine,  
and hand them over to Nebuchadrezzar  
the king of Babylon, to their enemies  
and those who would kill them. He  
shall put them to the sword and shall  
show no pity, no mercy or compassion.  
8 You shall say further to this people,  
These are the words of the LORD: I  
offer you now a choice between the way  
9 of life and the way of death. Whoever  
remains in this city shall die by sword,  
by famine, or by pestilence, but who-

ever goes out to surrender to the  
Chaldeans, who are now besieging  
you, shall survive; he shall take home  
his life, and nothing more. I have set 10  
my face against this city, meaning to  
do them harm, not good, says the  
LORD. It shall be handed over to the  
king of Babylon, and he shall burn it  
to the ground.

To the royal house of Judah. 11  
Listen to the word of the LORD:  
O house of David, these are the 12  
words of the LORD:  
Administer justice betimes,  
rescue the victim from his  
oppressor,  
lest the fire of my fury blaze up and  
burn unquenched  
because of your evil doings.

The LORD says, 13  
I am against you who lie in the  
valley,  
you, the rock in the plain,  
you who say, 'Who can come down  
upon us?  
Who can penetrate our lairs?'  
I will punish you as you deserve, 14  
says the LORD,  
I will kindle fire on the heathland  
around you,  
and it shall consume everything  
round about.

These were the words of the LORD: 22  
Go down to the house of the king of  
Judah and say this: Listen to the words 2  
of the LORD, O king of Judah, you who  
sit on David's throne, you and your  
courtiers and your people who come  
in at these gates. These are the words 3  
of the LORD: Deal justly and fairly,  
rescue the victim from his oppressor,  
do not ill-treat or do violence to the  
alien, the orphan or the widow, do not  
shed innocent blood in this place. If 4  
you obey, and only if you obey, kings  
who sit on David's throne shall yet

21.1-23.8: The kings are denounced. 1-7: Jeremiah answers Zedekiah. 1: *Pashhur*: not the same person as in 20.1. 2: *Nebuchadrezzar* is closer to the Akkadian original, *Nabū-kudurri-usur*, than the more familiar spelling, *Nebuchadnezzar* (see 2 Kgs.24.1). *Making war*: the final siege of Jerusalem was in 588-587. The king hopes for a *miracle* like the deliverance from Egypt. 5: *Outstretched hand*. . . *strong arm*: these words are here bitterly ironical; they commonly signify deliverance for Israel, as in Deut.4.34. 7: See 2 Kgs.25.6-7,18-21. 12: *House of David*: all the Judean kings were of Davidic lineage. 13-14: These verses are apparently not in their original context. 13: *Valley*: Jerusalem. 22.1-7: These verses develop the thought of 21.11-12.

- come riding through these gates in chariots and on horses, with their retinue of courtiers and people. But if you do not listen to my words, then by myself I swear, says the LORD, this house shall become a desolate ruin.
- 6 For these are the words of the LORD about the royal house of Judah:
- Though you are dear to me as Gilead or as the heights of Lebanon, I swear that I will make you a wilderness, a land of unpeopled cities.
- 7 I will dedicate an armed host to fight against you, a ravening horde; they shall cut your choicest cedars down and fling them on the fire.
- 8 Men of many nations shall pass by this city and say to one another, 'Why has the LORD done this to such a great city?' The answer will be, 'Because they forsook their covenant with the LORD their God; they worshipped other gods and served them.'
- 10 Weep not for the dead nor brood over his loss. Weep rather for him who has gone away, for he shall never return, never again see the land of his birth.
- 11 For these are the words of the LORD concerning Shallum son of Josiah, king of Judah, who succeeded his father on the throne and has gone away: He shall never return; he shall die in the place of his exile and never see this land again.
- 13 Shame on the man who builds his house by unjust means and completes its roof-chambers by fraud, making his countrymen work without payment,
- giving them no wage for their labour!
- Shame on the man who says, 'I will build a spacious house with airy roof-chambers, set windows in it, panel it with cedar and paint it with vermilion'!
- If your cedar is more splendid, does that prove you a king? Think of your father: he ate and drank, dealt justly and fairly; all went well with him. He dispensed justice to the lowly and poor;<sup>e</sup> did not this show he knew me? says the LORD.
- But you have no eyes, no thought for anything but gain, set only on the innocent blood you can shed, on cruel acts of tyranny.
- Therefore these are the words of the LORD concerning Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah:
- For him no mourner shall say, 'Alas, brother, dear brother!' no one say, 'Alas, lord and master!' He shall be buried like a dead ass, dragged along and flung out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.
- Get up into Lebanon and cry aloud, make your voice heard in Bashan, cry aloud from Abarim, for all who befriend you are broken. I spoke to you in your days of prosperous ease, but you said, 'I will not listen.' This is how you behaved since your youth; never have you obeyed me. The wind shall carry away all your friends,<sup>f</sup>

<sup>e</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds all went well (repeated from verse 15).  
<sup>f</sup> Or shepherds.

6: Gilead and Lebanon are symbols for flourishing habitations; so, too, cedars, v. 7. 10-12: Concerning Jehoahaz the son of Josiah. 10: For the dead: this is King Josiah, whom Pharaoh Necho killed at Megiddo (2 Kgs.23.28-30). For him who has gone away: this is Jehoahaz who succeeded his father, Josiah, only to be deposed by Necho and brought to Egypt where he died (2 Kgs.23.30-34). 11: Shallum is the name here and in 1 Chr.3.15. 13-19: Concerning Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, whom Necho made king after deposing Jehoahaz (see v. 18 and 2 Kgs.23.34-36). 17-19: Words addressed to Jehoiakim. 20-30: The kings of Judah in exile. 20: Lebanon, Bashan, and Abarim (the latter in Moab): these areas were to the north and the

your lovers shall depart into exile.

Then you will be put to shame and abashed

for all your evil deeds.<sup>g</sup>

- 23 You dwellers in Lebanon, who make your nests among the cedars, how you will groan when the pains come upon you, like the pangs of a woman in labour!

- 24 By my life, says the LORD, Coniah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, shall be the signet-ring on my right hand no longer. Yes, Coniah, I will pull you off.

- 25 I will hand you over to those who seek your life, to those you fear, to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and to the

- 26 Chaldeans. I will fling you headlong, you and the mother who gave you birth, into another land, a land where you were not born; and there shall you both die. They shall never come back to their own land, the land for which they long.

- 28 This man, Coniah, then, is he a mere puppet, contemptible and broken, only a thing unwanted? Why else are he and his children flung out headlong and hurled into a country they do not know?

- 29 O land, land, land, hear the words of the LORD: These are the words of the LORD: Write this man down as stripped of all honour, one who in his own life shall not prosper, nor shall he leave descendants to sit in prosperity on David's throne or rule again in Judah.

- 23 Shame on the shepherds who let the sheep of my flock scatter and be lost!

- 2 says the LORD. Therefore these are the words of the LORD the God of Israel about the shepherds who tend my people: You have scattered and dispersed my flock. You have not watched over them; but I am watching you to punish you for your evil doings, says the LORD. I will myself gather the remnant of my sheep from all the lands

to which I have dispersed them. I will bring them back to their homes, and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will appoint shepherds to tend them; they shall never again know fear or dismay or punishment. This is the very word of the LORD.

The days are now coming, says the LORD,

when I will make a righteous Branch spring from David's line, a king who shall rule wisely, maintaining law and justice in the land.

In his days Judah shall be kept safe, and Israel shall live undisturbed.

This is the name to be given to him: The LORD is our Righteousness.

Therefore the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer swear, 'By the life of the LORD who brought Israel up from Egypt', but, 'By the life of the LORD who brought the descendants of the Israelites back from a northern land and from all the lands to which he had dispersed them, to live again on their own soil.'

On the prophets. 9

Deep within me my heart is broken, there is no strength in my bones; because of the LORD, because of his dread words

I have become like a drunken man, like a man overcome with wine.

For the land is full of adulterers, and because of them the earth lies parched,

the wild pastures have dried up.

The course that they run is evil, and their powers are misused.

For prophet and priest alike are goddess;

I have come upon the evil they are doing even in my own house.

This is the very word of the LORD.

<sup>g</sup> Or calamities.

east, the direction of exile or of flight. 21: God speaks in this verse. 24-30: Concerning Jehoiachin (called *Coniah* here, but Jeconiah in 24.2 and 1 Chr.3.16). 24: *Signet-ring*: a symbol of authority (see Gen.41.42; Hag.2.23). 25-27: See 2 Kgs.24.8-17. 27: *They* (by anticipation): this is possibly an allusion to the *descendants* of Jehoiachin, who are denied rulership in v. 30. 23.1-4: *The shepherds* (kings) whom God will appoint; see Ezek.34.1-10. 5: *Branch* is used also in Isa.11.1 and Zech.3.9 to designate the hoped for ideal ruler from the tree of Jesse, father of David. 7-8: A promise repeated from 16.14-15.

23.9-40: Concerning prophets and prophecy. 10-12: Here God is speaking. See 5.7,8; 6.13.

- 12 Therefore the path shall turn slippery  
beneath their feet;  
they shall be dispersed in the dark  
and shall fall there.  
For I will bring disaster on them when  
their day of reckoning comes.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- 13 I found the prophets of Samaria  
men of no sense:  
they prophesied in Baal's name and  
led my people Israel astray.
- 14 In the prophets of Jerusalem I see a  
thing most horrible:  
adulterers and hypocrites that they  
are,  
they encourage evildoers,  
so that no man turns back from his  
sin;  
to me all her inhabitants are like  
Sodom and Gomorrah.
- 15 These then are the words of the LORD  
of Hosts concerning the prophets:  
  
I will give them wormwood to eat  
and a bitter poison to drink;  
for a godless spirit has spread over  
all the land  
from the prophets of Jerusalem.
- 16 These are the words of the LORD of  
Hosts:  
  
Do not listen to what the prophets  
say,  
who buoy you up with false hopes;  
the vision they report springs from  
their own imagination,  
it is not from the mouth of the  
LORD.
- 17 They say to those who spurn the  
word of the LORD,  
'Prosperity shall be yours';  
and to all who follow the promptings  
of their own stubborn heart  
they say,  
'No disaster shall befall you.'
- 18 But which of them has stood in the  
council of the LORD,
- seen him and heard his word?  
Which of them has listened to his  
word and obeyed?  
See what a scorching wind has gone 19  
out from the LORD,  
a furious whirlwind;  
it whirls round the heads of the  
wicked.  
The LORD's anger is not to be 20  
turned aside,  
until he has accomplished and  
fulfilled his deep designs.  
In days to come you will fully  
understand.  
I did not send these prophets, yet 21  
they went in haste;  
I did not speak to them, yet they  
prophesied.  
If they have stood in my council, 22  
let them proclaim my words to my  
people  
and turn them from their evil course  
and their evil doings.  
Am I a god only near at hand, not 23  
far away?  
Can a man hide in any secret place 24  
and I not see him?  
Do I not fill heaven and earth?  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- I have heard what the prophets say, 25  
the prophets who speak lies in my  
name and cry, 'I have had a dream, a  
dream!' How long will it be till they 26  
change their tune, these prophets who  
prophesy lies and give voice to their  
own inventions? By these dreams which 27  
they tell one another these men think  
they will make my people forget my  
name, as their fathers forgot my name  
for the name of<sup>h</sup> Baal. If a prophet has 28  
a dream, let him tell his dream; if he  
has my word, let him speak my word in  
truth. What has chaff to do with grain?  
says the LORD. Do not my words 29  
scorch<sup>i</sup> like fire? says the LORD. Are  
they not like a hammer that splinters

<sup>h</sup> for the name of: or by their worship of.  
<sup>i</sup> scorch: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* thus.

13-15: *Prophets of Samaria* is an allusion to times past, for, by Jeremiah's day, the *people Israel* had long been exiled, this after the Assyrian conquest in 722. 19: The *fiurious whirlwind* of the LORD's anger (v. 20) is not to be turned aside by optimistic slogans. 22: A prophet who has truly been admitted to intimacy with God (*stood in my council*) brings word to his people designed to *turn them from their evil course*. 25-32: Misdeeds of the self-appointed prophets. 25: They pass off mere *dreams* for true prophetic words. 26: They *prophesy lies* and *give voice to their own fantasies*, leading the people to apostasy. 29: *Chaff... grain*: they are ignorant



## Two visions

30 rock? I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal my words from one another for their own use. I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who concoct words of their own and then say, 'This is his very word.' I am against the prophets, says the LORD, who dream lies and retail them, misleading my people with wild and reckless falsehoods. It was not I who sent them or commissioned them, and they will do this people no good. This is the very word of the LORD.

33 When you are asked by this people or by a prophet or priest what the burden of the LORD's message is, you shall answer, You are his burden, and I shall throw you down, says the LORD. 34 If prophet or priest or layman uses the term 'the LORD's burden', I will punish that man and his family. The form of words you shall use in speaking amongst yourselves is: 'What answer has the LORD given?' or, 'What has the LORD said?' You shall never again mention 'the burden of the LORD'; that is reserved for the man to whom he entrusts his message. If you do, you will make nonsense of the words of the living God, the LORD of Hosts our God. 37 This is the form you shall use in speaking to a prophet: 'What answer has the LORD given?' or, 'What has the LORD said?' But to any of you who do say, 'the burden of the LORD', the LORD speaks thus: Because you say, 'the burden of the LORD', though I sent to tell you not to say it, therefore I myself will carry you like a burden and throw you down, casting out of my sight both you and the city which I gave to you and to your forefathers. I will inflict on you endless reproach, endless shame which shall never be forgotten.

THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SHOWED ME: I saw two baskets of figs set out in front of the sanctuary of the LORD. This was after Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had deported from Jerusalem Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with the officers of Judah, the craftsmen and the smiths,<sup>J</sup> and taken them to Babylon. In one basket the figs were very good, like the figs that are first ripe; in the other the figs were very bad, so bad that they were not fit to eat. The LORD said to me, 'What are you looking at, Jeremiah?' 'Figs,' I answered, 'the good very good, and the bad so bad that they are not fit to eat.' Then this word came to me from the LORD: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: I count the exiles of Judah whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldaeans as good as these good figs. I will look upon them meaning to do them good, and I will restore them to their land; I will build them up and not pull them down, plant them and not uproot them. I will give them the wit to know me, for I am the LORD; they shall become my people and I will become their God, for they will come back to me with all their heart. But Zedekiah king of Judah, his officers and the survivors of Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt—all these I will treat as bad figs, says the LORD, so bad that they are not fit to eat. I will make them repugnant to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach, a by-word, an object-lesson and a thing of ridicule wherever I drive them. I will send against them sword, famine, and pestilence until they have

<sup>J</sup> the smiths: or the harem.

of the true intensity and power of God's words (see v. 9 and 20.9). 30: *Steal my words*: they quote but distort the words of true prophets. 33-38: In v. 33, there is a play on words, for *masa*<sup>a</sup> in Heb. is both something heavy to carry and also a prophetic message. In vv. 36, 38, the phrase *burden of the LORD* is regarded as offensive, an affront to the word of God, for it is not an unwelcome "burden." Hence, one should ask about God's *answer*; not his *burden*. 24.1-10: *Two baskets of figs* suggests two groups within the people. One, the Judean exiles, will eventually be restored; the second, *survivors* still in *Jerusalem* (v. 8), will yet experience exile. For the literary form used here compare 1.11-12, 13-16. 1: *In front of the sanctuary*: like firstfruit offerings; see Deut.26.1-4. *Jeconiah* (see 22.24-30 n.) was deported in 597 B.C. (2 Kgs.24.8-17). 6: *Build them up . . . plant them*: after the threat comes the promise; see 1.10. 8: This verse anticipates the events in ch. 43, with the wider dispersion of the conquered Judahites. See also 44.26-30. *Treat as bad figs*: See 29.17. 9: *Repugnant*: see 15.4; 29.18; 34.17. 10: See 21.9; 27.8; Isa.51.19.

vanished from the land which I gave to them and to their forefathers.

25 This came to Jeremiah as the word concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah (that is the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon). This is what the prophet Jeremiah said to all Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, to the present day, I have been receiving the words of the LORD and taking pains to speak to you, but you have not listened. The LORD has taken pains to send you his servants the prophets, but you have not listened or shown any inclination to listen. If each of you will turn from his wicked ways and evil courses, he has said, then you shall for ever live on the soil which the LORD gave to you and to your forefathers. You must not follow other gods, serving and worshipping them, nor must you provoke me to anger with the idols your hands have made; then I will not do you harm. But you did not listen to me, says the LORD; you provoked me to anger with the idols your hands had made and so brought harm upon yourselves. Therefore these are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the tribes of the north, says the LORD: I will send for my servant Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. I will bring them against this land and all its inhabitants and all these nations round it; I will exterminate them and make them a thing of horror and derision, a scandal for ever. I will silence all sounds of joy and gladness among them, the voices of bridegroom and bride, and the

sound of the handmill; I will quench the light of every lamp. For seventy years this whole country shall be a scandal and a horror; these nations shall be in subjection to the king of Babylon. When those seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people, says the LORD, for all their misdeeds and make the land of the Chaldaeans a waste for ever. I will bring upon that country all I have said, all that is written in this book, all that Jeremiah has prophesied against these peoples. They will be the victims of mighty nations and great kings, and thus I will repay them for their actions and their deeds.

These were the words of the LORD the God of Israel to me: Take from my hand this cup of fiery wine and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they have drunk it they will vomit and go mad; such is the sword which I am sending among them. Then I took the cup from the LORD's hand, gave it to all the nations to whom he sent me and made them drink it: to Jerusalem, the cities of Judah, its kings and officers, making them a scandal, a thing of horror and derision and an object of ridicule, as they still are: to Pharaoh king of Egypt, his courtiers, his officers, all his people, and all his rabble of followers, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the Philistines: to Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod: also to Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites, all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coasts and islands: to Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who roam the fringes of the desert,<sup>1</sup> all the

<sup>k</sup> They . . . victims: *prob. rdg.*; Heb. They were the victims.

<sup>1</sup> who roam . . . desert: or who clip the hair on their temples.

25.1-14: **Ineffective warnings.** Jeremiah, summarizing a twenty-three year effort, calls it a failure; he now foresees only disaster. 1: *Fourth year*: 605 B.C., the year when Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch (36.1). The reference in v. 13 to "this book" suggests that possibly 25.1-14 is the conclusion of, or else the preface to, the second copy of the "book" mentioned in 36.27-32. 3: *From the thirteenth year of Josiah*: see 1.2. 9: *Babylon*: see 1.15 n. 11: *Seventy*: actually Babylon fell in 539 B.C., fewer than *seventy years* from the destruction of Jerusalem in 587. Perhaps the seventy are reckoned (after the fact) to the rededication of the Temple about 516 B.C. (see Ezra 6.15).

25.15-38: **Worldwide devastation.** All Judah's foes will sink in ruin along with her—a small measure of comfort. 15: *Cup*: a frequent figure for experience; see Isa.51.22-23; Mk.14.36. *Fiery wine*: a captured city was often burned. Hence, fiery wine means a great disaster. 18: *As they still are*: the words suggest a time of continuing decline. 20: *Uz*: a place near Damascus. *Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod*: Philistine cities. 23: *Dedan, Tema, and Buz* were in central

kings of Arabia living in the wilderness,  
 25 all the kings of Zamri, all the kings of  
 Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,  
 26 all the kings of the north, neighbours  
 or far apart, and all the kingdoms on  
 the face of the earth. Last of all the  
 27 king of Sheshak<sup>m</sup> shall drink. You shall  
 say to them, These are the words of the  
 LORD of Hosts the God of Israel:  
 Drink this, get drunk and be sick; fall,  
 to rise no more, before the sword which  
 28 I am sending among you. If they refuse  
 to take the cup from you and to drink,  
 say to them, These are the words of the  
 LORD of Hosts: You must and shall  
 29 drink. I will first punish the city which  
 bears my name; do you think that you  
 can be exempt? No, you cannot be  
 exempt, for I am invoking the sword  
 against all that inhabit the earth. This  
 is the very word of the LORD of Hosts.  
 30 Prophecy to them and tell them all I  
 have said:

The LORD roars from Zion on high  
 and thunders from his holy  
 dwelling-place.

Yes, he roars across the heavens,  
 his home;

an echo comes back like the shout of  
 men treading grapes.

31 The great noise reaches to the ends  
 of the earth  
 and all its inhabitants.

For the LORD brings a charge  
 against the nations,

he goes to law with all mankind  
 and has handed the wicked over to  
 the sword.

This is the very word of the LORD.

32 These are the words of the LORD of  
 Hosts:

Ruin spreads from nation to nation,  
 a mighty tempest is blowing up from  
 the ends of the earth.

33 In that day those whom the LORD  
 has slain shall lie like dung on the

ground from one end of the earth to  
 the other; no one shall wail for them,  
 they shall not be taken up and buried.

Howl, shepherds, cry aloud, 34  
 sprinkle yourselves with ashes, you  
 masters of the flock.

It is your turn to go to the slaughter,  
 and you shall fall like fine rams.

The shepherds shall have nowhere 35  
 to flee,

the flockmasters no way of escape.

Hark, the shepherds cry out, the 36  
 flockmasters howl,

for the LORD is ravaging their  
 pasture,

and their peaceful homesteads lie in 37  
 ruins beneath his anger.

They flee like a young lion 38  
 abandoning his lair,

for their land has become a waste,  
 wasted by the cruel sword and by his  
 anger.

#### *Jerusalem laid under a curse*

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF 26

Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Ju-  
 dah, this word came to Jeremiah from  
 the LORD: These are the words of the 2

LORD: Stand in the court of the  
 LORD's house and speak to the in-  
 habitants of all the cities of Judah who

come to worship there. You shall tell  
 them everything that I command you  
 to say to them, keeping nothing back.

Perhaps they may listen, and every man 3  
 may turn back from his evil courses.

Then I will relent, and give up my  
 purpose to bring disaster on them for  
 their evil deeds. You shall say to them, 4

These are the words of the LORD: If  
 you do not obey me, if you do not

follow the law I have set before you,  
 and listen to the words of my servants 5

the prophets, the prophets whom I have  
 taken pains to send to you, but you

will not listen to my words.

*m A name for Babylon.*

Arabia. 25: *Zamri* is unknown. 29: *City which bears my name*: Jerusalem. *All that inhabit the earth* is an apocalyptic phrase; see following note. 30-38: This whole passage has the flavor of "apocalypse," the prediction of a violent intervention of God into human history for judgment. 34: *Shepherds*: rulers.

26.1-24: *Jeremiah's arrest and release*. Accused of a capital offense, Jeremiah is brought to trial, defends himself, finds support in a precedent, and is acquitted, though another prophet is executed for the same offense. 1: *The beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim*: 609 B.C. 2-6: An

6 have never listened to them, then I will make this house like Shiloh and this city an object of ridicule to all nations on earth.  
 7 The priests, the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah say this in the LORD's house and, when he came to the end of what the LORD had commanded him to say to them, priests, prophets, and people seized him and threatened him with death. 'Why', they demanded, 'have you prophesied in the LORD's name that this house shall become like Shiloh and this city waste and uninhabited?' The people all gathered against Jeremiah in the LORD's house.  
 10 The officers of Judah heard what was happening, and they went up from the royal palace to the LORD's house and took their places there at the entrance of the new gate. Then the priests and the prophets said to the officers and all the people, 'Condemn this fellow to death. He has prophesied against this city: you have heard it with your own ears.' Then Jeremiah said to the officers and the people, 'The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all that you have heard. If you now mend your ways and your doings and obey the LORD your God, then he may relent and revoke the disaster with which he has threatened you. But I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think right and proper. Only you may be certain that, if you put me to death, you and this city and all who live in it will be guilty of murdering an innocent man; for in very truth the LORD has sent me to you to say all this in your hearing.'  
 16 Then the officers and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, 'This man ought not to be condemned to death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.' Some of the elders of the land also stood up and

said to the assembled people, 'In the time of Hezekiah king of Judah, Micah of Moresheth was prophesying and said to all the people of Judah: "These are the words of the LORD of Hosts:

Zion shall become a ploughed field, Jerusalem a heap of ruins, and the temple-hill rough heath."

Did King Hezekiah and all Judah put him to death? Did not the king show reverence for the LORD and seek to placate him? Then the LORD relented and revoked the disaster with which he had threatened them. Are we to bring great disaster on ourselves?

There was another man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah, from Kiriath-jearim. He also prophesied against this city and this land, just as Jeremiah had done. King Jehoiakim with all his officers and his bodyguard heard what he said and sought to put him to death. When Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled to Egypt. King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Akbor with others to fetch Uriah from Egypt, and they brought him to the king. He had him put to death by the sword, and his body flung into the burial-place of the common people. But Ahikam son of Shaphan used his influence on Jeremiah's behalf to save him from death at the hands of the people.

*A rising against Nebuchadrezzar checked*

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD to Jeremiah: These are the words of the LORD to me: Take the cords and bars of a yoke and put them on your neck. Then send to the kings of Edom, Moab,

abstract of the Temple sermon, more fully quoted in 7.1-15. 9: Though Jeremiah said much more, what the people heard was: *This house shall become like Shiloh* (7.12 n.). The prophet had just laid the city under a curse; they must destroy him. 11: *The officers and all the people sit as a court in the Temple gate*. 12-15: Jeremiah repeats the threat. 15: *In very truth the LORD has sent me* (see 1.4-10). His affirmation is here made explicit. 18-19: *Hezekiah*: 715-687 B.C., about a century before this time. *Micah of Moresheth*: see Mic.1.1. *Zion shall become . . . rough heath*: see Mic.3.12. Hezekiah's reverence for the LORD is related not in the book of Mic. but in Isa.37.14-21. 20: *Uriah* is known only from this passage.

27.1-22: *Jeremiah declares Nebuchadrezzar's success*. 1: *Zedekiah* became king in 597 B.C. 3: *Send*: send word. *The envoys* have come to draw Judah into an anti-Babylonian alliance.

Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon by the envoys who have come from them to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, and give them the following message for their masters: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: Say to your masters: I made the earth with my great strength and with outstretched arm, I made man and beast on the face of the earth, and I give it to whom I see fit. I now give all these lands to my servant Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and I give him also all the beasts of the field to serve him. All nations shall serve him, and his son and his grandson, until the destined hour of his own land comes, and then mighty nations and great kings shall use him as they please. If any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon or submit to his yoke, I will punish them with sword, famine, and pestilence, says the LORD, until I leave them entirely in his power. Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your wise women, your soothsayers, and your sorcerers when they tell you not to serve the king of Babylon. They are prophesying falsely to you; and so you will be carried far from your own land, and I shall banish you and you will perish. But if any nation submits to the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will leave them on their own soil, says the LORD; they shall cultivate it and live there. I have said all this to Zedekiah king of Judah: If you will submit to the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, then you shall save your lives. Why should you and your people die by sword, famine, and pestilence, the fate with which the LORD has threatened any nation which does not serve the king of Babylon? Do not listen to the prophets who tell you not to become subject to the king of Babylon; they are prophesying falsely to you. I have not sent them, says the LORD; they are prophesying falsely in

my name, and so I shall banish you and you will perish, you and these prophets who prophesy to you.

I said to the priests and all the people, These are the words of the LORD: Do not listen to your prophets who tell you that the vessels of the LORD's house will very soon be brought back from Babylon; they are only prophesying falsely to you. Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and save your lives. Why should this city become a ruin? If they are prophets, and if they have the word of the LORD, let them intercede with the LORD of Hosts to grant that the vessels still left in the LORD's house, in the royal palace, and in Jerusalem, may not be carried off to Babylon. For these are the words of the LORD of Hosts concerning the pillars, the sea, the trolleys, and all the other vessels still left in this city, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon did not take when he deported Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, together with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. These indeed are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel concerning the vessels still left in the LORD's house, in the royal palace, and in Jerusalem: They shall be taken to Babylon and stay there until I recall them, says the LORD; then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.

That same year,<sup>n</sup> in the fifth month of the first<sup>o</sup> year of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, Hananiah son of Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, said to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, 'These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house which Nebuchadrezzar

<sup>n</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds at the beginning of the reign.  
<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. fourth.

7: *The destined hour of his own land*: when Cyrus of Persia will break the power of Babylon (539 B.C.). 9: *Prophets*: of these pagan nations. 12-15: Jeremiah's word to Zedekiah, king of Judah. 16-22: Jeremiah's word to the priests and people. 16: *The vessels* were taken as loot in 597 (see vv. 19-20). *Very soon*: within two years, according to 28.3. 17: See 21.8-10.

28.1-17: *Two types of prophets in conflict*. Hananiah disputes Jeremiah's claims and hears God's adverse judgment. 1: The same year, 597, as the events in ch. 27. 3: Temple treasures.

king of Babylon took from here and  
 4 carried off to Babylon. I will also bring  
 back to this place, says the LORD,  
 Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of  
 Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who  
 went to Babylon; for I will break the  
 5 yoke of the king of Babylon.' The  
 prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the  
 prophet in the presence of the priests  
 and all the people standing in the  
 6 LORD's house: 'May it be so! May the  
 LORD indeed do this: may he fulfil all  
 that you have prophesied, by bringing  
 back the vessels of the LORD's house  
 and all the exiles from Babylon to this  
 7 place! Only hear what I have to say to  
 8 you and to all the people: the prophets  
 who preceded you and me from earliest  
 times have foretold war, famine, and  
 pestilence for many lands and for great  
 9 kingdoms. If a prophet foretells prosper-  
 ity, when his words come true it will  
 be known that the LORD has sent him.'  
 10 Then the prophet Hananiah took the  
 yoke from the neck of the prophet  
 11 Jeremiah and broke it, saying before all  
 the people, 'These are the words of the  
 LORD: Thus will I break the yoke of  
 Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; I  
 will break it off the necks of all nations  
 within two years';<sup>p</sup> and the prophet  
 12 Jeremiah went his way. After Hananiah  
 had broken the yoke which had been on  
 Jeremiah's neck, the word of the LORD  
 13 came to Jeremiah: Go and say to  
 Hananiah, These are the words of the  
 LORD: You have broken bars of wood;  
 in their place you shall get bars of iron.  
 14 For these are the words of the LORD of  
 Hosts the God of Israel: I have put a  
 yoke of iron on the necks of all these  
 nations, making them serve Nebu-  
 chadrezzar king of Babylon. They shall  
 serve him, and I have given him even  
 15 the beasts of the field. Then Jeremiah  
 said to Hananiah, 'Listen, Hananiah.  
 The LORD has not sent you, and you  
 have led this nation to trust in false  
 16 prophecies. Therefore these are the

words of the LORD: Beware, I will  
 remove you from the face of the earth;  
 you shall die within the year, because  
 you have preached rebellion against the  
 LORD.' The prophet Hananiah died that  
 17 same year, in the seventh month.

Jeremiah sent a letter from Jerusalem  
 29 to the remaining elders among the  
 exiles, to the priests and prophets, and  
 to all the people whom Nebuchadrezzar  
 had deported from Jerusalem to Bab-  
 2 ylon, after King Jeconiah had left  
 Jerusalem with the queen mother and  
 the eunuchs, the officers of Judah and  
 Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the  
 3 smiths.<sup>q</sup> The prophet entrusted the  
 letter to Elashah son of Shaphan and  
 Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zede-  
 kiah king of Judah had sent to Babylon  
 to King Nebuchadrezzar. This is what  
 he wrote: These are the words of the  
 4 LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: To all  
 the exiles whom I have carried off from  
 Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses  
 5 and live in them; plant gardens and eat  
 their produce. Marry wives and beget  
 6 sons and daughters; take wives for  
 your sons and give your daughters to  
 husbands, so that they may bear sons  
 and daughters and you may increase  
 there and not dwindle away. Seek the  
 7 welfare of any city to which I have  
 carried you off, and pray to the LORD  
 for it; on its welfare your welfare will  
 depend. For these are the words of the  
 8 LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: Do  
 not be deceived by the prophets or the  
 diviners among you, and do not listen  
 to the wise women whom you set to  
 dream dreams. They prophesy falsely  
 9 to you in my name; I did not send them.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.

These are the words of the LORD: 10  
 When a full seventy years has passed  
 over Babylon, I will take up your cause  
 and fulfil the promise of good things I  
 made you, by bringing you back to this  
<sup>p</sup> within two years: or while there are still two full  
 years to run.  
<sup>q</sup> the smiths: or the harem.

6: "May it be so...!": the Heb. word is *amen*. "... May the LORD indeed do this!" Although Jeremiah believes that it will not come about, he wishes that it would. 8-9: Only when the words of a prophet, one foretelling prosperity, come true, will the prophecy be recognized as authentic; see Deut.18.21-22. 16: You shall die . . . because you have preached rebellion against the LORD: see Deut.13.5.

29.1-32: Messages to the exiles. 1-23: The first letter. 2: The time is after the first deportation in 597. 3: The opportunity is the sending of envoys to Nebuchadrezzar. 10: Babylon's seventy years are possibly reckoned (approximately) from the battle of Carchemish in 605 to the fall

11 place. I alone know my purpose for  
 you, says the LORD: prosperity and not  
 12 misfortune, and a long line of children  
 after you. If you invoke me and pray  
 13 to me, I will listen to you: when  
 you seek me, you shall find me; if you  
 14 search with all your heart, I will let you  
 find me, says the LORD. I will restore  
 your fortunes and gather you again  
 from all the nations and all the places  
 to which I have banished you, says the  
 LORD, and bring you back to the place  
 from which I have carried you into  
 exile.

15 You say that the LORD has raised up  
 16 prophets for you in Babylon. These are  
 the words of the LORD concerning the  
 king who sits on the throne of David  
 and all the people who live in this city,  
 your fellow-countrymen who have not  
 17 gone into exile with you. These are the  
 words of the LORD of Hosts: I bring  
 upon them sword, famine, and pes-  
 tilence, and make them like rotten figs,  
 18 too bad to be eaten. I pursue them with  
 sword, famine, and pestilence, and  
 make them repugnant to all the king-  
 doms of the earth, an object of execra-  
 tion and horror, of derision and  
 reproach, among all the nations to which  
 19 I have banished them. Just as they did  
 not listen to my words, says the LORD,  
 when I took pains to send them my  
 servants the prophets, so you did not  
 20 listen, says the LORD. But now, you  
 exiles whom I have sent from Jerusalem  
 to Babylon, listen to the words of the  
 21 LORD. These are the words of the LORD  
 of Hosts the God of Israel concerning  
 Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son  
 of Maaseiah, who prophesy falsely to  
 you in my name. I will hand them over  
 to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,  
 and he will put them to death before  
 22 your eyes. Their names shall be used by  
 all the exiles of Judah in Babylon when  
 they curse a man; they shall say, May  
 the LORD treat you like Zedekiah and  
 Ahab, whom the king of Babylon

23 roasted in the fire! For their conduct  
 in Israel was an outrage: they com-  
 mitted adultery with other men's wives,  
 and without my authority prophesied  
 in my name, and what they prophesied  
 was false. I know; I can testify. This is  
 the very word of the LORD.

To Shemaiah the Nehelamite.<sup>7</sup> These 24,25  
 are the words of the LORD of Hosts the  
 God of Israel: You have sent a letter in  
 your own name to Zephaniah son of  
 Maaseiah the priest, in which you say:  
 'The LORD has appointed you to be 26  
 priest in place of Jehoiada the priest,  
 and it is your duty, as officer in charge  
 of the LORD's house, to put every mad-  
 man who sets up as a prophet into the  
 stocks and the pillory. Why, then, have 27  
 you not reprimanded Jeremiah of  
 Anathoth, who poses as a prophet  
 before you? On the strength of this he 28  
 has sent to us in Babylon and said,  
 "Your exile will be long; build houses  
 and live in them, plant gardens and eat  
 their produce." ' Zephaniah the priest 29  
 read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet,  
 and the word of the LORD came to 30  
 Jeremiah: Send and tell all the exiles  
 that these are the words of the LORD  
 concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite:  
 Because Shemaiah has prophesied to  
 you, though I did not send him, and  
 has led you to trust in false prophecies,  
 these are now the words of the LORD: 32  
 I will punish Shemaiah and his children.  
 He shall have no one to take his place  
 in this nation and enjoy the prosperity  
 which I will bestow on my people, says  
 the LORD, because he has preached  
 rebellion against me.

#### *Hopes for the restoration of Jerusalem*

THE WORD WHICH CAME TO JEREMIAH 30  
 from the LORD. These are the words of 2  
 the LORD the God of Israel: Write in a  
 book all that I have said to you, for this 3

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds you shall say, saying.

of Babylon in 539. 12: *If you . . . pray to me I will listen to you*: even in Babylon. 16-18: *This city*: Jerusalem; still populous between the first and second deportations, it was yet to experience defeat and ruin; see 24.8-10. 21-23: *Ahab . . . and Zedekiah*: two prophets in Babylonia not mentioned elsewhere. 22: *May the Lord treat you like . . .*: this is a formula used in a curse, the counterpart of the formula for blessing in Gen.48.20. 24-32: The second letter. 28: He (correctly) understood Jeremiah to be saying: "Your exile will be long," that is, longer than Hananiah's predicted two years (28.3).

30.1-31.40: *Hopes for the restoration of Jerusalem*. It is sometimes argued that these chapters

- is the very word of the LORD: The time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and bring them back to the land which I gave to their forefathers; and it shall be their possession.
- 4 This is what the LORD has said to  
5 Israel and Judah. These are the words of the LORD:
- You shall hear a cry of terror, of fear without relief.
- 6 Ask and see: can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man gripping his sides like a woman in labour, every face changed, all turned pale?
- 7 Awful is that day:  
when has there been its like?  
A time of anguish for Jacob,  
yet he shall come through it safely.
- 8 In that day, says the LORD of Hosts, I will break their yoke off their necks and snap their cords; foreigners shall no longer use them as they please; they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.
- 10 And you, Jacob my servant, have no fear;  
despair not, O Israel, says the LORD.  
For I will bring you back safe from afar  
and your offspring from the land where they are captives;  
and Jacob shall be at rest once more, prosperous and unafraid.
- 11 For I am with you and will save you, says the LORD.  
I will make an end of all the nations  
amongst whom I have scattered you,  
but I will not make an end of you;  
though I punish you as you deserve,  
I will not sweep you clean away.
- For these are the words of the LORD to Zion:
- Your injury is past healing,  
cruel was the blow you suffered.  
There can be no<sup>s</sup> remedy for your sore,  
the new skin cannot grow.  
All your lovers have forgotten you;  
they look for you no longer.  
I have struck you down  
as an enemy strikes, and punished you cruelly;  
for your wickedness is great and your sins are many.
- Why complain of your injury,  
that your sore cannot be healed?<sup>t</sup>  
I have done this to you,  
because your wickedness is great and your sins are many.
- Yet all who devoured you shall themselves be devoured,  
all your oppressors shall go into captivity.  
Those who plunder you shall be plundered,  
and those who despoil you I will give up to be spoiled.  
I will cause the new skin to grow and heal your wounds, says the LORD,  
although men call you the Outcast, Zion, nobody's friend.
- These are the words of the LORD:
- Watch; I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's clans  
and show my love for all his dwellings.  
Every city shall be rebuilt on its mound of ruins,  
every mansion shall have its familiar household.  
From them praise shall be heard

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds one judging your case.  
<sup>t</sup> Why . . . healed?: or Cry not for help in your injury.  
Your sore cannot be healed.

originally held out hope for the exiles of the Northern Kingdom alone. As we have them now, they clearly speak to the exiles of the Southern Kingdom, too. References to the restoration of Judah are necessarily later than the fall of Jerusalem. 4-7: The concluding line, *Yet he shall come through it safely*, contains the consolation that an extreme crisis has been overcome. 8-11: The bright future. 9: *David their king*: the restoration of the monarchy to a descendant of David. 12-17: Again, Zion's disaster overcome. 18-24: The ruins will be restored and the kingdom reconstituted. 18: *Jacob's clans*: the ten northern tribes, not yet considered "lost"



and sounds of merrymaking,  
 I will increase them, they shall not  
 diminish,  
 I will raise them to honour, they shall  
 no longer be despised.  
 20 Their sons shall be what they once  
 were,  
 and their community shall be  
 established in my sight.  
 I will punish all their oppressors;  
 21 a ruler shall appear, one of  
 themselves,  
 a governor shall arise from their  
 own number.  
 I will myself bring him<sup>u</sup> near and so  
 he<sup>v</sup> shall approach me;  
 for no one ventures of himself to  
 approach me,  
 says the LORD.  
 22 So you shall be my people,  
 and I will be your God.  
 23 See what a scorching wind has gone  
 out from the LORD,  
 a sweeping whirlwind.  
 It whirls round the heads of the  
 wicked;  
 24 the LORD's anger is not to be turned  
 aside,  
 till he has finished and achieved his  
 heart's desire.  
 In days to come you will understand.  
 31 At that time, says the LORD, I will  
 become God of all the families of Israel,  
 2 and they shall become my people. These  
 are the words of the LORD:  
 A people that survived the sword  
 found favour in the wilderness;  
 Israel journeyed to find rest;  
 3 long ago<sup>w</sup> the LORD appeared to  
 them:  
 I have dearly loved you from of old,  
 and still I maintain my unflinching care  
 for you.  
 4 I will build you up again, O virgin  
 Israel,  
 and you shall be rebuilt.  
 Again you shall adorn yourself with  
 jingles,

and go forth with the merry  
 throng of dancers.  
 Again you shall plant vineyards on 5  
 the hills of Samaria,  
 vineyards which those who planted  
 them defiled;  
 for a day will come when the watch- 6  
 men on Ephraim's hills cry out,  
 Come, let us go up to Zion, to the  
 LORD our God.

For these are the words of the LORD: 7

Break into shouts of joy for Jacob's  
 sake,  
 lead the nations, crying loud and  
 clear,  
 sing out your praises and say,  
 The LORD has saved his people,  
 and preserved a remnant of Israel.  
 See how I bring them from the land 8  
 of the north;  
 I will gather them from the ends of  
 the earth,  
 their blind and lame among them,  
 women with child and women in  
 labour,  
 a great company.  
 They come home, weeping as they 9  
 come,  
 but I will comfort them and be  
 their escort.  
 I will lead them to flowing streams;  
 they shall not stumble, their path will  
 be so smooth.  
 For I have become a father to Israel,  
 and Ephraim is my eldest son.

Listen to the word of the LORD, you 10  
 nations,  
 announce it, make it known to coasts  
 and islands far away:  
 He who scattered Israel shall  
 gather them again  
 and watch over them as a shepherd  
 watches his flock.  
 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob 11  
 and redeemed him from a foe too  
 strong for him.

<sup>u</sup> Or them. <sup>v</sup> Or they. <sup>w</sup> long ago; or from afar.

(3.12 n.). 21: *A ruler . . . from their own number*; the end of foreign domination. 22: *My people . . . your God*: this ancient formula reaffirms the covenant. 23–24: *The wicked* are those who hold God's people in captivity; see v. 16. The verses repeat 23.19–20. 31.1–22: God's constant love for the Northern Kingdom. 4: Dancing in *vineyards* was an ancient ritual; see Judg. 21.19–21. 5: *Samaria*: the capital of the Northern Kingdom. 6: *Ephraim*: see 7.15 n. *Zion*: The mention here suggests a future reunion of the two Hebrew kingdoms. 8: *The land of the north*: the

- 12 They shall come with shouts of joy  
to Zion's height,  
shining with happiness at the  
bounty of the LORD,  
the corn, the new wine, and the oil,  
the young of flock and herd.  
They shall become like a watered  
garden  
and they shall never want again.
- 13 Then shall the girl show her joy in  
the dance,  
young men and old shall rejoice;  
I will turn their mourning into  
gladness,  
I will relent and give them joy to  
outdo their sorrow.
- 14 I will satisfy the priests with the fat  
of the land  
and fill my people with my bounty.  
This is the very word of the  
LORD.
- 15 These are the words of the LORD:  
  
Hark, lamentation is heard in  
Ramah, and bitter weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her sons.  
She refuses to be comforted: they  
are no more.
- 16 These are the words of the LORD:  
  
Cease your loud weeping,  
shed no more tears;  
for there shall be a reward for your  
toil,  
they shall return from the land of  
the enemy.
- 17 You shall leave descendants after  
you;<sup>x</sup>  
your sons shall return to their own  
land.
- 18 I listened; Ephraim was rocking in  
his grief:  
'Thou hast trained me to the yoke  
like an unbroken calf,  
and now I am trained;  
restore me, let me return,  
for thou, LORD, art my God.
- Though I broke loose I have  
repented:  
now that I am tamed I beat my  
breast;  
in shame and remorse  
I reproach myself for the sins of my  
youth.'
- Is Ephraim still my dear son,  
a child in whom I delight? 20  
As often as I turn my back on  
him  
I still remember him;  
and so my heart yearns for him,  
I am filled with tenderness  
towards him.  
This is the very word of the  
LORD.  
Build cairns to mark your way,  
set up sign-posts; 21  
make sure of the road,  
the path which you will tread.  
Come back, virgin Israel,  
come back to your cities.  
How long will you twist and turn, 22  
my wayward child?  
For the LORD has created a new  
thing in the earth:  
a woman turned into a man.
- These are the words of the LORD of 23  
Hosts the God of Israel: Once more  
shall these words be heard in the land  
of Judah and in her cities, when I  
restore their fortunes:  
  
The LORD bless you,  
the LORD, your true goal,<sup>y</sup> your  
holy mountain.  
Ploughmen and shepherds who 24  
wander with their flocks  
shall live together there.<sup>z</sup>  
For I have given deep draughts to 25  
the thirsty,  
and satisfied those who were faint  
with hunger.
- x You shall . . . you: or There shall be hope for your  
posterity.  
y the LORD . . . goal: or O home of righteousness.  
z Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Judah and all his cities.

distant regions of Assyria; see 2 Kgs.17.6. **15:** *Ramah*: a place in Benjamin. *Rachel* was the mother of Benjamin and Joseph, and the grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh, tribes of the Northern Kingdom. **18–20:** Ephraim's penitent words. **18:** See Hos.11.8. **22:** *A woman turned into a man*: The meaning is obscure. Perhaps it is a witty reference to the mixed figure that the *virgin Israel* (v. 21) is God's *dear son* (v. 20), or that the kingdom, conceived as female, acts a male's role. **23–25:** The restoration of Judah. **23:** *The LORD, your true goal*: the alternative translation (see Tfn.y), "O home of righteousness," is a probable designation for Jerusalem,

26 Thereupon I woke and looked about me, and my dream<sup>a</sup> had been pleasant.

27 The time is coming, says the LORD, when I will sow Israel and Judah with the seed of man and the seed of cattle.

28 As I watched over them with intent to pull down and to uproot, to demolish and destroy and harm, so now will I watch over them to build and to plant. This is the very word of the LORD.

29 In those days it shall no longer be said,

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge’;

30 for a man shall die for his own wrongdoing; the man who eats sour grapes shall have his own teeth set on edge.

31 The time is coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although they broke my covenant, I was patient with them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with Israel after those days, says the LORD; I will set my law within them and write it on their hearts; I will become their God and they shall become my people. No longer need they teach one another to know the LORD; all of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and remember their sin no more.

35 These are the words of the LORD, who gave the sun for a light by day and the moon and stars for a light by night, who cleft the sea and its waves roared; the LORD of Hosts is his name:

36 If this fixed order could vanish out of my sight,  
says the LORD,  
then the race of Israel too could

cease for evermore  
to be a nation in my sight.

These are the words of the LORD: If any man could measure the heaven above or fathom the depths of the earth beneath, then I could spurn the whole race of Israel because of all they have done. This is the very word of the LORD.

The time is coming, says the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt in the LORD’s honour from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The measuring line shall then be laid straight out over the hill of Gareb and round Goath.<sup>b</sup> All the valley and every field as far as the gorge of the Kidron to the corner by the Horse Gate eastwards shall be holy to the LORD. It shall never again be pulled down or demolished.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah (the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar). At that time the forces of the Babylonian king were besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned in the court of the guard-house attached to the royal palace. Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him after demanding what he meant by this prophecy: ‘These are the words of the LORD: I will deliver this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it. Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape from the Chaldaeans but will be surrendered to the king of Babylon; he will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes. Zedekiah will be taken to Babylon and will remain there until I turn my thoughts to him, says the LORD. However much you fight against the Chaldaeans you will have no success.’

Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is coming to see you and

*a Or sleep. b Or Goah.*

*your holy mountain*; see 33.16 for another use of righteousness. 26: The prophet, or a reader, reflects on the preceding lines. 27–40: The fulfillment of gleaming promises. 28: See 1.10. 31–34: *A new covenant*: unlike a usual covenant, it will not depend on external knowledge, nor be recorded on stone tablets, but will be internal, written on men’s hearts. 35–37: That God could reject Israel is not conceivable. 38–40: The places mentioned were in or near Jerusalem.

32.1–44: *Jeremiah’s confidence in a restored Judah*. 1: *Tenth year*: 588, the year before Jerusalem fell; see 2 Kgs.25.1–4. 2: *Imprisoned* (see 38.2–6,13). Yet Jeremiah had considerable freedom of movement. 7: *Anathoth*: see 1.1. *Right of redemption*: land remained within the

will say, 'Buy my field at Anathoth; you have the right of redemption, as next of kin, to buy it.' As the LORD had foretold, my cousin Hanamel came to the court of the guard-house and said, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in Benjamin. You have the right of redemption and possession as next of kin; buy it.' I knew that this was the LORD's message; so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out the price, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed and sealed the deed and had it witnessed; then I weighed out the money on the scales. I took my copies of the deed of purchase, both the sealed and the unsealed, and gave them to Baruch son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, of the witnesses whose names were on the deed of purchase, and of the Judaeans sitting in the court of the guard-house. In the presence of them all I gave my instructions to Baruch: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: Take these copies of the deed of purchase, the sealed and the unsealed, and deposit them in an earthenware jar so that they may be preserved for a long time. For these are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: The time will come when houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought and sold in this land. After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD: O Lord GOD, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great strength and with thy outstretched arm; nothing is impossible for thee. Thou keepest faith with thousands and thou dost requite the sins of fathers on to the heads of their sons. O great and mighty God whose name is the LORD of Hosts, great are thy purposes and mighty thy actions.

Thine eyes watch all the ways of men, and thou rewardest each according to his ways and as his deeds deserve. Thou didst work signs and portents in Egypt and hast continued them to this day, both in Israel and amongst all men, and hast won for thyself a name that lives on to this day. Thou didst bring thy people Israel out of Egypt with signs and portents, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with terrible power. Thou didst give them this land which thou didst promise with an oath to their forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey. They came and took possession of it, but they did not obey thee or follow thy law, they disobeyed all thy commands; and so thou hast brought this disaster upon them. Look at the siege-ramps, the men who are advancing to take the city, and the city given over to its assailants from Chaldaea, the victim of sword, famine, and pestilence. The word thou hast spoken is fulfilled and thou dost see it. And yet thou hast bidden me buy the field, O Lord GOD, and have the deed witnessed, even though the city is given to the Chaldaeans.

These are the words of the LORD to Jeremiah: I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything impossible for me? Therefore these are the words of the LORD: I will deliver this city into the hands of the Chaldaeans and of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. The Chaldaeans who are fighting against this city will enter it, set it on fire and burn it down, with the houses on whose roofs sacrifices have been burnt to Baal and drink-offerings poured out to other gods, by which I was provoked to anger.

From their earliest days Israel and Judah have been doing what is wrong

family; if any man had to sell his property the *next of kin* had the duty, as well as the right, to purchase it; see Lev.25.25. **8:** When it happened as the LORD had foretold (v. 7) Jeremiah knew that this was the LORD's message. **11:** *The sealed and the unsealed:* clay tablets in Mesopotamia and papyrus rolls in Egypt were completed, with one copy open and one sealed for security. *Baruch:* see 36.4. **14:** *In an earthenware jar:* the Qumran (Dead Sea) Scrolls were similarly preserved. **15:** The meaning is that since not all of the people would be taken captive nor the kingdom be destroyed forever, one would make use of the land he bought. **16-44:** The rest of the chapter enlarges on the theme already clearly stated and is thought to be a later supplement; the language is conventional. **16-25:** A prayer for enlightenment: God's actions are beyond challenge; and yet (v. 25) he has led his prophet to perform a wholly irrational act, so that one must wonder. **26-44:** God responds: After Judah has fared as she has indeed

31 in my eyes, provoking me to anger by their actions, says the LORD. For this city has so roused my anger and my fury, from the time it was built down to this day, that I would rid myself of it. Israel and Judah, their kings, officers, priests, prophets, and everyone living in Jerusalem and Judah have provoked me to anger by their wrongdoing. They have turned their backs on me and averted their faces; though I took pains to teach them, they would not hear or learn their lesson. They set up their loathsome idols in the house which bears my name and so defiled it. They built shrines to Baal in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, to surrender their sons and daughters to Molech. It was no command of mine, nor did it ever enter my thought to do this abominable thing and lead Judah into sin.

36 Now, therefore, these are the words of the LORD the God of Israel to this city of which you say, 'It is being given over to the king of Babylon, with sword, famine, and pestilence': I will gather them from all the lands to which I banished them in my anger, rage, and fury, and I will bring them back to this place and let them dwell there undisturbed. They shall become my people and I will become their God. I will give them one heart and one way of life so that they shall fear me at all times, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will enter into an eternal covenant with them, to follow them unfailingly with my bounty; I will fill their hearts with fear of me, and so they will not turn away from me. I will rejoice over them, rejoice to do them good, and faithfully with all my heart and soul I will plant them in this land. 42 For these are the words of the LORD: As I brought on this people such great disaster, so will I bring them all the prosperity which I now promise them. 43 Fields shall again be bought and sold

in this land of which you now say, 'It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given over to the Chaldaeans.' Fields shall be bought and sold, deeds signed, sealed, and witnessed, in Benjamin, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, of the hill-country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes. This is the very word of the LORD.

The word of the LORD came to 33 Jeremiah a second time while he was still imprisoned in the court of the guard-house: These are the words of the LORD who made the earth, who formed it and established it; the LORD is his name: If you call to me I will answer you, and tell you great and mysterious things which you do not understand. These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel concerning the houses in this city and the royal palace, which are to be razed to the ground, concerning siege-ramp and sword, and attackers<sup>c</sup> who fill the houses with the corpses of those whom he struck down in his furious rage: I hid my face from this city because of their wicked ways, but now I will bring her healing: I will heal and cure Judah and Israel, and will let my people see an age of peace and security. I will restore their fortunes and build them again as once they were. I will cleanse them of all the wickedness and sin that they have committed; I will forgive all the evil deeds they have done in rebellion against me. This city will win me a name<sup>d</sup> and praise and glory before all the nations on earth, when they hear of all the blessings I bestow on her; and they shall be moved and filled with awe because of the blessings and the peace which I have brought upon her.

These are the words of the LORD: 10 You say of this place, 'It is in ruins,

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the Chaldaeans.  
<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds of joy.

deserved, survivors will again become God's people, and he their God. 35: See 19.4-5. There "Baal," the Canaanite god, stands in place of the Moabite god *Molech* here. 39-40: God will give them a heart; he will fill their hearts with fear of him, by such divine initiative excluding all contingency from the arrangement. An eternal covenant is, in fact, a divine commitment; see 31.31-34 n.

33.1-26: More comforting thoughts. These supplement chs. 30-32. With vv. 1-9 compare 32.36-44. 4: Which are to be razed: the destruction was still in prospect. 8: I will cleanse them: as in 31.34 God takes the initiative. 9: This city will win me a name: see 13.11 n. 10: The destruction is no longer a prospect, but now a reality; accordingly, the passage comes after 587.

and neither man nor beast lives in the cities of Judah or in the streets of Jerusalem. It is all a waste, inhabited by neither man nor beast.' Yet in this place shall be heard once again the sounds of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the bride; here too shall be heard voices shouting, 'Praise the LORD of Hosts, for he is good, for his love endures for ever', as they offer praise and thanksgiving in the house of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as once they were. This is the word of the LORD.

12 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: In this place and in all its cities, now ruined and inhabited by neither man nor beast, there shall once more be a refuge where shepherds may fold their flocks. In the cities of the hill-country, of the Shephelah, of the Negeb, in Benjamin, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, flocks will once more pass under the shepherd's hand as he counts them. This is the word of the LORD.

14 Wait, says the LORD, the days are coming when I will bestow on Israel and Judah all the blessings I have promised them. In those days, at that time, I will make a righteous Branch of David spring up; he shall maintain law and justice in the land. In those days Judah shall be kept safe and Jerusalem shall live undisturbed; and this shall be her name: The LORD is our Righteousness.

17 For these are the words of the LORD: David will never lack a successor on the throne of Israel, nor will the levitical priests lack a man who shall come before me continually to present whole offerings, to burn grain-offerings and to make other offerings.

19 This word came from the LORD to Jeremiah: These are the words of the LORD: If the law that I made for the day and the night could be annulled so

that they fell out of their proper order, then my covenant with my servant David could be annulled so that none of his line should sit upon his throne; so also could my covenant with the levitical priests who minister to me. Like the innumerable host of heaven or the countless sands of the sea, I will increase the descendants of my servant David and the Levites who minister to me.

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Have you not observed how this people have said, 'It is the two families whom he chose that the LORD has spurned'? So others will despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation. These are the words of the LORD: If I had not made my law for day and night nor established a fixed order in heaven and earth, then I would spurn the descendants of Jacob and of my servant David, and would not take any of David's line to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But now I will restore their fortunes and have compassion upon them.

#### *Events under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah*

THE WORD WHICH CAME TO JEREMIAH from the LORD when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and his army, with all his vassal kingdoms and nations, were fighting against Jerusalem and all her towns: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: Go and say to Zedekiah king of Judah, These are the words of the LORD: I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon and he will burn it down. You shall not escape, you will be captured and handed over to him. You will see him face to face, and he will speak to you in person; and you shall go to Babylon. But listen to the LORD's word to you,

11: "Praise the LORD of Hosts . . .": this phrase is a variant of Ps.136.1. *Offer . . . thanksgiving*: the sacrifice of a thank offering (Lev.22.29) as acknowledgment of blessings received. 14-16: See 23.5-6 and 31.23 n. 17-22: The abiding stability of the Davidic and Levitical lines. 17: That *David will never lack a successor* (see 2 Sam.7.11-16) was an article of faith frequently invoked in postexilic times. 18: *Nor will the levitical priests lack a man*: see 1 Sam.2.35. 23-26: God will never *spurn . . . the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* or leave them without a legitimate ruler.

34.1-7: A warning to Zedekiah about his captivity. 1: The time is just before the final siege. 3: See the realities in 39.6-7. 5: *You shall not die by the sword*: Jeremiah offers only this comfort

Zedekiah king of Judah. This is his word: You shall not die by the sword; you will die a peaceful death, and they will kindle fires in your honour like the fires kindled in former times for the kings your ancestors who preceded you. 'Alas, my lord!' they will say as they beat their breasts in mourning for you. This I have spoken. This is the very word of the LORD. The prophet Jeremiah repeated all this to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem when the army of the king of Babylon was attacking Jerusalem and the remaining cities of Judah, namely Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in Judah.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim an act of freedom for the slaves. All who had Hebrew slaves, male or female, were to set them free; they were not to keep their fellow Judaeans in servitude. All the officers and people, having made this covenant to set free their slaves, both male and female, and not to keep them in servitude any longer, fulfilled its terms and let them go. Afterwards, however, they changed their minds and forced back again into slavery the men and women whom they had freed. Then this word came from the LORD to Jeremiah: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: I made a covenant with your forefathers on the day that I brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. These were its terms: 'Within seven years each of you shall set free any Hebrew who has sold himself to you as a slave and has served you for six years; you shall set him free.' Your forefathers did not listen to me or obey me. You, on the contrary, recently proclaimed an act of freedom for the slaves and made a covenant in my presence, in the house that bears my name, and so have done what is right in my eyes. But you too have profaned my name. You have all taken back the slaves you had set free and you have forced them, both male and female, to be your slaves again. Therefore these are the words of the LORD: After you had proclaimed an act of freedom, a deliverance for your kinsmen and your neighbours, you did not obey me; so I will proclaim a deliverance for you, says the LORD, a deliverance over to sword, to pestilence, and to famine, and I will make you repugnant to all the kingdoms of the earth. You have disregarded my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms to which you yourselves had agreed; so I will make you like the calf of the covenant when they cut it into two and passed between the pieces. Those who passed between the pieces of the calf were the officers of Judah and Jerusalem, the eunuchs and priests and all the people of the land. I will give them up to their enemies who seek their lives, and their bodies shall be food for birds of prey and wild beasts. I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah and his officers to their enemies who seek their lives and to the army of the king of Babylon, which is now raising the siege. I will give the command, says the LORD, and will bring them back to this city. They shall attack it and take it and burn it down, and I will make the cities of Judah desolate and unpeopled.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: Go and speak to the Rechabites, bring them to one of the rooms in the house of the LORD and offer them wine to drink. So I fetched Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, son of Habaziah, with his brothers

to the king; compare his minimal promise (21.9) to those who would surrender to the Chaldeans. Ceremonial fires in your honour: contrast with 22.18-19. 7: Lachish and Azekah: southwest of Jerusalem.

34.8-22: The evils of slavery. 14: Within seven years: see Deut.15.12. 16: The betrayal of the classes was a profanation of God's name. 17: Deliverance for you: this is bitter irony. 18: The dismembered covenant animal suggests the fate of one who breaches the covenant; see Gen.15.10. 21: The raising of the siege at the advance of an Egyptian army coming to Jerusalem's relief had produced the illusion of victory; thereupon the slaveholders, regretting their generous impulse, denounced the covenant (v. 8). 22: The thought is more fully developed in 37.7-10. There, Pharaoh's diversionary campaign has failed and Jerusalem's end is in sight.

35.1-19: A lesson in loyalty. The members of the Rechabite order remain faithful to the rules

and all his sons and all the family of  
 4 the Rechabites. I brought them into the  
 house of the LORD to the room of the  
 sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah, the man  
 of God; this adjoins the officers' room  
 above that of Maaseiah son of Shallum,  
 5 the keeper of the threshold. I set bowls  
 full of wine and drinking-cups before  
 the Rechabites and invited them to  
 6 drink wine; but they said, 'We will not  
 drink wine, for our forefather Jonadab  
 son of Rechab laid this command on  
 us: "You shall never drink wine, neither  
 7 you nor your children. You shall not  
 build houses or sow seed or plant vine-  
 yards; you shall have none of these  
 things. Instead, you shall remain tent-  
 dwellers all your lives, so that you may  
 live long in the land where you are  
 8 sojourners." We have honoured all the  
 commands of our forefather Jonadab  
 son of Rechab and have drunk no wine  
 all our lives, neither we nor our wives,  
 9 nor our sons, nor our daughters. We  
 have not built houses to live in, nor  
 have we possessed vineyards or sown  
 10 fields. We have lived in tents, obeying  
 and observing all the commands of our  
 forefather Jonadab. But when Nebu-  
 chadrezzar king of Babylon invaded  
 the land we said, "Come, let us go to  
 Jerusalem before the advancing Chal-  
 daean and Aramaean armies." And we  
 have stayed in Jerusalem.'

12 Then the word of the LORD came to  
 13 Jeremiah: These are the words of the  
 LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: Go  
 and say to the men of Judah and the  
 inhabitants of Jerusalem, You must  
 accept correction and obey my words,  
 14 says the LORD. The command of  
 Jonadab son of Rechab to his descen-  
 dants not to drink wine has been  
 honoured; they have not drunk wine  
 to this day, for they have obeyed their  
 ancestor's command. But I have taken  
 especial pains to warn you and yet you

have not obeyed me. I sent my servants 15  
 the prophets especially to say to you,  
 "Turn back every one of you from his  
 evil course, mend your ways and cease  
 to follow other gods and worship them;  
 then you shall remain on the land that  
 I have given to you and to your fore-  
 fathers.' Yet you did not obey or listen  
 to me. The sons of Jonadab son of 16  
 Rechab have honoured their ancestor's  
 command laid on them, but this people  
 have not listened to me. Therefore, 17  
 these are the words of the LORD the  
 God of Hosts, the God of Israel: Be-  
 cause they did not listen when I spoke  
 to them, nor answer when I called them,  
 I will bring upon Judah and upon all  
 the inhabitants of Jerusalem the disaster  
 with which I threatened them. To the 18  
 Rechabites Jeremiah said, These are the  
 words of the LORD of Hosts the God  
 of Israel: Because you have kept the  
 command of Jonadab your ancestor  
 and obeyed all his instructions and  
 carried out all that he told you to do,  
 therefore these are the words of the 19  
 LORD of Hosts the God of Israel:  
 Jonadab son of Rechab shall not want  
 a descendant to stand before me for all  
 time.

IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF JEHOIAKIM SON 36  
 of Josiah, king of Judah, this word  
 came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Take 2  
 a scroll and write on it every word that  
 I have spoken to you about Jerusalem  
 and Judah and all the nations, from the  
 day that I first spoke to you in the reign  
 of Josiah down to the present day. Per- 3  
 haps the house of Judah will be warned  
 of the calamity that I am planning to  
 bring on them, and every man will  
 abandon his evil course; then I will  
 forgive their wrongdoing and their sin.  
 So Jeremiah called Baruch son of 4  
 Neriah, and he wrote on the scroll at  
 Jeremiah's dictation all the words

laid down by their founder but Israel shows no such loyalty to God; compare Isa.1.3. 6-7: The group traced their beginnings to *Jonadab son of Rechab*. The Rechabites are otherwise known only from 2 Kgs.10.15-28 and 1 Chr.2.55. The abstentions mentioned are features of a nomadic society, *tent-dwellers*; see 2.2. Nazirites, too, abstained from products of the vine; see Num.6.1-4 and Judg.13.2-5. 16: This verse contains the point of the chapter. 18-19: On individual survival in the midst of general disaster, see also 39.16-18 and 45.5.

36.1-32: *Jeremiah, amid difficulties, records his words.* 1: *Fourth year*: 605 B.C. 2: *The day that I first spoke to you*: see 1.2. 3: The word *perhaps* suggests Jeremiah's motivation in that he goes on hoping that his repeated appeal may yet effect a change; see v. 7. 4-6: Baruch's *instruction*. Jeremiah was probably hiding, fearing a fate like that of Uriah; see 26.21-23. The



which the LORD had spoken to him.  
 5 He gave Baruch this instruction: 'I am prevented from going to the LORD's house. You must go there in my place on a fast-day and read the words of the LORD in the hearing of the people from the scroll you have written at my dictation. You shall read them in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come in  
 7 from their cities. Then perhaps they will present a petition to the LORD and every man will abandon his evil course; for the LORD has spoken against this people in great anger and wrath.'  
 8 Baruch son of Neriah did all that the prophet Jeremiah had told him to do, and read the words of the LORD in the LORD's house out of the book.  
 9 In the ninth month of the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, all the people in Jerusalem and all who came there from the cities of Judah proclaimed a fast before  
 10 the LORD. Then Baruch read Jeremiah's words in the house of the LORD out of the book in the hearing of all the people; he read them from the room of Gemariah son of the adjutant-general Shaphan in the upper court at the entrance to the new gate of the LORD's house. Micaiah son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan, heard all the words of the  
 12 LORD out of the book and went down to the palace, to the adjutant-general's room where all the officers were gathered—Elishama the adjutant-general, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Akbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah  
 13 and all the other officers. There Micaiah repeated all the words he had heard when Baruch read out of the book in  
 14 the people's hearing. Then the officers sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, son of Shelemiah, son of Cushi, to Baruch with this message: 'Come here and bring the scroll from which you read in the people's hearing.' So Baruch son of  
 15 Neriah brought the scroll to them, and they said, 'Sit down and<sup>e</sup> read it to us.'

When they heard what he read, they  
 16 turned to each other trembling and said, 'We must report this to the king.' They asked Baruch to tell them how he  
 17 had come to write all this. He said to them, 'Jeremiah dictated every word of  
 18 it to me, and I wrote it down in ink in the book.' The officers said to Baruch,  
 19 'You and Jeremiah must go into hiding so that no one may know where you are.' When they had deposited the scroll  
 20 in the room of Elishama the adjutant-general, they went to the court and reported everything to the king.

The king sent Jehudi to fetch the  
 21 scroll. When he had fetched it from the room of Elishama the adjutant-general, he read it to the king and to all the officers in attendance. It was the ninth  
 22 month of the year, and the king was sitting in his winter apartments with a fire burning in a brazier in front of him. When Jehudi had read three or  
 23 four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a penknife and threw them into the fire in the brazier. He went on doing so until the whole scroll  
 24 had been thrown on the fire. Neither the king nor any of his courtiers who heard these words showed any fear or  
 25 rent their clothes; and though Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, he  
 26 would not listen to them. The king then ordered Jerahmeel, a royal prince,<sup>f</sup> Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to fetch the scribe Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah; but the LORD had hidden them.

After the king had burnt the scroll  
 27 with all that Baruch had written on it at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Now take  
 28 another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim king of Judah burnt. You  
 29 shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, These are the words of the LORD: You

<sup>e</sup> Sit down and: or This time.  
<sup>f</sup> a royal prince: or the king's deputy.

unspecified *fast-day* provides Baruch with a gathering of hearers. 8: *The book*: the scroll of v. 1. 9: *Fifth year*: probably a mistake for the "fourth"; see 25.1 n. 12: *Other officers*: see 26.10. 16: *Trembling*: see 26.9 n. The words were in themselves a threat to the people and the city. 19: *Go into hiding*: the officers were not overtly hostile (see v. 25), but only frightened. 22: *Ninth month*: Kislev, in midwinter. 23: *Cut them . . . threw them into the fire*: he hoped to remove the curse by destroying the words. 24: Once they had burned up the words they no

burnt this scroll and said, Why have you written here that the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land and exterminate both men and beasts? Therefore these are the words of the LORD about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have no one to succeed him on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be exposed to scorching heat by day and frost by night. I will punish him and also his offspring and his courtiers for their wickedness, and I will bring down on them and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and on the men of Judah all the calamities with which I threatened them, and to which they turned a deaf ear. Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt; and much else was added to the same effect.

37 King Zedekiah son of Josiah was set on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, in succession to Coniah son of Jehoiakim.

2 Neither he nor his courtiers nor the people of the land listened to the words which the LORD spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

3 King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to the prophet Jeremiah to say to him, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God.' At the time Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people; he had not yet been thrown into prison. Meanwhile, Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Chaldaeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard of it they raised the siege. Then this word came from the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel: Say to the king of Judah who sent you to consult me, Pharaoh's army which marched out to

help you is on its way back to Egypt, its own land, and the Chaldaeans will return to the attack. They will capture this city and burn it to the ground. These are the words of the LORD: Do not deceive yourselves, do not imagine that the Chaldaeans will go away and leave you alone. They will not go: for even if you defeated the whole Chaldaean force with which you are now fighting, and only the wounded were left lying in their tents, they would rise and burn down the city.

When the Chaldaean army had raised the siege of Jerusalem because of the advance of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah was on the point of leaving Jerusalem to go into Benjaminite territory and take possession of his patrimony in the presence of the people there. Irijah son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah, the officer of the guard, was in the Benjamin Gate when Jeremiah reached it, and he arrested the prophet, accusing him of going over to the Chaldaeans. 'It is a lie,' said Jeremiah; 'I am not going over to the Chaldaeans.' Irijah would not listen to him but arrested him and brought him before the officers. The officers were indignant with Jeremiah; they flogged him and imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which they had converted into a prison; for Jeremiah had been put into a vaulted pit beneath the house, and here he remained for a long time.

King Zedekiah had Jeremiah brought to him and consulted him privately in the palace, asking him if there was a word from the LORD. 'Indeed there is,' said Jeremiah; 'you shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon.' Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, 'What wrong have I done to you or your courtiers or this people? Why have you thrown me into prison? Where are your prophets who prophesied that the

longer showed any fear. 32: Another scroll: see 25.1 n. Much else: the written record continues beyond the fourth year (v. 1.).

37.1-10: Jeremiah disappoints the king. 1: See 2 Kgs.24.15-17. 3: Pray for us: Zedekiah attributes to Jeremiah special intercessory qualities; see 7.16 n. and 15.1-2 n. 4: Not yet . . . thrown into prison; see v. 15. 5-8: See 34.21-22.

37.11-16: Jeremiah is accused of desertion and imprisoned. 11: See v. 5. 12: His patrimony: a part of the family inheritance from which, in 32.6-15, he buys a field. 13: The Benjamin gate: in the direction of Anathoth. 15: They flogged him: see 20.2. 16: A vaulted pit: apparently, according to v. 20, a dungeonlike, unwholesome place.

37.17-21: Jeremiah speaks bluntly. 19: Prophets: like Hananiah (ch. 28).

king of Babylon would not attack you  
 20 or your country? I pray you now, my  
 lord king, give me a hearing and let my  
 petition be presented: do not send me  
 back to the house of Jonathan the  
 21 scribe, or I shall die there.' Then King  
 Zedekiah gave the order and Jeremiah  
 was committed to the court of the  
 guard-house and was granted a daily  
 ration of one loaf from the Street of the  
 Bakers, until the bread in the city was  
 all gone. So Jeremiah remained in the  
 court of the guard-house.

38 Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah  
 son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah,  
 and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard  
 what Jeremiah was saying to all the  
 2 people: These are the words of the  
 LORD: Whoever remains in this city  
 shall die by sword, by famine, or by  
 pestilence, but whoever goes out to  
 surrender to the Chaldeans shall sur-  
 3 vive; he shall survive, he shall take  
 home his life and nothing more. These  
 are the words of the LORD: This city  
 will fall into the hands of the king of  
 Babylon's army, and they will capture  
 4 it. Then the officers said to the king,  
 'The man must be put to death. By  
 talking in this way he is discouraging  
 the soldiers and the rest of the people  
 left in the city. He is pursuing not the  
 5 people's welfare but their ruin.' King  
 Zedekiah said, 'He is in your hands;  
 6 the king is powerless against you.' So  
 they took Jeremiah and threw him into  
 the pit,<sup>g</sup> in the court of the guard-house,  
 letting him down with ropes. There was  
 no water in the pit, only mud, and  
 7-8 Jeremiah sank in the mud. Now Ebed-  
 melech the Cushite, a eunuch, who was  
 in the palace, heard that they had  
 thrown Jeremiah into the pit and went  
 to tell the king, who was seated in the  
 9 Benjamin Gate. 'Your majesty,' he said,  
 'these men have shown great wicked-  
 ness in their treatment of the prophet  
 Jeremiah. They have thrown him into  
 the pit, and when there is no more

bread in the city he will die of hunger  
 where he lies.' Thereupon the king told  
 10 Ebed-melech the Cushite to take three  
 men with him and hoist Jeremiah out  
 of the pit before he died. So Ebed-  
 11 melech went to the palace with the men  
 and took some tattered, cast-off clothes  
 from the wardrobe<sup>h</sup> and let them down  
 with ropes to Jeremiah in the pit. Ebed-  
 12 melech the Cushite said to Jeremiah,  
 'Put these old clothes under your arm-  
 pits to ease the ropes.' Jeremiah did  
 this, and they pulled him up out of the  
 13 pit with the ropes; and he remained in  
 the court of the guard-house.

King Zedekiah had the prophet  
 14 Jeremiah brought to him by the third  
 entrance to the LORD's house and said  
 to him, 'I want to ask you something;  
 hide nothing from me.' Jeremiah an-  
 15 swered, 'If I speak out, you will cer-  
 tainly put me to death; if I offer you  
 any advice, you will not take it.' But  
 16 King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah  
 privately, 'By the life of the LORD who  
 gave us our lives, I will not put you to  
 death, nor will I hand you over to these  
 men who are seeking to take your life.'  
 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, 'These are  
 17 the words of the LORD the God of  
 Hosts, the God of Israel: If you go out  
 and surrender to the officers of the king  
 of Babylon, you shall live and this city  
 shall not be burnt down; you and your  
 family shall live. But if you do not sur-  
 18 render to the officers of the king of  
 Babylon, the city shall fall into the  
 hands of the Chaldeans, and they  
 shall burn it down, and you will not  
 escape them.' King Zedekiah said to  
 19 Jeremiah, 'I am afraid of the Judaeans  
 who have gone over to the enemy. I  
 fear the Chaldeans will give me up to  
 them and I shall be roughly handled.'  
 Jeremiah answered, 'They will not give  
 20 you up. If you obey the LORD in every-

<sup>g</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Malchiah son (or deputy) of the king.*

<sup>h</sup> *the wardrobe: prob. rdg.; Heb. underneath the treasury.*

38.1-13: Jeremiah is charged with sedition. 1: *Pashhur son of Malchiah*: he is mentioned in 21.1. 2-3: Jeremiah's allegedly seditious speech may have been more extensive than the two verses quoted here. The same address probably appears in excerpts in 21.8-10, 32.3-5, and 34.2-5. 4: *He is discouraging the soldiers*: perhaps; but Jeremiah's goal is national survival. 5: *Powerless*: the king vacillates, first assenting to the attempt on Jeremiah's life and then (v. 10) to his deliverance from mortal danger. 7: *Cushite*: from Cush in Upper Egypt. 9: *He will die of hunger*: beyond hunger, there was the likelihood of dying of suffocation in the mud.

38.14-28: Zedekiah again consults the prophet. 15: The substance is paraphrased in Lk.22.67-68.

21 thing I tell you, all will be well with you and you shall live. But if you refuse to go out and surrender, this is what the  
 22 LORD has shown me: all the women left in the king of Judah's palace will be led out to the officers of the king of Babylon and they will say:

Your own friends have misled you and have been too strong for you; they have let your feet sink in the mud and have turned away and left you.

23 All your women and children will be led out to the Chaldaeans, and you will not escape; you will be seized by the king of Babylon and this city will be burnt down.' Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, 'Let  
 24 no one know about this, and you shall not be put to death. If the officers hear that I have been speaking with you and they come to you and say, "Tell us  
 25 what you said to the king and what he said to you; hide nothing from us, and  
 26 we will not put you to death", then answer, "I was presenting a petition to the king not to send me back to the  
 27 house of Jonathan to die there." ' The officers all came to Jeremiah and questioned him, and he said to them just what the king had told him to say; so  
 28 their talk came to an end and they were none the wiser. Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard-house till the day Jerusalem fell.

39<sup>1</sup> IN THE TENTH MONTH OF THE NINTH YEAR of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, Nebuchadrezzar advanced with all his army against Jerusalem, and they laid  
 2 siege to it. In the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on the ninth day of the month, the city was thrown  
 3 open. All the officers of the king of Babylon came in and took their seats in the middle gate: Nergalsarezer of Simmagir, Nebusarsekim<sup>j</sup> the chief eunuch,<sup>k</sup> Nergalsarezer the commander of the frontier troops,<sup>l</sup> and all the other  
 4 officers of the king of Babylon. When

Zedekiah king of Judah saw them, he and all his armed escort left the city and fled by night by way of the king's garden through the gate called Between the Two Walls. They escaped towards the Arabah, but the Chaldaean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the lowlands of Jericho. The king was seized and brought before Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pleaded his case before him. The king of Babylon  
 6 slew Zedekiah's sons before his eyes at Riblah; he also put to death the nobles of Judah. Then Zedekiah's eyes were  
 7 put out, and he was bound in fetters of bronze to be brought to Babylon. The Chaldaeans burnt the royal palace  
 8 and the house of the LORD and the houses<sup>m</sup> of the people, and pulled down the walls of Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan  
 9 captain of the bodyguard deported to Babylon the rest of the people left in the city, those who had deserted to him and any remaining artisans.<sup>n</sup> At the  
 10 same time the captain of the guard left behind the weakest class of the people, those who owned nothing at all, and made them vine-dressers and labourers.

Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon sent  
 11 orders about Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan captain of the guard. 'Take him,' he  
 12 said; 'take special care of him, and do him no harm of any kind, but do for him whatever he says.' So Nebuzaradan  
 13 captain of the guard sent Nebushazban the chief eunuch, Nergalsarezer the commander of the frontier troops, and all the chief officers of the king of  
 14 Babylon, and they fetched Jeremiah from the court of the guard-house and handed him over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, to take him out to the Residence. So he stayed with his own people.

*i* Verses 1-10: cp. 52. 4-16 and 2 Kgs. 25. 1-12.  
*j* Probably a different form of Nebushazban (verse 13).  
*k* the chief eunuch; or Rab-saris.  
*l* the commander . . . troops; or Rab-mag.  
*m* of the LORD and the houses; prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
*n* artisans: prob rdg., cp. 52. 15; Heb. people who were left.

22-23: The ladies of the court will taunt the king, but their fate will be no better. See 39.6; 41.10. 28: See 39.14.

39.1-14: Jeremiah is spared when Jerusalem falls. Vv. 1-2 and 4-10 appear also in 52.4-16 and 2 Kgs.25.1-12, the latter where they stood originally. Only 11-14 here concern Jeremiah. 14: Gedaliah son of Ahikam: the puppet governor appointed by Nebuchadrezzar; see 40.7. The Residence: for the governor at Mizpah (40.6). The royal palace had been destroyed (v. 8).

15 The word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was under arrest in the court of the guard-house: Go and say to Ebed-melech the Cushite, These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: I will make good the words I have spoken against this city, foretelling ruin and not prosperity, and when that day comes you will be there to see it. But I will preserve you on that day, says the LORD, and you shall not be handed over to the men you fear. I will keep you safe and you shall not fall a victim to the sword; because you trusted in me you shall escape, you shall take home your life and nothing more. This is the very word of the LORD.

*Jeremiah after the capture of Jerusalem*

40 THE WORD WHICH CAME FROM THE LORD concerning Jeremiah: Nebuzaradan captain of the guard had taken him in chains to Ramah along with the other exiles from Jerusalem and Judah who were being deported to Babylon; and there he set him free, and took it upon himself to say to Jeremiah, 'The LORD your God threatened this place with disaster, and has duly carried out his threat that this should happen to all of you because you have sinned against the LORD and not obeyed him. But as for you, Jeremiah, today I remove the fetters from your wrists. Come with me to Babylon if you wish, and I will take special care of you; but if you prefer not to come, well and good. The whole country lies before you; go wherever you think best.' Jeremiah had not yet answered when Nebuzaradan went on,<sup>o</sup> 'Go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and stay with him openly; or else go wherever you choose.' Then the captain of the guard

granted him an allowance of food, and gave him a present, and so took leave of him. Jeremiah then came to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people left in the land.

When all the captains of the armed bands in the country-side and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam governor of the land, and had put him in charge of the weakest class of the population, men, women, and children who had not been deported to Babylon, they came to him at Mizpah; Ishmael son of Nethaniah came, and Johanan and Jonathan sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai<sup>p</sup> from Netophah, and Jezaniah of Beth-maacah, with their men. Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, gave them all this assurance: 'Have no fear of the Chaldaean officers. Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon; and then all will be well with you. I am to stay in Mizpah and attend upon the Chaldaeans whenever they come, and you are to gather in the summer-fruits, wine, and oil, store them in jars, and settle in the towns you have taken over.' The Judaeans also, in Moab, Ammon, Edom and other countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and that he had set over them Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan. The Judaeans, therefore, from all the places where they were scattered, came back to Judah and presented themselves before Gedaliah at Mizpah; and they gathered in a considerable store of fruit and wine.

Johanan son of Kareah and all the captains of the armed bands from the country-side came to Gedaliah at Mizpah and said to him, 'Do you know that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?'  
<sup>o</sup> Jeremiah . . . went on: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible in context.*  
<sup>p</sup> Or Ophai.

39.15-18: Jeremiah praises Ebed-melech. See 38.8-13. 15: *Had come*: before the fall of Jerusalem.

40.1-6: Jeremiah after the capture of Jerusalem. 1: *Ramah*: in Benjamin, a few miles north of Jerusalem. 2-3: Nebuzaradan's language here is much like that of Jeremiah in 44.2-6. 5: *Ahikam, son of Shaphan*: he is mentioned in 26.24 and 2 Kgs.22.12. 6: *Mizpah*: see 39.14 n.

40.7-41.18: The assassination of Gedaliah. The date was probably 582 B.C. Some scholars call the event the "third revolt." The story is told more succinctly in 2 Kgs.25.22-26. 9: Compare this with Jeremiah's counsel in 27-12. 10: *Attend upon the Chaldaeans*: Gedaliah would represent

- 15 sinate you?' But Gedaliah son of Ahikam did not believe them. Then Johanan son of Kareah said in private to Gedaliah, 'Let me go, unknown to anyone else, and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah. Why allow him to assassinate you, and so let all the Judaeans who have rallied round you be scattered and the remnant of Judah lost?'
- 16 Gedaliah son of Ahikam answered him, 'Do no such thing. Your story about Ishmael is a lie.'
- 41 In the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, who was a member of the royal house, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah. While they were at table with him there, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose to their feet and assassinated Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor of the land. They also murdered the Judaeans with him in Mizpah and the Chaldaeans who happened to be there.
- 4 The second day after the murder of Gedaliah, while it was not yet common knowledge, there came eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They had shaved off their beards, their clothes were rent and their bodies gashed, and they were carrying grain-offerings and frankincense to take to the house of the LORD. Ishmael son of Nethaniah came out weeping from Mizpah to meet them and, when he met them, he said, 'Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam.' But as soon as they reached the centre of the town, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and his men murdered them and threw their bodies into a pit, all except ten of them who said to Ishmael, 'Do not kill us, for we have a secret hoard in the country, wheat and barley, oil and honey.' So he held his hand and did not kill them with the others. The pit into which he threw the bodies of those whose death he had caused by using Gedaliah's name was the pit which King Asa had made when threatened by Baasha king of Israel; and the dead bodies filled it. He rounded up the rest of the people in Mizpah, that is the king's daughters and all who remained in Mizpah when Nebuzaradan captain of the guard appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam governor; and with these he set out to cross over into Ammon. When Johanan son of Kareah and all the captains of the armed bands heard of the crimes committed by Ishmael son of Nethaniah, they took all the men they had and went to attack him. They found him by the great pool in Gibeon. The people with Ishmael were glad when they saw Johanan son of Kareah and the captains of the armed bands with him; and all whom Ishmael had taken prisoner at Mizpah turned and joined Johanan son of Kareah. But Ishmael son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and they made their way to the Ammonites.
- Johanan son of Kareah and all the captains of the armed bands took from Mizpah the survivors whom he had rescued from Ishmael son of Nethaniah after the murder of Gedaliah son of Ahikam—men, armed and unarmed, women, children, and eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibeon. They started out and broke their journey at Kimham's holding near Bethlehem, on their way into Egypt to escape the Chaldaeans. They were afraid because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had assassinated Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor of the country.
- All the captains of the armed bands, including Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah son of Hoshaiiah, together with the people, high and low, came to the

them to the Chaldeans. 41.4: *Shechem, Shiloh . . . Samaria*: These were once prominent northern cities, now again settled after war and destruction. 4-5: Since Gedaliah's murder was *not yet common knowledge*, the mourning rites were perhaps in observance of a fast day of the seventh month. Seemingly, parts of *the house of the LORD* were still standing, or else they had been restored. 9: *King Asa*: around 900 B.C.; see 1 Kgs.15.16-22. 11-18: The defeat of Ishmael. 12: *The pool* in Gibeon is mentioned also in 2 Sam.2.13. 17: *Kimham's* father was named Barzillai; see 2 Sam.19.37-40 and 1 Kgs.2.7. *Bethlehem* was on the way to Egypt. *Escape*: the motive for the group's flight to Egypt was the fear of Babylonian reprisals for Ishmael's rebellious acts.

42.1-43.7: **The fugitives consult Jeremiah**, whether to proceed to Egypt for safety, or whether

2 prophet Jeremiah and said to him, 'May our petition be acceptable to you: Pray to the LORD your God on our behalf and on behalf of this remnant; for, as you see for yourself, only a few  
3 of us remain out of many. Pray that the LORD your God may tell us which way we ought to go and what we ought to  
4 do.' Then the prophet Jeremiah said to them, 'I have heard your request and will pray to the LORD your God as you desire, and whatever answer the LORD gives I will tell you; I will keep nothing  
5 back.' They said to Jeremiah, 'May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not keep our oath! We swear that we will do whatever the  
6 LORD your God sends you to tell us. Whether we like it or not, we will obey the LORD our God to whom we send you, in order that it may be well with us; we will obey the LORD our God.'

7 Within ten days the word of the LORD  
8 came to Jeremiah; so he summoned Johanan son of Kareah, all the captains of the armed bands with him, and all  
9 the people, both high and low. He said to them, These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel, to whom you  
10 sent me to present your petition: If you will stay in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down, I will plant you and not uproot you; I grieve for the disaster which I have brought  
11 upon you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, says the LORD; for I am with you, to save you and deliver  
12 you from his power. I will show you compassion, and he too will have compassion on you; he will let you stay on  
13 your own soil. But it may be that you will disobey the LORD your God and say, 'We will not stay in this land. No,  
14 we will go to Egypt, where we shall see no sign of war, never hear the sound of the trumpet, and not starve for want of  
15 bread; and there we will live.' Then hear the word of the LORD, you remnant of Judah. These are the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: If you are bent on going to Egypt, if

you do settle there, then the sword you  
16 fear will overtake you in Egypt, and the famine you dread will still be with you, even in Egypt, and there you will die. All the men who are bent on going  
17 to Egypt and settling there will die by sword, by famine, or by pestilence; not one shall escape or survive the calamity which I will bring upon them. These are  
18 the words of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will my wrath be poured out upon you when you go to  
19 Egypt; you will become an object of execration and horror, of ridicule and reproach; you will never see this place again. To you, then, remnant of Judah,  
20 the LORD says, Do not go to Egypt. Make no mistake, I can bear witness against you this day. You deceived  
21 yourselves when you sent me to the LORD your God and said, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God; tell us all that the LORD our God says and we will do it.' I have told you everything today;  
22 but you have not obeyed the LORD your God in what he sent me to tell you. So now be sure of this: you will die by  
23 sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go and make your home.

When Jeremiah had finished reciting  
43 to the people all that the LORD their God had sent him to say, Azariah son  
2 of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and their party had the effrontery to say to<sup>q</sup> Jeremiah, 'You are lying; the LORD our God has not sent you to forbid us to go and make our  
3 home in Egypt. Baruch son of Neriah has incited you against us in order to put us in the power of the Chaldeans, so that they may kill us or deport us to  
4 Babylon.' Johanan son of Kareah and the captains of the armed bands and all  
5 the people refused to obey the LORD and stay in Judah. So Johanan son of Kareah and the captains collected the remnant of Judah, all who had returned from the countries among which

<sup>q</sup> to say to: or to say: It is being said to.

it would be safe to remain in Judea, but reject his answer. 2: *Your*: Jeremiah's God, as though there was a special tie between him and Jeremiah. 4: *To the LORD your God*: Jeremiah makes no distinction between their God and his. 10: *Stay in this land*: see 32.6-15. 14: *The trumpet*: the ram's horn warning of peril; see Ezek. 33.3. 19-20: See vv. 5-6. 43.3: The fugitives, strangely,

they had been scattered to make their  
 6 home in Judah—men, women and  
 children, including the king's daughters,  
 all the people whom Nebuzaradan cap-  
 tain of the guard had left with Gedaliah  
 son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as well  
 7 as the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch  
 son of Neriah; these all went to Egypt  
 and came to Tahpanhes, disobeying the  
 LORD.

8 The word of the LORD came to  
 9 Jeremiah at Tahpanhes: Take some  
 large stones and set them in cement in  
 the pavement at the entrance to  
 Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. Let  
 10 the Judaeans see you do it and say to  
 them, These are the words of the LORD  
 of Hosts the God of Israel: I will send  
 for my servant Nebuchadrezzar king of  
 Babylon, and he will place his throne on  
 these stones that I have set there, and  
 11 spread his canopy over them. He will  
 then proceed to strike Egypt down,  
 killing those doomed to death, taking  
 captive those who are for captivity, and  
 putting to the sword those who are for  
 12 the sword. He will set fire to the temples  
 of the Egyptian gods, burning the  
 buildings and carrying the gods into  
 captivity. He will scour the land of  
 Egypt as a shepherd scours his clothes  
 to rid them of lice. He will leave Egypt  
 13 with his purpose achieved. He will  
 smash the sacred pillars of Beth-  
 shemesh in Egypt and burn down the  
 temples of the Egyptian gods.

44 The word that came to Jeremiah for  
 all the Judaeans who were living in  
 Egypt, in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph,  
 2 and the district of Pathros: These are  
 the words of the LORD of Hosts the God  
 of Israel: You have seen the calamity  
 that I brought upon Jerusalem and all  
 the cities of Judah: today they are laid  
 3 waste and left uninhabited, all because  
 of the wickedness of those who pro-  
 voked me to anger by going after other  
 gods, gods unknown to them, by burn-  
 ing sacrifices to them. It was you and

your fathers who did this. I took pains  
 4 to send all my servants the prophets to  
 you with this warning: 'Do not do  
 this abominable thing which I hate.'  
 But your fathers would not listen; they  
 5 paid no heed. They did not give up  
 their wickedness or cease to burn sac-  
 rifices to other gods; so my anger and  
 6 wrath raged like a fire through the  
 cities of Judah and the streets of Jeru-  
 salem, and they became the desolate  
 ruin that they are today.

Now these are the words of the LORD  
 7 the God of Hosts, the God of Israel:  
 Why bring so great a disaster upon  
 yourselves? Why bring destruction  
 upon Judaeans, men and women, chil-  
 dren and babes, and leave yourselves  
 without a survivor? This is what comes  
 8 of your provoking me by all your  
 idolatry in burning sacrifices to other  
 gods in Egypt where you have made  
 your home. You will destroy your-  
 selves and become an object of ridicule  
 and reproach to all the nations of the  
 earth. Have you forgotten all the  
 9 wickedness committed by your fore-  
 fathers, by the kings of Judah and their  
 wives, by yourselves and your wives in  
 the land of Judah and in the streets of  
 Jerusalem? To this day you have shown  
 10 no remorse, no reverence; you have not  
 conformed to the law and the statutes  
 which I set before you and your fore-  
 fathers. These, therefore, are the words  
 11 of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel:  
 I have made up my mind to bring  
 calamity upon you and exterminate the  
 people of Judah. I will deal with the  
 12 remnant of Judah who were bent on  
 going to make their home in Egypt; in  
 Egypt they shall all meet their end.  
 Some shall fall by the sword, others  
 will meet their end by famine. High and  
 low alike will die by sword or by famine  
 and will be an object of execration and  
 horror, of ridicule and reproach. I will  
 13 punish those who live in Egypt as I  
 punished those in Jerusalem, by sword,

hold Baruch responsible for Jeremiah's unwelcome answer. 6: *Jeremiah and Baruch*: they were taken to Egypt, apparently against their will. 7: *Tahpanhes*: Daphne, just west of the Sinai-Egypt border (2.16).

43.8-44.30: *Jeremiah in Egypt*. 8-13: He forecasts Nebuchadrezzar's invasion of Egypt. 9: *Stones*: to dramatize the message. 12: *Will scour the land*: will leave no survivors. 13: *Beth-shemesh*: lit. "house of the sun (God)." It was also called On (Gen.41.45), and later, Heliopolis. It was near Tahpanhes. Nebuchadrezzar's forces did invade Egypt about 567 B.C. 44.1-30: The faithlessness of the Judeans in Egypt. 1: *Migdol*: near *Tahpanhes*; both were east of *Noph*



14 famine, and pestilence. Those who had remained in Judah came to make their home in Egypt, confident that they would return and live once more in Judah. But they shall not return;<sup>7</sup> not one of them shall survive, not one escape.

15 Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods and the crowds of women standing by<sup>8</sup> answered Jeremiah, 'We will not listen to what you tell us in the name of the LORD. We intend to fulfil

16 all the promises by which we have bound ourselves: we will burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pour drink-offerings to her as we used to do, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. We then had food in plenty and were content; no calamity

17 touched us. But from the time we left off burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring drink-offerings to her, we have been in great want, and in the end we have fallen victims to sword and famine.' And the women said,

18 'When we burnt sacrifices to the queen of heaven and poured drink-offerings to her, our husbands knew full well that we were making crescent-cakes marked with her image and pouring

19 drink-offerings to her.' When Jeremiah received this answer from these men and women and all the people, he said,

20 'The LORD did not forget those sacrifices which you and your fathers, your kings and princes and the people of the land burnt in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they

21 mounted up in his mind until he could no longer tolerate them, so wicked were your deeds and so abominable the things you did. Your land became a desolate waste, an object of horror and

22 ridicule, with no inhabitants, as it still is. This calamity has come upon you because you burnt these sacrifices and

sinned against the LORD and did not obey the LORD or conform to his laws, statutes, and teachings.'

Jeremiah further said to all the 24 people and to the women, Listen to the word of the LORD, all you from Judah who live in Egypt. These are the words 25 of the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel: You women have made your actions match your words. 'We will carry out our vows', you said, 'to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and to pour drink-offerings to her.' Well then, fulfil your vows by all means, and make your words good. But listen to the 26 word of the LORD, all you from Judah who live in Egypt. I have sworn by my great name, says the LORD, that my name shall never again be on the lips of the men of Judah; they shall no longer swear in Egypt, 'By the life of the Lord GOD.' I am on the watch to bring 27 you evil and not good, and all the men of Judah who are in Egypt shall meet their end by sword and by famine until not one is left.<sup>9</sup> It is then that all the 28 survivors of Judah who have made their home in Egypt shall know whose word prevails, theirs or mine.

This is the sign I give you, says the 29 LORD, that I intend to punish you in this place, so that you may learn that my words against you will prevail to bring evil upon you: These are the 30 words of the LORD: I will hand over Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt to his enemies and to those who seek his life, just as I handed over Zedekiah king of Judah to his enemy Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon who was seeking to take his life.

#### THE WORD WHICH THE PROPHET 45

Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah when he wrote these words in a

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds except fugitives.

<sup>s</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and all the people who lived in Egypt, in Pathros.

<sup>t</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds Few will escape the sword in Egypt to return to Judah.

(Memphis), while *Pathros* was in the south of Egypt. 17: *Queen of heaven*: see 7.18 n. 18: *The time*: this is probably not an allusion to Josiah's reform (621 B.C.), but to some more recent period, such as the fall of Jerusalem in 587, or possibly even the earlier deportation in 597. 26-27: *Meet their end*: contrast the doom on the exiles to Egypt with the hope extended to the exiles in Babylonia (24.6). 28: *Prevails*: the word that is *theirs* is in vv. 16-17a. 29-30: Jeremiah proposes a sign, that when Pharaoh *Hophra* will be taken by his enemies, God's punishment of these Judeans will be imminent. *Hophra* was deposed in 569, lost his life in 566. This prediction concludes the story of the Judeans in Egypt and the biography of Jeremiah.

45.1-5: *The experience of Baruch*. A warning against aggrandizement. See also ch. 36.

book at Jeremiah's dictation in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: These are the words of the LORD the God of Israel concerning you, Baruch: You said, 'Woe is me, for the LORD has added grief to all my trials. I have worn myself out with my labours and have had no respite.' This is what you shall say to Baruch, These are the words of the LORD: What I have built, I demolish; what I have planted, I uproot. So it will be with the whole earth. You seek great things for yourself. Leave off seeking them; for I will bring disaster upon all mankind, says the LORD, and I will let you live wherever you go, but you shall save your life and nothing more.

*Prophecies against the nations*

46 THIS CAME TO THE PROPHET JEREMIAH as the word of the LORD concerning the nations.

2 Of Egypt: concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt at Carchemish on the river Euphrates, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah.

3 Hold shield and buckler ready and advance to battle;  
4 harness the horses, let the riders mount;  
form up, your helmets on, your lances burnished;  
on with your coats of mail!  
5 But now, what sight is this?  
They are broken and routed,  
their warriors beaten down;  
they have turned to flight and do not look behind them.

Terror let loose!  
This is the very word of the LORD.

Can the swift escape, can the warrior 6  
save himself?  
In the north, by the river Euphrates,  
they stumble and fall.

Who is this rising like the Nile, 7  
like its streams turbulent in flood?  
Egypt is rising like the Nile, 8  
like its streams turbulent in flood.

He<sup>u</sup> says:

I will rise and cover the earth,  
I will destroy both city and people.

Charge, horsemen! On, you flashing 9  
chariots, on!  
Forward, the warriors,  
Cushites and men of Put carrying  
shields,  
Lydians grasping their bent bows!  
This is the day of the Lord, the GOD 10  
of Hosts,  
a day of vengeance, vengeance on  
his enemies;  
the sword shall devour and be sated,  
drunk with their blood.  
For the GOD of Hosts, the Lord,  
holds sacrifice  
in a northern land, by the river  
Euphrates.  
Go up into Gilead and fetch balm, 11  
O virgin people of Egypt.  
You have tried many remedies, all  
in vain;  
no skin shall grow over your  
wounds.  
The nations have heard your cry, 12  
and the earth echoes with your  
screams;

<sup>u</sup> Or It.

4: God also knows failure and grief. 5: Baruch needs to be satisfied simply to survive.

46.1-51.64: **Heathen nations will be destroyed.** Compare 25.15-38. The book of Jer. ends on a note of comfort. Unlike the comfort in chs. 30-34 which stressed God's forgiving love and looked to the rehabilitation of his exiled people, these chapters offer comfort through the elimination of actively or potentially hostile nations. The prevailing tone is spiteful, yet sympathy is not lacking. 1: The verse ascribes the ensuing chapters to Jeremiah; compare 1.5,10. Some scholars, however, question his authorship of the whole, others of the individual parts. 2-26: Two taunt songs (vv. 2-12 and 13-26) against Egypt. The proud might of Egypt (vv. 3-4 and 7-9) suffers inglorious defeat (5-6 and 11-12) at Carchemish. 2: *Carchemish*: a place on the upper Euphrates. There, in 605 B.C., *Nebuchadrezzar* of Babylonia defeated and wiped out the *army of Pharaoh Necho* (II), an ally of the waning Assyrian power. 3: Egypt is addressed. 9: *Put*: in North Africa. *The day of the Lord*: in an old tradition the day was to be, as here, a time of God's triumph over enemies, the foes of his people Israel. 11: *Balm*: a healing medicine;

- warrior stumbles against warrior  
and both fall together.
- 13 The word which the LORD spoke to the prophet Jeremiah when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon was coming to harry the land of Egypt:
- 14 Announce it in Egypt, proclaim it in Migdol,  
proclaim it in Noph and Tahpanhes.  
Say, Stand to! Be ready!  
for a sword devours all around you.
- 15 Why does Apis flee, why does your bull-god not<sup>v</sup> stand fast?  
The LORD has thrust him out.
- 16 The rabble of Egypt stumbles and falls,  
man against man;  
each says, 'Quick, back to our people,  
to the land of our birth, far from the cruel sword!'
- 17 Give Pharaoh of Egypt the title King Bombast,  
the man who missed his moment.
- 18 By my life, says the King whose name is the LORD of Hosts,  
one shall come mighty as Tabor among the hills,  
as Carmel by the sea.
- 19 Make ready your baggage for exile,  
you native people of Egypt;  
for Noph shall become a waste,  
ruined and unpeopled.
- 20 Egypt was a lovely heifer,  
but a gadfly from the north descended on her.
- 21 The mercenaries in her land were like stall-fed calves;  
but they too turned and fled,  
not one of them stood his ground.  
The hour of their downfall has come upon them,  
their day of reckoning.
- 22 Hark, she is hissing like a snake,  
for the enemy has come in all his force.
- They fall upon her with axes  
like woodcutters at their work.  
They cut down her forest, says the LORD,  
and it flaunts itself no more;  
for they are many as locusts and past counting.
- The Egyptians are put to shame,  
enslaved to a northern race.  
The LORD of Hosts the God of Israel has spoken:  
I will punish Amon god of No,<sup>w</sup>  
Egypt with her gods and her princes,  
Pharaoh and all who trust in him.  
I will deliver them to those bent on their destruction,  
to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and his troops;  
yet in after time the land shall be peopled as of old.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- But you Jacob my servant, have no fear,  
despair not, O Israel;  
for I will bring you back safe from afar  
and your offspring from the land where they are captives;  
and Jacob shall be at rest once more,  
prosperous and unafraid.
- O Jacob my servant, have no fear,  
says the LORD; for I am with you.  
I will make an end of all the nations amongst whom I have banished you;  
but I will not make an end of you;  
though I punish you as you deserve,  
I will not sweep you clean away.
- This came to the prophet Jeremiah as the word of the LORD concerning the Philistines before Pharaoh's harrying of Gaza: The LORD has spoken:

<sup>v</sup> Why does Apis . . . not: or Why is your bull-god routed, why does he not . . .  
<sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and Pharaoh.

see 8.22. 13: The precise occasion of the passage is uncertain. It may be that of 567 B.C.; see 43.13 n. 15: *Apis*: a bull god, one of the chief deities of Egypt. With the scorn here, compare Isa.46.1-2. 16: The people speaking are foreign mercenaries. 18: *Mighty*: these Palestinian mountains, *Carmel* and *Tabor*, dominate their vicinities. 25: *Amon*: a god worshipped at *No* (Thebes) in southern Egypt. 26: The latter part of the verse is probably an addition, softening the judgment; see 48.47 and 49.6. 27-28: Reassurance to Israel; see 30.1-11.

47.1-7: Concerning the *Philistines*. Pharaoh is mentioned only in v. 1. *From the north* (v. 2) suggests Babylon, not Egypt, as the agent of God (v. 4) being sent to destroy Philistia. The chapter could refer to any of the frequent occasions when Philistia was ground between the

- See how waters are rising from the north and swelling to a torrent in spate, flooding the land and all that is in it, cities and all who live in them. Men shall shriek in alarm and all who live in the land shall howl.
- 3 Hark, the pounding of his chargers' hooves, the rattle of his chariots and their rumbling wheels! Fathers spare no thought for their children; their hands hang powerless,
- 4 because the day is upon them when Philistia will be despoiled, and Tyre and Sidon destroyed to the last defender; for the LORD will despoil the Philistines, that remnant of the isle of Caphtor.
- 5 Gaza is shorn bare, Ashkelon ruined. Poor remnant of their strength, how long will you gash yourselves and cry:
- 6 Ah, sword in the hand of the LORD, how long will it be before you rest? Sheathe yourself, rest and be quiet.
- 7 How can it rest? for the LORD has given it work to do against Ashkelon and the plain by the sea; there he has assigned the sword its task.
- 48 Of Moab. The LORD of Hosts the God of Israel has spoken:
- Alas for Nebo! it is laid waste; Kiriathaim is put to shame and captured, Misgab reduced to shame and dismay;
- 2 Moab is renowned no longer. In Heshbon they plot evil against her:
- Come, destroy her, and leave her no longer a nation. And you who live in Madmen shall be struck down, your people pursued by the sword. Hark to the cries of anguish from Horonaim: great havoc and disaster! Moab is broken. Their cries are heard as far as Zoar. On the ascent of Luhith men go up weeping bitterly; on the descent of Horonaim cries of 'Disaster!' are heard. Flee, flee for your lives like a sand-grouse in the wilderness. Because you have trusted in your defences and your arsenals, you too will be captured, and Kemosh will go into exile, his priests and his captains with him; and a spoiler shall descend on every city. No city shall escape, valley and tableland will be laid waste and plundered; the LORD has spoken.
- Let a warning flash to Moab,<sup>x</sup> for she shall be laid in ruins<sup>y</sup> and her cities shall become waste places with no inhabitant. A curse on him who is slack in doing the LORD's work! A curse on him who withholds his sword from bloodshed!
- All his life long, Moab has lain undisturbed like wine settled on its lees, not emptied from vessel to vessel; he has not gone into exile. Therefore the taste of him is unaltered,

<sup>x</sup> Let . . . Moab: or Doom Moab to become saltings.  
<sup>y</sup> laid in ruins: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

two major powers, e.g. during Necho's campaign in 609 (see 2 Kgs.23.29). 4: *Tyre and Sidon*, Phoenician cities, seemingly allied with the Philistines (27.3). *Caphtor*: Crete, or possibly Asia Minor; see Amos 9.7. *Gaza . . . Ashkelon*: Philistine cities. 6: Philistia speaks here.

48.1-47: *Of Moab*. A collection of compositions concerning Moab, some threatening calamities, others lamenting that people's distress. Neither the occasions nor the human agents of destruction are specified. During the latter half of the seventh century and early in the sixth, Moab suffered from incursions of Arab tribes from the east. When Jerusalem fell in 587, Moab afforded refuge to fugitives from Judah (see 40.11-12). 1-6: The chapter begins with what sounds like a dirge, sympathy for Moab in her plight; compare Isa.15.1-8. 7: The tone becomes more hostile. *Kemosh*: the Moabite god; see vv. 13 and 46. *Will go into exile*: see also Isa.46.2.

- and the flavour stays unchanged.  
 12 Therefore the days are coming, says  
 the LORD,  
 when I will send men to tilt the jars;  
 they shall tilt them  
 and empty his vessels and smash his  
 jars;  
 13 and Moab shall be betrayed by  
 Kemosh,  
 as Israel was betrayed by Bethel,  
 a god in whom he trusted.  
 14 How can you say, 'We are warriors  
 and men valiant in battle'?  
 15 The spoiler of Moab and her cities  
 has come up,  
 and the flower of her army goes  
 down to the slaughter.  
 This is the very word of the King whose  
 name is the LORD of Hosts.  
 16 The downfall of Moab is near at  
 hand,  
 disaster rushes swiftly upon him.  
 17 Grieve for him, all you his  
 neighbours  
 and all you who acknowledge him,  
 and say, 'Alas! The commander's  
 staff is broken,  
 broken is the baton of honour.'  
 18 Come down from your place of  
 honour,  
 sit on the thirsty ground, you natives  
 of Dibon;  
 for the spoiler of Moab has come  
 upon you  
 and destroyed your citadels.  
 19 You that live in Aroer, stand on the  
 roadside and watch,  
 ask the fugitives, the man running,  
 the woman escaping,  
 ask them, 'What has happened?'  
 20 Moab is reduced to shame and  
 dismay:  
 howl and shriek,  
 proclaim by the Arnon that Moab is  
 despoiled,  
 21 and that judgement has come to the  
 tableland, to Holon and Jahazah, Me-  
 phaath and Dibon, Nebo and Beth-  
 diblathaim and Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, 22  
 Beth-meon, Kiriath and Bozrah, and to 23  
 all the cities of Moab far and near.  
 Moab's horn is hacked off 25  
 and his strong arm is broken,  
 says the LORD.  
 Make Moab drunk—he has defied 26  
 the LORD—  
 until he overflows with his vomit  
 and even he becomes a butt for  
 derision.  
 But was Israel ever your butt? 27  
 Was he ever in company with  
 thieves,  
 that whenever you spoke of him you  
 should shake your head?  
 Leave your cities, you inhabitants of 28  
 Moab,  
 and find a home among the crags;  
 become like a dove which nests  
 in the rock-face at the mouth of a  
 cavern.  
 We have heard of Moab's pride, and 29  
 proud indeed he is,  
 proud, presumptuous, overbearing,  
 insolent.  
 I know his arrogance, says the LORD; 30  
 his boasting is false, false are his  
 deeds.  
 Therefore I will howl over Moab 31  
 and cry in anguish at the fate of  
 every soul in Moab;  
 I will moan over the men of  
 Kir-heres.  
 I will weep for you more than I 32  
 wept for Jazer,  
 O vine of Sibmah  
 whose branches spread out to the  
 sea  
 and stretch as far as Jazer.  
 The despoiler has fallen on your fruit  
 and on your vintage,  
 gladness and joy are taken away 33  
 from the meadows of Moab,  
 and I have stopped the flow of wine  
 from the vats;

12: *Smash his jars*: see 13.12–14. 13: *Bethel*: see Gen.31.13. Here the word is a name for a deity rather than the place of a sanctuary. The betrayal alluded to is obscure. 17–24: Further sympathy for Moab. *Alas!*: the same Heb. word (*echah*) begins Lamentations. 25–39: Again the hostile words are interspersed with sympathetic murmurs (see vv. 31–32,34). 27: *Shake your head*: this motion is a sign of scorn. 29–33,36: These verses largely echo those of Isa.16.6–11.

nor shall shout follow shout from the harvesters—not one shout.

- 34 Heshbon and<sup>z</sup> Elealeh utter cries of anguish which are heard in Jahaz; the sound carries from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah; for the waters of Nimrim have become a desolate waste. In Moab I will stop their sacrificing at hill-shrines and burning of offerings to their gods, says the LORD.
- 35 Therefore my heart wails for Moab like a reed-pipe, wails like a pipe for the men of Kir-heres. Their hard-earned wealth has vanished. Every man's head is shorn in mourning, every beard shaved, every hand gashed, and every waist girded with sackcloth. On Moab's roofs and in her broad streets nothing is heard but lamentation; for I have broken Moab like a useless thing.<sup>a</sup>
- 36 Moab in her dismay has shamefully turned to flight. Moab has become a butt of derision and a cause of dismay to all her neighbours.
- 37 For the LORD has spoken:

A vulture shall swoop down and spread out his wings over Moab.

- 38 The towns are captured, the strongholds taken; on that day the spirit of Moab's warriors shall fail like the spirit of a woman in childbirth.
- 39 Then Moab shall be destroyed, no more to be a nation; for he defied the LORD.
- 40 The hunter's scare, the pit, and the trap threaten all who dwell in Moab, says the LORD.
- 41 If a man runs from the scare he will fall into the pit; if he climbs out of the pit he will be caught in the trap. All this will I bring on Moab in the year of their reckoning. This is the very word of the LORD.

- In the shadow of Heshbon the fugitives stand helpless; for fire has blazed out from Heshbon, flames have shot out from the palace of Sihon; they devour the homeland of Moab and the country of the sons of tumult.
- 42 Alas for you, Moab! the people of Kemosh have vanished, for your sons are taken into captivity and your daughters led away captive.
- 43 Yet in days to come I will restore Moab's fortunes. This is the very word of the LORD.

Here ends the sentence on Moab.

Of the people of Ammon. Thus says the LORD:

Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? Why has Milcom inherited the land of Gad, and why do his people live in the cities of Gad?

- 44 Look, therefore, a time is coming, says the LORD, when I will make Rabbath Ammon hear the battle-cry, when it will become a desolate mound of ruins and its villages will be burnt to ashes, and Israel shall disinherit those who disinherited him, says the LORD.

45 Howl, Heshbon, for Ai is despoiled. Cry aloud, you villages round Rabbath Ammon, put on sackcloth and beat your breast, and score your bodies with gashes.

<sup>z</sup> and: *prob. rdg.*, cp. *Isa. 15. 4*; *Heb.* as far as.  
<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* says the LORD.

34: Sites in Moab. 36: *Kir-heres* (Kir-hareseth) ancient capital of Moab. 40–46: Moab is to undergo irretrievable disaster. With vv. 43–44 compare *Isa. 24.17–18*. 45–46: On Moab's sad plight, see also *Num. 21.28–29*. 45: *Heshbon*: a border city. It is here in Moab, but in 49.3 it is in Ammon. *Sihon*: a Moabite king (*Num. 21.21–31*). *Sons of tumult*: see *Num. 24.17b*. 49.1–39: The seizure by the people of Ammon of Israelite territory will not go unpunished. The exact occasion is not known. 1: *Gad*: on Ammon's northern border, east of the Jordan. *Milcom*: the Ammonite god. 2: *Rabbath Ammon*: the capital city, modern Amman. 3: *Heshbon*: see

For Milcom will go into exile,  
 and with him his priests and officers.  
 4 Why do you boast of your resources,  
 you whose resources are melting  
 away,  
 you wayward people who trust in  
 your arsenals,  
 and say, 'Who will dare attack me?'  
 5 Beware, I am bringing fear upon you  
 from every side,<sup>b</sup>  
 and every one of you shall be driven  
 headlong  
 with no man to round up the  
 stragglers.  
 6 Yet after this I will restore the  
 fortunes of Ammon.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
 7 Of Edom. The LORD of Hosts has  
 said:  
 Is wisdom no longer to be found in  
 Teman?  
 Have her sages no skill in counsel?  
 Has their wisdom decayed?  
 8 The people of Dedan have turned  
 and fled  
 and taken refuge in remote places;  
 for I will bring Esau's calamity  
 upon him  
 when his day of reckoning comes.  
 9<sup>c</sup> When the vintagers come to you  
 they will surely leave gleanings;  
 and if thieves raid your early crop  
 in the night,  
 they will take only as much as  
 they want.  
 10 But I have ransacked Esau's treasure,  
 I have uncovered his hiding-places,  
 and he has nowhere to conceal  
 himself;  
 his children, his kinsfolk and his  
 neighbours are despoiled;  
 there is no one to help him.  
 11 What! am I to save alive your  
 fatherless children?  
 Are your widows to trust in me?

For the LORD has spoken: Those 12  
 who were not doomed to drink the cup  
 shall drink it none the less. Are you  
 alone to go unpunished? You shall not  
 go unpunished; you shall drink it. For 13  
 by my life, says the LORD, Bozrah shall  
 become a horror and reproach, a by-  
 word and a thing of ridicule; and all  
 her towns shall be a byword for ever.

When a herald was sent among the 14<sup>d</sup>  
 nations, crying,  
 'Gather together and march against  
 her,  
 rouse yourselves for battle',  
 I heard this message from the LORD:

Look, I make you the least of all 15  
 nations,  
 an object of all men's contempt.  
 Your overbearing arrogance and 16  
 your insolent heart  
 have led you astray,  
 you who haunt the crannies among  
 the rocks  
 and keep your hold on the heights  
 of the hills.  
 Though you build your nest high as  
 a vulture,  
 thence I will bring you down.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
 Edom shall become a scene of 17  
 horror,  
 all who pass that way shall be  
 horror-struck  
 and shall jeer in derision at the blows  
 she has borne,  
 overthrown like Sodom and Gomor- 18  
 rah and their neighbours,<sup>e</sup>  
 says the LORD.  
 No man shall live there,  
 no mortal make a home in her.  
 Look, like a lion coming up 19  
 from Jordan's dense thickets to the  
 perennial pastures,

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds says the Lord God of Hosts.  
<sup>c</sup> Verses 9 and 10: cp. Obad. 5, 6.  
<sup>d</sup> Verses 14-16: cp. Obad. 1-4. <sup>e</sup> Or inhabitants.

48.45 n. 6: See, similarly, 48.47. 7-22: *Of Edom*: except for her "arrogance" (v. 16) Edom's offense is not here specified. After the fall of Jerusalem and during the early Persian Period (sixth century), the Nabateans, nomadic peoples from Arabia, invaded and pushed the Edomites westward into southern Judah. 7: "Men of the east," including *Edom*, were widely reputed for their *wisdom*; see 1 Kgs.4.29-30. *Teman*: an Edomite city, at times used synonymously with Edom. 8: *Esau*: the ancestor of Edom; see Gen.25.29-30;36.1. 9: *Vintagers*: harvesters of grapes. 10: *Ransacked*: see Obad.5-6. 12: *Those who were not doomed*: i.e. not specifically "sentenced"; probably they are included in the category of: "all that inhabit the earth" in 25.29. 13: *Bozrah*: a fortress city in the northern part of Edom. 14-16: See Obad.1-4. 18: *Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbours*: see Deut.29.23. 19: *From Jordan's dense thickets*:

- in a moment I will chase every one  
away  
and round up the choicest of <sup>f</sup> her  
rams.  
For who is like me? Who is my  
equal?  
What shepherd can stand his ground  
before me?
- 20 Therefore listen to the LORD's whole  
purpose against Edom and all his plans  
against the people of Teman:
- The young ones of the flock shall  
be carried off,  
and their pasture shall be horrified  
at their fate.
- 21 At the sound of their fall the land  
quakes;  
it cries out, and the cry is heard at  
the Red Sea.<sup>g</sup>
- 22 A vulture shall soar and swoop  
down  
and spread out his wings over  
Bozrah,  
and on that day the spirit of Edom's  
warriors shall fail  
like the spirit of a woman in  
labour.
- 23 Of Damascus.  
Hamath and Arpad are in  
confusion,  
for they have heard news of  
disaster;  
they are tossed up and down in  
anxiety  
like the unresting sea.
- 24 Damascus has lost heart and turns to  
flight;  
trembling has seized her,  
the pangs of childbirth have gripped  
her.
- 25 How forlorn is the town of joyful  
song,  
the city of gladness!
- 26 Therefore her young men shall fall in  
her streets
- and all her warriors lie still in death  
that day.  
This is the very word of the LORD  
of Hosts.  
Then will I kindle a fire against the 27  
wall of Damascus  
and it shall consume the palaces of  
Ben-hadad.
- Of Kedar and the royal princes<sup>h</sup> of 28  
Hazer which Nebuchadrezzar king of  
Babylon subdued. The LORD has said:
- Come, attack Kedar,  
despoil the Arabs of the east.  
Carry off their tents and their flocks, 29  
their tent-hangings and all their  
vessels,  
drive off their camels too,  
and a cry shall go up: 'Terror let  
loose!'
- Flee, flee; make haste, 30  
take refuge in remote places, O  
people of Hazer,  
for the king of Babylon has laid his  
plans  
and formed a design against you,  
says the LORD.  
Come, let us attack a nation living at 31  
peace,  
in fancied security,  
with neither gates nor bars,  
sufficient to themselves.  
Their camels shall be carried off as 32  
booty,  
their vast herds of cattle as  
plunder;  
I will scatter them before the wind to  
roam the fringes of the desert,<sup>i</sup>  
and bring ruin upon them from  
every side.  
Hazer shall become a haunt of 33  
wolves,  
for ever desolate;  
no man shall live there,  
no mortal make a home in her.  
This is the very word of the LORD.

<sup>f</sup> the choicest of: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* who is chosen?

<sup>g</sup> Or the Sea of Reeds.

<sup>h</sup> royal princes: or kingdom.

<sup>i</sup> them . . . desert: or to the wind those who clip the hair on their temples.

God, like a lion, attacks Edom's *rams*, her leaders. 23-27: *Damascus*: the capital of Syria. 23: Except in v. 27, which is quoted from Amos 1.4, no reason for, or source of, the *disaster* is given. *Hamath* and *Arpad* are neighboring cities. *Ben-hadad*: a royal Syrian name. 28-33: *Kedar*: an area in the east of Palestine. 28: *Hazer*: a place unknown, but apparently in, or near, Kedar. 29: 'Terror let loose!': see 6.25; 46.5. 30: See 25.9. 31: See Ezek.38.11; Deut.33.28. 32: See Ezek.12.14,15. 33: *Wolves*: the exact identification is uncertain here and in 10.22.



- 34 This came to the prophet Jeremiah as the word of the LORD concerning  
 35 Zedekiah king of Judah: Thus says the LORD of Hosts:  
 Listen, I will break the bow of  
 Elam,  
 the chief weapon of their might;  
 36 I will bring four winds against Elam from the four quarters of heaven;  
 I will scatter them before these four winds,  
 and there shall be no nation to which the exiles from Elam shall not come.  
 37 I will break Elam before their foes, before those who are bent on their destruction;  
 I will vent my anger upon them in disaster;  
 I will harry them with the sword until I make an end of them.  
 38 Then I will set my throne in Elam, and there I will destroy the king and his officers.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
 39 Yet in days to come I will restore the fortunes of Elam.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
**50** The word which the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldaeans, through the prophet Jeremiah:  
 2 Declare and proclaim among the nations,  
 keep nothing back, spread the news: Babylon is taken,  
 Bel is put to shame, Marduk is in despair;  
 the idols of Babylon are put to shame,  
 her false gods are in despair.  
 For a nation out of the north has  
 fallen upon her;  
 they will make her land a desolate waste  
 where neither man nor beast shall live.  
 In those days, at that time, says the LORD, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together and go in tears to seek the LORD their God; they shall ask after Zion, turning their faces towards her, and they shall come and join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant which shall not be forgotten.  
 My people were lost sheep, whose shepherds let them stray and run wild on the mountains; they went from mountain to hill and forgot their fold. Whoever found them devoured them, and their enemies said, 'We incur no guilt, because they have sinned against the LORD, the LORD who is the true goal and the hope of all their fathers.'  
 Flee from Babylon, from the land of the Chaldaeans;  
 go forth, and be like he-goats leading the flock.  
 For I will stir up a host of mighty nations  
 and bring them against Babylon, marshalled against her from a northern land;  
 and from the north she shall be captured.  
 Their arrows shall be like a practised warrior  
 who never comes back empty-handed;  
 the Chaldaeans shall be plundered, and all who plunder them shall take their fill.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.

34-39: *Elam*: a country east of Babylonia, bordering on Media and Persia, and a protectorate of Media, but having no known contact with Judah. 34: *Zedekiah*: he began to reign around 597 B.C. 38: *Throne*: see also 1.15. 39: A comforting addition.

50.1-51.64: **Concerning Babylon**. Around 550 B.C. her capital fell before Cyrus the Persian. In part, chs. 50-51 anticipate those events, without, however, naming Persia, and in part they look back to them, but it is not always clear whether the intention is future or past. 2: *Babylon is taken*. But in vv. 3 and 9 the land is yet to be conquered. *Bel*, "great god," is a title of *Marduk* (Merodach), god of the city of Babylon. 3: *A nation out of the north*: Media lay north of Babylon, Persia to the southeast: by 539, Cyrus of Persia had incorporated the northern peoples into his expanding empire. 4-7: The reunion of *Israel and . . . Judah*: these verses interrupt the material concerning Babylon. 8: *Flee from Babylon*: this is addressed to captive Judeans. 9-10: God assembles the nations of the north; see 51.27-28 n. The time is future.

- 11 You ravaged my patrimony; but  
though you rejoice and exult,  
though you run free like a heifer  
after threshing,  
though you neigh like a stallion,  
12 your mother shall be cruelly  
disgraced,  
she who bore you shall be put to  
shame.  
Look at her, the mere rump of the  
nations,  
a wilderness, parched and desert,  
13 unpeopled through the wrath of the  
LORD,  
nothing but a desolate waste;  
all who pass by Babylon shall be  
horror-struck  
and jeer in derision at the sight of  
her wounds.
- 14 Marshal your forces against Babylon,  
on every side,  
you whose bows are ready strung;  
shoot at her, spare no arrows.  
15 Shout in triumph over her, she has  
thrown up her hands,  
her bastions are down, her walls  
demolished;  
this is the vengeance of the LORD.  
Take vengeance on her;  
as she has done, so do to her.  
16 Destroy every sower in Babylon,  
every reaper with his sickle at  
harvest-time.  
Before the cruel sword every man  
will go back to his people,  
every man flee to his own land.
- 17 Israel is a scattered flock  
harried and chased by lions:  
as the king of Assyria was the first  
to feed on him,  
so the king of Babylon was the last  
to gnaw his bones.
- 18 Therefore the LORD of Hosts the God  
of Israel says this:  
I will punish the king of Babylon  
and his country
- as I have punished the king of  
Assyria.  
I will bring Israel back to his  
19 pasture,  
and he shall graze on Carmel and  
Bashan;  
in the hills of Ephraim and Gilead he  
shall eat his fill.  
In those days, says the LORD, when 20  
that time comes, search shall be made  
for the iniquity of Israel but there shall  
be none, and for the sin of Judah but it  
shall not be found; for those whom I  
leave as a remnant I will forgive.
- Attack the land of Merathaim; 21  
attack it and the inhabitants of  
Pekod;  
put all to the sword and destroy  
them,  
and do whatever I bid you.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- Hark, the sound of war in the land 22  
and great destruction!  
See how the hammer of all the 23  
earth  
is hacked and broken in pieces,  
how Babylon has become  
a horror among the nations.  
O Babylon, you have laid a snare to 24  
be your own undoing;  
you have been trapped, all unawares;  
there you are, you are caught,  
because you have challenged the  
LORD.  
The LORD has opened his arsenal 25  
and brought out the weapons of  
his wrath;  
for this is work for the Lord the GOD  
of Hosts  
in the land of the Chaldeans.  
Her harvest-time has come: 26  
throw open her granaries,<sup>j</sup> pile her  
in heaps;  
destroy her, let no survivor be left.  
Put all her warriors to the sword; 27  
let them be led to the slaughter.

<sup>j</sup> Or cattle-pens.

11: *My patrimony*: the land of Judah. 12: *Your mother*: Babylon, the capital city. 16: *Every man*: from a foreign land. 17-20: Concern for Israel and Judah; see vv. 4-7. God has already dealt with Assyria which had conquered Israel; now he will punish Babylonia. He will bring Israel back to its land, forgiven. 19: *Carmel and Bashan . . . Ephraim and Gilead*: areas west and east of the Jordan, formerly occupied by the Northern Kingdom. 21: The attention reverts to Babylonia. 23: The conquests of Babylon, *the hammer of all the earth*, have been ended.

- Woe upon them! for their time has come,  
 their day of reckoning.
- 28 I hear the fugitives escaping from the land of Babylon to proclaim in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God.
- 29 Let your arrows be heard whistling against Babylon, all you whose bows are ready strung.  
 Pitch your tents all around her so that no one escapes.  
 Pay her back for all her misdeeds; as she has done, so do to her, for she has insulted the LORD the Holy One of Israel.
- 30 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all her warriors shall lie still in death that day.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.
- 31 I am against you, insolent city; for your time has come, your day of reckoning.  
 This is the very word of the Lord God of Hosts.
- 32 Insolence shall stumble and fall and no one shall lift her up, and I will kindle fire in the heath around her and it shall consume everything round about.
- 33 The LORD of Hosts has said this:  
 The peoples of Israel and Judah together are oppressed; their captors hold them firmly and refuse to release them.
- 34 But they have a powerful advocate, whose name is the LORD of Hosts; he himself will plead their cause, bringing distress on Babylon and turmoil on its people.
- 35 A sword hangs over the Chaldaeans,
- over the people of Babylon, her officers and her wise men, says the LORD.  
 A sword over the false prophets, and they are made fools, a sword over her warriors, and they despair,  
 a sword over her horses and her chariots and over all the rabble within her, and they shall become like women;  
 a sword over her treasures, and they shall be plundered,  
 a sword over her waters, and they shall dry up; for it is a land of idols that glories in its dreaded gods.<sup>k</sup>
- Therefore marmots and jackals shall skulk in it, desert-owls shall haunt it, nevermore shall it be inhabited by men and no one shall dwell in it through all the ages. As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbours,<sup>l</sup> says the LORD, no man shall live there, no mortal make a home in her.
- See, a people is coming from the north, a great nation, mighty<sup>m</sup> kings rouse themselves from earth's farthest corners; armed with bow and sabre, they are cruel and pitiless; bestriding horses, they sound like the thunder of the sea; they are like men arrayed for battle against you, Babylon.  
 The king of Babylon has heard news of them and his hands hang limp; agony grips him, anguish as of a woman in labour.  
 Look, like a lion coming up from Jordan's dense thickets to the perennial pastures, in a moment I will chase every one away

<sup>k</sup> dreaded gods; or dire portents.  
<sup>l</sup> Or inhabitants.  
<sup>m</sup> Or many.

28: At the end the Heb. adds "vengeance for his temple," as in 51.11. 40,44-46: These verses quote 49.18-21, substituting Babylon here for Edom there. 41-43: These verses quote 6.22-24 almost exactly, here substituting Babylon for Zion. 44: See vv. 40,44-46 n. God brings the Medes (51.11) to destroy Babylon and avenge the destruction of his Temple; see Isa.13.17-19. After Media's defeat about 550 B.C., by Cyrus of Persia, the latter was a real threat to Babylon.

- and round up the choicest of<sup>n</sup> the rams.  
 For who is like me? Who is my equal?  
 What shepherd can stand his ground before me?
- 45 Therefore listen to the LORD's whole purpose against Babylon and all his plans against the land of the Chaldaeans:
- The young ones of the flock shall be carried off  
 and their pasture shall be horrified at their fate.
- 46 At the sound of the capture of Babylon  
 the land quakes and her cry is heard among the nations.
- 51 For thus says the LORD:
- I will raise a destroying wind against Babylon and those who live in Kambul,<sup>o</sup>
- 2 and I will send winnowers to Babylon,  
 who shall winnow her and empty her land;  
 for they shall assail her on all sides on the day of disaster.
- 3 How shall the archer then string his bow  
 or put on his coat of mail?
- Spare none of her young men, destroy all her host,
- 4 and let them fall dead in the land of the Chaldaeans,  
 pierced through in her streets.
- 5 Israel and Judah are not left widowed by their God, by the LORD of Hosts;  
 but the land of the Chaldaeans is full of guilt,  
 condemned by the Holy One of Israel.
- 6 Flee out of Babylon, every man for himself,  
 or you will be struck down for her sin;
- for this is the LORD's day of vengeance,  
 and he is paying her full recompense.  
 Babylon has been a gold cup in the LORD's hand  
 to make all the earth drunk;  
 the nations have drunk of her wine,  
 and that has made them mad.  
 Babylon falls suddenly and is broken. 7  
 Howl over her,  
 fetch balm for her wound;  
 perhaps she will be healed.  
 We would have healed Babylon, but she would not be<sup>p</sup> healed.  
 Leave her and let us be off, each to his own country;  
 for her doom reaches to heaven  
 and mounts up to the skies.  
 The LORD has made our innocence plain to see;  
 come, let us proclaim in Zion  
 what the LORD our God has done.
- Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers. 11  
 The LORD has roused the spirit of the king of the Medes;  
 for the LORD's purpose against Babylon is to destroy it,  
 and his vengeance is the avenging of his temple.  
 Raise the standard against Babylon's walls,  
 mount a strong guard, post a watch,  
 set an ambush;  
 for the LORD has both planned and carried out  
 what he threatened to do to the people of Babylon.
- O opulent city, standing beside great waters,  
 your end has come, your destiny is certain. 13  
 The LORD of Hosts has sworn by himself, saying,  
 Once I filled you with men, countless as locusts,  
 yet a song of triumph shall be chanted over you. 14

*n* the choicest of: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* who is chosen?  
*o* Kambul: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the heart of my opponents.  
*p* would not be: *or* was not.

51.1: *Kambul*: Chaldea. 5: *Not left widowed by their God*: the same metaphor is in Isa.54.4-6. 6: *Flee out of Babylon*: this is addressed to the foreigners and the mercenaries; see 46.16 n. 7: *Cup*: see 25.15-16. 10: *Our innocence*: the words are spoken by the Judean exiles; see 50.28. 11: *The avenging of his temple*: see 50.28 n. 13: *Great waters* refers to the Euphrates river.

- 15<sup>a</sup> God made the earth by his power,  
fixed the world in place by his  
wisdom,  
unfurled the skies by his  
understanding.
- 16 At the thunder of his voice the waters  
in heaven are amazed;<sup>r</sup>  
he brings up the mist from the ends  
of the earth,  
he opens rifts<sup>s</sup> for the rain  
and brings the wind out of his  
storehouses.
- 17 All men are brutish and ignorant,  
every goldsmith is discredited by his  
idol;  
for the figures he casts are a sham,  
there is no breath in them.
- 18 They are worth nothing, mere  
mockeries,  
which perish when their day of  
reckoning comes.
- 19 God, Jacob's creator, is not like  
these;  
for he is the maker of all.  
Israel is the people he claims as  
his own;  
the LORD of Hosts is his name.
- 20 You are my battle-axe, my weapon  
of war;  
with you I will break nations in pieces,  
and with you I will destroy kingdoms.
- 21 With you I will break horse and  
rider,  
with you I will break chariot and  
rider,
- 22 with you I will break man and  
woman,  
with you I will break young and old,  
with you I will break young man and  
maiden,
- 23 with you I will break shepherd and  
flock,  
with you I will break ploughman and  
team,  
with you I will break viceroys and  
governors.
- 24 So will I repay Babylon and the  
people of Chaldaea  
for all the wrong which they did in  
Zion in your sight.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- I am against you, O destroying  
mountain,<sup>t</sup>  
you who destroy the whole earth,  
and I will stretch out my hand  
against you  
and send you tumbling from  
your terraces  
and make you a burnt-out mountain.  
No stone of yours shall be used as a  
corner-stone,  
no stone for a foundation;  
but you shall be desolate, for ever  
waste.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- Raise a standard in the land,<sup>u</sup>  
blow the trumpet among the nations,  
hallow the nations for war against  
her,  
summon the kingdoms of Ararat,  
Minni, and Ashkenaz,  
appoint a commander-in-chief  
against her,  
bring up the horses like a dark  
swarm of locusts;<sup>v</sup>  
hallow the nations for war against  
her,  
the king of the Medes, his viceroys  
and governors,  
and all the lands of his realm.  
The earth quakes and writhes;  
for the LORD's designs against  
Babylon are fulfilled,  
to make the land of Babylon desolate  
and unpeopled.  
Babylon's warriors have given up  
the fight,  
they skulk in the forts;  
their courage has failed, they have  
become like women.  
Her buildings are set on fire, the bars  
of her gates broken.  
Runner speeds to meet runner,

q Verses 15-19: cp. 10. 12-16.

r At the thunder . . . amazed: prob. rdg.; Heb. At the sound of his giving tumult of waters in heaven.

s rifts: prob. rdg.; Heb. lightnings.

t Or O Mount of the Destroyer.

u Or earth. v Or hoppers.

15-19: Note Tfn. q. 20-24: Continues vv. 1-14. The Medes (or Persians) are God's *weapon* against Babylon. 25-33: God summons a company of nations to avenge his people and destroy Babylon. 25: *Mountain*: Babylon, so called because of a landmark, a terraced tower (ziggurat) of the Marduk temple there. 27-28: *Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz*: they were far to the north. Defeated by the Medes, they were later added to the empire of Cyrus. The Heb. term for *commander-in-chief* is a loan word from the Babylonian. 31: Relay *runners* report to the king,

- messenger to meet messenger,  
bringing news to the king of Babylon  
that every quarter of his city is taken,  
32 the river-crossings are seized,  
the guard-towers set on fire  
and the garrison stricken with panic.
- 33 For the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel  
has spoken:  
  
Babylon is like a threshing-floor when  
it is trodden;  
soon, very soon, harvest-time will  
come.
- 34 'Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon  
has devoured me  
and sucked me dry,  
he has set me aside like an empty  
jar.  
Like a dragon he has gulped me  
down;  
he has filled his maw with my  
delicate flesh  
and spewed me up.
- 35 On Babylon be the violence done to  
me,  
the vengeance taken upon me!',  
Zion's people shall say.  
'My blood be upon the  
Chaldaeans!',  
Jerusalem shall say.
- 36 Therefore the LORD says:  
  
I will plead your cause, I will avenge  
you;  
I will dry up her sea<sup>w</sup> and make her  
waters fail;  
37 and Babylon shall become a heap of  
ruins, a haunt of wolves,  
a scene of horror and derision, with  
no inhabitant.
- 38 Together they roar like young lions,  
they growl like the whelps of a  
lioness.
- 39 I will cause their drinking bouts to  
end in fever  
and make them so drunk that they  
will writhe and toss,
- then sink into unending sleep,  
never to wake.  
This is the very word of the LORD.  
I will bring them like lambs to the  
slaughter,  
rams and he-goats together.  
Sheshak<sup>x</sup> is captured,  
the pride of the whole earth taken;  
40 Babylon has become a horror  
amongst the nations!  
The sea has surged over Babylon,  
she is covered by its roaring  
waves.  
Her cities have become waste places,  
41 a land dried up and desert,  
a land in whose cities no man lives  
and through which no mortal travels.  
I will punish Bel in Babylon  
and make him bring up what he has  
swallowed;  
nations shall never again come  
streaming to him.  
The wall of Babylon has fallen;  
42 come out of her, O my people,  
and let every man save himself  
from the anger of the LORD.  
Then beware of losing heart,  
43 fear no rumours spread abroad in the  
land,  
as rumour follows rumour,  
each year a new one:  
violence on earth and ruler against  
ruler.  
44 Therefore a time is coming  
when I will punish Babylon's  
idols,  
and all her land shall be put to  
shame,  
and all her slain shall lie fallen in  
her midst.  
Heaven and earth and all that is in  
45 them  
shall sing in triumph over  
Babylon;  
for marauders from the north shall  
outrun her.  
This is the very word of the LORD.  
46 Babylon must fall for the sake of<sup>y</sup>  
Israel's slain,

<sup>w</sup> Possibly the Euphrates.

<sup>x</sup> A name for Babylon.

<sup>y</sup> for the sake of: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

Nabonidus, who was probably away at his oasis at Tema in Arabia when Babylon fell. **33: Trodden:** grain was separated from straw by the treading of animals (Deut.25.4). **34-35: Jerusalem's plea.** **36-58:** God responds. Babylon is doomed (if not already taken, vv. 41,44). **41: Sheshak:** Babylonia. **44: Bel:** also called Marduk, the god of Babylon; see Isa.46.1-2. **45: Come out . . . my people:** from your captivity; compare Isa.48.20. **48: From the north:**

as the slain of all the world fell for  
 the sake of Babylon.  
 50 You who have escaped from her  
 sword, off with you, do not  
 linger.  
 Remember the LORD from afar  
 and call Jerusalem to mind.  
 51 We are put to shame by the  
 reproaches we have heard,  
 and our faces are covered with  
 confusion:  
 strangers have entered the sacred  
 courts of the LORD's house.  
 52 A time is coming therefore, says the  
 LORD,  
 when I will punish her idols,  
 and all through the land there shall  
 be the groaning of the wounded.  
 53 Though Babylon should reach to the  
 skies  
 and make her high towers  
 inaccessible,  
 I will send marauders to overrun her.  
 This is the very word of the LORD.  
 54 Hark, cries of agony from Babylon!  
 Sounds of destruction from the  
 land of the Chaldeans!  
 55 For the LORD is despoiling Babylon  
 and will silence the hum of the city,  
 before the advancing wave that  
 booms and roars  
 like mighty waters.  
 56 For marauders march on Babylon  
 herself,  
 her warriors are captured and their  
 bows are broken;  
 for the LORD, a God of retribution,  
 will repay in full.  
 57 I will make her princes and her wise  
 men drunk,  
 her viceroys and governors and  
 warriors,  
 and they shall sink into unending  
 sleep, never to wake.  
 This is the very word of the King,  
 whose name is the LORD of Hosts.

The LORD of Hosts says: 58  
 The walls of broad Babylon shall be  
 razed to the ground,  
 her lofty gates shall be set on fire.  
 Worthless now is the thing for which  
 the nations toiled;  
 the peoples wore themselves out for  
 a mere nothing.

The instructions given by the prophet 59  
 Jeremiah to the quartermaster Seraiah  
 son of Neriah and grandson of Mah-  
 seiah, when he went to Babylon with  
 Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth  
 year of his reign.

Jeremiah, having written down in a<sup>z</sup> 60  
 book<sup>a</sup> a full description of the disaster  
 which would come upon Babylon, said 61  
 to Seraiah, 'When you come to Babylon,  
 look at this, read it all and then say, 62  
 "Thou, O LORD, hast declared thy  
 purpose to destroy this place and leave  
 it with no one living in it, man or  
 beast; it shall be desolate, for ever  
 waste." When you have finished reading 63  
 the book, tie a stone to it and throw it  
 into the Euphrates, and then say, "So 64  
 shall Babylon sink, never to rise again  
 after the disaster which I shall bring  
 upon her.''

Thus far are the collected sayings of  
 Jeremiah.

*Historical note about the fall  
 of Jerusalem*

ZEDEKIAH WAS TWENTY-ONE YEARS OLD 52<sup>b</sup>  
 when he came to the throne, and he  
 reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years;  
 his mother was Hamutal daughter of

<sup>z</sup> Or one.  
<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds all these things which are  
 written concerning Babylon.  
<sup>b</sup> Verses 1-27: cp. 39. 1-10 and 2 Kgs. 24. 18-25. 21.

vv. 27-28 n. 51: *We*: the speaker and his fellow exiles. 53: *High towers*: see v. 25 n. and Gen. 11.4 n.  
 56: *Israel's God of retribution will repay Babylon for her cruelty to his people*; compare  
 Isa. 47.6. 59-64: *A curse on Babylon*. 59: *Seraiah*: he appears to have been a brother to  
 Jeremiah's disciple Baruch; see 32.12. *With king Zedekiah*: such a journey is unknown. The  
 king may have gone in person to pay a vassal's homage to Nebuchadrezzar; see 29.3. 63: *Throw  
 it into the Euphrates*: set the process in motion. Compare the rinsing of the written curse in  
 Num. 5.23. 64b: *Thus far... Jeremiah*: this half verse, apparently, once followed v. 58.

52.1-34: *An appendix recapitulating Zedekiah's reign, Jerusalem's fall, deportations, Je-  
 hoichin's release*. Only vv. 28-30 are new; the remainder of this chapter is taken almost ver-  
 batim from, one may see, 2 Kgs. 24.18-25.21, 27-30. Vv. 4-16 occur also in Jer. 39.1-2, 4-10.

2 Jeremiah of Libnah. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the LORD, as  
3 Jehoiakim had done. Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that in the end he banished them from his sight; and Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4 In the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon advanced with all his army against Jerusalem, invested it and erected watch-towers against it on every side; 5 the siege lasted till the eleventh year of  
6 King Zedekiah. In the fourth month of that year, on the ninth day of the month, when famine was severe in the city and there was no food for the  
7 common people, the city was thrown open. When Zedekiah king of Judah saw this, he and<sup>c</sup> all his armed escort left the city and fled by night through the gate called Between the Two Walls, near the king's garden. They escaped towards the Arabah, although the Chaldeans were surrounding the city.  
8 But the Chaldaean army pursued the king and overtook him in the lowlands of Jericho; and all his company was dispersed. The king was seized and brought before the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he pleaded his case before him. The king of Babylon slew Zedekiah's sons before his eyes; he also put to death all the  
9 princes of Judah in Riblah. Then the king of Babylon put Zedekiah's eyes out, bound him with fetters of bronze, brought him to Babylon and committed him to prison till the day of his death.

12 In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the king's  
13 bodyguard,<sup>d</sup> came to Jerusalem and set fire to the house of the LORD and the royal palace; all the houses in the city, including the mansion of Gedaliah,<sup>e</sup> were burnt down. The Chaldaean forces with the captain of the guard pulled down the walls all round Jerusalem. <sup>f</sup>Nebuzaradan captain of the guard deported the rest of the people left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and any re-

maining artisans. The captain of the guard left only the weakest class of people to be vine-dressers and labourers.

The Chaldeans broke up the pillars 17 of bronze in the house of the LORD, the trolleys, and the sea of bronze, and took the metal to Babylon. They took 18 also the pots, shovels, snuffers, tossing-bowls, saucers, and all the vessels of bronze used in the service of the temple. The captain of the guard took 19 away the precious metal, whether gold or silver, of which the cups, firepans, tossing-bowls, pots, lamp-stands, saucers, and flagons were made. The 20 bronze of the two pillars, of the one sea and of the twelve oxen supporting it, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, was beyond weighing. The one pillar was eighteen cubits 21 high and twelve cubits in circumference; it was hollow and the metal was four fingers thick. It had a capital 22 of bronze, five cubits high, and a decoration of network and pomegranates ran all round it, wholly of bronze. The other pillar, with its pomegranates, was exactly like it. Ninety-six pomegranates were exposed 23 to view and there were a hundred in all on the network all round.

The captain of the guard took Seraiah 24 the chief priest and Zephaniah the deputy chief priest and the three on duty at the entrance; he took also from 25 the city a eunuch who was in charge of the fighting men, seven of those with right of access to the king who were still in the city, the adjutant-general<sup>g</sup> whose duty was to muster the people for war, and sixty men of the people who were still there. These Nebuzaradan 26 captain of the guard brought to the king of Babylon at Riblah. There, in the 27 land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them flogged and put to death. So Judah went into exile from their own land.

<sup>c</sup> When Zedekiah . . . and: *prob. rdg.*; *cp.* 39. 4; *Heb. om.*

<sup>d</sup> captain . . . bodyguard: *prob. rdg.*, *cp.* 2 *Kgs.* 25. 8; *Heb.* captain of the bodyguard stood before the king of Babylon.

<sup>e</sup> Gedaliah: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the great man.

<sup>f</sup> *Prob. rdg.*, *cp.* 39. 9 and 2 *Kgs.* 25. 11; *Heb. prefixes* The weakest class of the people (*cp. verse 16*).

<sup>g</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* commander-in-chief.



28 These were the people deported by Nebuchadrezzar in the seventeenth<sup>h</sup> year: three thousand and twenty-three  
 29 Judaeans. In his eighteenth year, eight hundred and thirty-two people from  
 30 Jerusalem; in his twenty-third year, seven hundred and forty-five Judaeans were deported by Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard: all together four thousand six hundred people.  
 31<sup>i</sup> In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year of his accession showed favour to Jehoiachin king of Judah. He brought him out of prison, treated him kindly 32 and gave him a seat at table above the kings with him in Babylon. So 33 Jehoiachin discarded his prison clothes and lived as a pensioner of the king for the rest of his life. For his maintenance 34 a regular daily allowance was given him by the king of Babylon as long as he lived, to the day of his death.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. seventh.  
<sup>i</sup> Verses 31-34: cp. 2 Kgs. 25. 27-30.

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28-30: The dates are 588, 587, and 582 B.C. The Heb. text reads seventh, 598 B.C., but this is usually corrected to *seventeenth*, 588. The events of 582 B.C. are unknown and unrecorded; perhaps there was some aftermath to the (undated) assassination of Gedaliah (40.7-41.8). No great numbers were deported, 4600 in all. 31-34: The same as 2 Kgs.25.27-30.

# LAMENTATIONS

This collection of five carefully structured poems is unified by a common theme: lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem and its Temple to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. Each poem except the last is an alphabetic acrostic.

With dirge-type rhythm, the mood is set by a number of unnamed voices. One voice comments on the condition of the city (1.1–11b), while another is that of the city herself, whose personification heightens the pathos (1.11c–22). A third voice is that of a man who, though crushed, maintains an attitude of hope (ch. 3). At times the voice speaks in the plural, as in ch. 5. All these separate voices blend as one.

A very old tradition that Jeremiah was the author is based upon some similarities between his writings and Lamentations, but there are also profound differences; the poems have closer affinities to the national “laments,” such as Pss. 44, 74, 80. The exact date after 587 and the place of composition are difficult to determine because the style and themes were used for many hundreds of years, even in Mesopotamian compositions antedating Hebrew literature.

Lamentations probably came to be used in the Temple in liturgical mourning, a practice which continues in Jewish synagogue worship today.

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## *Sorrows of captive Zion*

- |   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1 | How solitary lies the city, once so full of people!<br>Once great among nations, now become a widow;<br>once queen among provinces, now put to forced labour!                            |  | her young children have gone, driven away captive by the enemy.<br>All majesty has vanished from the daughter of Zion.<br>Her princes have become like deer that can find no pasture and run on, their strength all spent, pursued by the hunter. | 6 |
| 2 | Bitterly she weeps in the night, tears run down her cheeks;<br>she has no one to bring her comfort among all that love her;<br>all her friends turned traitor and became her enemies.    |  | Jerusalem has remembered her days of misery and wandering, <sup>a</sup> when her people fell into the power of the adversary and there was no one to help her. The adversary saw and mocked at her fallen state.                                  | 7 |
| 3 | Judah went into the misery of exile and endless servitude.<br>Settled among the nations, she found no resting-place;<br>all her persecutors fell upon her in her sore straits.           |  | Jerusalem had sinned greatly, and so she was treated like a filthy rag;<br>all those who had honoured her held her cheap,<br>for they had seen her nakedness. What could she do but sigh and turn away?   | 8 |
| 4 | The paths to Zion mourn, for none attend her sacred feasts;<br>all her gates are desolate.<br>Her priests groan and sigh,<br>her virgins are cruelly treated.<br>How bitter is her fate! |  | Uncleanness clung to her skirts,<br>and she gave no thought to her fate.<br>Her fall was beyond belief and there was no one to comfort her.   | 9 |
| 5 | Her adversaries have become her masters,<br>her enemies take their ease,<br>for the LORD has cruelly punished her<br>because of misdeeds without number;                                 |  | Look, LORD, upon her misery,<br>see how the enemy has triumphed.  |   |

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds* all her treasures which have been from days of old.

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1.1–22: The desolation of Zion (Jerusalem). This general lament introduces many of the themes of the book. 1: *How*: lit. “alas, how . . .” From *greatness* to *widowhood*, from a *queen* to a *slave* are typical of the poet’s stylistic contrasts. 3: Even though *Judah* as a whole sometimes appears, the main focus is on Jerusalem and the Temple. 5: *Misdeeds without number*: this theme of sin is to be contrasted with that of innocence, as in 3.52; or the sin of a specific group, as in 4.13; or the sins of the fathers, as in 5.7. 6: *Daughter of Zion*: a term of endearment for Zion, personifying the Temple mount area. 7: The backward look seems to come after the

- 10 The adversary stretched out his hand  
to seize all her treasures;  
then it was that she saw Gentiles  
entering her sanctuary,  
Gentiles forbidden by thee to enter  
the assembly, for it was thine.
- 11 All her people groaned,  
they begged for bread;  
they sold their treasures for food  
to give them strength again.
- Look, O LORD, and see  
how cheap I am accounted.
- 12 Is it of no concern to you who  
pass by?  
If only you would look and see:  
is there any agony like mine,  
like these my torments  
with which the LORD has cruelly  
punished me  
in the day of his anger?
- 13 He sent down fire from heaven,  
it ran through my bones;  
he spread out a net to catch my  
feet,  
and turned me back;  
he made me an example of  
desolation,  
racked with sickness all day long.
- 14 My transgressions were bound<sup>b</sup>  
upon me,  
his own hand knotted them round  
me;  
his yoke was lifted on to my neck,  
my strength failed beneath its  
weight;  
the Lord abandoned me to its hold,<sup>c</sup>  
and I could not stand.
- 15 The Lord treated with scorn  
all the mighty men within my walls;  
he marshalled rank on rank  
against me  
to crush my young warriors.  
The Lord trod down, like grapes  
in the press,  
the virgin daughter of Judah.
- 16 For these things I weep over my  
plight,<sup>d</sup>  
my eyes run with tears;
- for any to comfort me and renew  
my strength  
are far to seek;  
my sons are an example of  
desolation,  
for the enemy is victorious.
- Zion lifted her hands in prayer,  
but there was no one to comfort  
her;  
the LORD gave Jacob's enemies the  
order  
to beset him on every side.  
Jerusalem became a filthy rag in  
their midst.
- The LORD was in the right;  
it was I who rebelled against his  
commands.
- Listen, O listen, all you nations,  
and look on my agony:  
my virgins and my young men are  
gone into captivity.
- I called to my lovers, they broke  
faith with me;  
my priests and my elders in the city  
went hungry and could find  
nothing,  
although they sought food for  
themselves  
to renew their strength.
- See, LORD, how sorely I am  
distressed.
- My bowels writhe in anguish  
and my stomach turns within me,  
because I wantonly rebelled.  
The sword makes orphans in the  
streets,  
as plague does within doors.
- Hear me when I groan  
with no one to comfort me.  
All my enemies, when they heard  
of my calamity,  
rejoiced at what thou hadst done;  
but hasten the day thou hast  
promised  
when they shall become like me.

<sup>b</sup> bound: *prob. rdg.; Heb. word unknown.*  
<sup>c</sup> its hold: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>d</sup> my plight: *prob. rdg.; Heb. my eye.*

passing of many years. 10: This verse is a stereotyped description of the enemy; see Ps. 74.4-8. 1.11c-22: The voice is now the city herself speaking. 12: You who pass by: perhaps the other nations; see v. 18. 15: Rank on rank against me: the role of the Lord as an enemy warrior, as in Isa.10.5-11. 17: Here the observer in 1.1-11b again comments. 18: The city's confession of sin; see Deut.28.15-68. Into captivity: see 2 Kgs.25.11. 21: Hasten the day: though somewhat incongruous with v. 15, this is a call for God's wrath on the enemy, as in 3.64-66; see also Pss.60.12; 83.9-18.

- 22 Let all their evil deeds come before thee;  
torment them in their turn,  
as thou hast tormented me  
for all my transgressions;  
for my sighs are many and my heart  
is faint.
- Zion's hope of relief after punishment*
- 2 What darkness the Lord in his anger  
has brought upon the daughter  
of Zion!  
He hurled down from heaven to  
earth  
the glory of Israel,  
and did not remember in the day  
of his anger  
that Zion was his footstool.
- 2 The Lord overwhelmed without pity  
all the dwellings of Jacob.  
In his wrath he tore down  
the strongholds of the daughter of  
Judah;  
he levelled with the ground and  
desecrated  
the kingdom and its rulers.
- 3 In his anger he hacked down  
the horn of Israel's pride,  
he withdrew his helping hand  
when the enemy came on;  
and he blazed in Jacob like flaming  
fire  
that rages far and wide.
- 4 In enmity he strung his bow;  
he took his stand like an adversary  
and with his strong arm he slew  
all those who had been his delight;  
he poured his fury out like fire  
on the tent of the daughter of  
Zion.
- 5 The Lord played an enemy's part  
and overwhelmed Israel.  
He overwhelmed all their towered  
mansions  
and brought down their  
strongholds in ruins;
- sorrow upon sorrow he brought  
to the daughter of Judah.  
He stripped his tabernacle as a vine 6  
is stripped,  
and made the place of assembly  
a ruin.  
In Zion the LORD blotted out all  
memory  
of festal assembly<sup>e</sup> and of  
sabbath;  
king and priest alike he scorned  
in the grimness of his anger.  
The Lord spurned his own altar 7  
and laid a curse upon his  
sanctuary.  
He delivered the walls of her  
mansions  
into the power of the enemy;  
in the LORD's very house they  
raised shouts of victory  
as on a day of festival.
- The LORD was minded to bring 8  
down in ruins  
the walls of the daughter of Zion;  
he took their measure with his  
line  
and did not scruple to demolish  
her;  
he made rampart and wall lament,  
and both together lay dejected.  
Her gates are sunk into the earth, 9  
he has shattered and broken their  
bars;  
her king and her rulers are among  
the Gentiles,  
and there is no law;  
her prophets too have received  
no vision from the LORD.
- The elders of the daughter of 10  
Zion  
sit on the ground and sigh;  
they have cast dust on their heads  
and clothed themselves in  
sackcloth;  
the virgins of Jerusalem  
bow their heads to the ground.

<sup>e</sup> festal assembly: or appointed seasons.

2.1-4.22: A compassionate God judges suffering Zion. Dire as the sufferings are, the Lord will have compassion.

2.1-10: The fullness of calamity. 1: *What*: lit. "alas, how"; so too 1.1 and 4.1. The verse reminds God of past favors, especially his partiality for the Temple, which here, and in 1 Chr.28.2, is likened to a *footstool*, a figure of affectionate comfort. 3: *Horn*: perhaps of the altar, as in Amos 3.14; see also Ps.75.10. 4-5: See 1.15 n. 6: *Blotted out all memory*: see 1.7 n. 7: *Shouts of victory*: as in Ps.74.4. 9bc: Revelation and prophecy have ceased; compare Mic.3.5-6.

- 11 My eyes are blinded with tears,  
my bowels writhe in anguish.  
In my bitterness my bile is spilt on  
the earth  
because of my people's wound,  
when children and infants faint  
in the streets of the town  
and cry to their mothers,  
12 'Where can we get corn and wine?'—  
when they faint like wounded things  
in the streets of the city,  
gasping out their lives  
in their mothers' bosom.
- 13 How can I cheer you? Whose  
plight is like yours,  
daughter of Jerusalem?  
To what can I compare you for  
your comfort,  
virgin daughter of Zion?  
For your wound gapes wide as the  
ocean;  
who can heal you?
- 14 The visions that your prophets saw  
for you  
were false and painted shams;  
they did not bring home to you  
your guilt  
and so reverse your fortunes.  
The visions that they saw for you  
were delusions,  
false and fraudulent.<sup>f</sup>
- 15 All those who pass by  
snap their fingers at you;  
they hiss and wag their heads at you,  
daughter of Jerusalem:  
'Is this the city once called Perfect  
in beauty,  
Joy of the whole earth?'  
16 All your enemies  
make mouths and jeer at you;  
they hiss and grind their teeth,  
saying, 'Here we are,  
this is the day we have waited for;  
we have lived to see it.'
- 17 The LORD has done what he planned  
to do,  
he has fulfilled his threat,
- all that he ordained from days of  
old.  
He has demolished without pity  
and let the enemy rejoice over you,  
filling your adversaries with pride.  
Cry with a full heart<sup>g</sup> to the Lord,  
18 O wall of the daughter of Zion;  
let your tears run down like a  
torrent  
by day and by night.  
Give yourself not a moment's rest,  
let your tears never cease.  
Arise and cry aloud in the night;  
19 at the beginning of every watch  
pour out your heart like water  
in the Lord's very presence.  
Lift up your hands to him  
for the lives of your children.<sup>h</sup>  
Look, LORD, and see:  
20 who is it that thou hast thus  
tormented?  
Must women eat the fruit of their  
wombs,  
the children they have brought  
safely to birth?  
Shall priest and prophet be slain  
in the sanctuary of the Lord?  
21 There in the streets young men  
and old  
lie on the ground.  
My virgins and my young men  
have fallen  
by sword and by famine;  
thou hast slain them in the day of  
thy anger,  
slaughtered them without pity.  
Thou didst summon my enemies  
22 against me from every side,  
like men assembling for a  
festival;  
not a man escaped, not one  
survived  
in the day of the LORD's anger.  
All whom I brought safely to birth  
and reared  
were destroyed by my enemies.

<sup>f</sup> fraudulent: or causing banishment.<sup>g</sup> Cry . . . heart: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* Their heart cried.<sup>h</sup> *Prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* adds who faint with hunger at every street-corner.

2.11–16: An observer witnesses the distress. 12: The hunger: see 4.4–10. 13: *Virgin*: the figure appears also in Amos 5.2. 14: *Your prophets*: here the false prophets, who prophesied peace; see Jer.14.13–16. The true prophets spoke of destruction; see Jer.28.8. 15: *All those who pass by*: recalling the words of 1.12.

2.17–19: Let the city weep. 17: *All that he ordained*: compare Jer.23.20.

2.20–22: The city's plea to God. 21: The day of the LORD (v. 22), anticipated by many prophets, is viewed here as having occurred; see Joel 1.14–15 n.

3	I am the man who has known affliction, I have felt the rod of his wrath.	17	peace has gone out of my life, and I have forgotten what prosperity means.
2	It was I whom he led away and left to walk in darkness, where no light is.	18	Then I cry out that my strength has gone and so has my hope in the LORD.
3	Against me alone he has turned his hand, and so it is all day long.	19	The memory of my distress and my wanderings is <sup>i</sup> wormwood and gall.
4	He has wasted away my flesh and my skin and broken all my bones;	20	Remember, O remember, and stoop down to me. <sup>j k</sup>
5	he has built up walls around me, behind and before,	21	All this I take to heart and therefore I will wait patiently:
6	and has cast me into a place of darkness like a man long dead.	22	the LORD's true love is surely not spent, <sup>l</sup> nor has his compassion failed;
7	He has walled me in so that I cannot escape, and weighed me down with fetters;	23	they are new every morning, so great is his constancy.
8	even when I cry out and call for help, he rejects my prayer.	24	The LORD, I say, is all that I have; therefore I will wait for him patiently.
9	He has barred my road with blocks of stone and tangled up my way.	25	The LORD is good to those who look for him, to all who seek him;
10	He lies in wait for me like a bear or a lion lurking in a covert.	26	it is good to wait in patience and sigh for deliverance by the LORD.
11	He has made my way refractory and lamed me and left me desolate.	27	It is good, too, for a man to carry the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and sigh
12	He has strung his bow and made me the target for his arrows;	28	if it is heavy upon him; let him lay his face in the dust,
13	he has pierced my kidneys with shafts drawn from his quiver.	29	and there may yet be hope. Let him turn his cheek to the smiter
14	I have become a laughing-stock to all nations, the target of their mocking songs all day.	30	and endure full measure of abuse; for the Lord will not cast off his servants <sup>m</sup> for ever.
15	He has given me my fill of bitter herbs and made me drunk with wormwood.	31	He may punish cruelly, yet he will have compassion in the fullness of his love;
16	He has broken my teeth on gravel; fed on ashes, I am racked with pain;	32	he does not willingly afflict or punish any mortal man.
			<small>i The memory . . . is: or Remember my distress and my wanderings, the . . . j stoop down to me: prob. original rdg., altered in Heb. to I sink down. k Remember . . . me: or I remember, I remember them and sink down. l spent: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible. m his servants: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.</small>

3.1-66: An individual in distress bemoans his plight. See the similar themes in such psalms of lamentation as Pss.22; 69. The individual has traditionally been identified as Jeremiah; see Introduction.

3.1-18: What his life has become. 1: *His wrath*: the Lord's, as in 2.4-5. 2-16: Many metaphors describe the techniques of the punishing God, literally inconsistent with one another, but thematically in accord. 14: *Laughing-stock*: see Jer.20.7.

3.19-33: A sensitive outpouring of trust in the Lord. The positive attitude here is unique in the book. 21: *Wait patiently*: the idea, a key one, recurs often in this section, but not elsewhere in the book; compare Pss.69.3; 42.5. 29: *Hope*: equivalent to waiting. 30: Compare Isa.50.6; Mt.5.39.

34	To trample underfoot any prisoner in the land,	drove me cruelly like a bird; they thrust me alive into the silent	53
35	to deprive a man of his rights in defiance of the Most High,	pit, and they closed it over me with	
36	to pervert justice in the courts— such things the Lord has never approved.	a stone; the waters rose high above my head, and I said, 'My end has come.'	54
37	Who can command and it is done, if the Lord has forbidden it?	But I called on thy name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit;	55
38	Do not both bad and good proceed from the mouth of the Most High?	thou heardest my voice; do not turn a deaf ear	56
39	Why should any man living complain, any mortal who has sinned?	When I cry, 'Come to my relief.' Thou wast near when I called to	57
40	Let us examine our ways and put them to the test and turn back to the LORD;	thee; thou didst say, 'Have no fear.'	
41	let us lift up our hearts, not our hands, to God in heaven.	Lord, thou didst plead my cause and ransom my life;	58
42	We ourselves have sinned and rebelled, and thou hast not forgiven.	thou sawest, LORD, the injustice done to me	59
43	In anger thou hast turned <sup>n</sup> and pursued us and slain without pity;	and gavest judgement in my favour;	
44	thou hast hidden thyself behind the clouds beyond reach of our prayers;	thou sawest their vengeance, all their plots against me.	60
45	thou hast treated us as offscouring and refuse among the nations.	Thou didst hear their bitter taunts, O LORD,	61
46	All our enemies make mouths and jeer at us.	their many plots against me, the whispering, the murmurs of my	62
47	Before us lie hunter's scare and pit, devastation and ruin.	enemies all the day long.	
48	My eyes run with streams of water because of my people's wound.	See how, whether they sit or stand, they taunt me bitterly.	63
49	My eyes stream with unceasing tears and refuse all comfort,	Pay them back for their deeds, O LORD,	64
50	while the LORD in heaven looks down and watches my affliction, <sup>o</sup>	pay them back what they deserve. Show them how hard thy heart	65
51	while the LORD torments <sup>p</sup> me with the fate of all the daughters of my city.	can be, how little concern thou hast for them.	
52	Those who for no reason were my enemies	Pursue them in anger and exterminate them	66
		from beneath thy heavens, O LORD.	
		How dulled is the gold, how tarnished the fine gold!	4
		The stones of the sanctuary <sup>q</sup> lie strewn at every street-corner.	

*n* Prob. rdg.; Heb. hidden.

*o* my affliction: prob. rdg.; Heb. my eye.

*p* the LORD torments: prob. rdg.; Heb. tormenting.

*q* The stones of the sanctuary: or Bright gems.

3.34-47: The city or nation speaks as a prophet. 41: A de-emphasis on worship and a stress on morality, as in Isa.1.15-17.

3.48-51: The afflicted individual again. 51: The only direct mention of the city in this chapter.

3.52-66: The innocent one is hurt. 52: No reason: this motif is common in the psalms of lamentation, as in Ps.69.4. 64: See 1.21 n.

4.1-16: A return to the distressing conditions in Jerusalem, but here on a more personal level.

- 2 See Zion's precious sons,  
once worth their weight in finest  
gold,  
now counted as pitchers of  
earthenware  
made by any potter's hand.
- 3 Even whales<sup>r</sup> uncover the teat  
and suckle their young;  
but the daughters of my people are  
cruel  
as ostriches in the desert.
- 4 The sucking infant's tongue  
cleaves to its palate from thirst;  
young children beg for bread  
but no one offers them a crumb.
- 5 Those who once fed delicately  
are desolate in the streets,  
and those nurtured in purple  
now grovel on dunghills.
- 6 The punishment<sup>s</sup> of my people is  
worse  
than the penalty<sup>t</sup> of Sodom,  
which was overthrown in a moment  
and no one wrung his hands.
- 7 Her crowned princes<sup>u</sup> were once  
purer than snow,  
whiter than milk;  
they were ruddier than branching  
coral,<sup>v</sup>  
and their limbs were lapis lazuli.
- 8 But their faces turned blacker than  
soot,  
and no one knew them in the  
streets;  
the skin was drawn tight over their  
bones,  
dry as touchwood.
- 9 Those who died by the sword were  
more fortunate  
than those who died of hunger;  
these wasted away, deprived  
of the produce of the field.
- 10 Tender-hearted women with their  
own hands  
boiled their own children;  
their children became their food  
in the day of my people's  
wounding.
- 11 The LORD glutted his rage  
and poured forth his anger;  
he kindled a fire in Zion,  
and it consumed her foundations.  
This no one believed, neither the  
kings of the earth  
nor anyone that dwelt in the world:  
that enemy or invader would enter  
the gates of Jerusalem.  
It was for the sins of her prophets  
and for the iniquities of her priests,  
who shed within her walls  
the blood of the righteous.  
They wandered blindly in the streets,  
so stained with blood  
that men would not touch  
even their garments.  
'Away, away; unclean!' men cried  
to them.  
'Away, do not come near.'  
They hastened away, they wandered  
among the nations,<sup>w</sup>  
unable to find any resting-place.  
The LORD himself scattered them,  
he thought of them no more;  
he showed no favours to priests,  
no pity for elders.
- Still we strain our eyes,  
looking in vain for help.  
We have watched and watched  
for a nation powerless to save us.  
When we go out, we take to  
by-ways  
to avoid the public streets;  
our days are all but finished,<sup>x</sup>  
our end has come.  
Our pursuers have shown  
themselves swifter  
than vultures in the sky;  
they are hot on our trail over the  
hills,  
they lurk to catch us in the  
wilderness.  
The LORD's anointed, the breath  
of life to us,

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. jackals.      <sup>s</sup> Or iniquity.  
<sup>t</sup> Or sin.      <sup>u</sup> crowned princes; or Nazirites.  
<sup>v</sup> than . . . coral; prob. rdg.; Heb. branch than coral.  
<sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. add; they said.  
<sup>x</sup> our . . . finished; prob. rdg.; Heb. our end has drawn  
near, our days are complete.

3-10: A vivid portrayal of the results of hunger. 3: *Cruel*: see v. 10. *As ostriches*: see Job 39.13-18. 6: *Sodom*: the oft-used example of a wicked city; see Gen.19.1-26. 10: *Their own children*: see 2.20. 13: See 1.5 n. Here the blame is laid at the feet of the leaders: prophets (false, see 2.14 n.), priests, and elders (v. 16).

4.17-20: A poet again cries out. The passage, deeply personal and sorrowful, is in the plural. 17: *A nation powerless*: perhaps Egypt; see Jer.37.5-7. 19-20: Perhaps this is related to the incident told of the king, that is, the *LORD's anointed*, in 2 Kgs.25.4-7.



was caught in their machinations;  
 although we had thought to live  
 among the nations, safe under his  
 protection.

- 21 Rejoice and be glad, daughter of  
 Edom,  
 you who live in the land of Uz.  
 Yet the cup shall pass to you in  
 your turn,  
 and when you are drunk you will  
 expose yourself to shame.
- 22 The punishment for your sin, daughter  
 of Zion, is now complete,  
 and never again shall you be carried  
 into exile.  
 But you, daughter of Edom, your  
 sin shall be punished,  
 and your guilt revealed.

*A prayer for remembrance and  
 restoration*

- Remember, O LORD, what has  
 5 befallen us;  
 look, and see how we are scorned.
- 2 Our patrimony is turned over to  
 strangers  
 and our homes to foreigners.
- 3 We are like orphans, without a  
 father;  
 our mothers are like widows.
- 4 We must buy our own water to  
 drink,  
 our own wood can only be had at a  
 price.
- 5 The yoke is on our necks, we are  
 overdriven;  
 we are weary and are given no rest.
- 6 We came to terms, now with the  
 Egyptians,  
 now with the Assyrians, to provide  
 us with food.
- 7 Our fathers sinned and are no more,

- and we bear the burden of their guilt.  
 Slaves have become our rulers, 8  
 and there is no one to rescue us  
 from them.  
 We must bring in our food from 9  
 the wilderness,  
 risking our lives in the scorching  
 heat.<sup>y</sup>  
 Our skins are blackened as in a 10  
 furnace  
 by the ravages of starvation.  
 Women were raped in Zion, 11  
 virgins raped in the cities of Judah.  
 Princes were hung up by their hands, 12  
 and elders received no honour.  
 Young men toil to grind corn, 13  
 and boys stumble under loads of  
 wood.  
 Elders have left off their sessions 14  
 in the gate,  
 and young men no longer pluck  
 the strings.  
 Joy has fled from our hearts, 15  
 and our dances are turned to  
 mourning.  
 The garlands have fallen from 16  
 our heads;  
 woe betide us, sinners that we are.  
 For this we are sick at heart, 17  
 for all this our eyes grow dim:  
 because Mount Zion is desolate 18  
 and over it the jackals run wild.
- O LORD, thou art enthroned for ever, 19  
 thy throne endures from one  
 generation to another.  
 Why wilt thou quite forget us 20  
 and forsake us these many days?  
 O LORD, turn us back to thyself, 21  
 and we will come back;  
 renew our days as in times long past.  
 For if thou hast utterly rejected us, 22  
 then great indeed has been thy  
 anger against us.

<sup>y</sup> in the scorching heat: or by the sword.

4.21–22: Criticism of Edom for her action at the time of the fall; see Obad.10–14; Ps.137.7. 22: Punishment . . . complete: this theme is also found in Isa.40.2.

5.1–18: A prayer for remembrance and restoration. Many verses are paraphrases of passages in chs. 1; 2; 4. 6: Assyrians: this is anachronistic; the Babylonians, conquerors of the Assyrians, had control at the time of the fall of the city. The mention shows a powerful remembrance of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom (721 B.C.) and the siege of Jerusalem; see 2 Kgs. chs. 17–19. 7: Our fathers sinned: another explanation of the fall. On the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children, see Jer.31.29; see also 1.5 n. 14–18: For a similar passage, see Isa.24.7–13.

5.19–22: A final prayer for rescue. 21: Turn us back: unless the LORD himself causes the city to return to him, she will have no success in doing so. 22: The conclusion is indefinite, fittingly cautious after the mournful words of the rest of the book.

# THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

Ezekiel, priest and prophet, began his ministry in the last years of the Kingdom of Judah and ended it during the Babylonian captivity following upon the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. His ministry bridges the greatest catastrophe and transformation the religion of Israel ever experienced: the transition from a religion identified with a land and a temple, with its sacrifices, to a religion identified with a community of people, thus leading ultimately to the full development of the synagogue where the study of the Law is paramount, the essential Judaism of today.

Beginning with the inaugural vision, dated 593 B.C. (1.2), and ending with the last securely dated oracle, 571 B.C. (29.17), Ezekiel contains the most complete chronology of any prophetic book. The dates do not follow in order, however, and only the oracle immediately following a given date can be attached to it with certainty. The dating of the oracles according to contemporary chronology in the annotations is an approximation, correlating the lunar calendar followed by the ancients with the modern solar calendar.

Ezekiel, the most unusual among a unique class of men, the prophets of Israel, dramatized his prophecies by bizarre actions that some interpreters see as simply literary devices to emphasize his message, but which others see as reflecting pathological states. Further, though he seems to be with the captives in Babylon (1.1-3; 3.11, etc.) he sometimes addresses his message to the Palestinian Jews (11.1-3), so that interpreters are divided between postulating a double ministry (first to the people in Palestine before the captivity and then to the captives in Babylonia after the destruction of Jerusalem) and holding a single ministry, but attributing the gift of clairvoyance to Ezekiel by which he was in contact with people and events in Palestine.

The key to Ezekiel's message is a very exalted idea of God; a God beyond man's comprehension (1.4-28); a God whose hand guides the destinies of nations (chs. 25-32); a God whose "holy name" is upon man to forgive transgression and to give his own "spirit" to him (36.22-26). Earlier prophets saw in man's life a cause and effect chain with this sequence: sin—punishment—repentance (condition)—redemption (at a price). Ezekiel sees the sequence as: sin—punishment—redemption (gratuitous)—repentance (free). Thus, with redemption once assured, man is free to choose repentance without the coercion of punishment; Ezekiel's message, therefore, stresses also freedom of choice and human responsibility (ch. 18).

The MT account of Ezekiel is longer and more repetitious than that of the Sept., which is more concise and more strongly supported by the other versions, suggesting that the MT has undergone disturbance and dislocation in many passages. Moreover, chs. 40-48 are regarded by many scholars as an addition from a later hand and a later time (see 40.1-48.35 n.).

## *Ezekiel's call to be a prophet*

1 **O**N THE FIFTH DAY OF THE FOURTH month in the thirtieth year, while I was among the exiles by the

river Kebar,<sup>a</sup> the heavens were opened and I saw a vision of God. On the fifth day of the month in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin, the word of

<sup>a</sup> Or the Kebar canal.

**1.1-3.21: Ezekiel empowered.** He receives his commission to prophesy doom to the Israelites.  
**1.1-3: Superscription.** 1-2: There is difficulty understanding the *thirtieth year*, especially in view of the *fifth year* (v. 2), since both dates seem to refer to the same event, i.e. the call of the prophet. The point of reference for both dates seems to be the capture of *Jehoiachin* by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 597 B.C. (2 Kgs.24.10-17). The first date then becomes 568 B.C. and the second 593 B.C. Scholars think that the thirtieth year refers either to a second call of the prophet, the one in Babylonia (see Introduction); or possibly, though less likely, to the date of the compilation of Ezekiel's many messages into a single book. Some conjecture that the call of another prophet whose work was in some way associated with that of Ezekiel was added. The *river Kebar*, an irrigation canal mentioned in Babylonian records, flowed from the Euphrates through the old city of Nippur, where excavations revealed ancient business contracts with Jewish names. See Ps.137.1-6. There were two groups of *exiles*. The first, referred to here, was taken to Babylonia with King Jehoiachin. The second was deported by Nebuchadnezzar after his destruction of Jerusalem (12.11-12; 2 Kgs.25.3-12); this date is set by some at 586, by others at 587 B.C. Jehoiachin was considered the rightful king, if a restoration were to take place; hence his captivity is the point of departure for all the dates in the book. **3: Ezekiel** means "God strengthens." *Hand of the LORD* is the symbol for Ezekiel's consciousness that he is divinely moved to action. Compare 8.1-9,11. *Chaldea*: southern part of Babylonia.

the LORD came to Ezekiel son of Buzi the priest, in Chaldea, by the river Kebar, and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.

4 I saw a storm wind coming from the north, a vast cloud with flashes of fire and brilliant light about it; and within was a radiance like brass, glowing in the heart of the flames. In the fire was the semblance of four living creatures in human form. Each had four faces and each four wings; their legs were straight, and their hooves were like the hooves of a calf, glittering like a disc of bronze. Under the wings on each of the four sides were human hands; all four creatures had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another. They did not turn as they moved; each creature went straight forward. Their faces were like this: all four had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right, on the left the face of an ox and the face of an eagle. Their wings were spread; each living creature had one pair touching its neighbours',<sup>b</sup> while one pair covered its body. They moved straight forward in whatever direction the spirit<sup>c</sup> would go; they never swerved in their course. 13 The appearance of the creatures was as if fire from burning coals or torches were darting to and fro among them; the fire was radiant, and out of the fire came lightning.<sup>d</sup>

15 As I looked at the living creatures, I saw wheels on the ground, one beside each of the four.<sup>e</sup> The wheels sparkled like topaz, and they were all alike: in form and working they were like a wheel inside a wheel, and when they moved in any of the four directions they never swerved in their course. All four had hubs and each hub had a projection which had the power of sight,<sup>f</sup> and the rims of the wheels were full of eyes all

round. When the living creatures 19 moved, the wheels moved beside them; when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose; they moved in whatever direction the spirit<sup>c</sup> would go; and the wheels rose together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the one 21 moved, the other moved; when the one halted, the other halted; when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose together with them, for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels.

Above the heads of the living creatures 22 was, as it were, a vault glittering like a sheet of ice, awe-inspiring, stretched over their heads above them. Under the 23 vault their wings were spread straight out, touching one another, while one pair covered the body of each. I heard, 24 too, the noise of their wings; when they moved it was like the noise of a great torrent or of a cloud-burst,<sup>g</sup> like the noise of a crowd or of an armed camp; when they halted their wings dropped. A sound was heard above the vault over 25 their heads, as they halted with drooping wings. Above the vault over their 26 heads there appeared, as it were, a sapphire<sup>h</sup> in the shape of a throne, and high above all, upon the throne, a form in human likeness. I saw what might 27 have been brass glowing like fire in a furnace from the waist upwards; and from the waist downwards I saw what looked like fire with encircling radiance. Like a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy 28 day was the sight of that encircling

<sup>b</sup> its neighbours': *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>c</sup> Or wind.

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg., cp. Sept.*; *Heb. adds (14) and the living creatures went out (prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure) and in like rays of light.*

<sup>e</sup> one . . . four: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>f</sup> the power of sight: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. fear.*

<sup>g</sup> Or of the Almighty.

<sup>h</sup> Or lapis lazuli.

1.4-28a: The throne-chariot vision. God's incomprehensible majesty, power, and mobility are conveyed in a visual metaphor that overwhelms the imagination and, moreover, is a fitting summary of God's activity in the book. 4: *North*: mythological symbol for the dwelling of the gods; see Isa.14.13. *Wind, cloud, fire* are all signs of God's presence as in Exod.19.16; Ps.18.10-14. 12: *The Spirit* is God's purposeful power directing the activity of the universe and of man; see 1.20. 15-21: *Wheels* are symbols of cosmic mobility, and the *eyes all around* signify an all-seeing intelligence guiding the movement of the most insensitive elements in the universe which respond to the same active spirit that moves the prophet, e.g. 3.14. 22: The ancients considered the sky a *vault* (Gen.1.6), i.e. a solid roof over the world supporting a great *torrent of flood waters* above which God was enthroned Lord over the universe and all in it. Compare Ps.29.10-14. 28: *Like . . . the glory of the LORD* indicates that the description is a subjective vision rather than an objective presence of God such as that experienced at Sinai by all the people. See Exod.19.17-20.

radiance; it was like the appearance of the glory of the LORD.

When I saw this I threw myself on my face, and heard a voice speaking to me: 2 **Man**, he said, stand up, and let me talk with you. As he spoke, a spirit came into me and stood me on my feet, 3 and I listened to him speaking. He said to me, **Man**, I am sending you to the Israelites, a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me. Past generations of them have been in revolt against me to this very day, and this generation to which I am sending you is stubborn and obstinate. When you say to them, 'These are the words of the Lord God', 5 they will know that they have a prophet among them, whether they listen or whether they refuse to listen, because 6 they are rebels. But you, man, must not be afraid of them or of what they say, though they are rebels against you and renegades, and you find yourself sitting on scorpions. There is nothing to fear in what they say, and nothing in their looks to terrify you, rebels 7 though they are. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or whether they refuse to listen, rebels that they are. But you, man, must listen to what I say and not be rebellious like them. Open your mouth and eat what I give you. 9 Then I saw a hand stretched out to me, holding a scroll. He unrolled it before me, and it was written all over on both sides with dirges and laments 3 and words of woe. Then he said to me, 'Man, eat what is in front of you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the 2 Israelites.' So I opened my mouth and 3 he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said, 'Man, swallow this scroll I give

you, and fill yourself full.' So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey.

**Man**, he said to me, go and tell the 4 Israelites what I have to say to them. You are sent not to people whose 5 speech is thick and difficult, but to Israelites. No; I am not sending you to 6 great nations whose speech is so thick and so difficult that you cannot make out what they say; if however I had sent you to them they would have listened to you. But the Israelites will 7 refuse to listen to you, for they refuse to listen to me, so brazen are they all and stubborn. But I will make you a 8 match for them. I will make you as brazen as they are and as stubborn as they are. I will make your brow like 9 adamant, harder than flint. Never fear them, never be terrified by them, rebels though they are. And he said to me, 10 Listen carefully, man, to all that I have to say to you, and take it to heart. Go 11 to your fellow-countrymen in exile and speak to them. Whether they listen or refuse to listen, say, 'These are the words of the Lord God.'

Then a spirit<sup>i</sup> lifted me up, and I 12 heard behind me a fierce rushing sound as the glory of the LORD rose<sup>j</sup> from his place. I heard the sound of the living 13 creatures' wings brushing against one another, the sound of the wheels beside them, and a fierce rushing sound. A 14 spirit<sup>i</sup> lifted me and carried me along, and I went full of exaltation, the hand of the LORD strong upon me. So I came 15 to the exiles at Tel-abib who were settled by the river Kebar. For seven days I stayed with them, dumbfounded.

<sup>i</sup> Or wind.  
<sup>j</sup> rose: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

**1.28b-3.21: Prophetic experience of the call and five commissions.** There are four calls: 1.28b-3.9; 3.10-11; 3.16-21; 3.22-27, which contain five commissions. 2.1: *Man*, lit. "son of man," used over ninety times, contrasts human frailty with God's might and glory. Compare Job 14.1-5. 2: *Spirit* . . . stood me, i.e. bridged the distance between God and the prophet, and gave such power to his words and actions that the people will know, i.e. be unable to ignore, the reality of the divine message even though they refuse to listen. 2.8-3.3: The scroll contains only dirges and words of woe because a prophet preaching peace is suspect; see 13.10-16. Eating the scroll signifies assimilating God's message; the sweetness is the sense of fulfillment it brings; compare Pss.19.9-10; 119.100-103. 4-9: Ezekiel's boldness is attributed to God because it was acquired in carrying out his commission. 10-21: Some interpreters conjecture that this repetition is a second call of Ezekiel; others, that it is the call of another man whose prophecy is added to that of Ezekiel's (see 1.1-2 n.); still others reason that it is editorial duplication. See Introduction. 14: *Full of exaltation*: lit. "bitter in the fury of my spirit," the ecstasy of a religious experience. 15: *Tel-abib*: a Jewish settlement in Babylonia. In 1.1, Ezekiel is already among the exiles when the vision takes place; here he is arriving after the vision.

16 At the end of seven days, the word of  
 17 the LORD came to me: Man, I have  
 made you a watchman for the Israelites;  
 you will take messages from me and  
 18 carry my warnings to them. It may be  
 that I pronounce sentence of death on  
 a wicked man:<sup>k</sup> if you do not warn him  
 to give up his wicked ways and so save  
 his life, the guilt is his; because of his  
 wickedness he shall die, but I will hold  
 19 you answerable for his death. But if you  
 have warned him and he still continues  
 in his wicked and evil ways, he shall die  
 because of his wickedness, but you will  
 20 have saved yourself. Or it may be that a  
 righteous man turns away and does  
 wrong, and I let that be the cause of his  
 downfall; he will die because you have  
 not warned him. He will die for his sin;  
 the righteous deeds he has done will  
 not be taken into account, and I will  
 21 hold you answerable for his death. But  
 if you have warned the righteous man  
 not to sin and he has not sinned, then  
 he will have saved his life because he  
 has been warned, and you will have  
 saved yourself.

### The impending ruin of Jerusalem

22 THE HAND OF THE LORD CAME UPON ME  
 there, and he said to me, Rise up; go  
 out into the plain, and there I will speak  
 23 to you. So I rose and went out into the  
 plain; the glory of the LORD was there,  
 like the glory which I had seen by the  
 river Kebar, and I threw myself down  
 24 on my face. Then a spirit came into me  
 and stood me on my feet, and spoke to  
 me: Go, he said, and shut yourself up  
 25 in your house. You shall be tied and  
 bound with ropes, man, so that you

cannot go out among the people. I will 26  
 fasten your tongue to the roof of your  
 mouth and you will be unable to speak;  
 you will not be the one to rebuke them,  
 rebels though they are. But when I have 27  
 something to say to you, I will give you  
 back the power of speech. Then you  
 will say to them, 'These are the words  
 of the Lord God.' If anyone will listen,  
 he may listen, and, if he refuses to  
 listen, he may refuse; for they are  
 rebels.

Man, take a tile and set it before you. 4  
 Draw a city on it, the city of Jerusalem:  
 lay siege to it, erect watch-towers 2  
 against it, raise a siege-ramp, put  
 mantelets in position, and bring batter-  
 ing-rams against it all round. Then 3  
 take an iron griddle, and put it as a  
 wall of iron between you and the city.  
 Keep your face turned towards the city;  
 it will be the besieged and you the  
 besieger. This will be a sign to the  
 Israelites.

Now lie on your left side, and I will 4  
 lay Israel's iniquity on you; you shall  
 bear their iniquity for as many days as  
 you lie on that side. Allowing one day 5  
 for every year of their iniquity, I ordain  
 that you bear it for one hundred and  
 ninety days; thus you shall bear Israel's  
 iniquity. When you have completed all 6  
 this, lie down a second time on your  
 right side, and bear Judah's iniquity  
 for forty days; I count one day for 7  
 every year. Then turn your face to-  
 wards the siege of Jerusalem and bare  
 your arm, and prophesy against it. See 8  
 how I tie you with ropes so that you  
 cannot turn over from one side to the  
 other until you complete the days of  
 your distress.

<sup>k</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds if you do not warn him.

For possible explanation see vv. 10–12. 16: How the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel is not clear; it need only imply his conviction that he spoke God's message to the people. 17–21: The prophet as *watchman* has a long tradition in Israel; compare Isa.21.6–12. Here it applies Ezekiel's principle of personal responsibility (see 18.1–32) to the prophetic office.

3.22–27: Ezekiel confined. To be *bound with ropes* (v. 25) may mean actual physical restraints; more probably it means discouragement, deterring the prophet from speaking and acting except when moved by special inspiration from God. Compare Ps.22.15.

4.1–5.17: Actions symbolic of the judgment of Jerusalem. The prophecies given here as actions seem impossible to perform and so are probably dramatic allegories. Ezekiel, having received a command "to speak . . . in allegory and parable" (17.2), acquired a reputation of dealing "only in parables"; see 20.49. 1: *Tile*: clay tablet. 3: *Israelites*, lit. "house of Israel," embraces both the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as in v. 4, taken into captivity in 721 B.C. by the Assyrians, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, as in v. 6; Ezekiel envisions the ultimate restoration and reunion of the two. 4: *Bear their iniquity*: be a symbol of their punishment. 5–6: The number symbolism is uncertain, possibly referring to the duration of the exiles of the two kingdoms.

9 Then take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt. Mix them all in one bowl and make your bread out of them. You are to eat it during the one hundred and ninety days you spend lying on your side. And you must weigh out your food; you may eat twenty shekels' weight a day, taking it from time to time. Measure out your drinking water too; you may drink a sixth of a hin a day, taking it from time to time. You are to eat your bread baked like barley cakes, using human dung as fuel, and you must bake it where people can see you. Then the LORD said, 'This is the kind of bread, unclean bread, that the Israelites will eat in the foreign lands into which I shall drive them.' But I said, 'O Lord GOD, I have never been made unclean, never in my life have I eaten what has died naturally or been killed by wild beasts; no tainted meat has ever passed my lips.' So he allowed me to use cow-dung instead of human dung to bake my bread.

16 Then he said to me, Man, I am cutting short their daily bread in Jerusalem; people will weigh out anxiously the bread they eat, and measure with dismay the water they drink. So their food and their water will run short until they are dismayed at the sight of one another; they will waste away because of their iniquity.

5 Man, take a sharp sword, take it like a barber's razor and run it over your head and your chin. Then take scales and divide the hair into three. When the siege comes to an end, burn one third of the hair in a fire in the centre of the city; cut up one third with the sword all round the city; scatter one third to the wind, and I will follow it with drawn sword. Take a few of these hairs and tie them up in a fold of your robe. Then take others of them, throw them into the fire and burn them, and

out of them fire will come upon all Israel.

These are the words of the Lord GOD: This city of Jerusalem I have set among the nations, with other countries around her, and she has rebelled against my laws and my statutes more wickedly than those nations and countries; for her people have rejected my laws and refused to conform to my statutes.

Therefore the Lord GOD says: Since you have been more ungrateful than the nations around you and have not conformed to my statutes and have not kept my laws or even the laws of the nations around you, therefore, says the Lord GOD, I, in my turn, will be against you; I will execute judgements in your midst for the nations to see, such judgements as I have never executed before nor ever will again, so abominable have your offences been. Therefore, O Jerusalem, fathers will eat their children and children their fathers in your midst; I will execute judgements on you, and any who are left in you I will scatter to the four winds. As I live, says the Lord GOD, because you have defiled my holy place with all your vile and abominable rites, I in my turn will consume you without pity; I in my turn will not spare you. One third of your people shall die by pestilence and perish by famine in your midst; one third shall fall by the sword in the country round about; and one third I will scatter to the four winds and follow with drawn sword. Then my anger will be spent, I will abate my fury against them and be calm; when my fury is spent they will know that it is I, the LORD, who spoke in jealous passion. I have made you a scandal<sup>1</sup> and a reproach to the nations around you, and all who pass by will see it. You will be an object of reproach and abuse, a terrible lesson to the nations around you, when I pass

<sup>1</sup> Or desolation.

9: Mixing different grains *all in one bowl* signifies the last of the food supply, the threat of famine. 12: Contact with *human dung* made a person unclean (Deut.23.13); here it indicates the ritual uncleanness of Babylon where pure cultic life was impossible. 5.1-17: Shearing the prophet's hair and beard—symbols of dignity (2 Sam.10.4-5) and of life (Num.6.1-9)—is a sign of the degradation and massacre following the horrible siege. God treats Israel with the *jealous passion* of a rejected lover; this theme is central in the book. For examples, read 6.13; 7.3, 8; 8.18; 14.21; 20.8; 28.23.

sentence on you and do judgement in anger and fury. I, the LORD, have spoken. When I shoot the deadly arrows of famine against you,<sup>m</sup> arrows of destruction, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring famine upon you and cut short your daily bread; I will unleash famine and beasts of prey upon you, and they will leave you childless. Pestilence and slaughter will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

6 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, look towards the mountains of Israel, and prophesy to them: Mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD. This is his word to mountains and hills, watercourses and valleys: I am bringing a sword against you, and I will destroy your hill-shrines. Your altars will be made desolate, your incense-altars shattered, and I will fling down your slain before your idols. I will strew the corpses of the Israelites before their idols, and I will scatter your bones about your altars. In all your settlements the blood-spattered altars<sup>n</sup> shall be laid waste and the hill-shrines made desolate. Your altars will be waste and desolate and your idols shattered and useless, your incense-altars hewn down, and all your works wiped out; with the slain falling about you, you shall know that I am the LORD. But when they fall,<sup>o</sup> I will leave you, among the nations, some who survive the sword. When you are scattered in foreign lands, these survivors, in captivity among the nations, will remember how I was grieved because their hearts had turned wantonly from me and their eyes had gone roving wantonly after idols. Then they will loathe themselves for all the evil they have done with their abominations. So they will know that I am the

LORD, that I was uttering no vain threat when I said that I would bring this evil upon them.

These are the words of the Lord GOD: Beat your hands together, stamp with your foot, bemoan your vile abominations, people of Israel. Men will fall by sword, famine, and pestilence. Far away they will die by pestilence; at home they will fall by the sword; any who survive or are spared will die by famine, and so at last my anger will be spent. You will know that I am the LORD when their slain fall among the idols round their altars, on every high hill, on all mountain-tops, under every spreading tree, under every leafy terebinth, wherever they have brought offerings of soothing odour for their idols one and all. So I will stretch out my hand over them and make the land a desolate waste in all their settlements, more desolate than the desert of Riblah.<sup>p</sup> They shall know that I am the LORD.

The word of the LORD came to me: Man, the Lord GOD says this to the land of Israel: An end is coming, the end is coming upon the four corners of the land.<sup>q</sup> The end is now upon you; I will unleash my anger against you; I will call you to account for your doings and bring your abominations upon your own heads. I will neither pity nor spare you: I will make you suffer for your doings and the abominations that continue in your midst. So you shall know that I am the LORD.

These are the words of the Lord GOD: Behold, it comes, disasters one upon another; the end, the end, it comes, it comes.<sup>r</sup> Doom is coming upon you, dweller in the land; the time is coming, the day is near, with

*m* Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.

*n* blood-spattered altars: or cities.

*o* when they fall: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

*p* Prob. rdg.; Heb. Diblah. *q* Or earth.

*r* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds it wakes up, behold it comes.

6.1-7.27: **Oracles of judgment.** Here punishment is announced in words rather than in symbolic actions. 3: *Hill-shrines*: lit. "high places," associated with mountaintops where worship was carried on. They were proscribed after Hezekiah centralized the cult in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kgs. 18.4), because the rituals tended toward the cult of the fertility gods of the Canaanites. 5: The touch of *corpses* which made a person unclean for worship will pollute the very altars. 8: *Some who survive*: the "remnant" (Isa. 4.3) will be the seed of the restoration. 11: *Sword, famine, pestilence* are the traditional scourges by which God punishes his people; see Jer. 14.12; 27.8. 13: *Leafy terebinth*: certain trees were especially associated with female deities in fertility rites, the terebinth among them. See Deut. 16.21.

7.1-27: **Judgment against the land.** The day is near when all practitioners of evil in Israel will be destroyed and all human security will disintegrate: social life, vv. 10-11; economic life,

confusion and the crash of thunder.<sup>s</sup>

8 Now, in an instant, I will vent my rage upon you and let my anger spend itself. I will call you to account for your doings and bring your abominations upon your own heads. I will neither pity nor spare; I will make you suffer for your doings and the abominations that continue in your midst. So you shall know that it is I, the LORD, who strike the blow.

10 Behold, the day! the doom is here, it has burst upon them. Injustice buds, insolence blossoms, violence shoots up into injustice and wickedness. And it is all their fault, the fault of their turmoil and tumult and all their restless ways. 12 The time has come, the day has arrived; the buyer has no reason to be glad, and the seller none for regret, for 13 I am angry at all their turmoil. The seller will never go back on his bargain while either of them lives; for the bargain will never be reversed because of the turmoil, and no man will exert himself, even in his iniquity, as long as he lives. The trumpet has sounded and all is ready, but no one goes out to war.

15 Outside is the sword, inside are pestilence and famine; in the country men will die by the sword, in the city famine and pestilence will carry them off. If any escape and take to the mountains, like moaning doves, there will I slay them, each for his iniquity, while their hands hang limp and their knees run with urine. They will go in sackcloth, shuddering from head to foot, with faces downcast and heads close shaved. 19 They shall fling their silver into the streets and cast aside their gold like filth; their silver and their gold will be powerless to save them on the day of the LORD's fury. Their hunger will not be satisfied nor their bellies filled; for their iniquity will be the cause of their downfall. They have fed their pride on their beautiful jewels, which they made into vile and abominable images.

Therefore I will treat their jewels like filth, I will hand them over as plunder to foreigners and as booty to the most evil people on earth, and these will defile them. I will turn my face from them and let my treasured land be profaned; brigands will come in and defile it.

Clench your fists, for the land is full of bloodshed<sup>r</sup> and the city full of violence. I will let in the scum of nations to take possession of their houses; I will quell the pride of the strong, and their sanctuaries shall be profaned. Shuddering will come over them, and they will look in vain for peace. Tempest shall follow upon tempest and rumour upon rumour. Men will go seeking a vision from a prophet; there will be no more guidance from a priest, no counsel from elders. The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with horror, the hands of the common people will shake with fright. I will deal with them as they deserve, and call them to account for their doings; and so they shall know that I am the LORD.

#### Jerusalem's guilt and punishment

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF THE SIXTH MONTH 8 in the sixth year, I was sitting at home and the elders of Judah were with me. Suddenly the hand of the Lord GOD came upon me, and I saw what looked like a man. He seemed to be all fire from the waist down and to shine and glitter like brass from the waist up. He stretched out what seemed a hand and seized me by the forelock. A spirit<sup>u</sup> lifted me up between heaven and earth, carried me to Jerusalem in a vision of God and put me down at the entrance to the inner gate facing north, where stands the image of Lust to rouse

<sup>s</sup> and the crash of thunder: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>r</sup> bloodshed: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. the judgement of bloodshed.*  
<sup>u</sup> Or wind.

12-19; religious life, 20-26; political life, 27. 12-14: Neither the *buyer* getting a good bargain can rejoice nor the *seller* suffering a loss will grieve; total disaster will permanently nullify all loss or gain. 26-27: In the catastrophe to follow, of all the community functions, only the work of the *prophet* will remain, it being a divine communication rather than a human effort.

8.1-11.25: God punishes Jerusalem for her abominations. 1-18: Pagan rites such as these are also mentioned elsewhere, e.g. 2 Kgs.21.7; Hos.10.1-2. 1: *Sixth year*: September 17, 592 B.C. 3: The *image of Lust* was probably that of the fertility goddess, Asherah, mentioned in



4 lustful passion. The glory of the God of  
 Israel was there, like the vision I had  
 5 seen in the plain. The LORD said to me,  
 'Man, look northwards.' I did so, and  
 there to the north of the altar gate, at  
 the entrance, was that image of Lust.  
 6 'Man,' he said, 'do you see what they  
 are doing? The monstrous abominations  
 which the Israelites practise here are  
 driving me far from my sanctuary,  
 and you will see even more such  
 abominations.'  
 7 Then he brought me to the entrance  
 of the court, and I looked and found a  
 8 hole in the wall. 'Man,' he said to me,  
 'dig through the wall.' I did so, and it  
 9 became an opening. 'Go in,' he said,  
 'and see the vile abominations they  
 10 practise here.' So I went in and saw  
 figures of reptiles, beasts, and vermin,  
 and all the idols of the Israelites,  
 11 carved round the walls. Seventy elders  
 of Israel were standing in front of them,  
 with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan in the  
 middle, and each held a censer from  
 which rose the fragrant smoke of  
 12 incense. 'Man,' he said to me, 'do you  
 see what the elders of Israel are doing  
 in darkness, each at the shrine of his  
 own carved image? They think that  
 the LORD does not see them, or that he  
 13 has forsaken the country. You will see',  
 he said, 'yet more monstrous abominations  
 which they practise.'  
 14 Then he brought me to that gateway  
 of the LORD's house which faces north;  
 and there I saw women sitting and  
 15 wailing for Tammuz. 'Man, do you see  
 that?' he asked me. 'But you will see  
 abominations more monstrous than  
 16 these.' So he took me to the inner court  
 of the LORD's house, and there, by the  
 entrance to the sanctuary of the LORD,  
 between porch and altar, were some  
 twenty-five men with their backs to the  
 sanctuary and their faces to the east,  
 prostrating themselves to the rising  
 17 sun. He said to me, 'Man, do you see  
 that? Is it because they think these

abominations a trifle, that the Jews  
 have filled the country with violence?  
 They provoke me further to anger, even  
 while they seek to appease me; I will  
 18 turn upon them in my rage; I will  
 neither pity nor spare. Loudly as they  
 may cry to me, I will not listen.'

A loud voice rang in my ears: 'Here 9  
 they come, those appointed to punish  
 the city, each carrying his weapon of  
 destruction.' Then I saw six men 2  
 approaching from the road that leads  
 to the upper northern gate, each carry-  
 ing a battle-axe, one man among them  
 dressed in linen, with pen and ink at  
 his waist; and they halted by the altar  
 of bronze. Then the glory of the God 3  
 of Israel rose from above the cherubim.  
 He came to the terrace of the temple  
 and called to the man dressed in linen  
 with pen and ink at his waist. 'Go 4  
 through the city, through Jerusalem,'  
 said the LORD, 'and put a mark on the  
 foreheads of those who groan and  
 lament over the abominations practised  
 there.' Then I heard him say to the 5  
 others, 'Follow him through the city  
 and kill without pity; spare no one.  
 Kill and destroy them all, old men and 6  
 young, girls, little children and women,  
 but touch no one who bears the mark.  
 Begin at my sanctuary.' So they began  
 with the elders in front of the temple.  
 'Defile the temple,' he said, 'and fill the 7  
 courts with dead bodies; then go out  
 into the city and kill.'

While they did their work, I was left 8  
 alone; and I threw myself upon my  
 face, crying out, 'O Lord GOD, must  
 thou destroy all the Israelites who are  
 left, pouring out thy anger on Jerusa- 9  
 lem?' He answered, 'The iniquity of  
 Israel and Judah is great indeed; the  
 land is full of murder, the city is filled  
 with injustice. They think the LORD has  
 forsaken this country; they think he  
 sees nothing. But I will neither pity nor 10  
 spare them; I will make them answer  
 for all they have done.' Then the man 11

2 Kgs.21.7. 7-11: The imagery recalls the Egyptian Book of the Dead, with its descriptions of the cult of the god Osiris. 14-15: *Tammuz*, the Babylonian god of fertility, whose annual descent into the underworld brought death to vegetation, was mourned especially by *women*. 17: *Violence* is seen as the result of idolatry.

9.1-11: *Purge of idolaters in Jerusalem*. 2: *Linen*: a ritually clean cloth worn by those in immediate service of God, priests in the Temple (Lev.16.3-4) and angels in heaven (Dan.10.5; Rev.15.6). 7: *Dead bodies* made the Temple unfit for any worship, legitimate or idolatrous.

dressed in linen with pen and ink at his waist came and made his report: 'I have done what thou hast commanded.'

- 10 Then I saw, above the vault over the heads of the cherubim, as it were a throne of sapphire<sup>v</sup> visible above them.
- 2 The LORD said to the man dressed in linen, 'Come in between the circling wheels under the cherubim, and take a handful of the burning embers lying among the cherubim; then toss them over the city.' So he went in before my eyes.
- 3 The cherubim stood on the right side of the temple as a man enters, and a cloud filled the inner court. The glory of the LORD rose high from above the cherubim and moved on to the terrace; and the temple was filled with the cloud, while the radiance of the glory of the LORD filled the court. The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far as the outer court, as loud as if God Almighty were speaking.
- 6 Then he told the man dressed in linen to take fire from between the circling wheels and among the cherubim; the man came and stood by a wheel, and a cherub from among the cherubim put its hand into the fire that lay among them, and, taking some fire, gave it to the man dressed in linen; and he received it and went out.
- 8 Under the wings of the cherubim there appeared what seemed a human hand. And I saw four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub. They had the sparkle of topaz, and all four were alike, like a wheel inside a wheel. When the cherubim moved in any of the four directions, they never swerved in their course; they went straight on in the direction in which their heads were turned, never swerving in their course. Their whole

bodies, their backs and hands and wings, as well as the wheels, were full of eyes all round the four of them.<sup>w</sup> The whirring of the wheels sounded in my ears. Each had four faces: the first was that of a cherub, the second that of a man, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle.

Then the cherubim raised themselves up, those same living creatures I had seen by the river Kebar. When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them; when the cherubim lifted their wings and rose from the ground, the wheels did not turn away from them. When the one halted, the other halted; when the one rose, the other rose; for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels. Then the glory of the LORD left the temple terrace and halted above the cherubim. The cherubim lifted their wings and raised themselves from the ground; I watched them go with the wheels beside them. They halted at the eastern gateway of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.

These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel at the river Kebar; I knew that they were cherubim. Each had four faces and four wings and the semblance of human hands under their wings. Their faces were like those I had seen in vision by the river Kebar;<sup>x</sup> they moved, each one of them, straight forward.

A spirit<sup>y</sup> lifted me up and brought me to the eastern gate of the LORD's house, the gate that faces east. By the doorway were twenty-five men, and I saw among them two of high office, Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah. The LORD said to me,

<sup>v</sup> Or lapis lazuli. <sup>w</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds their wheels. <sup>x</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and them. <sup>y</sup> Or wind.

**10.1-22: God leaves the Temple.** In the Bible, abandonment by the Lord is the most terrible punishment known; see Deut.31.16-17; Ps.27.8-10. **3-4:** Unlike the subjective vision of 1.28, the glory of the LORD here is Israel's shared experience of the objective majesty of God. The symbolism of cloud conveys his hiddenness (Exod.16.10) and the brilliance of sapphire manifests his majesty (Exod.24.9-10). Compare Isa.6.1-5. **7:** Jerusalem, desecrated and put under the ban (Josh.6.17 n.), must be completely destroyed by fire (5.2) coming from God's throne itself; a new city, holy to the LORD, may then rise in its place; see 40.2. **19:** The LORD leaves by the eastern gateway because he is going eastward to the captives already in Babylon. The vision continues in 11.22-24.

**11.1-25: False security of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** Jehoiachin and the most important people of Jerusalem were taken captive to Babylon in 597; those who remained congratulated themselves that they had God's favor and were therefore safe. Compare Jer.24.1-10. **2-3:** The princes, as secure and contented as meat in a bubbling stewpot, express a confidence that

Man, it is these who are planning mischief and plotting trouble in this city, saying to themselves, 'There will be no building of houses yet awhile; the city is a stewpot and we are the meat in it.' Therefore, said he, prophesy against them, prophesy, O man. Then the spirit of the LORD came suddenly upon me, and he told me to say, These are the words of the LORD: This is what you are saying to yourselves, you men of Israel; well do I know the thoughts that rise in your mind. You have killed and killed in this city and heaped the streets with the slain. These, therefore, are the words of the Lord God: The bodies of the slain that you have put there, it is they that are the meat. The city is indeed the stewpot, but I will take you out of it. It is a sword that you fear, and a sword I will bring upon you, says the Lord God. I will take you out of it; I will give you over to a foreign power; I will bring you to justice. You too shall fall by the sword when I judge you on the frontier of Israel; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. So the city will not be your stewpot, nor you the meat in it. On the frontier of Israel I will judge you; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. You have not conformed to my statutes nor kept my laws, but you have followed the laws of the nations around you.

While I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah fell dead; and I threw myself upon my face, crying aloud, 'O Lord God, must thou make an end of all the Israelites who are left?'

The word of the LORD came to me:

Man, they are your brothers, your brothers and your kinsmen, this whole people of Israel, to whom the men who now live in Jerusalem have said, 'Keep your distance from the LORD; the land has been made over to us as our property.' Say therefore, These are the words of the Lord God: When I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them in many lands, for a while I became their sanctuary in the countries to which they had gone. Say therefore, These are the words of the Lord God: I will gather them from among the nations and assemble them from the countries over which I have scattered them, and I will give them the soil of Israel. When they come into it, they will do away with all their vile and abominable practices. I will give them a different heart and put a new spirit into them; I will take the heart of stone out of their bodies and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will conform to my statutes and keep my laws. They will become my people, and I will become their God. But as for those whose heart is set upon<sup>z</sup> their vile and abominable practices, I will make them answer for all they have done. This is the very word of the Lord God.

Then the cherubim lifted their wings, with the wheels beside them and the glory of the God of Israel above them. The glory of the LORD rose up and left the city, and halted on the mountain to the east of it. And a spirit<sup>a</sup> lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Chaldaea. All this came in a vision sent by the spirit of God, and

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the heart of.    <sup>a</sup> Or wind.

*houses* will be built in the city after *awhile*, thus giving the lie to Ezekiel's warning in 7.12-13. The key to this allegory is found in 24.3-7, 9-13. 7-9: Those unjustly slain in Jerusalem by the princes are the *meat* in the *stewpot*, i.e. their bodies will remain in Palestine, but the nobility will be taken beyond the *frontier of Israel* for examination: judgment. 13: Pelatiah's death in the presence of the prophesying Ezekiel is considered proof by some interpreters of the prophet's double ministry, first before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and subsequently in Babylon. Those who admit only a Babylonian ministry explain the whole verse either as a vision the prophet had in Babylonia or as one he added when the oracles were gathered together in 563 B.C. See 1.1-2 n. 14-15: The northern tribes having been in captivity since 721 B.C. (2 Kgs.17.6) and a large portion of Judah since 597 B.C., the men who *now live in Jerusalem* consider the *whole people of Israel* as at a *distance from the LORD*, i.e. away from his presence in the Temple. Hence, in their false security, they claim all the land as their exclusive property. 16-17: Though distant from the Temple, the captives have the LORD himself (vv. 22-24) as *their sanctuary* until he, as their next-of-kin, delivers them from captivity and gives them anew the *soil of Palestine*. 19-20: Following a new Exodus (vv. 16-17), *God* will renew his covenant with Israel; by giving them a *new spirit* and a *heart of flesh*, he will make them his *people*. 23: To fulfill the promises made in vv. 16-17, 19-20, the *glory of the LORD* leaves Jerusalem to be with the exiles in the *east*.

then the vision that I had seen left me.  
 25 I told the exiles all that the LORD had revealed to me.

*Jerusalem's downfall certain*

12 THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO ME:

2 Man, you live among a rebellious people. Though they have eyes they will not see, though they have ears they will not hear, because they are a rebellious people. Therefore, man, pack up what you need for a journey into exile, by day before their eyes; then set off on your journey. When you leave home and go off into exile before their eyes, it may be they will see that they are rebels. Bring out your belongings, packed as for exile; do it by day, before their eyes, and then at evening, still before their eyes, leave home, as if you were going into exile. Next, before their eyes, break a hole through the wall, and carry your belongings out through it. When dusk falls, take your pack on your shoulder, before their eyes, and carry it out, with your face covered so that you cannot see the ground. I am making you a warning sign for the Israelites.

7 I did exactly as I had been told. By day I brought out my belongings, packed as for exile, and at evening I broke through the wall with my hands. When dusk fell, I shouldered my pack and carried it out before their eyes.

8 Next morning, the word of the LORD came to me: Man, he said, have not the Israelites, that rebellious people, asked you what you are doing? Tell them that these are the words of the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem, and all the Israelites there-

in.<sup>b</sup> Tell them that you are a sign to warn them; what you have done will be done to them; they will go into exile and captivity. Their prince will shoulder his pack in the dusk and go through a hole made to let him out, with his face covered so that he cannot be seen nor himself see the ground. But I will cast my net over him, and he will be caught in the meshes. I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, though he will not see it; and there he will die. I will scatter his bodyguard and drive all his squadrons to the four winds; I will follow them with drawn sword. Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through many lands. But I will leave a few of them who will escape sword, famine, and pestilence, to tell the whole story of their abominations to the peoples among whom they go; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

And the word of the LORD came to me: Man, he said, as you eat you must tremble, and as you drink you must shudder with dread. Say to the common people. These are the words of the Lord GOD about those who live in Jerusalem and about the land of Israel: They will eat with dread and be filled with horror as they drink; the land shall be filled with horror because it is sated with the violence of all who live there. Inhabited cities shall be deserted, and the land shall become a waste. Thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

The word of the LORD came to me: Man, he said, what is this proverb current in the land of Israel: 'Time runs on, visions die away'? Say to them, <sup>b</sup> therein: prob. rdg.; Heb. among them.

12.1-24.27: **Jerusalem's fate predicted.** This section contains further prophecies against all whose conduct makes Jerusalem's doom inevitable: the city's rulers and people, priests and prophets.

12.1-20: **More symbols of exile.** According to some interpreters, the prophet acts out his prediction of exile before the inhabitants of Jerusalem in Palestine; according to others, he is in Babylon before the captives. 6: The *face* was covered as a sign of grief, or to avoid recognition and thus escape ridicule. 12: Ezekiel's dramatization (vv. 3-7) was already applied to Israel's departure into exile (vv. 10-11). Its reapplication here to the attempted escape of King Zedekiah (2 Kgs.25.4-5) is probably a later addition, but possibly by the prophet himself. 13: *There he will die*: the words seem to indicate that the writer is in Palestine, not Babylonia.

12.21-13.23: **True and false prophecy.** Without objective criteria to distinguish true from false prophecy, the common people are left confused. See 1 Kgs.22.1-28; Jer.28.1-15; Mic.3.5. Two oracles (the first, vv. 21-25, and the second, 26-28) reflect both ridicule suffered by the prophet and his own keen sensitivity and hurt. 22: *Visions die away*: they are not fulfilled.

These are the words of the Lord GOD: I have put an end to this proverb; it shall never be heard in Israel again. Say rather to them, The time, with all the vision means, is near. There will be no more false visions, no specious divination among the Israelites, for I, the LORD, will say what I will, and it shall be done. It shall be put off no longer: in your lifetime, you rebellious people, I will speak, I will act. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

The word of the LORD came to me: Man, he said, the Israelites say that the vision you now see is not to be fulfilled for many years: you are prophesying of a time far off. Say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: No word of mine shall be delayed; even as I speak it shall be done. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

13<sup>1,2</sup> The LORD said to me, Man, prophesy of the prophets of Israel; prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear what the LORD says: 3 These are the words of the Lord GOD: Oh, the wicked folly of the prophets! Their inspiration comes from themselves; they have seen no vision. Your prophets, Israel, have been like jackals among ruins. They have not gone up into the breach to repair the broken wall round the Israelites, that they may stand firm in battle on the day of the LORD. Oh, false vision and lying divination! Oh, those prophets who say, 'It is the very word of the LORD', when it is not the LORD who has sent them; yet they expect their words to control the event. Is it not a false vision that you prophets have seen? Is not your divination a lie? You call it the very word of the LORD, but it is not I who have spoken.

8 These, then, are the words of the

Lord GOD: Because your words are false and your visions a lie, I am against you, says the Lord GOD. I will raise my hand against the prophets whose visions are false, whose divinations are a lie. They shall have no place in the counsels of my people; they shall not be entered in the roll of Israel nor set foot upon its soil. Thus you shall know that I am the Lord GOD. Rightly, for they have misled my people by saying that all is well when all is not well. It is as if they were building a wall and used whitewash for the daubing. Tell these daubers that it will fall; rain will pour down in torrents, and I will send hailstones hard as rock streaming down and I will unleash a stormy wind. When the building falls, men will ask, 'Where is the plaster you should have used?' So these are the words of the Lord GOD: In my rage I will unleash a stormy wind; rain will come in torrents in my anger, hailstones hard as rock in my fury, until all is destroyed. I will demolish the building which you have daubed with whitewash and level it to the ground, so that its foundations are laid bare. It shall fall, and you shall be destroyed within it; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I will spend my rage on the building and on those who daubed it with wash; and people<sup>c</sup> will say, 'The building is gone and the men who daubed it are gone, those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem, who saw visions of prosperity when there was no prosperity.' This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

Now turn, man, to the women of your people who prophesy out of their own hearts, and prophesy to them. Say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: I loathe you, you women

<sup>c</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. I.

25: Ezekiel feels that he speaks what the LORD wishes to say, i.e. that he is the mouth of God. 13.1-5: Those who prophesy out of their own hearts, i.e. make schemes in their minds, are moved by their greed, and, far from exposing the community's weaknesses, conceal and exploit them; thus they live like jackals off the calamity of others. For the ancients the heart was the seat of the intellect. 6: In divination, man, on his own initiative and for his own gain, seeks to discover the will of God; by contrast, the true prophet is moved by God, against his will and to his own danger; see 3.4-10; Jer.1.4-10. Divination, arising out of self-interest, tends easily toward lying. 10-11: Plaster, not whitewash, gives mud-brick walls a hard, water-resistant coat that does not merely hide the faults of the wall. So, too, a true prophet strengthens the community against a day of reckoning by not hiding its evil. 17-23: Certain women seem to have practiced, for payment by handfuls of barley and scraps of bread (v. 19), idolatrous magic, divination, and sorcery of an unknown nature. See 1 Sam.28.7-19; Mic.3.5-11.

who hunt men's lives by sewing magic bands upon the wrists and putting veils over the heads of persons of every age; are you to hunt the lives of my people and keep your own lives safe?

19 You have violated my sanctity before my people with handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. You bring death to those who should not die, and life to those who should not live, by lying to this people of mine who listen to lies.

20 So these are the words of the LORD GOD: I am against your magic bands with which you hunt men's lives for the excitement of it. I will tear them from your arms and set those lives at liberty, lives that you hunt for the excitement

21 of it. I will tear up your long veils and save my people from you; you shall no longer have power to hunt them. Thus you shall know that I am the

22 LORD. You discouraged the righteous man with lies, when I meant him no hurt; you so strengthened the wicked that he would not abandon his evil

23 ways and be saved; and therefore you shall never see your false visions again nor practise your divination any more. I will rescue my people from your power; and thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

14 Some of the elders of Israel came to

2 visit me, and while they sat with me the

3 LORD said to me, Man, these people have set their hearts on their idols and keep their eyes fixed on the sinful things that cause their downfall. Am I to let

4 such men consult me? Speak to them and tell them that these are the words of the LORD GOD: If any Israelite, with his heart set on his idols and his eyes fixed on the sinful things that cause his downfall, comes to a prophet, I, the LORD, in my own person, shall be constrained to answer him, despite his

5 many idols. My answer will grip the hearts of the Israelites, estranged from me as they are, one and all, through

6 their idols. So tell the Israelites that

these are the words of the Lord God: Turn away, turn away from your idols; turn your backs on all your abominations. If any man, Israelite or alien,

7 renounces me, sets his heart upon idols and fixes his eyes upon the vile thing that is his downfall—if such a man comes to consult me through a prophet, I, the LORD, in my own person, shall be constrained to answer him. I will set

8 my face against that man; I will make him an example and a byword; I will rid my people of him. Thus you shall know that I am the LORD. If a prophet

9 is seduced into making a prophecy, it is I the LORD who have seduced him; I will stretch out my hand and rid my people Israel of him. Both shall be

10 punished; the prophet and the man who consults him alike are guilty. And

11 never again will the Israelites stray from their allegiance, never again defy my will and bring pollution upon themselves; they will become my people, and I will become their God. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These were the words of the LORD

12 to me: Man, when a country sins by

13 breaking faith with me, I will stretch out my hand and cut short its daily bread. I will send famine upon it and destroy both men and cattle. Even if

14 those three men were living there, Noah, Danel<sup>d</sup> and Job, they would save none but themselves by their righteousness. This is the very word of the Lord GOD. If I should turn wild

15 beasts loose in a country to destroy its inhabitants, until it became a waste through which no man would pass for fear of the beasts, then, if those three

16 men were living there, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would not save even their own sons and daughters; they would save themselves alone, and the country would become a waste. Or

17 if I should bring the sword upon that country and command it to go through

<sup>d</sup> Or, as otherwise read, Daniel.

**14.1–23: Duplicity and personal responsibility.** 7: If anyone, while still practicing idolatry, comes to consult a prophet he will receive an answer not from the prophet, but from the LORD—in punishment! 9: A prophet who gives an answer to a known idolater is regarded as his accomplice. God, who as LORD of all allowed it, is considered to have *seduced* him in order to destroy him and *rid* the community of his influence. 14: Three men were famous in the ancient world for their virtue and intercessory power. *Noah* (Gen.6.9), *Job* (Job 42.7–10), and *Daniel*, a Canaanite hero, or possibly Daniel the biblical hero (Dan.3.22–27). These men were not able to save their wicked contemporaries from God's anger in time of calamity. They

18 the land and should destroy men and  
 cattle, then, if those three men were  
 living there, as I live, says the Lord  
 GOD, they could save neither son nor  
 daughter; they would save themselves  
 19 alone. Or if I should send pestilence on  
 that land and pour out my fury upon  
 it in blood, to destroy men and cattle,  
 20 then, if Noah, Danel and Job were  
 living there, as I live, says the Lord  
 GOD, they would save neither son nor  
 daughter; they would save themselves  
 alone by their righteousness.  
 21 These were the words of the Lord  
 GOD: How much less hope is there for  
 Jerusalem when I inflict on her these  
 four punishments of mine, sword and  
 famine, wild beasts and pestilence, to  
 22 destroy both men and cattle! Some will  
 be left in her, some survivors to be  
 brought out, both sons and daughters.  
 Look at them as they come out to you,  
 and see how they have behaved and  
 what they have done. This will be some  
 comfort to you for all the harm I have  
 done to Jerusalem and all I have inflicted  
 23 upon her. It will bring you comfort  
 when you see how they have behaved  
 and what they have done; for you will  
 know that it was not without reason  
 that I dealt thus with her. This is  
 the very word of the Lord GOD.

15 These were the words of the LORD  
 to me:

2 Man, how is the vine better than any  
 other tree,  
 than a branch from a tree in the forest?  
 3 Is wood got from it  
 fit to make anything useful?  
 Can men make it into a peg  
 and hang things on it?  
 4 If it is put on the fire for fuel,  
 if its two ends are burnt by the fire  
 and the middle is charred,

is it fit for anything useful?  
 Nothing useful could be made of it 5  
 even when whole;  
 how much less, when it is burnt by  
 the fire and charred,  
 can it be made into anything useful!

So these are the words of the Lord 6  
 GOD:

I treat the vine, as against forest-trees,  
 only as fuel for the fire,  
 even so I treat the people of Jerusalem;  
 I set my face against them. 7  
 Though they escape from the fire,  
 fire shall burn them up.  
 Thus you shall know that I am the  
 LORD  
 when I set my face against them,  
 making the land a waste 8  
 because they have broken faith.  
 This is the very word of the Lord  
 GOD.

The word of the LORD came to me: 16  
 Man, he said, make Jerusalem see her 2  
 abominable conduct. Tell her that these 3  
 are the words of the Lord GOD to her:  
 Canaan is the land of your ancestry  
 and there you were born; an Amorite  
 was your father and a Hittite your  
 mother. This is how you were treated 4  
 at birth: when you were born, your  
 navel-string was not tied, you were not  
 bathed in water ready for the rubbing,  
 you were not salted as you should have  
 been nor wrapped in swaddling clothes. 5  
 No one cared for you enough to do  
 any of these things or, indeed, to have  
 any pity for you; you were thrown out  
 on the bare ground in your own filth  
 on the day of your birth. Then I came 6  
 by and saw you kicking helplessly in  
 your own blood; I spoke to you, there  
 in your blood, and bade you live. I 7

would not be able to do so in the present situation. 21-23: The survivors of the coming catastrophe will be evidence that God does not punish *without reason*. That he does not will be a source of hope to the exiles.

15.1-8: Parable of the wood of the vine. Israel is the vine cultivated by God, in contrast to the big trees, the nations. Unlike the big trees, a vine is valued only for its fruit and not for its wood, especially if it has been charred by flames, as Israel has been by sin and her punishment, the Exile. See Judg.9.12-13; Jn.15.1-11.

16.1-63: The marriage allegory of Jerusalem. The city's history is compared, in erotic imagery, to the biography of a woman in distinct stages of her life. 1-7: Unlike other cities, Jerusalem had no epic legend of being founded by some god's commission. Rather, like an illegitimate foundling, she was left as the result of the Amorite and Hittite movements in Palestine, known now as occurring in the second millennium B.C. The LORD bade Jerusalem

tended you like an evergreen plant, like something growing in the fields; you throve and grew. You came to full womanhood; your breasts became firm and your hair grew, but still you were naked and exposed.

8 Again I came by and saw that you were ripe for love. I spread the skirt of my robe over you and covered your naked body. Then I plighted my troth and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you in water and washed off the blood and anointed you with oil. I gave you robes of brocade and sandals of stout hide; I fastened a linen girdle round you and dressed you in lawn. For jewellery I put bracelets on your arms and a chain round your neck; I gave you a nose-ring, I put pendants in your ears and a beautiful coronet on your head. You had ornaments of gold and silver, your dresses were of linen, lawn, and brocade. You had flour and honey and olive oil for food, and you grew very beautiful, you grew into a queen. The fame of your beauty went all over the world, for the splendour with which I decked you made it perfect. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

15 But you trusted to your beauty and prostituted your fame; you committed fornication, offering yourself freely to any passer-by for your beauty to become his. You took some of your clothes and decked a platform for yourself in gay colours and there you committed fornication; you had intercourse with him for your beauty to become his.<sup>e</sup> You took the splendid ornaments of gold and silver which I had given you, and made for yourself male images with which you committed fornication. You covered them with your robes of brocade and offered

up my oil and my incense before them. You took the food I had given you, the flour, the oil, and the honey, with which I had fed you, and set it before them as an offering of soothing odour. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

You took the sons and daughters whom you had borne to me, and sacrificed them to these images for their food. Was this of less account than your fornication? No! you slaughtered my children and handed them over, you surrendered them to your images. With all your abominable fornication you forgot those early days when you lay naked and exposed, kicking helplessly in your own blood.

After all the evil you had done (Oh! the pity of it, says the Lord GOD), you built yourself a couch and constructed a high-stool in every open place. You built up your high-stools at the top of every street and disgraced your beauty, offering your body to any passer-by in countless acts of fornication. You committed fornication with your gross neighbours, the Egyptians, and you provoked me to anger by your countless acts of fornication.

I stretched out my hand against you and cut down your portion. Then I gave you up to women who hated you, Philistine women, who were so disgusted by your lewd ways. Not content with this, you committed fornication with the Assyrians, led them into fornication and still were not content. You committed countless acts of fornication in Chaldaea, the land of commerce, and even with this you were not content.

How you anger me! says the Lord GOD. You have done all this like the imperious whore you are. You have built your couch at the top of every

<sup>e</sup> you had intercourse . . . his: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

*live*, by not destroying her during Joshua's conquest; see Josh.15.63. **8-14**: The espoused maiden: Jerusalem, being *ripe for love* when taken by David (2 Sam.5.6-8), became the "spouse" of the Lord when the Ark of the *Covenant* was moved into it (2 Sam.6.12-19); she was given *ornaments* when the Temple and the palaces were built by Solomon (1 Kgs.6.1-9.1). **15-19**: The flirtatious bride: her head turned by commerce with other nations, Jerusalem committed the double fornication of being unfaithful to God and of adopting the ritualistic prostitution of fertility cults (2 Kgs.21.1-18; Hos.4.13-14). **20-22**: An unfeeling mother: even human sacrifices of her children were offered; see 2 Kgs.16.3; 17.17; Jer.7.31. **23-34**: The adulterous wife: Jerusalem squandered the wealth of the Lord, her husband, in order to attract partners for her illicit love affairs of commerce and idolatry, thus being worse than a prostitute who offers herself to gain wealth (2 Kgs.16.7-18; 21.1-22). *High-stools* are the "high places,"



street and constructed your stool in every open place, but, unlike the common prostitute, you have scorned a fee. An adulterous wife who owes obedience to her husband takes a fee from<sup>f</sup> strangers. The prostitute also takes her fee; but you give presents to all your lovers, you bribe them to come from all quarters to commit fornication with you. You are the very opposite of other women in your fornication: no one runs after you, you do not receive a fee, you give it. You are the very opposite.

Listen to the words of the LORD, whore that you are. These are the words of the Lord GOD: You have been prodigal in your excesses, you have exposed your naked body in fornication with your lovers. In return for your abominable idols and for the slaughter of the children you have given them, I will gather all those lovers to whom you made advances,<sup>g</sup> all whom you loved and all whom you hated. I will gather them in from all quarters against you; I will strip you naked before them, and they shall see your whole body naked. I will put you on trial for adultery and murder, and I will charge you with<sup>h</sup> blood shed in jealousy and fury. Then I will hand you over to them. They will demolish your couch and pull down your high-stool; they will strip your clothes off, take away your splendid ornaments, and leave you naked and exposed. They will bring up the mob against you and stone you, they will hack you to pieces with their swords. They will burn down your houses and execute judgement on you, and many women shall see it. I will put an end to your fornication, and you shall never again give a fee to your lovers. Then I will abate my fury, and my jealousy will turn away from you. I will be calm and will no longer be provoked to anger. For you had forgotten the days of your youth and exasperated me with all your doings: so I in my turn brought retribution

upon you for your deeds. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

Did you not commit these obscenities, as well as all your other abominations? Dealers in proverbs will say of you, 'Like mother, like daughter.' You are a true daughter of a mother who loathed her husband and children. You are a true sister of your sisters who loathed their husbands and children. You are all daughters of a Hittite mother and an Amorite father. Your elder sister was Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; your younger sister, who lived with her daughters to the south of you, was Sodom. Did you not behave as they did and commit the same abominations? You came very near to doing even worse than they. As I live, says the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never behaved as you and your daughters have done. This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride of wealth and food in plenty, comfort and ease, and yet she never helped the poor and wretched. They grew haughty and did deeds abominable in my sight, and I made away with them, as you have seen. Samaria was never half the sinner you have been; you have committed more abominations than she, abominations which have made your sister seem innocent. You must bear the humiliation which you thought your sisters deserved. Your sins are so much more abominable than theirs that they appear innocent in comparison with you; and now you must bear your shame and humiliation and make your sisters seem innocent.

But I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore yours at the same time. Even though you bring them comfort, you will bear your shame, you will be disgraced for all you have done; but when

<sup>f</sup> a fee from: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

<sup>g</sup> to whom . . . advances: *or* whom you charmed.

<sup>h</sup> charge you with: *prob. mng.*; *Heb. give you.*

sanctuaries of illicit worship; see 6.3 n.; 2 Kgs.21.3. 35-43: The castoff and condemned woman: Jerusalem, having lost the concerned jealousy of her husband, gained instead the cruel contempt of her paramours, Egypt and Babylon, nations which despoiled her. 45-52: Jerusalem's sins exceed those of her sister cities Samaria and Sodom, and therefore, so will her *shame and humiliation*. 53-63: Reconciliation, conversion, and new espousals await Jerusalem when once

your sister Sodom and her daughters become what they were of old, and when your sister Samaria and her daughters become what they were of old, then you and your daughters will be restored. Did you not hear and talk much of your sister Sodom in the days of your pride, before your wickedness was exposed, in the days when the daughters of Aram with those about her were disgraced, and the daughters of the Philistines round about, who so despised you? Now you too must bear the consequences of your lewd and abominable conduct. This is the very word of the LORD.

These are the words of the Lord GOD: I will treat you as you have deserved, because you violated a covenant and made light of a solemn oath. But I will remember the covenant I made with you when you were young, and I will establish with you a covenant which shall last for ever. And you will remember your past ways and feel ashamed when you receive your sisters, the elder and the younger. For I will give them to you as daughters, and they shall not be outside your covenant.<sup>i</sup> Thus I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD. You will remember, and will be so ashamed and humiliated that you will never open your mouth again once I have accepted expiation for all you have done. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These were the words of the Lord 2 to me: Man, speak to the Israelites in 3 allegory and parable. Tell them that these are the words of the Lord GOD:

A great eagle  
with broad wings and long pinions,

in full plumage, richly patterned,  
came to Lebanon.  
He took the very top of a cedar-  
tree,  
he plucked its highest twig; 4  
he carried it off to a land of  
commerce,  
and planted it in a city of  
merchants.  
Then he took a native seed 5  
and put it in nursery-ground;  
he set it like a willow,  
a shoot beside abundant water.  
It sprouted and became a vine, 6  
sprawling low along the ground  
and bending its trailing boughs  
towards him<sup>j</sup>  
with its roots growing beneath him.  
So it became a vine, it branched out  
and put forth shoots.  
But there was another great eagle 7  
with broad wings and thick plumage;  
and this vine gave its roots  
a twist towards him;<sup>j</sup>  
it pushed out its trailing boughs  
towards him,  
seeking drink from the bed where it  
was planted,  
though it had been set 8  
in good ground beside abundant  
water  
that it might bear shoots and be  
fruitful  
and become a noble vine.

Tell them that these are the words of 9  
the Lord GOD:

Can such a vine flourish?  
Will not its roots be broken off  
and its fruit be stripped,

*i* and they . . . covenant: *or* though not on the ground  
of your covenant. *j* *Or* inwards.

she will recognize and return to her original condition. *Daughters of Aram*: perhaps the Assyrian cities of Asshur and Nineveh destroyed in 614 and 612 respectively. *Solemn oath*: oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar broken by Zedekiah; see 17.12-18.

17.1-24: *Allegory of the cedar and the eagles* portrays the drama of Zedekiah, the weak king of Judah, caught between the aggressiveness of the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt. 3-5: Since allegory is an extended metaphor, a narrative with a continuous system of equivalents, the following identifications can possibly be made: *great eagle*, Nebuchadnezzar; *Lebanon*, city of Jerusalem; *top of a cedar tree*, dynasty of David; *highest twig*, King Jehoiachin; *land of commerce*, Babylonia; *city of merchants*, Babylon; *native seed*, Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, placed upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. (2 Kgs.24.17). 6: *Roots growing beneath him* is explained in v. 13, namely, when the king of Babylon put Zedekiah "on his oath." The kingdom was *sprawling low*, because most of its exalted citizens had been taken into captivity and Zedekiah's power was very limited even over his princes (Jer.38.5). 7: *Another great eagle*: the Pharaoh Psammetichus II of Egypt (594-588 B.C.). Zedekiah's request for

and all its fresh sprouting leaves  
wither,  
until it is uprooted and carried away  
with little effort and few hands?  
10 If it is transplanted, can it flourish?  
Will it not be utterly shrivelled,  
as though by the touch of the east  
wind,  
on the bed where it ought to  
sprout?

11 These were the words of the LORD  
12 to me: Say to that rebellious people,  
Do you not know what this means?  
The king of Babylon came to Jerusa-  
lem, took its king and its officers and  
had them brought to him at Babylon.  
13 He took a prince of the royal line and  
made a treaty with him, putting him on  
his oath. He took away the chief men  
14 of the country, so that it should  
become a humble kingdom unable to  
raise itself but ready to observe the  
15 treaty and keep it in force. But the  
prince rebelled against him and sent  
messengers to Egypt, asking for horses  
and men in plenty. Can such a man  
prosper? Can he escape destruction if  
he acts in this way? Can he violate a  
16 covenant and escape? As I live, says  
the Lord GOD, I swear that he shall die  
in the land of the king who put him  
on the throne; he made light of his  
oath and violated the covenant he  
made with him. He shall die in Babylon.  
17 Pharaoh will send no large army, no  
great host, to protect him in battle; no  
siege-ramp will be raised, no watch-  
tower put up, nor will the lives of many  
18 men be lost. He has violated a covenant  
and has made light of his oath. He had  
submitted, and yet he did all these  
things; he shall not escape.  
19 These then are the words of the Lord  
GOD: As I live, he has made light of the  
oath he took by me and has violated  
the covenant I made with him. I will

bring retribution upon him; I will cast 20  
my net over him, and he shall be caught  
in its meshes. I will carry him to  
Babylon and bring him to judgement  
there, because he has broken faith with  
me. In all his squadrons every com- 21  
mander shall fall by the sword; those  
who are left will be scattered to the four  
winds. Thus you shall know that it is I,  
the LORD, who have spoken.

These are the words of the Lord 22  
GOD:

I, too, will take a slip  
from the lofty crown of the cedar  
and set it in the soil;  
I will pluck a tender shoot from the  
topmost branch  
and plant it.  
I will plant it high on a lofty 23  
mountain,  
the highest mountain in Israel.  
It will put out branches, bear its fruit,  
and become a noble cedar.  
Winged birds of every kind will  
roost under it,  
they will roost in the shelter of its  
sweeping boughs.  
All the trees of the country-side 24  
will know  
that it is I, the LORD,  
who bring low the tall tree  
and raise the low tree high,  
who dry up the green tree  
and make the dry tree put forth  
buds.  
I, the LORD, have spoken and will  
do it.

THESE WERE THE WORDS OF THE LORD 18  
to me: What do you all mean by 2  
repeating this proverb in the land of  
Israel:

'The fathers have eaten sour grapes,  
and the children's teeth are set on  
edge?'

military aid from Egypt (v. 15) is the *twist towards him*. 19: Ezekiel considers Zedekiah's breach of his loyalty oath to Nebuchadnezzar a rejection of God's *covenant*. 22-24: God's action in history—to *pluck* and to *plant*—is decisive, not the maneuverings of kings.

18.1-32: **The Lord's way is freedom.** Maintaining right relations with God frees a man from: (a) the past of his parents, vv. 1-20; (b) the past of his own life, vv. 21-32. Although individual responsibility is asserted by biblical authors before Ezekiel, as in Deut.24.16; 2 Kgs.14.6; Jer.31.29-30, Ezekiel's challenging affirmation here stands in clear contrast to the strong formulations of the inherited doctrine found in Exod.34.7; Lev.26.39-40; Deut.5.9. 2: *This proverb*, restating, though somewhat cynically, the teaching of Exod.20.5 and 34.7, seems to imply that the nation's recent calamities were an unjust application of the teaching by God.

3 As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall never again be used in Israel. Every living soul belongs to me; father and son alike are mine. The soul that sins shall die.

5 Consider the man who is righteous and does what is just and right. He never feasts at mountain-shrines, never lifts his eyes to the idols of Israel, never dishonours another man's wife, never approaches a woman during her periods. He oppresses no man, he returns the debtor's pledge, he never robs. He gives bread to the hungry and clothes to those who have none. He never lends either at discount or at interest. He shuns injustice and deals fairly between man and man. He conforms to my statutes and loyally observes my laws. Such a man is righteous: he shall live, says the Lord GOD.

10 He may have a son who is a man of violence and a cut-throat who turns his back on these rules.<sup>k</sup> He obeys none of them, he feasts at mountain-shrines, he dishonours another man's wife, he oppresses the unfortunate and the poor, he is a robber, he does not return the debtor's pledge, he lifts his eyes to idols and joins in abominable rites; he lends both at discount and at interest. Such a man shall not live. Because he has committed all these abominations he shall die, and his blood will be on his own head.

14 This man in turn may have a son who sees all his father's sins; he sees, but he commits none of them. He never feasts at mountain-shrines, never lifts his eyes to the idols of Israel, never dishonours another man's wife. He oppresses no man, takes no pledge, does not rob. He gives bread to the hungry and clothes to those who have none. He shuns injustice, he never lends either at discount or at interest. He keeps my laws and conforms to my statutes. Such a man shall not die for his father's wrongdoing; he shall live.

18 His father may have been guilty of oppression and robbery and may have lived an evil life among his kinsfolk, and so has died because of his iniquity.

19 You may ask, 'Why is the son not punished for his father's iniquity?' Because he has always done what is just and right and has been careful to obey all my laws, therefore he shall live. It is the soul that sins, and no other, that shall die; a son shall not share a father's guilt, nor a father his son's. The righteous man shall reap the fruit of his own righteousness, and the wicked man the fruit of his own wickedness.

21 It may be that a wicked man gives up his sinful ways and keeps all my laws, doing what is just and right. That man shall live; he shall not die. None of the offences he has committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of his righteous deeds. Have I any desire, says the Lord GOD, for the death of a wicked man? Would I not rather that he should mend his ways and live?

24 It may be that a righteous man turns back from his righteous ways and commits every kind of abomination that the wicked practise; shall he do this and live? No, none of his former righteousness will be remembered in his favour; he has broken his faith, he has sinned, and he shall die. You say that the Lord acts without principle? Listen, you Israelites, it is you who act without principle, not I. If a righteous man turns from his righteousness, takes to evil ways and dies,<sup>l</sup> it is because of these evil ways that he dies. Again, if a wicked man turns from his wicked ways and does what is just and right, he will save his life. If he sees his offences as they are and turns his back on them all, then he shall live; he shall not die.

29 'The Lord acts without principle', say the Israelites. No, Israelites, it is you who act without principle, not I. Therefore, Israelites, says the Lord GOD, I will judge every man of you on his deeds. Turn, turn from your offences, or your iniquity will be your downfall. Throw off the load of your past misdeeds; get yourselves a new

<sup>k</sup> who turns . . . rules: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>l</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* because of them.

31-32: After repeated assurances that a man of "righteous deeds" will "surely live" (vv.

32 heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, you men of Israel? I have no desire for any man's death. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

19 Raise a lament over the princes of 2 Israel and say:

Your mother was a lioness among the lions! She made her lair among the young lions and many were the cubs she bore.

3 One of her cubs she raised, and he grew into a young lion. He learnt to tear his prey, he devoured men.

4 Then the nations shouted at<sup>m</sup> him and he was caught in their pit, and they dragged him with hooks to the land of Egypt.

5 His case, she saw, was desperate, her hope was lost; so she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.

6 He prowled among the lions and acted like a young lion. He learnt to tear his prey, he devoured men;

7 he broke down their palaces, laid their cities in ruins.

The land and all that was in it was aghast at the noise of his roaring.

8 From the provinces all round the nations raised the hue and cry; they cast their net over him and he was caught in their pit.

9 With hooks they drew him into a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon, who flung him into prison, that his voice might never again be heard on the mountains of Israel.

10 Your mother was a vine in a vineyard<sup>n</sup> planted by the waterside.

It grew fruitful and luxuriant, for there was water in plenty.

It had stout branches, fit to make sceptres for those who bear rule. 11

It grew tall, finding its way through the foliage, and conspicuous for its height and many trailing boughs.

But it was torn up in anger and thrown to the ground; the east wind blighted it, its fruit was blown off, its strong branches were blighted, and fire burnt it. 12

Now it is replanted in the wilderness, 13

in a dry and thirsty land; and fire bursts forth from its own branches 14

and burns up its shoots.<sup>o</sup> It has no strong branch any more to make a sceptre for those who bear rule.

This is the lament and as a lament it passed into use.

ON THE TENTH DAY OF THE FIFTH 20 month in the seventh year, some of the elders of Israel came to consult the LORD and were sitting with me. Then 2 this word came to me from the LORD: Man, say to the elders of Israel, This 3 is the word of the Lord GOD: Do you come to consult me? As I live, I will not be consulted by you. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

Will you judge them? Will you judge 4 them, O man? Then tell them of the abominations of their forefathers and 5 say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: When I chose Israel, with uplifted hand I bound myself by oath to the race of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt; I lifted up my hand and declared: I am the LORD your God.

<sup>m</sup> shouted at; or heard a report about.  
<sup>n</sup> in a vineyard; prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure in context.  
<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds its fruit.

9,17,22), Ezekiel exhorts his reader to *get a new heart and a new spirit* and so turn and live; the prophet's message seems to have implications beyond the physical life of this world.

19.1-14: **Laments on the royal house.** The calamities of the Davidic dynasty are depicted allegorically in mournful poetic meter. 2: *Lioness*: Judah (Gen.49.9). 3: *One of her cubs*: King Jehoahaz, taken captive by Pharaoh Necho in 609; see 2 Kgs.23.30-34. 10: *Vine*: Judah. 11: *Stout branches*: either Zedekiah or Jehoiachin.

20.1-44: **Theology of Israel's history.** The history of Israel, in the prophet's view, is the history of God's self-revelation, so that Israel might have life. 1: August 14, 591 B.C. Compare

- 6 On that day I swore with hand uplifted that I would bring them out of Egypt into the land I had sought out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, fairest of all lands. I told them, every one, to cast away the loathsome things on which they feasted their eyes and not to defile themselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God, I said.
- 8 But they rebelled against me, they refused to listen to me, and not one of them cast away the loathsome things on which he feasted his eyes or forsook the idols of Egypt. I had thought to pour out my wrath and exhaust my anger on them in Egypt. I acted for the honour of my name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom Israel was living: I revealed myself to them by bringing Israel out of Egypt. I brought them out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. There I gave my statutes to them and taught them my laws, so that by keeping them men might have life. Further, I gave them my sabbaths as a sign between us, so that they should know that I, the LORD, was hallowing them for myself. But the Israelites rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not conform to my statutes, they rejected my laws, though by keeping them men might have life, and they utterly desecrated my sabbaths. So again I thought to pour out my wrath on them in the wilderness to destroy them. I acted for the honour of my name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations who had seen me bring them out.
- 15 Further, I swore to them in the wilderness with uplifted hand that I would not bring them into the land I had given them, that land flowing with milk and honey, fairest of all lands. For they had rejected my laws, they would not conform to my statutes and they desecrated my sabbaths, because they loved to follow idols of their own.
- 17 Yet I pitied them too much to destroy them and did not make an end of them in the wilderness. I commanded their sons in the wilderness not to conform to their fathers' statutes, nor observe their laws, nor defile themselves with their idols. I said, I am the LORD your God, you must conform to my statutes; you must observe my laws and act according to them. You must keep my sabbaths holy, and they will become a sign between us; so you will know that I am the LORD your God.
- 21 But the sons too rebelled against me. They did not conform to my statutes or observe my laws, though any who had done so would have had life through them, and they desecrated my sabbaths. Again I thought to pour out my wrath and exhaust my anger on them in the wilderness. I acted for the honour of my name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations who had seen me bring them out. Yes, and in the wilderness I swore to them with uplifted hand that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them abroad, because they had disobeyed my laws, rejected my statutes, desecrated my sabbaths, and turned longing eyes toward the idols of their forefathers. I did more; I imposed on them statutes that were not good statutes, and laws by which they could not win life. I let them defile themselves with gifts to idols; I made them surrender their eldest sons to them so that I might fill them with horror. Thus they would know that I am the LORD.
- 27 Speak then, O man, to the Israelites and say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: Once again your forefathers insulted me and broke faith with me: when I brought them into the land which I had sworn with uplifted hand to give them, they marked down every hill-top and every leafy tree, and there they offered their sacrifices, they made the gifts which roused my anger, they set out their offerings of soothing odour and poured out their drink-offerings. I asked them,

1.1; 8.1; 24.1. 9: *Honour of his name*: not vain concern for reputation, but acute awareness that Israel's welfare flows from, and is identified with, the name, i.e. the reality, of God. 20: The observance of the *sabbaths* became at this time, and especially in captivity, a visible *sign* of fidelity to the covenant. 25-26: The *surrender* of the *eldest sons* as *gifts to idols* is seen as one of the *laws* from God, inasmuch as he directs even the evil deeds of men to their own good. Sacrifices

What is this hill-shrine to which you are going up? And 'hill-shrine' has been its name ever since.

30 So tell the Israelites, These are the words of the Lord GOD: Are you defiling yourselves as your forefathers did? Are you wantonly giving yourselves to their loathsome gods? When  
31 you bring your gifts, when you pass your sons through the fire, you are still defiling yourselves in the service of your crowd of idols. How can I let you consult me, men of Israel? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you. When you say to yourselves, 'Let us become like the nations and tribes of other lands and worship wood and stone', you are thinking of  
32 something that can never be. As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will reign over you with a strong hand, with arm  
33 outstretched and wrath outpoured. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands over which you have been scattered by my strong hand, my outstretched arm and out-  
34 poured wrath. I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples; there will I confront you, and there will I state my case against you. Even as I did in the wilderness of Egypt against your fore-  
35 fathers, so will I state my case against you. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

37 I will pass you under the rod and bring you within the bond<sup>p</sup> of the covenant. I will rid you of those who revolt and rebel against me. I will take them out of the land where they are now living, but they shall not set foot on the soil of Israel. Thus shall you know that I am the LORD.

39 Now, men of Israel, these are the words of the Lord GOD: Go, sweep away your idols, every man of you. So in days to come you will never be disobedient to me or desecrate my holy name with your gifts and your idol-  
40 atries. But on my holy hill, the lofty

hill of Israel, says the Lord GOD, there shall the Israelites serve me in the land, every one of them. There will I receive them with favour; there will I demand your contribution and the best of your offerings, with all your consecrated gifts. I will receive your offerings of  
41 soothing odour, when I have brought you out from the peoples and gathered you from the lands where you have been scattered. I, and only I, will have your worship, for all the nations to see.

You will know that I am the LORD, 42 when I bring you home to the soil of Israel, to the land which I swore with uplifted hand to give your forefathers. There you will remember your past ways 43 and all the wanton deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and will loathe yourselves for all the evils you have done. You will know that I am 44 the LORD, when I have dealt with you, O men of Israel, not as your wicked ways and your vicious deeds deserve but for the honour of my name. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These were the words of the LORD 45 to me: Man, turn and face towards 46 Teman<sup>q</sup> and pour out your words to the south; prophesy to the rough country of the Negeb. Say to it, Listen 47 to the words of the LORD. These are the words of the Lord GOD: I will set fire to you, and the fire will consume all the wood, green and dry alike. Its fiery flame shall not be put out, but from the Negeb northwards every face 48 will be scorched by it. All men will see 49 that it is I, the LORD, who have set it ablaze; it shall not be put out. 'Ah no! O Lord GOD,' I cried; 'they say of me, "He deals only in parables."'

These were the words of the LORD 21 to me: Man, turn and face towards 2 Jerusalem, and pour out your words against her sanctuary;<sup>r</sup> prophesy against the land of Israel. Say to the 3

<sup>p</sup> Or muster.                      <sup>q</sup> Or face southward.  
<sup>r</sup> her sanctuary: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* sanctuaries.

of human infants are condemned in v. 31 and in 16.20; also in Lev.18.21; Jer.7.31. 34-39: The return from exile through the wilderness of the peoples, i.e. the desert of Syria, will be like the Sinai experience relived.

20.45-21.32: Parable of the forest fire is the oracle of doom in vv. 45-48. When the people object that Ezekiel is *dealing only in parables* (v. 49), he gives an explanation (21.1-7). 46: According to some interpreters, Ezekiel, if in Babylon, could not *face south* and look toward Judah. See Introduction. *Negeb*: the southern part of Judah. 21.3: The consuming fire (20.47) is the *sword* which destroys Israel, both of which are attributed to God as the Lord of history.

land of Israel, These are the words of the LORD: I am against you; I will draw my sword from the scabbard and cut off from you both righteous and wicked. It is because I would cut off your righteous and your wicked equally that my sword will be drawn from the scabbard against all men, from the Negeb northwards. All men shall know that I the LORD have drawn my sword; it shall never again be sheathed. Groan in their presence, man, groan bitterly until your lungs are bursting. When they ask you why you are groaning, say to them, 'I groan at the thing I have heard; when it comes, all hearts melt, all courage fails, all hands fall limp, all men's knees run with urine. It is coming. It is here.' This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These were the words of the LORD to me: Prophecy, man, and say, This is the word of the Lord:

A sword, a sword is sharpened and burnished,  
 sharpened to kill and kill again,  
 burnished to flash<sup>s</sup> like lightning.  
 Ah! the club is brandished, my son,  
 to defy all wooden idols!  
 The sword is given to be burnished  
 ready for the hand to grasp.  
 The sword—it is sharpened,  
 it is burnished,  
 ready to be put into the slayer's hand.

Cry, man, and howl; for all this falls on my people, it falls on Israel's princes who are delivered over to the sword and are slain with my people. Therefore beat your breast in remorse, for it is the test—and what if it is not in truth the club of defiance? This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

But you, man, prophesy and clap your hands together;  
 swing the sword twice, thrice;  
 it is the sword of slaughter,  
 the great sword of slaughter whirling about them.

That their hearts may be troubled and many stumble and fall,  
 I have set the threat of the sword at all their gates,  
 the threat of the sword<sup>t</sup> made to flash like lightning  
 and drawn to kill.  
 Be sharpened, turn right; be unsheathed, turn left,  
 wherever your point is aimed.

I, too, will clap my hands together and abate my anger. I, the LORD, have spoken. These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, trace out two roads by which the sword of the king of Babylon may come, starting both of them from the same land. Then carve a signpost, carve it at the point where the highway forks. Mark out a road for the sword to come to the Ammonite city of Rabbah, to Judah, and to Jerusalem at the heart of it. For the king of Babylon halts to take the omens at the parting of the ways, where the road divides. He casts lots with arrows, consults teraphim<sup>u</sup> and inspects the livers of beasts. The augur's arrow marked 'Jerusalem' falls at his right hand: here, then,<sup>v</sup> he must raise a shout and sound the battle-cry, set battering-rams against the gates, pile siege-ramps and build watch-towers. It may well seem to the people that the auguries are false, whereas they will put me in mind of their wrongdoing, and they will fall into the enemies' hand. These therefore are the words of the Lord GOD: Because you have kept me mindful of your wrongdoing by your open rebellion, and your sins have been revealed in all your acts, because you have kept yourselves in my mind, you will fall into the enemies' hand by force.

You, too, you impious and wicked prince of Israel, your fate has come upon you in the hour of final punishment. These are the words of the Lord

<sup>s</sup> to flash: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>t</sup> the threat of the sword: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure in context.*  
<sup>u</sup> Or household gods.  
<sup>v</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds he must set battering-rams.*

8-17: This song of the sword is a poetic description of the coming catastrophe. 20: Rabbah is modern Amman, the capital of Jordan. 21: Three forms of divination are used; the result of only one is given: arrows inscribed with alternatives, shaken in a quiver, and then drawn. 23-24: The auguries do not bind the Lord but only put him in mind of Israel's rebellion against him. 25: Wicked prince: Zedekiah. See 7.2, 3, 7; 12.10; 17.19; 35.5; 2 Chr.36.11-13; Jer.52.2.



GOD: Put off your diadem, lay aside your crown. All is changed; raise the low and bring down the high. Ruin! Ruin! I will bring about such ruin as never was before, until the rightful sovereign comes. Then I will give him all. Man, prophesy and say, These are the words of the Lord GOD to the Ammonites and to their shameful god:

A sword, a sword drawn for slaughter, burnished for destruction,<sup>w</sup> to flash like lightning!  
 29 Your visions are false, your auguries a lie, which bid you bring it<sup>x</sup> down upon the necks of impious and wicked men, whose fate has come upon them in the hour of final punishment.  
 30 Sheathe it again. I will judge you in the place where you were born, the land of your origin.  
 31 I will pour out my rage upon you; I will breathe out my blazing wrath over you. I will hand you over to brutal men, skilled in destruction.  
 32 You shall become fuel for fire, your blood shall be shed within the land and you shall leave no memory behind.

For I, the LORD, have spoken.

22 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, will you judge her, will you judge the murderous city and bring home to her all her abominable deeds? Say to her, These are the words of the Lord GOD: Alas for the city that sheds blood within her walls and brings her fate upon herself, the city that makes herself idols and is defiled thereby! The guilt is yours for the

blood you have shed, the pollution is on you for the idols you have made. You have shortened your days by this and brought the end of your years nearer. This is why I exposed you to the contempt of the nations and the mockery of every country. Lands far and near will taunt you with your infamy and gross disorder. In you the princes of Israel, one and all, have used their power to shed blood; men have treated their fathers and mothers with contempt, they have oppressed the alien and ill-treated the orphan and the widow. You have disdained what is sacred to me and desecrated my sabbaths. In you, Jerusalem, informers have worked to procure bloodshed; in you are men who have feasted at mountain-shrines and have committed lewdness. In you men have exposed their fathers' nakedness; they have violated women during their periods; they have committed an outrage with their neighbours' wives and have lewdly defiled their daughters-in-law; they have ravished their sisters, their own fathers' daughters. In you men have accepted bribes to shed blood, and they have exacted discount and interest on their loans. You have oppressed your fellows for gain, and you have forgotten me. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

See, I strike with my clenched fist in anger at your ill-gotten gains and at the bloodshed within your walls. Will your strength or courage stand when I deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and I will act. I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you abroad; thus will I rid you altogether of your defilement. I will sift you in the sight of the nations, and you will know that I am the LORD.

<sup>w</sup> for destruction: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. you.*

<sup>y</sup> I will sift you: or You will be profaned.

28-32: The song of the *sword* depicts for Ammon the same fate as for Judah in vv. 8-17.

22.1-31: The docket of crimes committed by the city and by various classes of citizens. Three indictments are given, in legal form, each followed by an appropriate sentence: vv. 1-12, against the population of Jerusalem in general, vv. 13-16 being the sentence; 17-18, against other Israelites who took refuge in the city, with the sentence in 19-22; 23-30, against specific classes for their various abuses of civic, religious and social authority or responsibility, with v. 31 as the sentence. 3: *Sheds blood*: bloody violence, or sins which demand the death penalty as in vv. 10-11. 10-11: These acts, according to Lev. 18.6-30, are prohibited. 12: Two forms of exacting *interest* were apparently in use: *discount* (Heb. "bite"), taking a cut at the time of loan; and *interest* (Heb. "increase"), demanding at time of payment more than was lent.

17 These were the words of the LORD  
 18 to me: Man, to me all Israelites are an  
 alloy, their silver alloyed with copper,  
 19 tin, iron, and lead.<sup>z</sup> Therefore, these  
 are the words of the Lord GOD:  
 because you have all become alloyed,  
 I will gather you together into Jeru-  
 20 salem, as a mass of silver, copper, iron,  
 lead, and tin is gathered into a crucible  
 for the fire to be blown to full heat to  
 melt them. So will I gather you in my  
 anger and wrath, set you there and  
 21 melt you; I will collect you and blow up  
 the fire of my anger until you are melted  
 22 within it. You will be melted as silver  
 is melted in a crucible, and you will  
 know that I, the LORD, have poured  
 out my anger upon you.

23 These were the words of the LORD  
 24 to me: Man, say to Jerusalem, You are  
 like a land on which no rain has fallen;  
 no shower has come down upon you<sup>a</sup>  
 25 in the days of indignation. The princes  
 within her are like lions growling as  
 they tear their prey. They have  
 devoured men, and seized their trea-  
 sure and all their wealth; they have  
 widowed many women within her  
 26 walls. Her priests have done violence  
 to my law<sup>b</sup> and profaned what is  
 sacred to me. They make no distinction  
 between sacred and common, and lead  
 men to see no difference between clean  
 and unclean. They have disregarded  
 my sabbaths, and I am dishonoured  
 27 among them. Her officers within her  
 are like wolves tearing their prey,  
 shedding blood and destroying men's  
 28 lives to acquire ill-gotten gain. Her  
 prophets use whitewash instead of  
 plaster;<sup>c</sup> their vision is false and their  
 divination a lie. They say, 'This is the  
 word of the Lord GOD', when the LORD  
 29 has not spoken. The common people  
 are bullies and robbers; they ill-treat

the unfortunate and the poor, they are  
 unjust and cruel to the alien. I looked 30  
 for a man among them who could build  
 up a barricade, who could stand before  
 me in the breach to defend the land  
 from ruin; but I found no such man.  
 I poured out my indignation upon them 31  
 and utterly destroyed them in the fire  
 of my wrath. Thus I brought on them  
 the punishment they had deserved.  
 This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

The word of the LORD came to me: 23  
 Man, he said, there were once two 2  
 women, daughters of the same mother.  
 They played the whore in Egypt, 3  
 played the whore while they were  
 still girls; for there they let their  
 breasts be fondled and their virgin  
 bosoms pressed. The elder was named 4  
 Oholah, her sister Oholibah. They  
 became mine and bore me sons and  
 daughters. 'Oholah' is Samaria, 'Oholi-  
 bah' Jerusalem. While she owed me 5  
 obedience Oholah played the whore  
 and was infatuated with her Assyrian  
 lovers, staff officers in blue,<sup>d</sup> viceroy 6  
 and governors, handsome young caval-  
 iers all of them, riding on horseback.  
 She played the whore with all of them, 7  
 the flower of the Assyrian youth; and  
 she let herself be defiled with all their  
 idols, wherever her lust led her. She 8  
 never gave up the whorish ways she had  
 learnt in Egypt, where men had lain  
 with her when young, had pressed her  
 virgin bosom and overwhelmed her  
 with their fornication. So I abandoned 9  
 her to her lovers, the Assyrians, with  
 whom she was infatuated. They rav-  
 10 ished her, they took her sons and  
 daughters, and they killed her with the  
 sword. She became a byword among

<sup>z</sup> their silver . . . lead: *prob. rdg.: Heb.* copper, tin, iron, and lead inside a crucible; they are an alloy, silver. <sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb.* it. <sup>b</sup> Or instruction. <sup>c</sup> *Cp.* 13. 8-16. <sup>d</sup> Or violet.

20: *Into Jerusalem*: possibly an allusion to refugees fleeing before the advancing Babylonian army.

23.1-49: *Allegorical tale of two cities*. Similar in literary form to ch. 16, but there the emphasis is on cultic infidelity, here on political instability. 1-3: The *two women* are the two capital cities: Samaria standing for the Northern Kingdom Israel, and Jerusalem for the Southern Kingdom Judah. *Played the whore in Egypt as girls*: the patriarchs, ancestors of the two kingdoms, descended into Egypt in search of food. Their progeny, making use of Egypt's power and wealth (see Gen. chs. 40-50), presumably fell into idolatry and were subsequently enslaved (Exod. 1.1-14). Such events set the pattern, allegorically, of the two women's adult life. 4: *Oholah*: lit. "she who has a tent" (or: "her [own] tent"), that is, the Northern Kingdom; *Oholibah*: lit. "my tent [is] in her," is the Southern. "Tent" probably means the place of worship, Oholah having her own schismatic worship (see 1 Kgs. 12.25-33), and Oholibah being the sanctuary in Jerusalem where the Ark was kept (2 Sam. 6.17). 5-10: Because political

women, and judgement was passed upon her.

11 Oholibah, her sister, had watched her, and she gave herself up to lust and played the whore worse than her sister.  
 12 She, too, was infatuated with Assyrians, viceroys, governors and staff officers, all handsome young cavaliers, in full  
 13 dress, riding on horseback. I found that she too had let herself be defiled; both  
 14 had gone the same way; but she carried her fornication to greater lengths: she saw male figures carved on the wall, sculptured forms of Chaldaeans, picked  
 15 out in vermilion. Belts were round their waists, and on their heads turbans with dangling ends. All seemed to be high officers and looked like Babylonians,  
 16 natives of Chaldea. As she looked she was infatuated with them, so she sent messengers to Chaldea for them. And  
 17 the Babylonians came to her to share her bed, and defiled her with fornication; she was defiled by them until she  
 18 was filled with revulsion. She made no secret that she was a whore but let herself be ravished until I was filled with  
 19 her sister. She played the whore again and again, remembering how in her youth she had played the whore in  
 20 Egypt. She was infatuated with their male prostitutes, whose members were like those of asses and whose seed came  
 21 in floods like that of horses. So, Oholibah, you relived the lewdness of your girlhood in Egypt when you let your bosom be pressed and your breasts fondled.<sup>e</sup>

22 Therefore these are the words of the Lord God: I will rouse them against you, Oholibah, those lovers of yours who have filled you with revulsion, and bring them upon you from every side,  
 23 the Babylonians and all those Chaldaeans, men of Pekod, Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them. Handsome young men they are, viceroys and governors, commanders and staff officers,<sup>f</sup> riding on horseback.  
 24 They will come against you with war-

horses, with chariots and wagons, with a host drawn from the nations, armed with shield, buckler, and helmet; they will beset you on every side. I will give them authority to judge, and they will use that authority to judge you. I will  
 25 turn my jealous wrath loose on you, and they will make you feel their fury. They will cut off your nose and your ears, and in the end you<sup>g</sup> will fall by the sword.<sup>h</sup> They will strip you of your  
 26 clothes and take away all your finery. So I will put a stop to your lewdness  
 27 and the way in which you learnt to play the whore in Egypt. You will never cast longing eyes on such things again, never remember Egypt any more.

These are the words of the Lord  
 28 God: I am handing you over to those whom you hate, those who have filled you with revulsion; and they will make  
 29 you feel their hatred. They will take all you have earned and leave you naked and exposed; that body with which you have played the whore will be ravished. It is your lewdness and your fornication that have brought this upon you,  
 30 it is because you have followed alien peoples and played the whore and have allowed yourself to be defiled with their idols. You have followed in your sister's  
 31 footsteps, and I will put her cup into your hand.

These are the words of the Lord  
 32 God:

You shall drink from your sister's cup,  
 a cup deep and wide,  
 charged with mockery and scorn,  
 more than ever cup can hold.  
 It<sup>i</sup> will be full of drunkenness and  
 33 grief,  
 a cup of ruin and desolation,  
 the cup of your sister Samaria;  
 and you shall drink it to the dregs. 34

<sup>e</sup> fondled: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.  
<sup>f</sup> staff officers: prob. rdg., cp. verses 5 and 12; Heb. obscure.

<sup>g</sup> in the end you; or your successors.  
<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds They will take your sons and daughters, and in the end you will be burnt.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. You.

alliances implied a lack of trust in God's power, the prophets considered reliance on them as playing the *whore*. God abandoned Samaria in 721 B.C., when she was destroyed by the Assyrians and her people taken into captivity; see 2 Kgs.17.5-6. 12: Oholibah (Judah) was *infatuated* with *Assyrians*, when Ahaz, king of Judah (735-715 B.C.), courted their favor (2 Kgs.16.7-9). 32: Samaria's fate (destruction of 721 B.C.) will be Jerusalem's *cup* in the destruction and

Then you will chew<sup>j</sup> it in pieces  
and tear out your breasts.

This is my verdict, says the Lord GOD.

35 Therefore, these are the words of the  
Lord GOD: Because you have for-  
gotten me and flung me behind your  
back, you must bear the guilt of your  
lewdness and your fornication.

36 The LORD said to me, Man, will you  
judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then  
37 tax them with their vile offences. They  
have committed adultery, and there is  
blood on their hands. They have com-  
mitted adultery with their idols and  
offered my children to them for food,  
38 the children they had borne me. This  
too they have done to me: they have  
polluted my sanctuary and desecrated  
39 my sabbaths. They came into my  
sanctuary and desecrated it by slaugh-  
tering their sons as an offering to their  
idols; this they did in my own house.

40 They would send for men from a far-off  
country; and the men came at the  
messenger's bidding. You bathed your  
body for these men, you painted your  
eyes, decked yourself in your finery,  
41 you sat yourself upon a bed of state  
and had a table put ready before it and  
laid my own incense and my own oil  
42 on it. Loud were the voices of the light-  
hearted crowd; and besides ordinary  
folk Sabaeans were there, brought from  
the wilderness; they put bracelets on  
the women's hands and beautiful gar-  
43 lands on their heads. I thought: Ah  
that woman, grown old in adultery!  
Now they will commit fornication with  
44 her—with her of all women! They  
resorted to her as a prostitute; they  
resorted to Oholah and Oholibah,  
45 those lewd women. Upright men will  
condemn them for their adultery and  
bloodshed; for adulterous they are, and  
blood is on their hands.

46 These are the words of the Lord  
GOD: Summon the invading host;

abandon them to terror and rapine.  
Let the host stone them and hack them 47  
to pieces with their swords, kill their  
sons and daughters and burn down  
their houses. Thus I will put an end 48  
to lewdness in the land, and other  
women shall be taught not to be as  
lewd as they. You shall pay the penalty 49  
for your lewd conduct and be punished  
for your idolatries, and you will know  
that I am the Lord GOD.

These were the words of the LORD, 24  
spoken to me on the tenth day  
of the tenth month in the ninth year:  
Man, write down a name for this day, 2  
this very day: This is the day the king  
of Babylon invested Jerusalem. Sing a 3  
song of derision to this people of  
rebels; say to them, These are the  
words of the Lord GOD:

Set a cauldron on the fire,  
set it on and pour water into it.  
Into it collect the pieces, 4  
all the choice pieces,  
cram it with leg and shoulder and  
the best of the bones;  
take the best of the flock. 5  
Pack the logs<sup>k</sup> round it underneath;  
seethe the stew  
and boil the bones in it.

O city running with blood, 6  
O pot green with corrosion,  
corrosion that will never be clean!

Therefore these are the words of the  
Lord GOD:

Empty it, piece after piece,  
though no lot is cast for any of them.  
The city had blood in her midst 7  
and she poured it out on the  
gleaming rock,  
not on the ground: she did not pour  
it there  
for the dust to cover it.

*j* Or dash. *k* Prob. rdg., cp. verse 10; Heb. bones.

captivity of 587 B.C. 40-44: Unknown contemporary political events seem to be indicated. 42: *Sabaeans*: inhabitants of Sheba, a land of traders in the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula, probably modern Yemen.

24.1-27: *Jerusalem is besieged*: Verses 1-14 are an elaboration and interpretation of 11.3-13. 1: The date is probably January 18, 588 B.C.; compare 2 Kgs. 25.1. 3-5: Into the *cauldron* (Jerusalem) are collected the *choice pieces* (the nobility); the Babylonians apply the *fire* (siege), thus fulfilling in a tragic sense the optimistic allegory of 11.3. 6: Their expected security destroyed, the nobles will be taken out *piece after piece* indiscriminately because the cauldron is full of *corrosion*. 7: *Blood*, the source of life, and thus somehow divine, is to be covered by

- 8 But I too have spilt blood on the gleaming white rock so that it cannot be covered, to make anger flare up and to call down vengeance.
- 9 Therefore these are the words of the Lord GOD:

- O city running with blood, I too will make a great fire-pit.
- 10 Fill it with logs, light the fire; make an end of the meat, pour out all the broth<sup>l</sup> and the bones with it.<sup>m</sup>
- 11 Then set the pot empty on the coals so that its copper may be heated red-hot, and then the impurities in it may be melted and its corrosion burnt off.
- 12 Try as you may,<sup>n</sup> the corrosion is so deep that it will not come off; only fire will rid it of corrosion for you.
- 13 Even so, when I cleansed you in your filthy lewdness, you did not become clean from it, and therefore you shall never again be clean until I have satisfied my anger against you.
- 14 I, the LORD, have spoken; the time is coming, I will act. I will not refrain nor pity nor relent; I will judge you for your conduct and for all that you have done. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

- 15 These were the words of the LORD
- 16 to me: Man, I am taking from you at one blow the dearest thing you have, but you must not wail or weep or give
- 17 way to tears. Keep in good heart; be quiet, and make no mourning for the dead; cover your head as usual and put sandals on your feet. You shall not

cover your upper lip in mourning nor eat the bread of despair.

I spoke to the people in the morning; and that very evening my wife died. Next morning I did as I was told. The people asked me to say what meaning my behaviour had for them. I answered, These were the words of the LORD to me: Tell the Israelites, This is the word of the Lord GOD: I will desecrate my sanctuary, which has been the pride of your strength, the delight of your eyes and your heart's desire; and the sons and daughters whom you have left behind shall fall by the sword. But, I said, you shall do as I have done: you shall not cover your upper lip in mourning nor eat the bread of despair. You shall cover your head and put sandals on your feet; you shall not wail nor weep. Because of your wickedness you will pine away and will lament to<sup>o</sup> one another. The LORD says, Ezekiel will be a sign to warn you, and when it happens you will do as he has done, and you will know that I am the Lord GOD.

And now, man, a word for you: I am taking from them that fortress whose beauty so gladdened them, the delight of their eyes, their heart's desire; I am taking their sons and their daughters. Soon fugitives will come and tell you their news by word of mouth. At once you will recover the power of speech and speak with the fugitives; you will no longer be dumb. So will you be a portent to them, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

### *Prophecies against foreign nations*

THESE WERE THE WORDS OF THE LORD 25  
to me: Man, look towards the Ammonites and prophesy against them. 2

<sup>l</sup> I pour . . . broth: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* mix ointment.  
<sup>m</sup> with it: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* will be scorched.  
<sup>n</sup> Try as you may: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.  
<sup>o</sup> Or for.

dust and forbidden to human contact. See Gen.9.4-6; Lev.17.13-14. Blood poured on gleaming rock shows flagrant disregard for life and its divine origin. 15-24: Ezekiel, at the double tragedy of his wife's death and the impending destruction of the Temple, is so numbed by grief that he cannot perform the ordinary rituals of mourning (v. 17) so important in the Near East. 26: *Soon*: lit. "on the very day." That fugitives could arrive so quickly again raises the question of where Ezekiel was preaching, in Babylon or in Palestine. See Introduction.

25.1-32.32: Judgment passed against enemy nations. The sin of the nations is twofold: the arrogance of powerful nations like Egypt, Tyre, and Babylon that exalt themselves at the

3 Say to the Ammonites, Listen to the word of the Lord GOD. These are his words: Because you cried 'Aha!' when you saw my holy place desecrated, the soil of Israel laid waste and the people  
4 of Judah sent into exile, I will hand you over as a possession to the tribes of the east. They shall pitch their camps and put up their dwellings among you; they shall eat your crops;  
5 they shall drink your milk. I will make Rabbah a camel-pasture and Ammon a sheep-walk. Thus you shall know that  
6 I am the LORD. These are the words of the Lord GOD: Because you clapped your hands and stamped your feet, and exulted over the land of Israel with  
7 single-minded scorn, I will stretch out my hand over you and make you the prey of the nations and cut you off from all other peoples; in every land I will exterminate you and bring you to utter ruin. Thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

8 These are the words of the Lord GOD: Because Moab said, 'Judah is like all the rest', I will expose the flank of Moab and lay open its cities,<sup>p</sup> from one end to the other—the fairest of its cities: Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and  
10 Kiriathaim. I will hand over Moab and Ammon together to the tribes of the east to be their possession, so that the Ammonites shall not be remembered  
11 among the nations, and so that I may execute judgement upon Moab. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

12 These are the words of the Lord

GOD: Because Edom took deliberate revenge on Judah and by so doing incurred lasting guilt, I will stretch my  
13 hand out over Edom, says the Lord GOD, and destroy both man and beast in it, laying waste the land from Teman as far as Dedan; they shall fall by the sword. I will wreak my vengeance upon  
14 Edom through my people Israel. They will deal with Edom as my anger and fury demand, and it shall feel my vengeance. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These are the words of the Lord  
15 GOD: Because the Philistines have taken deliberate revenge and have avenged themselves with single-minded scorn, giving vent to their age-long enmity in destruction, I will stretch out  
16 my hand over the Philistines, says the Lord GOD, I will wipe out the Kerethites and destroy all the rest of the dwellers by the sea. I will take fearful  
17 vengeance upon them and punish them in my fury. When I take my vengeance, they shall know that I am the LORD.

These were the words of the LORD to  
26 me on the first day of the first month in the eleventh year: Man, Tyre has 2 said of Jerusalem,

Aha! she that was the gateway of  
the nations  
is broken,  
her gates swing open to me;  
I grow rich, she lies in ruins.

<sup>p</sup> and lay . . . cities: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* from the cities, from its cities.

expense of God; and the meanness of Israel's weak neighbors, Edom and Moab, that exalt themselves by preying on God's people. The first act in the restoration of Israel is the judgment passed upon the nations. See 36.7.

**25.1–17: Oracles against Israel's neighbors.** Apparently written after the destruction of Jerusalem, these oracles are cast in the form of a lawsuit against the nations, i.e. an indictment and a sentence: "because . . . therefore." **1–7: Ammonites:** people inhabiting the east side of the Jordan just north of the Dead Sea. Partners with Judah in the conspiracy against Nebuchadnezzar, they despoiled their prostrate ally; see Jer.49.1–2. **4: Tribes of the east** are nomadic Arabs. **8–11: Moab:** directly south of Ammon and east of the Dead Sea. Most of its cities were situated on the *flank of Moab*, the steep but rounded eastern shore of that sea. **12–14:** Inhabiting the region south of the Dead Sea before the destruction of Jerusalem, *Edom* profited from Judah's tragedy by occupying the southern half of her territory. For traditional hostility between Judah and Edom see Gen.27.41; 36.6–8. *Teman . . . Dedan:* Edomite cities to the southeast of the Dead Sea. **15–17: The Philistines** and their kinsmen the *Kerethites* (both living on the Mediterranean coast, though by then greatly diminished) also plundered prostrate Judah.

**26.1–21: Tyre will be swept from the sea.** Tyre, an ancient Phoenician port (in modern Lebanon) was the heart of a commercial and cultural empire. Its traditional friendship with Israel (1 Kgs. ch. 5) wins it a fate less harsh. **1: Eleventh year:** approximately April 22, 587 B.C. **2:** Caravans to

3 Therefore these are the words of the Lord GOD:

I am against you, Tyre,  
and will bring up many nations  
against you  
as the sea brings up its waves;  
4 they will destroy the walls of Tyre  
and pull down her towers.

I will scrape the soil off her  
and make her a gleaming rock,  
5 she shall be an islet where men  
spread their nets;

I have spoken, says the Lord GOD.  
She shall become the prey of  
nations,  
6 and her daughters<sup>q</sup> shall be slain by  
the sword in the open country.

Thus they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 These are the words of the Lord GOD: I am bringing against Tyre from the north Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, king of kings. He will come with horses and chariots, with cavalry and a great army.

8 Your daughters in the open country he will put to the sword. He will set up watch-towers against you, pile up siege-ramps against you and raise against you a screen of shields.

9 He will launch his battering-rams on your walls and break down your towers with his axes.

10 He will cover you with dust from the thousands of his cavalry; at the thunder of his horses and of his chariot-wheels your walls will quake when he enters your gates as men enter a city that is breached.

11 He will trample all your streets with the hooves of his horses and put your people to the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground.

Your wealth will become spoil, 12  
your merchandise will be plundered,  
your walls levelled,  
your pleasant houses pulled down,  
your stones, your timber and your rubble

will be dumped into the sea.  
So I will silence the clamour of 13  
your songs,  
and the sound of your harps shall be heard no more.

I will make you a gleaming rock, 14  
a place for fishermen to spread their nets,  
and you shall never be rebuilt.

I, the LORD, have spoken.  
This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These are the words of the Lord 15  
GOD to Tyre: How the coasts and islands will shake at the sound of your downfall, while the wounded groan, and the slaughter goes on in your midst! Then all the sea-kings will 16  
come down from their thrones, and lay aside their cloaks, and strip off their brocaded robes. They will wear coarse loin-cloths; they will sit on the ground, shuddering at every moment, horror-struck at your fate. Then they will raise 17  
this dirge over you:

How you are undone, swept from the sea,

O famous city!  
You whose strength lay in the sea,  
you and your inhabitants,  
who spread their terror throughout the mainland.<sup>r</sup>

Now the coast-lands tremble on the 18  
day of your downfall,  
and the isles of the sea are appalled at your passing.

For these are the words of the Lord 19  
GOD: When I make you a desolate city, like a city where no man can live, when I bring up the primeval ocean

<sup>q</sup> Or daughter-towns.

<sup>r</sup> the mainland: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* her inhabitants.

Tyre from Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt had to pay duty to use Israelite territory as a gateway. 3: Tyre, built on an island a half mile from shore, will be overrun by *nations*, just as it is washed by the *sea waves* in a storm. 4: *Rock*: a play on words since "rock" and "Tyre" are identical in Heb. 8: A *screen of shields*: probably an offensive military technique. 14: Tyre

- 20 against you and the great waters cover you, I will thrust you down with those that descend to the abyss, to the dead of all the ages. I will make you dwell in the underworld as in places long desolate, with those that go down to the abyss. So you will never again be inhabited or take your place in the land of the living. I will bring you to a fearful end, and you shall be no more; men may look for you but will never find you again. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.
- 27 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, raise a dirge over Tyre and say, Tyre, throned above your harbours, you who carry the trade of the nations to many coasts and islands, these are the words of the Lord GOD:
- men of Pharas,<sup>t</sup> Lud,<sup>u</sup> and Put, 10  
served  
as warriors in your army;  
they hung shield and helmet around you,  
and it was they who gave you your glory.
- Men of Arvad and Cilicia manned 11  
all your walls,  
men of Gammad were posted on your towers  
and hung their shields around your battlements;  
it was they who made your beauty perfect.

- Tarshish was a source of your 12  
commerce, from its abundant resources offering silver and iron, tin and lead, as your staple wares. Javan,<sup>v</sup> Tubal, 13  
and Meshech dealt with you, offering slaves and vessels of bronze as your imports. Men from Togarmah offered 14  
horses, mares, and mules as your staple wares. Rhodians dealt with you, great 15  
islands were a source of your commerce, paying what was due to you in ivory and ebony. Edom was a source of 16  
your commerce, so many were your undertakings, and offered purple garnets, brocade and fine linen, black coral and red jasper,<sup>w</sup> for your staple wares. Judah and Israel dealt with you, offering 17  
wheat from Minnith, and meal, syrup, oil, and balsam, as your imports. Damascus was a source of your 18  
commerce, so many were your undertakings, from its abundant resources offering wine of Helbon and wool of Suhar, and casks of wine from Izalla,<sup>x</sup> 19  
for your staple wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were among your imports. Dedan dealt with you in coarse woollens for saddle-cloths. 20  
Arabia and all the chiefs of Kedar were 21  
the source of your commerce in lambs, rams, and he-goats; this was your trade
- O Tyre, you said,  
'I am perfect in beauty.'  
4 Your frontiers are on the high seas,  
your builders made your beauty perfect;  
5 they fashioned all your timbers of pine from Senir;  
they took a cedar from Lebanon to raise up a mast over you.  
6 They made your oars of oaks from Bashan;  
they made your deck strong<sup>s</sup> with box-wood  
from the coasts of Kittim.  
7 Your canvas was linen,  
patterned linen from Egypt to make your sails;  
your awnings were violet and purple from the coasts of Elishah.  
8 Men of Sidon and Arvad became your oarsmen;  
you had skilled men within you, O Tyre,  
who served as your helmsmen.  
9 You had skilled veterans from Gebal caulking your seams.  
You had all sea-going ships and their sailors  
to market your wares;
- s strong: prob. rdg.; Heb. ivory. t Or Persia.  
u Or Lydia. v Or Ionia. w Or and carbuncles.  
x casks . . . Izalla: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

was not *rebuilt* after its destruction by Alexander in 332 B.C. 20: *Abyss*: Sheol, the place of the dead; see 31.15-18.

27.1-28.19: *Dirge over Tyre*. The lament is in traditional dirge meter called the *qinah*. Tyre is like a stately ship, carrying an expert crew, rich passengers and rare cargo, that founders. 5: *Senir*: Mount Hermon near Damascus. 6: *Bashan*: plateau east of the Sea of Galilee mentioned for its oaks in Isa.2.13. *Kittim*: Cyprus. 10-25a: This section, in which the metaphor shifts from a ship to a fortified city and the language from poetry to prose, is possibly an



22 with them. Dealers from Sheba and Raamah dealt with you, offering the choicest spices, every kind of precious stone and gold, as your staple wares.

23 Harran, Kanneh, and Eden, dealers from Asshur and all Media, dealt with you; they were your dealers in gorgeous stuffs, violet cloths and brocades, in stores of coloured fabric rolled up and tied with cords; your dealings with them were in these.

25 Ships of Tarshish were the caravans for your imports; you were deeply laden with full cargoes on the high seas.

26 Your oarsmen brought you into many waters, but on the high seas an east wind wrecked you.

27 Your wealth, your staple wares, your imports, your sailors and your helmsmen, your caulkers, your merchants, and your warriors, all your ship's company, all who were with you, were flung into the sea on the day of your disaster;

28 at the cries of your helmsmen the troubled waters tossed.

29 When all the rowers disembark from their ships, when the sailors, the helmsmen all together, go ashore,

30 they exclaim over your fate, they cry out bitterly; they throw dust on their heads and sprinkle themselves with ashes.

31 They tear out their hair at your plight and put on sackcloth; they weep bitterly over you, bitterly wailing.

32 In their lamentation they raise a dirge over you, and this is their dirge:  
Who was like Tyre,  
with her buildings piled<sup>y</sup> off shore?

When your wares were unloaded off the sea 33  
you met the needs of many nations; with your vast resources and your imports you enriched the kings of the earth.

Now you are broken by the sea 34  
in deep water;  
your wares and all your company are gone overboard.

All who dwell on the coasts and islands 35  
are aghast at your fate;  
horror is written on the faces of their kings  
and their hair stands on end.

Among the nations the merchants 36  
jeer in derision at you;  
you have come to a fearful end and shall be no more for ever.

These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, say to the prince of Tyre, This is the word of the Lord God:

In your arrogance you say,  
'I am a god;  
I sit throned like a god on the high seas.'

Though you are a man and no god, you try to think the thoughts of a god.

What? are you wiser than Danel?<sup>z</sup> Is no secret too dark for you? Clever and shrewd as you are, you have amassed wealth for yourself,  
you have amassed gold and silver in your treasuries;  
by great cleverness in your trading you have heaped up riches,  
and with your riches your arrogance has grown.

Therefore these are the words of the Lord GOD:

Because you try to think the thoughts of a god

<sup>y</sup> with her buildings piled: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>z</sup> Or, as otherwise read, Daniel; cp. 14. 14, 20.

interpolation. 26: The east wind, death-dealing on sea (Ps.48.7) and land (Jer.18.17) alike, probably symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar, as in 17.10. 28.1-3: Blinded by arrogance, the city scorned its national hero Danel, who, a model of true wisdom (14.14 n.), had placed his sagacity at the service of the gods, of widows and orphans. 4-10: Thinking its power and wisdom

- 7 I will bring strangers against you,  
the most ruthless of nations,  
who will draw their swords against  
your fine wisdom  
and lay your pride in the dust,  
8 sending you down to the pit<sup>a</sup> to die  
a death of disgrace on the high seas.  
9 Will you dare to say that you are  
a god  
when you face your assailants,  
though you are a man and no god  
in the hands of those who lay  
you low?  
10 You will die strengthless  
at the hands of strangers.

For I have spoken. This is the very  
word of the Lord GOD.

- 11 These were the words of the LORD to  
12 me: Man, raise this dirge over the king  
of Tyre, and say to him, This is the  
word of the Lord GOD:

You set the seal on perfection;  
full of wisdom you were and  
altogether beautiful.

- 13 You were in an Eden, a garden of  
God,  
adorned with gems of every kind:  
sardin and chrysolite and jade,  
topaz, cornelian and green jasper,  
lapis lazuli,<sup>b</sup> purple garnet and  
green felspar.

Your jingling beads were of gold,  
and the spangles you wore were  
made for you  
on the day of your birth.

- 14 I set you with a towering cherub<sup>c</sup>  
as guardian;  
you were on God's holy hill  
and you walked proudly among  
stones that flashed with fire.

- 15 You were blameless in all your ways  
from the day of your birth  
until your iniquity came to light.

- 16 Your commerce grew so great,  
lawlessness filled your heart and you  
went wrong,

so I brought you down in disgrace  
from the mountain of God,  
and the guardian cherub banished  
you<sup>d</sup>  
from among the stones that  
flashed like fire.

Your beauty made you arrogant, 17  
you misused your wisdom to increase  
your dignity.

I flung you to the ground,  
I left you there, a sight for kings  
to see.

So great was your sin in your wicked 18  
trading  
that you desecrated your  
sanctuaries.

So I kindled a fire within you,  
and it devoured you.

I left you as ashes on the ground  
for all to see.

All among the nations who knew 19  
you were aghast:  
you came to a fearful end and shall  
be no more for ever.

These were the words of the LORD to 20  
me: Man, look towards Sidon and 21  
prophesy against her. These are the 22  
words of the Lord GOD:

Sidon, I am against you  
and I will show my glory in your  
midst.

Men will know that I am the LORD  
when I execute judgement upon her  
and thereby prove my holiness.

I will let loose pestilence upon her 23  
and bloodshed in her streets;  
the slain will fall in her streets,  
beset on all sides by the sword;  
then men will know that I am the  
LORD.

No longer shall the Israelites suffer 24

<sup>a</sup> Or to destruction. <sup>b</sup> Or sapphire.  
<sup>c</sup> I set . . . cherub; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* You were a tower-  
ing cherub whom I set.  
<sup>d</sup> and the . . . you: *or* and I parted you, O guardian  
cherub, . . .

unlimited, as it amassed wealth for its own glorification, Tyre will find a fool's fate. 11-19: Though Tyre had, like a cherub in the Temple (*God's holy hill*), enjoyed familiarity with God, he scorned such honor in favor of his own *dignity*, achieved by *wicked trading*. Some interpreters see in the passage allusions to unknown creation myths; others, an allegory on Tyre's ancient and long-standing alliance with Israel (1 Kgs.5.1-18), ended when the high priest Jehoiada cast Queen Athaliah—daughter of the Tyrian princess Jezebel—out of the temple. See 2 Kgs.11.13-16. Cut off from God's people, Tyre's doom was sealed.

28.20-24: *Sidon denounced*. Sidon, a Phoenician city north of Tyre, merits punishment as an accomplice in the fatal rebellion against Babylon; see Jer.27.3.

from the scorn of their neighbours, the pricking of briars and scratching of thorns, and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

25 These are the words of the Lord GOD: When I gather the Israelites from the peoples among whom they are scattered, I shall thereby prove my holiness in the sight of all nations. They shall live on their native soil, which I  
26 gave to my servant Jacob. They shall live there in peace of mind, build houses and plant vineyards; they shall live there in peace of mind when I execute judgement on all their scornful neighbours. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD their God.

29 These were the words of the LORD to me on the twelfth day of the tenth  
2 month in the tenth year: Man, look towards Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and all his  
3 country. Say, These are the words of the Lord GOD:

I am against you,  
Pharaoh king of Egypt,  
you great monster,  
lurking in the streams of the Nile.  
You have said, 'My Nile is my own;  
it was I who made it.'

4 I will put hooks in your jaws  
and make them cling<sup>e</sup> to your scales.  
I will hoist you out of its streams  
with all its fish clinging to your scales.

5 I will fling you into the  
wilderness,  
you and all the fish in your streams;  
you will fall on the bare ground  
with none to pick you up and bury  
you;

I will make you food  
for beasts and for birds.

So all who live in Egypt will know 6  
that I am the LORD,  
for the support that you gave to  
the Israelites  
was no better than a reed,  
which splintered in the hand when 7  
they grasped you,  
and tore their armpits;  
when they leaned upon you, you  
snapped  
and their limbs gave way.

This therefore is the word of the 8  
Lord GOD: I am bringing a sword upon  
you to destroy both man and beast.  
The land of Egypt shall become a 9  
desolate waste, and they shall know  
that I am the LORD, because you said,  
'The Nile is mine; it was I who made 10  
it.' I am against you therefore, you and  
your Nile, and I will make Egypt  
desolate, wasted by drought, from  
Migdol to Syene and up to the very  
frontier of Cush. No foot of man 11  
shall pass through it, no foot of beast;  
it shall lie uninhabited for forty years.  
I will make the land of Egypt the most 12  
desolate of desolate lands; her cities  
shall lie derelict among the ruined  
cities. For forty years shall they lie  
derelict, and I will scatter the Egyptians  
among the nations and disperse them  
among the lands.

These are the words of the Lord 13  
GOD: At the end of forty years I will  
gather the Egyptians from the peoples  
among whom they are scattered. I will 14  
turn the fortunes of Egypt and bring  
them back to Pathros, the land of their  
origin, where they shall become a  
petty kingdom. She shall be the most 15  
paltry of kingdoms and never again

<sup>e</sup> make them cling: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* make the fish of your streams cling.

28.25-26: Israel, restored, will experience God's holiness, and will witness it to the nations. 29.1-32.32: Egypt shall become a desolate waste. From Israel's beginning as a nation, Egypt either oppressed it like a slave master or abused it by fickle alliances; see 29.6-7. The reed conveys the latter idea for it was abundant in the Nile and hence a symbol of Egypt. It promised support, but would break and pierce the hand.

29.1-9: Oracle against Pharaoh, the monster and reed of the Nile. 1: January 7, 587 B.C. 3: *Streams of the Nile*: the Nile's several mouths in the delta. *Great monster*: the crocodile. 4: *Clinging fish*: the dependent nations. 6-7: The *support no better than a reed* given to the Israelites reflects Pharaoh Hophra's failure to drive the Babylonians from Palestine, a little less than a year before this oracle. See Jer.37.1-10. The Babylonians' siege was briefly lifted; see Jer.34.21-22.

29.10-16: Israelites will never trust Egypt again. When finally converted, Israel will have a "new heart" and a "new spirit" from the LORD; it will then depend entirely on him. 10: *Migdol*: at the northern boundary of Egypt. *Syene*: modern Aswan on the southern frontiers, near *Cush*, i.e. Ethiopia. 12: *Forty years*: a round number.

exalt herself over the nations, for I will make the Egyptians too few to rule over them. The Israelites will never trust Egypt again; this will be a reminder to them of their sin in turning to Egypt for help. They shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

17 These were the words of the LORD to me on the first day of the first month in the twenty-seventh year: Man, long did Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon keep his army in the field against Tyre, until every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder chafed. But neither he nor his army gained anything from Tyre for their long service against her. 19 This, therefore, is the word of the Lord GOD: I am giving the land of Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. He shall carry off its wealth, he shall spoil and plunder it, and so his army will be paid. I have given him the land of Egypt as the wages for his service because they have disregarded me. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

21 At that time I will make Israel put out fresh shoots, and give you back the power to speak among them, and they will know that I am the LORD.

30 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, prophesy and say, These are the words of the Lord GOD:

Woe, woe for the day!

3 for a day is near,  
a day of the LORD is near,  
a day of cloud, a day of reckoning  
for the nations.

4 Then a sword will come upon Egypt,  
and there will be anguish in Cush,  
when the slain fall in Egypt,  
when its wealth is taken and its  
foundations are torn up.

5 Cush and Put and Lud,<sup>f</sup>  
all the Arabs and Libyans and the  
peoples of allied lands,  
shall fall with them by the sword.

These are the words of the LORD: 6

All who support Egypt shall fall  
and her boasted might be brought  
low;  
from Migdol to Syene men shall fall  
by the sword.

This is the very word of the Lord  
GOD.

They shall be the most desolate of 7  
desolate lands, and their cities shall lie  
derelict among the ruined cities. When 8  
I set Egypt on fire and all her helpers  
are broken, they will know that I am  
the LORD. When that time comes 9  
messengers shall go out in haste from  
my presence to alarm Cush, still with-  
out a care, and anguish shall come upon  
her in Egypt's hour. Even now it is on  
the way.

These are the words of the Lord 10  
GOD:

I will make an end of Egypt's  
hordes

by the hands of Nebuchadrezzar  
king of Babylon.

He and his people with him, the 11  
most ruthless of nations,  
will be brought to ravage the land.  
They will draw their swords against  
Egypt  
and fill the land with the slain.

I will make the streams of the Nile 12  
dry land

and sell Egypt to evil men;  
I will lay waste the land and every-  
thing in it by foreign hands.

I, the LORD, have spoken.

These are the words of the Lord 13  
GOD:

I will make an end of the  
lordlings<sup>g</sup>

<sup>f</sup> Or Lydia. <sup>g</sup> Or idols.

29.17–21: Egypt as wages for Nebuchadrezzar. 17: The latest date for any oracle is April 26, 571 B.C., this date is also the latest secure one in the book. Since other oracles with earlier dates will follow, this one is placed here because its topic is the same as that of the preceding. 20: In humbling Tyre, Nebuchadrezzar carries out God's purposes in history, and so deserves wages. 21: Fresh shoots are symbols of restoration, either in messianic (Isa. 11.1) or political perspective (17.22).

30.1–19: Day of the LORD for Egypt is near. 3: In the early prophetic writings, the day or the day of the LORD is the time of God's future decisive judgment when he will bring doom either for Israel (Amos 5.18–20) or for the nations (Isa. 2.12). Later it represented the vindication of Israel against the nations (Joel 3.1–3).

and wipe out the princelings<sup>b</sup> of Noph;  
 and never again shall a prince arise in Egypt.  
 Then I will put fear in that land,  
 14 I will lay Pathros waste and set fire to Zoan  
 and execute judgement on No.  
 15 I will pour out my rage upon Sin, the bastion of Egypt,  
 and destroy the horde of Noph.  
 16 I will set Egypt on fire, and Syene shall writhe in anguish;  
 the walls of No shall be breached and flood-waters shall burst into it.  
 17 The young men of On and Pi-beseth<sup>f</sup> shall fall by the sword  
 and the cities themselves go into captivity.  
 18 Daylight shall fail in Tahpanhes when I break the yoke of Egypt there;  
 then her boasted might shall be subdued;  
 a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters<sup>j</sup> shall go into captivity.  
 19 Thus I will execute judgement on Egypt,  
 and they shall know that I am the LORD.  
 20 This was the word of the LORD to me on the seventh day of the first month  
 21 in the eleventh year: Man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. See, it has not been bound up with dressings and bandage to give it  
 22 strength to wield a sword. These, therefore, are the words of the Lord GOD: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt; I will break both his arms, the sound and the broken, and make the  
 23 sword drop from his hand. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them over many lands.  
 24 Then I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand; but I will break Pharaoh's

arms, and he shall lie wounded and groaning before him. I will give 25 strength to the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall. Men will know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword in the hand of the king of Babylon, and he stretches it out over the land of Egypt. I will scatter the Egyptians among the 26 nations and disperse them over many lands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

On the first day of the third month 31 in the eleventh year this word came to me from the LORD: Man, say to 2 Pharaoh king of Egypt and all his horde:

What are you like in your greatness?

Look at Assyria: it was a cedar in 3 Lebanon,  
 whose fair branches overshadowed the forest,  
 towering high with its crown finding a way through the foliage.  
 Springs nourished it, underground 4 waters gave it height,  
 their streams washed the soil all round it  
 and sent forth their rills to every tree in the country.  
 So it grew taller than every other tree. 5  
 Its boughs were many, its branches spread far;  
 for water was abundant in the channels.  
 In its boughs all the birds of the air 6  
 had their nests,  
 under its branches all wild creatures bore their young,  
 and in its shadow all great nations made their home.  
 A splendid great tree it was, with 7  
 its long spreading boughs,  
 for its roots were beside abundant waters.  
 No cedar in God's garden 8  
 overshadowed it,

<sup>a</sup> Or false gods. <sup>i</sup> Or Bubastis. <sup>j</sup> Or daughter-towns.

30.20–26: The sword drops from Pharaoh's arm. 20: April 29, 587 B.C. 21: Pharaoh's sword arm was broken the year before when he was compelled to abandon his effort to lift the siege of Jerusalem. See 29.6–7 n. 22: Both his arms will be broken when Egypt will sink to complete military insignificance. This happened following its conquest by Cambyses in 525 B.C.

31.1–18: Egypt, proud cedar of Lebanon, will be hewed down like Assyria. 8: Many commentators see in God's garden a reference to a mythological earthly paradise; others, a symbol

no fir could compare with its boughs,  
and no plane-tree had such branches;  
not a tree in God's garden  
could rival its beauty.

9 I, the LORD, gave it beauty  
with its mass of spreading boughs,  
the envy of all the trees in Eden,  
the garden of God.

10 Therefore these are the words of the  
Lord GOD: Because it grew so high  
and pushed its crown up through the  
foliage, and its pride mounted as it  
11 grew, therefore I handed it over to a  
prince of the nations to deal with it;  
I made an example of it as its wicked-  
12 ness deserved. Strangers from the most  
ruthless of nations hewed it down and  
flung it away. Its sweeping boughs fell  
on the mountains and in all the valleys,  
and its branches lay broken beside all  
13 the streams in the land. All nations of  
the earth came out from under its shade  
and left it. All the birds of the air  
settled on its fallen trunk; the wild crea-  
14 tures all stood by its branches. Never  
again, therefore, shall the well-watered  
trees grow so high or push their  
crowns up through the foliage. Nor  
shall the strongest of them, well  
watered though they be, stand erect in  
their full height; for all have been given  
over to death, to the world below, to  
share the common doom and go down  
to the abyss.

15 These are the words of the Lord  
GOD: When he went down to Sheol,  
I closed the deep over him as a gate, I  
dammed its rivers, the great waters  
were held back. I put Lebanon in  
mourning for him, and all the trees of  
16 the country-side wilted. I made nations  
shake with the crash of his fall, when I  
brought him down to Sheol with those  
who go down to the abyss. From this  
all the trees of Eden, all the choicest

and best of Lebanon, all the well-  
watered trees, drew comfort in the  
world below. They too like him had  
gone down to Sheol, to those slain with  
the sword; and those who had lived in  
his shadow were scattered among the  
nations. Which among the trees of  
Eden was like you in glory and great-  
ness? Yet you will be brought down  
with the trees of Eden to the world  
below; you will lie with those who have  
been slain by the sword, in the company  
of the strengthless dead. This stands  
for Pharaoh and all his horde. This is  
the very word of the Lord GOD.

On the first day of the twelfth month 32  
in the twelfth year the word of the  
LORD came to me: Man, raise a dirge 2  
over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say  
to him:

Young lion of the nations, you are  
undone.

You were like a monster in the waters  
of the Nile

scattering the water with its snout,<sup>k,l</sup>  
churning the water with its feet  
and fouling the streams.

These are the words of the Lord 3  
GOD: When many nations are gathered  
together I will spread my net over you,  
and you will be dragged up in its  
meshes. I will fling you on land, dashing 4  
you down on the bare ground. I will let  
all the birds of the air settle upon you  
and all the wild beasts gorge themselves  
on your flesh. Your flesh I will lay on 5  
the mountains, and fill the valleys with  
the worms that feed on it. I will drench 6  
the land with your discharge, drench it  
with your blood to the very mountain-  
tops, and the watercourses shall be full  
of you. When I put out your light I will 7

<sup>k</sup> snout: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* streams.

<sup>l</sup> scattering . . . snout: *or heaving itself up in the streams.*

of God's care (Isa. 51.3) for the nations in endowing them with material resources. 12: Assyria's far-reaching administration broke down like *sweeping branches* when the trunk is cut; so too will Egypt's. 15: When Egypt *went down to Sheol* all the dependent nations shook and *wilted*. 18: *Slain by the sword*: those who suffered an untimely death.

32.1-32: A dirge over Egypt. This final prophecy against Egypt contains two oracles: vv. 1-16, a continuation of the monster allegory of ch. 29, and vv. 17-32, a dirge on the descent into Sheol of Pharaoh and his hordes to join the company of the dishonored dead. 1: March 3, 585 B.C. 2: *Fouling the streams*: doing violence to other nations by its violence. 3-4: The monster Egypt will be *dragged* out of the Nile onto the *bare ground*, to be seen and despoiled by the nations, called here *beasts* that *gorge* themselves on carrion. 5: To leave the *flesh* of the dead unburied was a great curse for the ancients. 7: These phenomena suggest the judgment of the

veil the sky and blacken its stars; I will veil the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. I will darken all the shining lights of the sky above you and bring darkness over your land. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

I will disquiet many peoples when I bring your broken army among the nations into lands you have never known. I will appal many peoples with your fate; when I brandish my sword in the faces of their kings, their hair shall stand on end. In the day of your downfall each shall tremble for his own fate from moment to moment. For these are the words of the Lord GOD: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. I will make the whole horde of you fall by the sword of warriors who are of all men the most ruthless. They shall make havoc of the pride of Egypt, and all its horde shall be wiped out. I will destroy all their cattle beside many waters. No foot of man, no hoof of beast, shall ever churn them up again. Then will I let their waters settle and their streams run smooth as oil. This is the very word of the Lord GOD. When I have laid Egypt waste, and the whole land is devastated, when I strike down all who dwell there, they shall know that I am the LORD.

This is a dirge, and the women of the nations shall sing it as a dirge. They shall sing it as a dirge, as a dirge over Egypt and all its horde. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

On the fifteenth day of the first month in the twelfth year, the word of the LORD came to me:

Man, raise a lament, you and the daughters of the nations, over the hordes of Egypt and her nobles, whom I will bring down<sup>m</sup> to the world below with those that go down to the abyss.

Are you better favoured than others?

Go down and be laid to rest with the strengthless dead.

A sword stands ready. Those who marched with her, and all her horde, shall fall into the midst of those slain by the sword. Warrior chieftains in Sheol speak to Pharaoh and those who aided him:

The strengthless dead, slain by the sword, have come down and are laid to rest. There is Assyria with all her company, her buried around her, all of them slain and fallen by the sword. Her graves are set in the recesses of the abyss, with her company buried around her, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, men who once filled the land of the living with terror. There is Elam, with all her hordes buried around her, all of them slain, fallen by the sword; they have gone down strengthless to the world below, men who struck terror into the land of the living but now share the disgrace of those that go down to the abyss. In the midst of the slain a resting-place has been made for her, with all her hordes buried around her; all of them strengthless, slain by the sword. For they who once struck terror into the land of the living now share the disgrace of those that go down to the abyss; they are assigned a place in the midst of the slain. There are Meshech and Tubal with all their hordes, with their buried around them, all of them strengthless and slain by the sword, men who once struck terror into the land of the living. Do they not rest with warriors fallen strengthless,<sup>n</sup> who have gone down to Sheol with their weapons, their swords under their heads and their shields over their bones,<sup>o</sup> though the terror of their prowess once lay on the land of the living? You also, Pharaoh, shall lie broken in the company of the strengthless dead, resting with those slain by the sword. There is Edom, her kings and all her princes, who, for all their

<sup>m</sup> her nobles . . . down: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>n</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. from strengthless ones.*  
<sup>o</sup> and . . . bones: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

day of the Lord; see Joel 2.1-2. 17: April 27, 586 B.C. 21: *Strengthless*: lit. "uncircumcised," and therefore excluded from the community of Israel and its God, even after death. The Israelites are not included in this multitude even though two degrees of existence are mentioned: honorable and dishonorable.

proww, have been lodged with those slain by the sword; they shall rest with the strengthless dead and with those that go down to the abyss. There are all the princes of the North and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror they inspired by their prowess. They rest strengthless with those slain by the sword, and they share the disgrace of those that go down to the abyss.

Pharaoh will see them and will take comfort for his lost hordes—Pharaoh who, with all his army, is slain by the sword, says the Lord GOD; though he spread<sup>p</sup> terror throughout the land of the living, yet he with all his horde is laid to rest with those that are slain by the sword, in the company of the strengthless dead. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

### *The remnant of Israel in the land*

33 THESE WERE THE WORDS OF THE LORD

2 to me: Man, say to your fellow-countrymen, When I set armies in motion against a land, its people choose one of themselves to be a watchman.

3 When he sees the enemy approaching and blows his trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone does not heed the warning and is overtaken by the enemy, he is responsible for his own fate. He is responsible because, when he heard the alarm, he paid no heed to it; if he had heeded it, he would have escaped. But if the watchman does not blow his trumpet or warn the people when he sees the enemy approaching, then any man who is killed is caught with all his sins upon him; but I will hold the watchman answerable for his death.

7 Man, I have appointed you a watchman for the Israelites. You will take messages from me and carry my warn-

ings to them. It may be that I pronounce sentence of death on a man because he is wicked; if you do not warn him to give up his ways, the guilt is his and because of his wickedness he shall die, but I will hold you answerable for his death. But if you have warned him to give up his ways, and he has not given them up, he will die because of his wickedness, but you will have saved yourself.

Man, say to the Israelites, You complain, 'We are burdened by our sins and offences; we are pining away because of them; we despair of life.' So tell them: As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no desire for the death of the wicked. I would rather that a wicked man should mend his ways and live. Give up your evil ways, give them up; O Israelites, why should you die?

Man, say to your fellow-countrymen, When a righteous man goes wrong, his righteousness shall not save him. When a wicked man mends his ways, his former wickedness shall not bring him down. When a righteous man sins, all his righteousness cannot save his life. It may be that, when I tell the righteous man that he will save his life, he presumes on his righteousness and does wrong; then none of his righteous acts will be remembered: he will die for the wrong he has done. It may be that when I pronounce sentence of death on the wicked, he mends his ways and does what is just and right: if he then restores the pledges he has taken, repays what he has stolen, and, doing no more wrong, follows the rules that ensure life, he shall live and not die. None of the sins he has committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live, because he does what is just and right.

Your fellow-countrymen are saying, 'The Lord acts without principle', but

*p* Prob. rdg.; *Heb.* I have spread.

33.1–37.28: Israel to be restored; the kingdom established. The prophet assures Israel that the Lord will accomplish her redemption.

33.1–20: A prophet's responsibility. Ideas from preceding chapters are paralleled here: With 33.1–6, compare 3.4–11; with 33.7–9, compare 3.16–21; with 33.10–20, compare 18.1–32; with 33.23–29, compare 12.17–20. 1–6: This particular definition of prophetic role is unique to Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar's advancing *armies* (v. 2) probably suggested the oracle; life or death depended possibly on the warning of a watchman. On the watchman's importance in the hills of Palestine, see 2 Kgs.9.17–28. 7–9: Ezekiel is here presumably in Palestine, not in Babylonia. See Introduction. 10–20: Compare with 18.2.–30.



it is their ways that are unprincipled.

18 When a righteous man gives up his righteousness and does wrong, he shall die because of it; and when a wicked man gives up his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live.

20 How, Israel, can you say that the Lord acts without principle, when I judge every man of you on his deeds?

21 On the fifth day of the tenth month in the twelfth year of our captivity, fugitives came to me from Jerusalem and told me that the city had fallen.

22 The evening before they arrived, the hand of the LORD had come upon me, and by the time they reached me in the morning the LORD had given me back my speech. My speech was restored and I was no longer dumb.

23 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, the inhabitants of these wastes on the soil of Israel say, 'When Abraham took possession of the land he was but one; now we are many, and the land has been granted to us in possession.' Tell them, therefore, that these are the words of the Lord GOD: You eat meat with the blood in it, you lift up your eyes to idols, you shed<sup>q</sup> blood; and yet you expect to possess the land! You trust to the sword, you commit abominations, you defile one another's wives; and you expect to possess the land! Tell them that these are the words of the Lord GOD: As I live, among the ruins they shall fall by the sword; in the open country I will give them for food to beasts: in dens and caves they shall die by pestilence.

28 I will make the land a desolate waste; her boasted might shall be brought to nothing, and the mountains of Israel shall be an untrodden desert. When I make the land a desolate waste because of all the abominations they have

committed, they will know that I am the LORD.

Man, your fellow-countrymen gather in groups and talk of you under walls and in doorways and say to one another, 'Let us go and see what message there is from the LORD.' So my people will come crowding in, as people do, and sit down in front of you. They will hear what you have to say, but they will not do it. 'Fine words!' they will say, but their hearts are set on selfish gain. You are no more to them than a singer of fine songs<sup>r</sup> with a lovely voice, or a clever harpist; they will listen to what you say but will certainly not do it. But when it comes, as come it will, they will know that there has been a prophet in their midst.

These were the words of the LORD to me: Prophecy, man, against the shepherds of Israel; prophecy and say to them, You shepherds, these are the words of the Lord GOD: How I hate the shepherds of Israel who care only for themselves! Should not the shepherd care for the sheep? You consume the milk, wear the wool, and slaughter the fat beasts, but you do not feed the sheep. You have not encouraged the weary, tended the sick, bandaged the hurt, recovered the straggler, or searched for the lost; and even the strong you have driven with ruthless severity. They are scattered, they have no shepherd, they have become the prey of wild beasts. My sheep go straying over the mountains and on every high hill, my flock is dispersed over the whole country, with no one to ask after them or search for them.

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the words of the LORD. As surely as I live,

<sup>q</sup> Or pour out.

<sup>r</sup> Fine words: or Love songs.

<sup>s</sup> fine songs: or love songs.

33.21-22: Jerusalem's fall. The date varies; where the MT reads *twelfth* year or January 8, 585 B.C., the Syr. and Sept. read "eleventh" or January 19, 586 B.C. See 24.26 n. 22: See 3.26-27 where Ezekiel seems not to be completely mute but only forbidden by the Lord to speak in certain circumstances. Compare 24.18-21, 26-27.

33.28: The desolation. Since the prediction of a *desolate waste* must be for the future, these words were spoken prior to the destruction of 587 B.C. The dates of v. 21 do not apply to this oracle.

33.30-33: The people listen, but do not heed. Such dubious pietism, blending *selfish gain* into a search for God's *message*, seems in vogue after the first capture of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.

34.1-31: The Lord as shepherd of his flock, Israel, is an image which Ezekiel inherited (Isa. 40.10-11; Jer. 23.1-6) and passed on to those who followed him (Zech. 13.7), including Jesus (Mt. 18.12-14; Jn. 10.1-18). 6: Worship at illicit *hill* shrines was encouraged or tolerated by most kings. See 2 Kgs. 12.3; 21.3; Jer. 50.6. 8: *Wild beasts*: the hostile neighboring peoples.

says the Lord GOD, because my sheep are ravaged by wild beasts and have become their prey for lack of a shepherd, because my shepherds have not asked after the sheep but have cared only for themselves and not for the sheep—therefore, you shepherds, hear the words of the LORD. These are the words of the Lord GOD: I am against the shepherds and will demand my sheep from them. I will dismiss those shepherds: they shall care only for themselves no longer; I will rescue my sheep from their jaws, and they shall feed on them no more.

For these are the words of the Lord GOD: Now I myself will ask after my sheep and go in search of them. As a shepherd goes in search of his sheep when his flock is dispersed all around him, so I will go in search of my sheep and rescue them, no matter where they were scattered in dark and cloudy days. I will bring them out from every nation, gather them in from other lands, and lead them home to their own soil. I will graze them on the mountains of Israel, by her streams and in all her green fields. I will feed them on good grazing-ground, and their pasture shall be the high mountains of Israel. There they will rest, there in good pasture, and find rich grazing on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my flock, I myself pen them in their fold, says the Lord GOD. I will search for the lost, recover the straggler, bandage the hurt, strengthen the sick, leave the healthy and strong to play, and give them their proper food.

As for you, my flock, these are the words of the Lord GOD: I will judge between one sheep and another. You rams and he-goats! Are you not satisfied with grazing on good herbage, that you must trample down the rest

with your feet? Or with drinking clear water, that you must churn up the rest with your feet? My flock has to eat what you have trampled and drink what you have churned up. These, therefore, are the words of the Lord GOD to them: Now I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean. You hustle the weary with flank and shoulder, you butt them with your horns until you have driven them away and scattered them abroad. Therefore I will save my flock, and they shall be ravaged no more; I will judge between one sheep and another. Then I will set over them one shepherd to take care of them, my servant David; he shall care for them and become their shepherd. I, the LORD, will become their God, and my servant David shall be a prince among them. I, the LORD, have spoken. I will make a covenant with them to ensure prosperity; I will rid the land of wild beasts, and men shall live in peace of mind on the open pastures and sleep in the woods. I will settle them in the neighbourhood of my hill and send them rain in due season, blessed rain. Trees in the country-side shall bear their fruit, the land shall yield its produce, and men shall live in peace of mind on their own soil. They shall know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yokes and rescue them from those who have enslaved them. They shall never be ravaged by the nations again nor shall wild beasts devour them; they shall live in peace of mind, with no one to alarm them. I will give prosperity to their plantations; they shall never again be victims of famine in the land nor any longer bear the taunts of the nations. They shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they are my people Israel, says the Lord GOD. You are my

10: A play upon ideas; lit.: "I will stop them from feeding the flock so that they may no longer feed themselves [upon it]." 11-14: God will *tend his flock*: a continuation of his saving action performed in the Exodus from Egypt. Compare Isa.63.7-19. 17: The Lord's judging *between one sheep and another* is a concrete application of the principle—not found explicit in other prophets—of individual responsibility (see 33.8-9). 18: *Churn up*: abuse of power by exploiting the weak; see 32.2 for the same indictment of Egypt. 19: The *fat sheep* are the self-satisfied, hardhearted and insensitive people; see Deut.32.15; Jer.5.28. 23: The *one shepherd* points to a renewed dynasty of David, uniting the two kingdoms separated after Solomon (see Hos.1.11). 24: Ezekiel envisions a restored Israel politically similar to the period after the Exodus. The ruler will be a *prince*, not an absolute king with power to dictate (2 Kgs.16.10-18) in matters of worship and conduct as the kings had done. Compare 45.13-17 n.

flock, my people, the flock I feed, and I am your God. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

- 35 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, look towards the hill-country of Seir and prophesy against it. Say, 3 These are the words of the Lord God;

O hill-country of Seir, I am against you:

I will stretch out my hand over you and make you a desolate waste.

- 4 I will lay your cities in ruins and you shall be made desolate; thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

- 5 For you have maintained an immemorial feud and handed over the Israelites to the sword in the hour of their doom, at the time of their final punishment.

- 6 Therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I make blood your destiny, and blood shall pursue you; you are most surely guilty of blood, and blood shall pursue you.

- 7 I will make the hill-country of Seir a desolate waste and put an end to all in it who pass to and fro;

- 8 I will fill your hills and your valleys with its slain, and those slain by the sword shall fall into your streams.

- 9 I will make you desolate for ever, and your cities shall not be inhabited; thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

- 10 You say, The two nations and the two countries shall be mine and I will take possession of them, though the

LORD is' there. Therefore, as I live, 11 says the Lord GOD, your anger and jealousy shall be requited, for I will do to you what you have done in your hatred against them. I shall be known among you when I judge you; you 12 shall know that I am the LORD. I have heard all your blasphemies; you have said, 'The mountains of Israel are desolate and have been given to us to devour.' You have set yourselves up 13 against me and spoken recklessly against me. I myself have heard you. These are the words of the Lord GOD: 14 I will make you so desolate that the whole world will gloat over you. I will do to you as you did to Israel my own possession when you gloated over its desolation. O hill-country of Seir, you will be desolate, and it will be the end of all Edom. Thus men will know that I am the LORD.

And do you, man, prophesy to the 36 mountains of Israel and say, Mountains of Israel, hear the words of the LORD. These are the words of the Lord GOD: 2 The enemy has said, 'Aha! now the everlasting highlands are ours.' Therefore prophesy and say, These are the words of the Lord GOD: You mountains of Israel, all round you men gloated over you and trampled you down when you were seized and occupied by the rest of the nations; your name was bandied about in the common talk of men. Therefore, listen 4 to the words of the Lord GOD when he speaks to the mountains and hills, to the streams and valleys, to the desolate palaces and deserted cities, all plundered and despised by the rest of the nations round you. These are the words 5 of the Lord GOD: In the fire of my jealousy I have spoken plainly against the rest of the nations, and against Edom above all. For Edom, swollen with triumphant scorn, seized on my

<sup>1</sup> Or has been.

35.1-15: The indictment of Edom. 1-5: A lawsuit is prepared for the recovery of the mountains of Israel (ch. 36). The defendant is *the hill-country of Seir*, which is Edom. The accusation is the oppression of Judah by occupying its lands extensively in *its hour of doom*, the destruction of 587 B.C. Compare Obad. 1-21. 6: The verdict is: *guilty of blood*; and the sentence: *blood shall pursue you*, with the Lord himself as avenger. 10: *Shall be mine*: second indictment. 11: The verdict: *guilty of anger and jealousy*; the sentence: exact retaliation; see Exod. 21.23-25.

36.1-38: Mountains of Israel will be like a garden of Eden. 1-11: The mountains of Israel are personified as successful plaintiffs. The verdict is the *fire of the Lord's jealousy against the rest of the nations* (v. 5); the mountains in compensation are to *yield fruit* and have the Lord

land to hold it up to public contempt.  
 6 Therefore prophesy over the soil of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, the streams and valleys, These are the words of the Lord GOD: I have spoken my mind in jealousy and anger because you have had to endure the taunts of all nations. Therefore, says the Lord GOD, I have sworn with uplifted hand that the nations round about shall be punished for<sup>u</sup> their taunts. But you, mountains of Israel, you shall put forth your branches and yield your fruit for my people Israel, for their home-coming is near. See now, I am for you, I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. I will plant many men upon you—the whole house of Israel. The cities shall again be inhabited and the palaces rebuilt. I will plant many men and beasts upon you; they shall increase and be fruitful. I will make you populous as in days of old and more prosperous than you were at first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD. I will make men—my people Israel—tread your paths again. They shall settle in you, and you shall be their possession; but you shall never again rob them of their children.  
 13 These are the words of the Lord GOD: People say that you are a land that devours men and robs your tribes of their children. But you shall never devour men any more nor rob your tribes of their children, says the Lord GOD. I will never let you hear the taunts of the nations again nor shall you have to endure the reproaches of the peoples. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.  
 16 These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, when the Israelites lived on their own soil they defiled it with their ways and deeds; their ways were foul and disgusting in my sight. I poured out my fury upon them because of the blood they had poured out upon the land, and the idols with which they

had defiled it. I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed among different countries; I passed on them the sentence which their ways and deeds deserved. When they came among those nations, they caused my holy name to be profaned wherever they came: men said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and it is from his land that they have come.' And I spared them for the sake of my holy name which the Israelites had profaned among the nations to whom they had gone.

Therefore tell the Israelites that these are the words of the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, you Israelites, that I am acting, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the peoples where you have gone. I will hallow my great name, which has been profaned among those nations. When they see that I reveal my holiness through you, the nations will know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD. I will take you out of the nations and gather you from every land and bring you to your own soil. I will sprinkle clean water over you, and you shall be cleansed from all that defiles you; I will cleanse you from the taint of all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit into you and make you conform to my statutes, keep my laws and live by them. You shall live in the land which I gave to your ancestors; you shall become my people, and I will become your God. I will save you from all that defiles you; I will call to the corn and make it plentiful; I will bring no more famine upon you. I will make the trees bear abundant fruit and the ground yield heavy crops, so that you will never again have to bear the reproach of famine among the nations. You will recall your wicked ways and

<sup>u</sup> be punished for: or bear.

*plant many men on them* (v. 10), thus reversing the oracles of Israel's doom pronounced in chs. 6 and 7. 26–27: The heart being for the ancients the seat of the conscious processes of knowing and willing, a *heart of stone* is imperceptive and one which chooses not to be aware of what the Lord has done, what his demands are, and does not know how to respond; by contrast a *heart of flesh* is a sensitive human heart fully aware of its relationship with God, and so capable of receiving a new measure of his life-giving activity, a *new spirit*. 29–31: In other prophets, the process of redemption involved the people's sin, their punishment, and, upon doing penance, their restoration. Ezekiel promises that God will redeem Israel out of his

- evil deeds, and you will loathe yourselves because of your wickedness and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I am acting; be sure of that, says the Lord GOD. Feel, then, the shame and disgrace of your ways, men of Israel.
- These are the words of the Lord GOD: When I cleanse you of all your wickedness, I will re-people the cities, and the palaces shall be rebuilt. The land now desolate shall be tilled, instead of lying waste for every passer-by to see. Men will say that this same land which was waste has become like a garden of Eden, and people will make their homes in the cities once ruined, wasted, and shattered, but now well fortified. The nations still left around you will know that it is I, the LORD, who have rebuilt the shattered cities and planted anew the waste land; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.
- These are the words of the Lord GOD: Yet again will I let the Israelites ask me to act in their behalf. I will make their men numerous as sheep, like the sheep offered as holy-gifts, like the sheep in Jerusalem at times of festival. So shall their ruined cities be filled with human flocks, and they shall know that I am the LORD.
- The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he carried me out by his spirit and put me down in a plain full of bones. He made me go to and fro across them until I had been round them all;<sup>v</sup> they covered the plain, countless numbers of them, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Man, can these bones live again?' I answered, 'Only thou knowest that, Lord GOD.' He said to me, 'Prophecy over these bones and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. This is the
- word of the Lord GOD to these bones: I will put breath<sup>w</sup> into you, and you shall live. I will fasten sinews on you, bring flesh upon you, overlay you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.' I began to prophesy as he had bidden me, and as I prophesied there was a rustling sound and the bones fitted themselves together. As I looked, sinews appeared upon them, flesh covered them, and they were overlaid with skin, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the wind, prophecy, man, and say to it, These are the words of the Lord GOD: Come, O wind, come from every quarter and breathe into these slain, that they may come to life.' I began to prophesy as he had bidden me: breath came into them; they came to life and rose to their feet, a mighty host. He said to me, 'Man, these bones are the whole people of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dry, our thread of life is snapped, our web is severed from the loom."<sup>x</sup> Prophecy, therefore, and say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: O my people, I will open your graves and bring you up from them, and restore you to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and bring you up from them, O my people. Then I will put my spirit<sup>y</sup> into you and you shall live, and I will settle you on your own soil, and you shall know that I the LORD have spoken and will act. This is the very word of the LORD.'
- These were the words of the LORD to me: Man, take one leaf of a wooden tablet and write on it, 'Judah and his

<sup>v</sup> He made . . . all: or He made me pass all round them.  
<sup>w</sup> Or wind or spirit.  
<sup>x</sup> our web . . . loom: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* we are completely cut off.  
<sup>y</sup> Or breath.

sheer goodness, "for the sake of my holy name" (vv. 21–22), leading the people thereafter to repent.

**37.1–14: The dry bones of Israel's hopes will live again.** Central to the passage is a remarkable play on the Heb. word *ruah*, with its basic meaning, "breath," being applied in three contexts: (a) wind, the life-giving breath in nature; (b) the life-supporting breath of the nostrils in animals and man; (c) spirit, the life-creating power of God. Ezekiel does not refer directly to personal resurrection. His emphasis on individual responsibility and a person's continued life with God, which parallels national survival, at least raises the question. **2:** *Very dry:* lifeless a long time. **8–9:** The perfect and more enduring new creation of man also occurs in two stages; compare Gen.2.7. **11:** Israel's *bones are dry*, being *completely cut off* (Tfn. x) from the core of life, the covenant.

**37.15–28: One nation (Israel), one king (David), and one God (the Lord).** **16:** *Joseph* is a synonym for the Northern Kingdom, Israel, sometimes called Ephraim after its leading tribe.

associates of Israel.' Then take another leaf and write on it, 'Joseph, the leaf of Ephraim and all his associates of Israel.' Now bring the two together to form one tablet; then they will be a folding tablet in your hand. When your fellow-countrymen ask you to tell them what you mean by this, say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: I am taking the leaf of Joseph, which belongs to Ephraim and his associate tribes of Israel, and joining<sup>a</sup> to it the leaf of Judah. Thus I shall make them one tablet, and they shall be one in my hand. The leaves on which you write shall be visible in your hand for all to see. Then say to them, These are the words of the Lord GOD: I am gathering up the Israelites from their places of exile among the nations; I will assemble them from every quarter and restore them to their own soil. I will make them one single nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and they shall have one king; they shall no longer be two nations or divided into two kingdoms. They shall never again be defiled with their idols, their loathsome ways and all their disloyal acts; I will rescue them from all their sinful backsliding and purify them. Thus they shall become my people, and I will become their God. My servant David shall become king over them, and they shall have one shepherd. They shall conform to my laws, they shall observe and carry out my statutes. They shall live in the land which I gave my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their descendants shall live there for ever, and my servant David shall for ever be their prince. I will make a covenant with them to bring them prosperity; this covenant shall be theirs for ever.<sup>a</sup> I will greatly increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary for ever in their midst. They shall live

under the shelter of my dwelling; I will become their God and they shall become my people. The nations shall know that I the LORD am keeping Israel sacred to myself, because my sanctuary is in the midst of them for ever.

*God's triumph over the world*

THESE WERE THE WORDS OF THE LORD to me: Man, look towards Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, in the land of Magog, and prophesy against him. Say, These are the words of the Lord GOD: I am against you, Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you about, I will put hooks in your jaws. I will lead you out, you and your whole army, horses and horsemen, all fully equipped, a great host with shield and buckler, every man wielding a sword, and with them the men of Pharas, Cush, and Put, all with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its squadrons, Beth-togarmah with its squadrons from the far recesses of the north—a great concourse of peoples with you. Be prepared; make ready, you and all the host which has gathered to join you, and hold yourselves in reserve for me.<sup>b</sup> After many days you will be summoned; in years to come you will enter a land restored from ruin, whose people are gathered from many nations upon the mountains of Israel that have been desolate so long. The Israelites, brought out from the nations, will all be living undisturbed; and you will come up, driving in like a hurricane; you will cover the land like a cloud, you and all your squadrons, a great concourse of peoples.

This is the word of the Lord GOD: 10

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds them.

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and I will put them.

<sup>b</sup> and hold . . . me: or and you shall be their rallying-point.

21–28: God will unite the *two kingdoms* to himself by a new *covenant*. The description of the new land and new Temple (chs. 40–48) should logically follow here.

38.1–39.29: *Gog will be destroyed*. God's triumph over the world includes primarily the triumph of Israel over all hostile evil forces. Resembling other biblical apocalypses (Isa. chs. 24–27; Dan. chs. 9–14; Zech. chs. 9–14), these verses are an early form of the genre.

38.1–39.7: *Universal terror against Gog*, who sets in motion against Israel all the forces of evil and hostility. 2: *Gog* resembles all Israel's persecutors, a symbol of all wickedness menacing it, but neither he nor the land of *Magog* nor its place names can be identified with certainty.

4–13: The *army of Gog* is composed of elements from the four corners of the author's world: Gomer, north; Ethiopia, south; Tarshish, west; Dedan, east; it is called out from the *far*

At that time a thought will enter your  
 11 head and you will plan evil. You will  
 say, 'I will attack a land of open  
 villages, I will fall upon a people living  
 12 quiet and undisturbed, undefended by  
 walls, with neither gates nor bars.' You  
 will expect to come plundering, spoil-  
 ing, and stripping bare the ruins where  
 men now live again, a people gathered  
 out of the nations, a people acquiring  
 cattle and goods, and making their  
 home at the very centre of the world.  
 13 Sheba and Dedan, the traders of  
 Tarshish and her leading merchants,  
 will say to you, 'Is it for plunder that  
 you have come? Have you gathered  
 your host to get spoil, to carry off  
 silver and gold, to seize cattle and  
 goods, to collect rich spoil?'  
 14 Therefore, prophesy, man, and say  
 to Gog, These are the words of the  
 Lord GOD: In that day when my  
 people Israel is living undisturbed, will  
 15 you not awake and come with many  
 nations from your home in the far  
 recesses of the north, all riding on  
 horses, a great host, a mighty army?  
 16 You will come up against my people  
 Israel; and in those future days you  
 will be like a cloud covering the earth.  
 I will bring you against my land, that  
 the nations may know me, when they  
 see me prove my holiness at your  
 expense, O Gog.  
 17 This is the word of the Lord GOD:  
 When I spoke in days of old through  
 my servants the prophets, who prophesied  
 in those days unceasingly, it was  
 you whom I threatened to bring  
 18 against Israel. On that day, when at  
 length Gog comes against the land of  
 Israel, says the Lord GOD, my wrath  
 19 will boil over. In my jealousy and in  
 the heat of my anger I swear that on  
 that day there shall be a great earth-  
 quake throughout the land of Israel.  
 20 The fish in the sea and the birds in the  
 air, the wild animals and all reptiles  
 that move on the ground, all mankind  
 on the face of the earth, all shall be  
 shaken before me. Mountains shall be  
 torn up, the terraced hills collapse, and

every wall crash to the ground. I will  
 21 summon universal terror against Gog,  
 says the Lord GOD, and his men shall  
 turn their swords against one another.  
 I will bring him to judgement with  
 22 pestilence and bloodshed; I will pour  
 down teeming rain, hailstones hard as  
 rock, and fire and brimstone, upon him,  
 upon his squadrons, upon the whole  
 concourse of peoples with him. Thus  
 23 will I prove myself great and holy and  
 make myself known to many nations;  
 they shall know that I am the LORD.

And you, man, prophesy against  
 39 Gog and say, These are the words of  
 the Lord GOD: I am against you, Gog,  
 prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.  
 I will turn you about and drive you, I  
 2 will fetch you up from the far recesses  
 of the north and bring you to the  
 mountains of Israel. I will strike the  
 3 bow from your left hand and dash the  
 arrows from your right hand. There  
 4 on the mountains of Israel you shall  
 fall, you, all your squadrons, and your  
 allies; I will give you as food to the  
 birds of prey and the wild beasts. You  
 5 shall fall on the bare ground, for it is I  
 who have spoken. This is the very word  
 of the Lord GOD. I will send fire on  
 6 Magog and on those who live undisturbed  
 in the coasts and islands, and they shall  
 know that I am the LORD. My holy name  
 I will make known in  
 7 the midst of my people Israel and will  
 no longer let it be profaned; the nations  
 shall know that in Israel I, the  
 LORD, am holy.

Behold, it comes; it shall be, says the  
 8 Lord GOD, the day of which I have  
 spoken. The dwellers in the cities of  
 9 Israel shall come out and gather  
 weapons to light their fires, buckler and  
 shield, bow and arrows, throwing-stick  
 and lance, and they shall kindle fires  
 with them for seven years. They shall  
 10 take no wood from the fields nor cut it  
 from the forests but shall light their  
 fires with the weapons. Thus they will  
 plunder their plunderers and spoil their  
 spoilers. This is the very word of the  
 Lord GOD.

*recesses of the north*, the mythological dwelling of good and evil. 12: *Centre of the world*: Jerusalem; see 5.5. 39.7: To know God or his name is to experience God's reality and to acknowledge it by obedience.

39.8-20: Evil turned to good in the complete slaughter of Gog. 8: The verse hearkens back to 38.17.

11 In that day I will give to Gog, instead of<sup>c</sup> a burial-ground in Israel, the valley of Abarim east of the Sea.<sup>d</sup> There they shall bury Gog and all his horde, and all Abarim will be blocked; and they shall call it the Valley of Gog's

12 Horde. For seven months the Israelites shall bury them and purify the land; 13 all the people shall take their share in the burying. The day that I win myself honour shall be a memorable day for them. This is the very word of the Lord

14 GOD. Men shall be picked for the regular duty of going through the country and searching for<sup>e</sup> any left above ground, to purify the land; they shall begin their search at the end of the

15 seven months. They shall go through the country, and whenever one of them sees a human bone he shall put a marker beside it until it has been buried

16 in the Valley of Gog's Horde. So no more shall be heard of that great horde,<sup>f</sup> and the land will be purified.

17 Man, these are the words of the Lord GOD: Cry to every bird that flies and to all the wild beasts: Come, assemble, gather from every side to my sacrifice, the great sacrifice I am making for you on the mountains of Israel; eat flesh

18 and drink blood, eat the flesh of warriors and drink the blood of princes of the earth; all these are your rams and sheep, he-goats and bulls, and

19 buffaloes of Bashan. You shall cram yourselves with fat and drink yourselves drunk on blood at the sacrifice

20 which I am preparing for you. At my table you shall eat your fill of horses and riders, of warriors and all manner of fighting men. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

21 I will show my glory among the nations; all shall see the judgement

that I execute and the heavy hand that I lay upon them. From that day forwards 22 the Israelites shall know that I am the LORD their God. The nations shall 23 know that the Israelites went into exile for their iniquity, because they were faithless to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they fell, every one of them, by the sword. I dealt with them 24 as they deserved, defiled and rebellious as they were, and hid my face from them.

These, therefore, are the words of the 25 Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and show my affection for all Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget 26 their shame and all their unfaithfulness to me, when they are at home again on their own soil, undisturbed, with no one to alarm them. When I bring them 27 home out of the nations and gather them from the lands of their enemies, I will make them an example of my holiness, for many nations to see. They 28 will know that I am the LORD their God, because I who sent them into exile among the nations will bring them together again on the soil of their own land and leave none of them behind. No longer will I hide my face 29 from them, I who have poured out my spirit upon Israel. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

### The restored theocracy

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, ON 40 the tenth day of the month, in the

*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds there.

*d* That is the Dead Sea.

*e* searching for: prob. rdg.; Heb. burying those who are passing through.

*f* So . . . horde: prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.

11: *Abarim*: play on words with *oberim*, Heb. "travelers," who will be blocked and so reminded of God's action. The *Sea* is the Dead Sea. 15: Unburied bodies make the land unclean. 17-20: An evil army other than Gog's, which has been buried, is slaughtered and then offered as sacrifices for wild beasts, thus reversing the usual practice of animal sacrifices offered for men. The significance of this is not clear.

39.21-29: End of the oracles. The only relation between this passage and Gog is the theme of Israel's exaltation after exile and the vindication of God's holiness in accomplishing it.

40.1-48.35: Revelation of "Utopia." It is described in a vision extending over eight chapters. Containing precise building plans, rubrics for ritual, and legal enactments—none of which was ever realized, and perhaps not meant to be—the passage aims to portray graphically the religious, social and political structures of a society termed "The-Lord-is-there" (*Jehovah-shammah*, 48.35). It is a religious Utopia, the ideal postexilic Jewish community in its relations with the Lord. Most interpreters agree that some of this material is not Ezekiel's but comes from the postexilic community that developed following his inspiration.



twenty-fifth year of our exile, that is  
 fourteen years after the destruction of  
 the city, on that very day, the hand of  
 the LORD came upon me and he brought  
 me there. In a vision God brought me  
 to the land of Israel and set me on a  
 very high mountain, where I saw what  
 seemed the buildings of a city facing  
 me. He led me towards it, and I saw a  
 man like a figure of bronze holding a  
 cord of linen thread and a measuring-  
 rod, and standing at the gate. 'Man,'  
 he said to me, 'look closely and listen  
 carefully; mark well all that I show you,  
 for this is why you have been brought  
 here. Tell the Israelites all that you see.'  
 Round the outside of the temple ran  
 a wall. The length of the rod which the  
 man was holding was six cubits, reckon-  
 ing by the long cubit which was one  
 cubit and a hand's breadth. He  
 measured the thickness and the height  
 of the wall; each was one rod. He came  
 to a gate which faced eastwards, went  
 up its steps and measured the threshold  
 of the gateway; its depth was one rod.  
 Each cell was one rod long and one rod  
 wide; the space between the cells five  
 cubits, and the threshold of the gateway  
 at the end of the vestibule on the side  
 facing the temple one rod. He measured  
 the vestibule of the gate and found it  
 eight cubits, with pilasters two cubits  
 thick; the vestibule of the gateway lay  
 at the end near the temple. Now the  
 cells of the gateway, looking back  
 eastwards, were three in number on  
 each side; all three of the same size, and  
 their pilasters on each side of the same  
 size also. He measured the entrance into  
 the gateway; it was ten cubits wide,  
 and the gateway itself throughout its  
 length thirteen cubits wide. In front of  
 the cells on each side lay a kerb, one  
 cubit wide; each cell was six cubits by  
 six. He measured the width of the gate-  
 way through the cell doors which faced

one another, from the back of one cell  
 to the back of the opposite cell; he  
 made it twenty-five cubits, and the  
 vestibule twenty cubits, across; the  
 gateway on every side projected into  
 the court. From the front of the  
 entrance-gate to the outer face of the  
 vestibule of the inner gate the distance  
 was fifty cubits. Both cells and pilasters  
 had loopholes all round inside the  
 gateway, and the vestibule had win-  
 dows all round within and palms  
 carved on each pilaster.

He brought me to the outer court,  
 and I saw rooms and a pavement all  
 round the court: in all, thirty rooms on  
 the pavement. The pavement ran up  
 to the side of the gateways, as wide as  
 they were long; this was the lower  
 pavement. He measured the width of  
 the court from the front of the lower  
 gateway to the outside of the inner  
 gateway; it was a hundred cubits. He  
 led me round to the north and I saw a  
 gateway facing northwards, belonging  
 to the outer court, and he measured its  
 length and its breadth. Its cells, three  
 on each side, together with its pilasters  
 and its vestibule, were the same size as  
 those of the first gateway, fifty cubits  
 long by twenty-five wide. So too its  
 windows, and those of<sup>g</sup> its vestibule,  
 and its palms were the same size as  
 those of the gateway which faced east;  
 it was approached by seven steps with  
 its vestibule facing them. A gate like  
 that on the east side led to the inner  
 court opposite the northern gateway;  
 he measured from gateway to gateway,  
 and it was a hundred cubits. Then he  
 led me round to the south, and I found  
 a gateway facing southwards. He  
 measured its cells, its pilasters, and its  
 vestibule, and found it the same size

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds pilaster.  
<sup>h</sup> those of: prob. rdg.: Heb. om.

40.1-47: The new Temple: its enclosure. 1: *Beginning of the year*: Heb., *r'oš haššāna*. In modern Judaism this phrase would indicate the Feast of the New Year which is celebrated on the first day of the month of Tishri (September-October). In Ezekiel all dates are derived from the ancient religious calendar in which the year began in the spring. Hence the *tenth day of the month* is probably April 28, 573 B.C. 5: *The length of the rod* was about 10 feet 4 inches long. The long cubit, an ancient standard, was seven hands' breadth or 20.60 inches, and the newer cubit was six hands' breadth or 17.5 inches. In choosing the ancient measure, Ezekiel indicates a return to ancient standards (and/or possibly principles) in the new community. 6: *Gate*: of the new Temple. Built on a high mountain (17.23), the new Temple rose above successive elevations of seven, eight and ten steps; see vv. 22,26,31,34,49. The Temple stood on the last

25 as the others, fifty cubits long by  
twenty-five wide. Both gateway and  
vestibule had windows all round like  
26 the others. It was approached by seven  
steps with a vestibule facing them and  
27 palms carved on each pilaster. The  
inner court had a gateway facing south-  
wards, and he measured from gateway  
to gateway; it was a hundred cubits.

28 He brought me into the inner court  
through the southern gateway, mea-  
sured it and found it the same size as  
29 the others. So were its cells, pilasters,  
and vestibule, fifty cubits long by  
twenty-five wide. It and its vestibule  
31 had windows all round.<sup>i</sup> Its vestibule  
faced the outer court; it had palms  
carved on its pilasters, and eight steps  
led up to it.

32 Then he brought me into the inner  
court, towards the east, and measured  
the gateway and found it the same size  
33 as the others. So too were its cells,  
pilasters, and vestibule; it and its  
vestibule had windows all round, and  
it was fifty cubits long by twenty-five  
34 wide. Its vestibule faced the outer court  
and had a palm carved on each  
35 pilaster; eight steps led up to it. Then  
he brought me to the north gateway  
and measured it and found it the same  
36 size as the others. So were its cells,  
pilasters, and vestibule, and it had  
windows all round; it was fifty cubits  
37 long by twenty-five wide. Its vestibule  
faced the outer court and had palms  
carved on the pilaster at each side;  
eight steps led up to it.

38 There was a room opening out from  
the vestibule of the gateway;<sup>j</sup> here the  
39 whole-offerings were washed. In the  
vestibule of the gateway were two  
tables on each side, at which to slaugh-  
ter the whole-offering, the sin-offering,  
40 and the guilt-offering. At the corner on  
the outside, as one goes up to the  
opening of the northern gateway, stood  
two tables, and two more at the other  
corner of the vestibule of the gateway.

Another four stood on each side at the 41  
corner of the gateway, eight tables in  
all at which slaughtering was done.  
Four tables used for the whole-offering 42  
were of hewn stone, each a cubit and a  
half long by a cubit and a half wide  
and a cubit high; and on them they put  
the instruments used for the whole-  
offering and other sacrifices. The flesh 43  
of the offerings was on the tables, and  
ledges a hand's breadth in width were  
fixed all round facing inwards.

Then he brought me right into the 44  
inner court, and I saw two rooms in  
the inner court, one at the corner of the  
northern gateway, facing south, and  
one at the corner of the southern gate-  
way, facing north. This room facing 45  
south, he told me, is for the priests who  
have charge of the temple. The room 46  
facing north is for the priests who have  
charge of the altar; these are the sons  
of Zadok, who alone of the Levites  
may come near to serve the LORD. He 47  
measured the court; it was square, a  
hundred cubits each way, and the altar  
lay in front of the temple.

Then he brought me into the 48  
vestibule of the temple, and measured  
a pilaster of the vestibule; it was five  
cubits on each side, the width of the  
gateway fourteen cubits and that of the  
corners of the gateway three cubits in  
each direction. The vestibule was 49  
twenty cubits long by twelve wide; ten  
steps led up to it, and by the pilasters  
rose pillars, one on each side.

Then he brought me into the sanc- 41  
tuary and measured the pilasters; they  
were six cubits wide on each side. The 2  
opening was ten cubits wide and its  
corners five cubits wide in each direc-  
tion. He measured its length; it was  
forty cubits, and its width twenty. He 3  
went inside and measured the pilasters  
at the opening; they were two cubits;

<sup>i</sup> So some MSS.; others add (30) It had vestibules all round, and it was twenty-five cubits long by five wide.  
<sup>j</sup> the vestibule of the gateway: *prob. rdg.*: *Hcb.* pilasters, the gates.

elevation crowning the land as the Lord's throne; see 43.7. 25: The gateway and windows all round enabled guards to keep out any one who might profane the Temple. 39: The emphasis on sin-offering and guilt-offering, expiatory sacrifices, stems from a keener sense of culpability and responsibility following the Exile. 45-46: The Levites are divided into two ranks, those having charge of the temple, performing work formerly done by foreign slaves, and a superior rank in charge of altar sacrifices; see 43.19; 44.10-15.

40.48-42.20: The new Temple, like other ancient temples, had three well defined areas: the vestibule (vv. 48-49); the sanctuary (41.1-2); the Holy of Holies (41.4). 49: Two pillars stood in

the opening itself was six cubits, and the corners of the opening were seven cubits in each direction. Then he measured the room at the far end of the sanctuary; its length and its breadth were each twenty cubits. He said to me, 'This is the Holy of Holies.'

He measured the wall of the temple; it was six cubits high, and each arcade all round the house was four cubits wide. The arcades were arranged in three tiers, each tier in thirty sections. In the wall all round the temple there were intakes for the arcades, so that they could be supported without being fastened into the wall of the temple.

The higher up the arcades were, the broader they were all round by the addition of the intakes, one above the other all round the temple; the temple itself had a ramp running upwards on a base, and in this way one went up from the lowest to the highest tier by way of the middle tier.

Then I saw a raised pavement all round the temple, and the foundations of the arcades were flush with it and measured a full rod, six cubits high.

The outer wall of the arcades was five cubits thick. There was an unoccupied area beside the terrace<sup>k</sup> which was adjacent to the temple, and the arcades opened on to this area, one opening facing northwards and one southwards; the unoccupied area was five cubits wide on all sides. There was a free space<sup>m</sup> twenty cubits wide all round the temple. On the western side, at the far end of the free space, stood a building seventy cubits wide; its wall was five cubits thick all round, and its length ninety cubits.

He measured the temple; it was a hundred cubits long; and the free space, the building, and its walls, a hundred cubits in all. The eastern front of the temple and the free space was a hundred cubits wide. He measured the length of the building at the far end of the free space to the west of the

temple, and its corridors on each side: a hundred cubits.

The sanctuary, the inner shrine and the outer vestibule were panelled; the embrasures all round the three of them were framed with wood all round. From the ground up to the windows and above the door, both in the inner and outer chambers, round all the walls, inside and out, were carved figures,<sup>n</sup> cherubim and palm-trees, a palm between every pair of cherubim. Each cherub had two faces: one the face of a man, looking towards one palm-tree, and the other the face of a lion, looking towards another palm-tree. Such was the carving round the whole of the temple. The cherubim and the palm-trees were carved from the ground up to the top of the doorway and on the wall of the sanctuary. The door-posts of the sanctuary were square.<sup>o</sup>

In front of<sup>p</sup> the Holy Place was what seemed an altar of wood, three cubits high and two cubits long; it was fitted with cornerposts, and its base and sides also were of wood. He told me that this was the table which stood before the LORD. The sanctuary had a double door, and the Holy Place also had a double door: the double doors had swinging leaves, a pair for each door. Cherubim and palm-trees like those on the walls were carved on them.<sup>q</sup> Outside there was a wooden cornice over the vestibule; on both sides of the vestibule were loopholes, with palm-trees carved at the corners.<sup>r</sup>

Then he took me to the outer court round by the north and brought me to the rooms facing the free space and

<sup>k</sup> beside the terrace: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* between the arcades.

<sup>l</sup> Verses 10 and 11 transposed.

<sup>m</sup> There . . . space: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Between the rooms.

<sup>n</sup> carved figures: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* measures and carving.

<sup>o</sup> The door-posts . . . square: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* unintelligible.

<sup>p</sup> In front of: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* The face of.

<sup>q</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds on the doors of the sanctuary.

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds and the arcades of the temple and the cornices.

front of Solomon's Temple; see 1 Kgs.7.21,41. 41.12: *On the western side . . . a building*: possibly a place for keeping animals destined for sacrifice. 22: *The altar of wood* seems to be either the altar of incense or the *table* of the Presence bearing the twelve cakes of pure wheat flour, a witness to the covenant between the Lord and the twelve tribes; see Lev.24.5-9; 1 Kgs.6.20-22. 42.1-14: Accessory structures provide rooms for priests to eat their share of the sacrifices, for storing vestments and other supplies. The shape and disposition of the buildings are unclear.

2 facing the buildings to the north. The length along the northern side was a hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty.  
 3 Facing the free space measuring twenty cubits, which adjoined the inner court, and facing the pavement of the outer court, were corridors at three levels  
 4 corresponding to each other. In front of the rooms a passage, ten cubits wide and a hundred cubits long, ran towards the inner court; their entrances faced  
 5 northwards. The upper rooms were shorter than the lower and middle rooms, because the corridors took  
 6 building space from them. For they were all at three levels and had no pillars as the courts had, so that the lower and middle levels were recessed  
 7 from the ground upwards. An outside wall, fifty cubits long, ran parallel to the rooms and in front of them, on the  
 8 side of the outer court. The rooms adjacent to the outer court were fifty cubits long, and those facing the  
 9 sanctuary a hundred cubits. Below these rooms was an entry from the east as one entered them from the outer court  
 10 where the wall of the court began.<sup>s</sup> On the south side, passing by the free space and the building, were other  
 11 rooms with a passage in front of them. These rooms corresponded, in length and breadth and in general character,  
 12 to those facing north, whose exits and entrances were the same as those of the rooms on the south. As one<sup>t</sup> went eastwards, where the passages began, there was an entrance in the face of the  
 13 inner<sup>u</sup> wall. Then he said to me, 'The northern and southern rooms facing the free space are the consecrated rooms where the priests who approach the LORD may eat the most sacred offerings. There they shall put these offerings as well as the grain-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering; for the place is holy.'  
 14 When the priests have entered the Holy Place they shall not go into the outer court again without leaving here the

garments they have worn while performing their duties, for these are holy. They shall put on other garments when they approach the place assigned to the people.<sup>v</sup>

When he had finished measuring the  
 15 inner temple, he brought me out towards the gateway which faces eastwards and measured the whole area. He measured the east side with the  
 16 measuring-rod, and it was five hundred cubits. He turned and measured the  
 17 north side with his rod, and it was five hundred cubits. He turned to the south  
 18 side and measured it with his rod; it was five hundred cubits. He turned to the  
 19 west and measured it with his rod; it was five hundred cubits. So he  
 20 measured all four sides; in each direction the surrounding wall measured five hundred cubits. This marked off the sacred area from the profane.

He led me to the gate, the gate facing  
 43 eastwards, and I beheld the glory of  
 2 the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the sound of a mighty torrent, and the earth shone with his  
 3 glory. The form that I saw was the same as that which I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and as that which I had seen by the river Kebar,<sup>v</sup>  
 4 and I fell on my face. The glory of the LORD came up to the temple towards the gate which faced eastwards. A  
 5 spirit<sup>w</sup> lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard  
 6 one speaking to me from the temple, and the man was standing at my side. He said, Man, do you see the place of  
 7 my throne, the place where I set my feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites for ever? Neither they nor their kings shall ever defile my holy name again with their wanton disloyalty, and with the corpses<sup>x</sup> of their

<sup>s</sup> began: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* breadth.

<sup>t</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they.

<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* word unknown.

<sup>v</sup> Or the Kebar canal.  
<sup>w</sup> Or wind.    <sup>x</sup> Or effigies.

15-20: The Temple area is holy, 500 cubits square, surrounded by a wall separating it from the profane, secular life.

43.1-12: The glory of the LORD returns to consecrate the new city. This occurrence is the high point of the vision. 1: *Glory*; see 10.3-4 n. 2: *The east*: the direction in which he had departed in 11.23. 3: There is here no appearance of a man, no living creatures as in 1.4-28. 7: Now the Lord will set his feet permanently in Jerusalem because it is his, planned and built by him; earlier, since it was Canaanite in origin, he had entered it as a sojourner. See 16.3.

8 kings when they die. They set their threshold by mine and their door-post beside mine, with a wall between me and them, and they defiled my holy name with the abominations they committed, and I destroyed them in my anger. But now they shall abandon their wanton disloyalty and remove the corpses<sup>x</sup> of their kings far from me, and I will dwell among them for ever.

9 So tell the Israelites, man, about this temple, its appearance and proportions, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities. If they are ashamed of all they have done, you shall describe to them the temple and its fittings, its exits and entrances, all the details and particulars of its elevation and plan; explain them and draw them before their eyes, so that they may keep them in mind and carry them out. This is the plan of the temple to be built on the top of the mountain; all its precincts on every side shall be most holy.

10 These were the dimensions of the altar in cubits (the cubit that is a cubit and a hand's breadth). This was the height of the altar: the base was a cubit high<sup>y</sup> and projected a cubit; on its edge was a rim one span deep. From the base to the cubit-wide ridge of the lower pedestal-block was two cubits, and from this shorter pedestal-block to the cubit-wide ridge of the taller pedestal-block was four cubits. The altar-hearth was four cubits high and was surmounted by four horns a cubit high. The hearth was twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide, being a perfect square. The upper pedestal-block was fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide along its four sides, and the rim round it was half a cubit deep. The base of the altar projected a cubit, and there were steps facing eastwards.

18 He said to me, Man, these are the words of the Lord GOD: These are the regulations for the altar when it has been made, for sacrificing whole-offerings on it and flinging the blood against it. The levitical priests of the family of Zadok, and they alone, may come near to me to serve me, says the Lord GOD. You shall assign them a young bull for a sin-offering; you shall take some of the blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the upper pedestal and all round the rim, and so purify it and make expiation for it. Then take the bull assigned as the sin-offering, and they shall destroy it by fire in the proper place within the precincts but outside the Holy Place. On the second day you shall present a he-goat without blemish as a sin-offering, and with it they shall purify the altar as they did with the bull. When you have completely purified the altar, you shall present a young bull without blemish and a ram without blemish from the flock. You shall present them before the LORD; the priests shall throw salt on them and sacrifice them as a whole-offering to the LORD. For seven days you shall provide as a daily sin-offering a goat, a young bull, and a ram from the flock; all of them shall be provided free from blemish. For seven days they shall make expiation for the altar, and pronounce it ritually clean, and consecrate it. At the end of that time, on the eighth day and onwards, the priests shall sacrifice on the altar your whole-offerings and your shared-offerings, and I will accept you. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

<sup>x</sup> Or effigies.

<sup>y</sup> the base . . . high: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* the base of the cubit.

**8:** Unlike Solomon's Temple, the new Temple will not be a dependency of the king, surrounded by his buildings; see 1 Kgs. 7.1-12; 2 Kgs. 16.7-20.

**43.13-27: Shape of the altar and its consecration.** Since in cultic acts the altar represents God (Exod. 24.6-8), it will be a sign of his permanent presence. **13-17:** Built in tiers on three platforms—16, 14, and 12 cubits square—the altar resembles the Babylonian ziggurat, or sacred tower (Gen. 11.4 n.); it is 12 cubits or about 20½ ft. high. **15:** The significance of the horns, projections from the four corners of the altar, is not known. **18-26:** Zadokite priests were the descendants of Zadok, the priest who remained loyal to David (1 Kgs. 1.5-40). They will consecrate the altar—lit. "fill its hands" (with offerings), terminology used in consecrating priests—setting it aside for sacred use. Compare Exod. 29.1-46. **27: Accept you:** be pleased with you. *Whole offerings:* the sacrifice was completely burned. *Shared offerings:* the offerer received a portion of it back and ate it as a sign of his communion with God.

- 44 He again brought me round to the outer gate of the sanctuary facing eastwards, and it was shut. The LORD said to me, This gate shall be kept shut; it must not be opened. No man may enter by it, for the LORD the God of Israel has entered by it. It shall be kept shut. The prince, however, when he is here as prince, may sit there to eat food in the presence of the LORD; he shall come in and go out by the vestibule of the gate.
- 4 He brought me round to the northern gate facing the temple, and I saw the glory of the LORD filling the LORD's house, and I fell on my face. The LORD said to me, Mark well, man, look closely, and listen carefully to all that I say to you, to all the rules and regulations for the house of the LORD. Mark well the entrance to the house of the LORD and all the exits from the sanctuary. Say to that rebel people of Israel, These are the words of the Lord GOD: Enough of all these abominations of yours, you Israelites! You have added to them by bringing foreigners, uncircumcised in mind and body, to stand in my sanctuary and defile my house when you present my food to me, both fat and blood, and they have made my covenant void. Instead of keeping charge of my holy things yourselves, you have chosen to put these men in charge of my sanctuary.
- 9 These are the words of the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in mind and body, shall enter my sanctuary, not even a foreigner living among the Israelites. But the Levites, though they deserted me when the Israelites went astray after their idols and had to bear the punishment of their iniquity, shall yet do service in my sanctuary. They shall take charge of the gates of the temple and do service there. They shall slaughter the whole-offering and the sacrifice for the people and shall be in attendance to serve them. Because they served them in the presence of their idols and brought Israel to the ground by their iniquity, says the Lord GOD, I have sworn with uplifted hand that they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity. They shall not have access to me, to serve me as priests; they shall not come near to my holy things or to the Holy of Holies; they shall bear the shame of the abominable deeds they have done. I will put them in charge of the temple with all the service which must be performed there.
- But the levitical priests of the family of Zadok remained in charge of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me; these shall approach me to serve me. They shall be in attendance on me, presenting the fat and the blood, says the Lord GOD. It is they who shall enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve me and observe my charge. When they come to the gates of the inner court they shall dress in linen; they shall wear no wool when they serve me at the gates of the inner court and within. They shall wear linen turbans, and linen drawers on their loins; they shall not fasten their clothes with a belt so that they sweat. When they go out to the people in the outer court, they shall take off the clothes they have worn while serving, leave them in the sacred rooms and put on other clothes; otherwise they will transmit the sacred influence to the people through their clothing.
- They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long; they shall only clip their hair. No priest shall drink wine when he is to enter the inner court. He may not marry a widow or a divorced woman; he may marry a virgin of Israelite birth. He may, however, marry the widow of a priest.
- They shall teach my people to distinguish the sacred from the profane,

44.1-31: The personnel of the new Temple receive guidelines for a worship free from profanation. 3: *The prince* could be in the Temple as *prince*, not for the priestly function of the former kings; see 2 Chr.26.16-19. For sacred meals following a sacrifice see Deut.12.4-7. 7: The Bible notes several instances of foreigners being taken into Temple service; most to the point are Josh.9.23-27; Ezra 2.43,55; 8.20; Neh.7.57,60; 11.3,21. Circumcision of the body is a sign of circumcision of mind: a willingness to love and serve the Lord by keeping his Law (see Deut.10.12-20); foreigners, uncircumcised in both, would profane the new covenant. 10-16: Ezekiel seems to be a transition between Deut. (18.1-8) where all Levites are priests, and the

24 and show them the difference between clean and unclean. When disputes break out, they shall take their place in court, and settle the case according to my rules. At all my appointed seasons they shall observe my laws and statutes. They shall keep my sabbaths holy.

25 They shall not defile themselves by contact with any dead person, except<sup>z</sup> father or mother, son or daughter, 26 brother or unmarried sister. After purification, they shall count seven 27 days and then be clean. When they enter the inner court to serve in the Holy Place, they shall present their sin-offering, says the Lord GOD.

28 They shall own no patrimony in Israel; I am their patrimony. You shall grant them no holding in Israel; I am 29 their holding. The grain-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering shall be eaten by them, and everything in Israel devoted to God shall be theirs.

30 The first of all the firstfruits and all your contributions of every kind shall belong wholly to the priests. You shall give the first lump of your dough to the priests, that a blessing may rest 31 upon your home. The priests shall eat no carrion, bird or beast, whether it has died naturally or been killed by a wild animal.

45 When you divide the land by lot among the tribes for their possession, you shall set apart from it a sacred reserve for the LORD, twenty-five thousand cubits in length and twenty thousand in width; the whole enclosure shall be sacred. Of this a square plot, five hundred cubits each way, shall be devoted to the sanctuary, with 3 fifty cubits of open land round it. From this area you shall measure out a space twenty-five thousand by ten thousand cubits, in which the sanctuary, the 4 holiest place of all, shall stand. This

space is for the priests who serve in the sanctuary and who come nearest in serving the LORD. It shall include space for their houses and a sacred plot for the sanctuary. An area of twenty- 5 five thousand by ten thousand cubits shall belong to the Levites, the temple servants; on this shall stand the towns in which they live. You shall give to 6 each town an area of five thousand by twenty-five thousand cubits alongside the sacred reserve; this shall belong to all Israel. On either side of the sacred 7 reserve and of the city's holding the prince shall have a holding facing the sacred reserve and the city's holding, running westwards on the west and eastwards on the east. It shall run alongside one of the tribal portions, and stretch to the western limit of the land and to the eastern. It shall be his 8 holding in Israel; the princes of Israel shall never oppress my people again but shall give the land to Israel, tribe by tribe.

THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LORD 9 GOD: Enough, princes of Israel! Put an end to lawlessness and robbery; maintain law and justice; relieve my people and stop your evictions, says the Lord GOD. Your scales shall be 10 honest, your bushel and your gallon shall be honest. There shall be one 11 standard for each, taking each as the tenth of a homer, and the homer shall have its fixed standard. Your shekel 12 weight shall contain twenty gerahs; your mina shall contain weights of ten<sup>a</sup> and twenty-five and fifteen shekels.

These are the contributions you shall 13 set aside: out of every homer of wheat or of barley, one sixth of an ephah.

<sup>z</sup> any . . . except: or anyone else's dead, but only their own . . .  
<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. twenty.

later Priestly source (Num.3.5-10; 18.2) where they are assistants to the priests. 29: *Devoted to God*, lit. "under the ban," Heb. *herem*, is anything strictly reserved for sacred cultic use. 31: *Carrion* is meat with blood in it; hence forbidden.

45.1-8: **The new distribution of the land.** Beginning here and ending in ch. 48, there is a graphic portrayal of the ideals of theocracy, a political system in which God is held to be the supreme ruler. 4: Priests held such a position relative to the Tent of the Presence in the desert; see Num.3.38. 7-8: The prince's property is so great because he must provide offerings for the cult; see v. 17. The prince's role in the new nation is ambiguous, no mention being made of a king; see 44.3 n.; 45.13-17 n.

45.9-12: **Weights and measures** are standardized for use in the new Temple.

45.13-46.24: **Sacrifices, feasts, and ritual.** The cult outlined in great detail. 13-17: Out of

14 For oil the rule is<sup>b</sup> one tenth of a bath from every kor (at ten bath to the kor);  
 15 one sheep in every flock of two hundred is to be reserved by every Israelite clan. For a grain-offering, a whole-offering, and a shared-offering, to make expiation for them, says the  
 16 Lord GOD, all the people of the land shall bring<sup>c</sup> this contribution to the  
 17 prince in Israel; and the prince shall be responsible for the whole-offering, the grain-offering, and the drink-offering, at pilgrim-feasts, new moons, sabbaths, and every sacred season observed by Israel. He himself is to provide the sin-offering and the grain-offering, the whole-offering and the shared-offering, needed to make expiation for Israel.

18 These are the words of the Lord GOD: On the first day of the first month you shall take a young bull without blemish, and purify the sanctuary. The priest shall take some of the blood from the sin-offering and put it on the door-posts of the temple, on the four corners of the altar pedestal and on the gate-posts of the inner court.  
 20 You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month;<sup>d</sup> in this way you shall make expiation for the temple.

21 On the fourteenth day of the first month you shall hold the Passover, the pilgrim-feast of seven days; bread must be eaten unleavened. On that day the prince shall provide a bull as a sin-offering for himself and for all the  
 23 people. During the seven days of the feast he shall offer daily as a whole-offering to the LORD seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, and a  
 24 he-goat as a daily sin-offering. With every bull and ram he shall provide a grain-offering of one ephah, together  
 25 with a hin of oil for each ephah. He shall do the same thing also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month at the pilgrim-feast; this also shall last seven days, and he shall provide the same sin-offering and whole-offering

and the same quantity of grain and oil.

These are the words of the Lord  
 GOD: The eastern gate of the inner court shall remain closed for the six working days; it may be opened only on the sabbath and at new moon. When the prince comes through the porch of the gate from the outside, he shall halt at the door-post, and the priests shall sacrifice his whole-offering and shared-offerings. On the terrace he shall bow down at the gate and then go out, but the gate shall not be shut till the evening. On sabbaths and at new moons the people also shall bow down before the LORD at the entrance to that gate.

The whole-offering which the prince sacrifices to the LORD shall be as follows: on the sabbath, six sheep without blemish and a ram without blemish; the grain-offering shall be an ephah with the ram and as much as he likes with the sheep, together with a hin of oil for every ephah. At the new moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, six sheep and a ram, all without blemish. He shall provide as the grain-offering to go with the bull one ephah and with the ram one ephah, with the sheep as much as he can afford, adding a hin of oil for every ephah.

When the prince comes in, he shall enter through the porch of the gate and come out by the same way. But on festal days when the people come before the LORD, a man who enters by the northern gate to bow down shall leave by the southern gate, and a man who enters by the southern gate shall leave by the northern gate. He shall not turn back and go out through the gate by which he came in but shall go straight on. The prince shall then be among them, going in when they go in

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the bath, the oil.

<sup>c</sup> all . . . bring: prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

<sup>d</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds This comes from a man who is wrong and foolish. Cp. Lev. 23. 24; Num. 29. 1.

taxes he receives, the prince provides for certain sacrifices; in contrast to the meddling of past kings, this is the only privilege and duty allowed him; see 2 Kgs.16.10-18. 18-20: The rite here for purifying the sanctuary does not accord with Lev.16.1-34. Comparable discrepancies in relation to the prescriptions of the Pentateuch concerning sacrifices created problems about the eligibility of the entire book for the canon, the official list of Judaism's biblical books, as is known from rabbinic literature. 21: Passover: see Exod.23.15; Lev.23.4-8; Deut.16.1-8. 25: Feast of Tabernacles; see Exod.23.16; Lev.23.33-36; Deut.16.13-15. 46.1-2: The prince may enter the inner court to watch the priests offer the sacrifice which he has provided.



and coming out when they come out.

11 At pilgrim-feasts and on festal days the grain-offering shall be an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram and as much as he likes with a sheep, together with a hin of oil for every ephah.

12 When the prince provides a whole-offering or shared-offerings as a voluntary sacrifice to the LORD, the eastern gate shall be opened for him,<sup>e</sup> and he shall make his whole-offering and his shared-offerings as he does on the sabbath; when he goes out the gate shall be closed<sup>f</sup> behind him.

13 You shall provide a yearling sheep without blemish daily as a whole-offering to the LORD; you shall provide it morning by morning. With it every morning you shall provide as a grain-offering one sixth of an ephah with a third of a hin of oil to moisten the flour; the LORD's grain-offering is an observance prescribed for all time. Morning by morning, as a regular whole-offering, they shall offer a sheep with the grain-offering and the oil.

14 These are the words of the Lord GOD: When the prince makes a gift out of his property to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons, since it is part of the family property. But when he makes such a gift to one of his slaves, it shall be his only till the year of manumission, when it shall revert to the prince; it is the property of his sons and shall belong to them.

15 The prince shall not oppress the people by taking part of their holdings; he shall give his sons an inheritance from his own holding of land, so that my people may not be scattered and separated from their holdings.

16 Then he brought me through the entrance by the side of the gate to the rooms which face north (the sacred rooms reserved for the priests), and,

pointing to a place on their western side, he said to me, 'This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt-offering and the sin-offering and bake the grain-offering; they shall not take it into the outer court for fear they transmit the sacred influence to the people.' Then he brought me into the outer court and took me across to the four corners of the court, at each of which there was a further court. These four courts were vaulted and were the same size, forty cubits long by thirty cubits wide. Round each of the four was a row of stones, with fire-places constructed close up against the rows. He said to me, 'These are the kitchens where the attendants shall boil the people's sacrifices.'

He brought me back to the gate of the temple, and I saw a spring of water issuing from under the terrace of the temple towards the east; for the temple faced east. The water was running down along the right side, to the south of the altar. He took me out through the northern gate and brought me round by an outside path to the eastern gate of the court, and water was trickling from the right side. When the man went out eastwards he had a line in his hand. He measured a thousand cubits and made me walk through the water; it came up to my ankles. He measured another thousand and made me walk through the water; it came up to my knees. He measured another thousand and made me walk through the water; it was up to my waist. Another thousand, and it was a torrent I could not cross, for the water had risen and was now deep enough to swim in; it had become a torrent that could not be crossed. 'Mark this, man', he said, and led me back to the bank of

<sup>e</sup> the eastern . . . him: or he shall open the gate facing east.  
<sup>f</sup> the gate . . . closed: or he shall close the gate.

13-15: This daily morning sacrifice was unfaillingly offered in the Temple until the last days of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when, according to Josephus (*B.J.* VI,2,1), it was discontinued. In the year of manumission—probably every fiftieth or Jubilee year—all lands reverted to original patrimony; see Lev.25.8-55. 18: Compare 34.5-6. 20: Sacred influence is the Lord's exclusive holiness sometimes attached spatially to places and things connected with the cult, as here, and sometimes attached to the persons totally dedicated to the cult, the priests (Lev.21.6-8).

47.1-48.35: Life in the new land and the new city. Both land and city are to be so arranged that the vitality emanating from God in his Temple may keep the tribes in unity.

47.1-12: Life-giving water flowing from the Temple is a symbolism found in Ps.36.8-9; Joel 3.18; Zech.14.8; Rev.22.1-2. 3-6: In powerful contrast to this visionary stream which increases

7 the torrent. When we came back to the bank I saw a great number of trees on  
 8 each side. He said to me, 'This water flows out to the region lying east, and down to the Arabah; at last it will reach that sea whose waters are foul, and they  
 9 will be sweetened. When any one of the living creatures that swarm upon the earth comes where the torrent flows, it shall draw life from it. The fish shall be innumerable; for these waters come here so that the others may be sweetened, and where the torrent flows everything shall live. From En-ge-di as far as En-eglaim fishermen shall stand on its shores, for nets shall be spread there. Every kind of fish shall be there in shoals, like the fish of the Great Sea; but its swamps and pools shall not have their waters sweetened but shall be left as salt-pans. Beside the torrent on either bank all trees good for food shall spring up. Their leaves shall not wither, their fruit shall not cease; they shall bear early every month. For their water comes from the sanctuary; their fruit is for food and their foliage for enjoyment.'

13 These are the words of the Lord GOD: These are the boundary lines within which the twelve tribes of Israel shall enter into possession of the land, 14 Joseph receiving two portions. The land which I swore with hand uplifted to give to your fathers you shall divide with each other; it shall be assigned to you by lot as your patrimony. This is the frontier: on its northern side, from the Great Sea through Hethlon, Lebo-hamath, Zedad, Berutha, and Sibraim, which are between the frontiers of Damascus and Hamath, to Hazar-enan, 17 near the frontier of Hauran. So the frontier shall run from the sea to

Hazar-enan on the frontier of Damascus and northwards; this is its northern side. The eastern side runs alongside the territories of Hauran, Damascus, and Gilead, and alongside the territory of Israel; Jordan sets the boundary to the eastern sea, to Tamar. This is the eastern side. The southern side runs from Tamar to the waters of Meribah-by-Kadesh; the region assigned to you reaches the Great Sea. This is the southern side towards the Negeb. The western side is the Great Sea, which forms a boundary as far as a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This is the western side. You shall distribute this land among the tribes of Israel and assign it by lot as a patrimony for yourselves and for any aliens living in your midst who leave sons among you. They shall be treated as native-born in Israel and with you shall receive a patrimony by lot among the tribes of Israel. You shall give the alien his patrimony with the tribe in which he is living. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.

These are the names of the tribes: 48 In the extreme north, in the direction of Hethlon, to Lebo-hamath and Hazar-enan, with Damascus on the northern frontier in the direction of Hamath, and so from the eastern side to the western, shall be Dan: one portion.

Bordering on Dan, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Asher: one portion.

Bordering on Asher, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Naphtali: one portion.

Bordering on Naphtali, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Manasseh: one portion.

Bordering on Manasseh, from the

as it flows from the Temple into the desert is the spring Gihon, which still emerges from the hillside under the Temple area and quickly dries out in the valley of the brook Kidron, which is ordinarily a wadi or a dry wash. 8-9: *Arabah* is the geological rift forming the Dead Sea and the valley south of it, a barren desert. Even the Dead Sea, in whose *foul waters* (26 percent salt, besides a high mineral content) no life can survive, will be *sweetened* and will give life. The image symbol is the whole earth's receiving life and nourishment from the Lord's presence in his Temple. 10: *En-ge-di, En-eglaim*: oases on the western shore of the Dead Sea at the mouth of the wadi Kidron, just south of Qumran. *Great Sea* is the Mediterranean.

47.13-48.35. *Israel's boundaries and the tribal portions.* Except along the River Jordan, these boundaries approximate the greatest extent of the kingdom under David, the ideal king. Since, in the past, the tribes east of the Jordan tended to isolate themselves, no territories are assigned there. See Josh.22.10-29; Judg.5.15-17. 21-23: Other codes provide that *aliens* be treated like Israelites, but only here are they given a *patrimony* among the tribes of Israel. 48.1-8: Since they minister in the sanctuary, the portion of priests and Levites is adjacent to it. *Judah*, the

eastern side to the western, shall be Ephraim: one portion.

6 Bordering on Ephraim, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Reuben: one portion.

7 Bordering on Reuben, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Judah: one portion.

8 Bordering on Judah, from the eastern side to the western, shall be the reserve which you shall set apart. Its breadth shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and its length the same as that of the other portions, from the eastern side to the western, and the sanctuary shall be in the middle of it.

9 The reserve which you shall set apart for the LORD shall measure twenty-five thousand cubits by twenty<sup>g</sup> thousand. The reserve shall be apportioned thus: the priests shall have an area measuring twenty-five thousand cubits on the north side, ten thousand on the west, ten thousand on the east, and twenty-five thousand on the south side; the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the middle of it. It shall be for the consecrated priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept my charge and did not follow the Israelites when they went astray, as the Levites did. The area set apart for the priests from the reserved territory shall be most sacred, reaching the frontier of the Levites.

13 The Levites shall have a portion running parallel to the border of the priests. It shall be twenty-five thousand cubits long by ten thousand wide; altogether, the length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and the breadth ten thousand. They shall neither sell nor exchange any part of it, nor shall the best of the land be alienated; for it is holy to the LORD.

15 The strip which is left, five thousand cubits in width by twenty-five thousand, is the city's secular land for dwellings and common land, and the city shall be in the middle of it. These shall be its dimensions: on the northern side four thousand five hundred cubits, on the

southern side four thousand five hundred cubits, on the eastern side four thousand five hundred cubits, on the western side four thousand five hundred cubits. The common land belonging to the city shall be two hundred and fifty cubits to the north, two hundred and fifty to the south, two hundred and fifty to the east, and two hundred and fifty to the west. What is left parallel to the reserve, ten thousand cubits to the east and ten thousand to the west,<sup>h</sup> shall provide food for those who work in the city. Those who work in the city shall cultivate it; they may be drawn from any of the tribes of Israel.

You shall set apart the whole reserve, twenty-five thousand cubits square, as sacred, as far as the holding of the city. What is left over on each side of the sacred reserve and the holding of the city shall be assigned to the prince. Eastwards, what lies over against the reserved twenty-five thousand cubits, as far as the eastern side, and westwards, what lies over against the twenty-five thousand cubits to the western side, parallel to the tribal portions, shall be assigned to the prince; the sacred reserve and the sanctuary itself shall be in the centre. The<sup>i</sup> holding of the Levites and the<sup>i</sup> holding of the city shall be in the middle of that which is assigned to the prince; it shall be between the frontiers of Judah and Benjamin.

The rest of the tribes: from the eastern side to the western shall be Benjamin: one portion.

Bordering on Benjamin, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Simeon: one portion.

Bordering on Simeon, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Issachar: one portion.

Bordering on Issachar, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Zebulun: one portion.

<sup>g</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. ten.

<sup>h</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and it shall be parallel to the sacred reserve.

<sup>i</sup> Prob. rdg.: Heb. Some of the.

leading southern tribe, is closest to the sanctuary. It is placed among the northern tribes with whom it had formerly lived in hostile rivalry, to show the harmony in the new nation. 15: Land used for daily existence, i.e. unconnected with the cult, is *secular*, and so separated from the sanctuary by the priests' land. 16-19: Jerusalem, much larger in extent than at any time in history—5000 cubits or 1.6 miles square—will be a "federal" district, with the names of all

- 27 Bordering on Zebulun, from the eastern side to the western, shall be Gad: one portion.
- 28 Bordering on Gad, on the side of the Negeb, the border on the south stretches from Tamar to the waters of Meribah-by-Kadesh, to the Brook as far as the Great Sea.
- 29 This is the land which you shall allot as a patrimony to the tribes of Israel, and these shall be their lots. This is the very word of the Lord GOD.
- 30-31 These are to be the ways out of the city, and they are to be named after the tribes of Israel. The northern side, four thousand five hundred cubits long, shall have three gates, those of Reuben, Judah, and Levi; the eastern side, four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates, those of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan; the southern side, four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates, those of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; the western side, four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates, those of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali. The perimeter of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits, and the city's name for ever after shall be Jehovah-shammah.<sup>j</sup>
- <sup>j</sup> That is the LORD is there.

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the twelve tribes on its gates (vv. 30-34). 35: Unnamed till now, the city will be called in Heb. *Jehovah-shammah*, a contrast in assonance to its old Canaanite name *Yerushalaim*. For other names given Jerusalem by prophets as a sign of future transformation, see Isa. 1.26; 60.14; 62.2-4; Jer. 3.17; Zech. 8.3. The new city with its name expresses the concept of God's absolute transcendence and his intimate closeness.

# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The reports about Daniel in this book may contain elements about an older figure, or figures, with the same name: a king in an Ugaritic legend of the fourteenth century B.C.; the example, along with Noah and Job, of a righteous man in Ezek.14.14; and a wise man who knows secrets in Ezek.28.3; these three Daniels may reflect an ancient tradition about a single figure.

The book divides neatly into two parts. In chs. 1-6, Daniel is a young Jew at a foreign court, who, by his ability to interpret royal dreams, and through divine revelation, becomes a vizier to kings. In chs. 8-12, Daniel himself has the visions, and must turn to angels for interpretation. Chapter 7, belonging with chs. 1-6 in its idea of a succession of kingdoms, but also containing the first of the visions characteristic of the second section, unites the two parts. In language, too, ch. 7 provides a bridge between the two parts: Aramaic, rather than Hebrew, is found in 2.4-7.28; see 2.4 n. In chs. 1-6 Daniel has many of the characteristics of Joseph at the Pharaoh's court in Gen. ch. 41; in chs. 7-12 the author builds on elements from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel to fashion the most fully developed example of apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament; see 8.17 n., 12.1 n., and the heavenly figures of ch. 7.

The stories and visions are set in the Babylonian and Persian periods (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.), but they reflect a later time, primarily that of the successors to Alexander the Great. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.) and his wars with the Egyptians (see 7.8 n.) are especially in view. In chs. 7-12, Antiochus, though anonymous as befits apocalyptic literature, emerges in more and more detail as the oppressor of the Jews. In the face of his intense persecution, the book gives great encouragement to Jews by promising God's ultimate vindication of the righteous.

Additional stories in the Daniel tradition are found in the Sept. expansion of the book, and appear in the Apocrypha in The Song of the Three; Daniel and Susanna; and Daniel, Bel, and the Snake.

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## *Jews at the court of Nebuchadnezzar*

**1** IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came **2** to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. The Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his power, together with all that was left of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them off to the land of Shinar, to the temple of his god, where he deposited the vessels **3** in the treasury. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to take certain of the Israelite exiles, of the **4** blood royal and of the nobility, who were to be young men of good looks and bodily without fault, at home in all branches of knowledge, well-informed, intelligent, and fit for service in the royal court; and he was to

instruct them in the literature and language of the Chaldaeans. The king **5** assigned them a daily allowance of food and wine from the royal table. Their training was to last for three years, and at the end of that time they would<sup>a</sup> enter the royal service.

Among them there were certain **6** young men from Judah called Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; but **7** the master of the eunuchs gave them new names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah Shadrach, Mishael Meshach and Azariah Abed-nego. Now **8** Daniel determined not to contaminate himself by touching the food and wine assigned to him by the king, and he begged the master of the eunuchs not to make him do so. God made the **9** master show kindness and goodwill to

<sup>a</sup> at the end . . . would: or all of them were to.

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**1.1-21: Daniel as a young man at a foreign court.** See Introduction. The chronology is uncertain, and dates given are not necessarily precise. **1:** *Third year of Jehoiakim:* 607 or 606 B.C. *Nebuchadnezzar* became king in 605; but see 2 Kgs.24.1-6. The first deportation took place in 598; see 2 Kgs.24.10-17. **2:** *Shinar* was in southern Mesopotamia. **3:** *Ashpenaz* is otherwise unknown. **6:** *Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah* were common names; *Azariah* appears in Neh.10.2, and *Hananiah* in Neh.10.22. **7:** This was also the case with *Joseph* in Gen.41.45. **8:** *Determined not to contaminate himself:* compare 1 Macc.1.62; see Ezek.4.13; Hos.9.3.

10 Daniel, and he said to him, 'I am afraid of my lord the king: he has assigned you your food and drink, and if he sees you looking dejected, unlike the other young men of your own age, 11 it will cost me my head.' Then Daniel said to the guard whom the master of the eunuchs had put in charge of Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and himself, 'Submit us to this test for ten days. 12 Give us only vegetables to eat and 13 water to drink; then compare our looks with those of the young men who have lived on the food assigned by the king, and be guided in your treatment of us 14 by what you see.'<sup>b</sup> The guard listened to what they said and tested them for 15 ten days. At the end of ten days they looked healthier and were better nourished than all the young men who had lived on the food assigned them by 16 the king. So the guard took away the assignment of food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them only the vegetables.

17 To all four of these young men God had given knowledge and understanding of books and learning of every kind, while Daniel had a gift for interpreting visions and dreams of 18 every kind. The time came which the king had fixed for introducing the young men to court, and the master of the eunuchs brought them into the 19 presence of Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them and found none of them to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they 20 entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them on any matter calling for insight and judgement, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and exorcists in his 21 whole kingdom. Now Daniel was there till the first year of King Cyrus.

## 2 In the second year of his reign

Nebuchadnezzar had dreams, and his mind was so troubled that he could not sleep. Then the king gave orders to 2 summon the magicians, exorcists, sorcerers, and Chaldaeans to tell him what he had dreamt. They came in and stood 3 in the royal presence, and the king said to them, 'I have had a dream and my mind has been troubled to know what my dream was.' The Chaldaeans, 4 speaking in Aramaic, said, "Long live the king! Tell us what you dreamt and we will tell you the interpretation." The 5 king answered, "This is my declared intention. If you do not tell me both dream and interpretation, you shall be torn in pieces and your houses shall be forfeit."<sup>d</sup> But if you can tell me the 6 dream and the interpretation, you will be richly rewarded and loaded with honours. Tell me, therefore, the dream and its interpretation.' They answered 7 a second time, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will tell him the interpretation." The king answered, "It is clear to me that you are trying to gain time, because you see that my intention has been declared. 9 If you do not make known to me the dream, there is one law that applies to you, and one only. What is more, you have agreed among yourselves to tell me a pack of lies to my face in the hope that with time things may alter. Tell me the dream, therefore, and I shall know that you can give me the interpretation." The Chaldaeans answered 10 in the presence of the king, "Nobody on earth can tell your majesty what you wish to know; no great king or prince has ever made such a demand of magician, exorcist, or Chaldaean. What your majesty requires of us is too 11

<sup>b</sup> be guided . . . see: or treat us as you see fit.

<sup>c</sup> The Aramaic text begins here and continues to the end of ch. 7.

<sup>d</sup> Or made into a dunghill (mng. of Aram. word uncertain).

12: The total abstinence from meat was a safeguard against eating forbidden meats such as pork. 17: *Visions and dreams*: the practice of dream interpretation in Mesopotamia, and the special significance attributed to them, goes back to the third millennium. 20: This verse anticipates the plots in chs. 2; 4; 5. *Magicians and exorcists*: the Heb. terms are borrowed from the ancient Akkadian, meaning, respectively, "interpreters of dreams" and "incantation officials." 21: *First years of King Cyrus*: 539 B.C., sixty-eight years after the date (607 or 606) in v. 1.

2.1-49: *The revelation of the future history of five world kingdoms*. 1: *Second year*: 604 B.C. 2: *Chaldaeans*: wise men, rather than simply people from Chaldea. Chaldeans were found in great numbers in the Grecian lands, usually as astrologers and magicians. 4: *In Aramaic*: either the author is deliberately following the format of the Book of Ezra, in which the center chapters are in Aram., or else the stories in this section were handed down in Aram. 11: *No one but*

hard; there is no one but the gods, who dwell remote from mortal men, who can give you the answer.' At this the king lost his temper and in a great rage ordered the death of all the wise men of Babylon. A decree was issued that the wise men were to be executed, and accordingly men were sent to fetch Daniel and his companions for execution.

When Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, was setting out to execute the wise men of Babylon, Daniel approached him cautiously and with discretion and said, 'Sir, you represent the king; why has his majesty issued such a peremptory decree?' Arioch explained everything; so Daniel went in to the king's presence and begged for a certain time by which he would give the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went home and told the whole story to his companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They should ask the God of heaven in his mercy, he said, to disclose this secret, so that they and he with the rest of the wise men of Babylon should not be put to death. Then in a vision by night the secret was revealed to Daniel, and he blessed the God of heaven in these words:

Blessed be God's name from age to age,  
 for all wisdom and power are his.  
 He changes seasons and times;  
 he deposes kings and sets them up;  
 he gives wisdom to the wise  
 and all their store of knowledge to the men who know;  
 he reveals deep mysteries;  
 he knows what lies in darkness,  
 and light has its dwelling with him.  
 To thee, God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,  
 for thou hast given me wisdom and power;  
 thou hast now revealed to me what we asked,  
 and told us what the king is concerned to know.

Daniel therefore went to Arioch who had been charged by the king to put to death the wise men of Babylon and said to him, 'Do not put the wise men of Babylon to death. Take me into the king's presence, and I will now tell him the interpretation of the dream.' Arioch in great trepidation brought Daniel before the king and said to him, 'I have found among the Jewish exiles a man who will make known to your majesty the interpretation of your dream.' Thereupon the king said to Daniel (who was also called Belteshazzar), 'Can you tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?' Daniel answered in the king's presence, 'The secret about which your majesty inquires no wise man, exorcist, magician, or diviner can disclose to you. But there is in heaven a god who reveals secrets, and he has told King Nebuchadnezzar what is to be at the end of this age. This is the dream and these the visions that came into your head: the thoughts that came to you, O king, as you lay on your bed, were thoughts of things to come, and the revealer of secrets has made known to you what is to be. This secret has been revealed to me not because I am wise beyond all living men, but because your majesty is to know the interpretation and understand the thoughts which have entered your mind.

'As you watched, O king, you saw a great image. This image, huge and dazzling, towered before you, fearful to behold. The head of the image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,<sup>e</sup> its legs of iron, its feet part iron and part clay. While you looked, a stone was hewn from a mountain, not by human hands; it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and shattered them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all shattered to fragments and were swept away like chaff before the wind from a threshing-floor in summer, until no trace of them remained. But the stone which struck

<sup>e</sup> Or copper.

*the gods*: this anticipates v. 47, in which the king recognizes Daniel's words as divinely given. **28**: A god who reveals secrets: see v. 22. **32**: The theme of a descending scale of metals representing ages of world history is also found in Greece, in Hesiod's "Works and Days";

the image grew into a great mountain  
 36 filling the whole earth. That was the  
 dream. We shall now tell your majesty  
 37 the interpretation. You, O king, king  
 of kings, to whom the God of heaven  
 has given the kingdom with all its  
 38 power, authority, and honour; in whose  
 hands he has placed men and beasts  
 and birds of the air, wherever they  
 dwell, granting you sovereignty over  
 them all—you are that head of gold.  
 39 After you there shall arise another  
 kingdom, inferior to yours, and yet a  
 third kingdom, of bronze, which shall  
 have sovereignty over the whole world.  
 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom,  
 strong as iron; as iron shatters and  
 destroys all things, it shall break and  
 41 shatter the whole earth.<sup>f</sup> As, in your  
 vision, the feet and toes were part  
 potter's clay and part iron, it shall be  
 a divided kingdom. Its core shall be  
 partly of iron just as you saw iron  
 42 mixed with the common clay; as the  
 toes were part iron and part clay, the  
 kingdom shall be partly strong and  
 43 partly brittle. As, in your vision, the  
 iron was mixed with common clay, so  
 shall men mix with each other by  
 intermarriage, but such alliances shall  
 not be stable: iron does not mix with  
 44 clay. In the period of those kings the  
 God of heaven will establish a kingdom  
 which shall never be destroyed; that  
 kingdom shall never pass to another  
 people; it shall shatter and make an  
 end of all these kingdoms, while it shall  
 45 itself endure for ever. This is the  
 meaning of your vision of the stone  
 being hewn from a mountain, not by  
 human hands, and then shattering the  
 iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver,  
 and the gold. The mighty God has  
 made known to your majesty what is  
 to be hereafter. The dream is sure and  
 the interpretation to be trusted.<sup>g</sup>

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar pros-

trated himself and worshipped Daniel,  
 and gave orders that sacrifices and  
 soothing offerings should be made to  
 him. 'Truly,' he said, 'your god is  
 47 indeed God of gods and Lord over  
 kings, a revealer of secrets, since you  
 have been able to reveal this secret.'  
 Then the king promoted Daniel, 48  
 bestowed on him many rich gifts, and  
 made him regent over the whole  
 province of Babylon and chief prefect  
 over all the wise men of Babylon.  
 Moreover at Daniel's request the king 49  
 put Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego  
 in charge of the administration of the  
 province of Babylon. Daniel himself,  
 however, remained at court.

**KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR MADE AN IMAGE 3**  
 of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet  
 broad. He had it set up in the plain of  
 Dura in the province of Babylon. Then 2  
 he sent out a summons to assemble the  
 satraps, prefects, viceroys, counsellors,  
 treasurers, judges, chief constables, and  
 all governors of provinces to attend the  
 dedication of the image which he had  
 set up. So they assembled—the satraps, 3  
 prefects, viceroys, counsellors, treasurers,  
 judges, chief constables, and all  
 governors of provinces—for the dedica-  
 tion of the image which King Nebu-  
 chadnezzar had set up; and they stood  
 before the image which Nebuchad-  
 nezzar had set up. Then the herald 4  
 loudly proclaimed, 'O peoples and  
 nations of every language, you are  
 5 commanded, when you hear the sound  
 of horn, pipe, zither, triangle, dulcimer,  
 music, and singing of every kind, to  
 prostrate yourselves and worship the  
 golden image which King Nebuchad-  
 nezzar has set up. Whoever does not 6  
 prostrate himself and worship shall  
 forthwith be thrown into a blazing

<sup>f</sup> the whole earth: *prob. rdg.: Aram.* and like iron which shatters all these.

in ancient Hindu mythology; and elsewhere. 37–40: The four kingdoms are usually taken to be the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, and the Macedonian Greek; compare 8.20–21. There is no confirming evidence for the opinion (9.1), found in Jer.51.11,28 as well, that the Medes existed as a world power quite separate from the Persians. 44: The fifth kingdom will bring an end to world history as then known. 47: V. 22, alluded to here and in v. 28, is thereby a key theme of the story. 48: Daniel's appointment is similar to that of Joseph in Gen.41.41.

3.1–30: God delivers the three young men from the fiery furnace. The three are presented here as Daniel-like figures (see ch. 6), but do not appear again after this chapter. 1: *An image*: the account does not give the exact nature of the statue but indicates that it is a major Babylonian god. *Dura*: a place name common in ancient Babylonia; the exact location cannot be



7 furnace.' Accordingly, no sooner did all the peoples hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, triangle, dulcimer, music, and singing of every kind, than all the peoples and nations of every language prostrated themselves and worshipped the golden image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 It was then that certain Chaldeans came forward and brought a charge against the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'Long live the king! 9 Your majesty has issued an order that every man who hears the sound of horn, pipe, zither, triangle, dulcimer, music, and singing of every kind shall fall down and worship the image of gold. Whoever does not do so shall be 10 thrown into a blazing furnace. There are certain Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, whom you have put in charge of the administration of the province of Babylon. These men, your majesty, have taken no notice of your command; they do not serve your god, nor do they worship the golden image 11 which you have set up.' Then in rage and fury Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to be fetched, and they were brought into 12 the king's presence. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my god or worship the golden image which I have set up? If 13 you are ready at once to prostrate yourselves when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, triangle, dulcimer, music, and singing of every kind, and to worship the image that I have set up, well and good. But if you do not worship it, you shall forthwith be thrown into the blazing furnace; and what god is there that can save you 14 from my power?' Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'We have no need to 15 answer you on this matter. If there is a god who is able to save us from the blazing furnace, it is our God whom

we serve, and he will save us from your power, O king; but if not, be it known 16 to your majesty that we will neither serve your god nor worship the golden image that you have set up.'

Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a 17 rage with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and his face was distorted with anger. He gave orders that the furnace should be heated up to seven times its usual heat, and commanded 18 some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and throw them into the blazing furnace. Then those men in their 19 trousers, their shirts, and their hats and all their other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. Because the king's order was urgent 20 and the furnace exceedingly hot, the men who were carrying Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were killed by the flames that leapt out; and those three 21 men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell bound into the blazing furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was 22 amazed and sprang to his feet in great trepidation. He said to his courtiers, 'Was it not three men whom we threw bound into the fire?' They answered the king, 'Assuredly, your majesty.' He answered, 'Yet I see four men 23 walking about in the fire free and unharmed; and the fourth looks like a god.' Nebuchadnezzar approached the 24 door of the blazing furnace and said to the men, 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, come here.' Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego 25 came out from the fire. And the satraps, prefects, viceroys, and the king's courtiers gathered round and saw how the fire had had no power to harm the bodies of these men; the hair of their heads had not been 26 singed, their trousers were untouched, and no smell of fire lingered about them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke out, 28

determined. 17-18: *But if not*: that is, even if God does not save us. The intention is not to imply that God cannot save, but that they can be saved only by the God they worship. 23: At this point the Sept. introduces Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Roman Catholic Bibles retain it here, but Protestant Bibles include it as a separate book of the Apocrypha, in this version called "The Song of the Three." 25: *Like a god*: in v. 28, this fourth "person" is called an angel. 28-29: The king's acknowledgment here is similar to the endings in 2.47; 4.37; 6.26-7.

'Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He has sent his angel to save his servants who put their trust in him, who disobeyed the royal command and were willing to yield themselves to the fire rather than to serve or worship any god other than their own God. I therefore issue a decree that any man, to whatever people or nation he belongs, whatever his language, if he speaks blasphemy against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, shall be torn to pieces and his house shall be forfeit;<sup>g</sup> for there is no other god who can save men in this way.' Then the king advanced the fortunes of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

**4 KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR TO ALL PEOPLES** and nations of every language living in the whole world: May all prosperity be yours! It is my pleasure to recount the signs and marvels which the Most High God has worked for me:

3 How great are his signs,  
and his marvels overwhelming!  
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
his sovereignty stands to all  
generations.

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living peacefully at home in the luxury of my palace. As I lay on my bed, I saw a dream which terrified me; and fantasies and visions which came into my head dismayed me. So I issued an order summoning into my presence all the wise men of Babylon to make known to me the interpretation of the dream.  
7 Then the magicians, exorcists, Chaldeans, and diviners came in, and in their presence I related my dream. But they could not interpret it. And yet another came into my presence, Daniel, who is called Belteshazzar after the name of my god, a man possessed by

the spirit of the holy gods. To him, too, I related the dream: 'Belteshazzar, 9 chief of the magicians, whom I myself know to be possessed by the spirit of the holy gods, and whom no secret baffles, listen to the vision I saw in a dream, and tell me its interpretation.

'Here is the vision which came into my head as I was lying upon my bed:

As I was looking,  
I saw a tree of great height at the centre of the earth;  
the tree grew and became strong, 11  
reaching with its top to the sky  
and visible to earth's farthest bounds.

Its foliage was lovely, 12  
and its fruit abundant;  
and it yielded food for all.  
Beneath it the wild beasts found shelter,  
the birds lodged in its branches,  
and from it all living creatures fed.

'Here is another vision which came into my head as I was lying upon my bed:

As I was watching, there was a  
Watcher,  
a Holy One coming down from heaven.

He cried aloud and said, 14  
"Hew down the tree, lop off the branches,  
strip away the foliage, scatter the fruit.

Let the wild beasts flee from its shelter  
and the birds from its branches,  
but leave the stump with its roots in 15  
the ground.

So, tethered with an iron ring,  
let him eat his fill of the lush grass;  
let him be drenched with the dew  
of heaven

<sup>g</sup> Or made into a dunghill (mng. of Aram. word uncertain).

4.1-37: Nebuchadnezzar loses and regains the throne. This chapter has the form of a letter; it turns from the first to the third person in vv. 19-33. 3: The king's earlier reverence for Daniel's God (2.47 and 3.28-29) here emerges into full praise. 8: *Belteshazzar*: the author either mistakenly or according to folk etymology considers *Belteshazzar* to contain the name of the Babylonian god Bel. Actually it is a shortened form of a simple name, "Balatshuuzur," meaning "guards his life." 13: *Watcher, Holy One* are synonyms for "angel." The first is not found in the Bible outside this chapter, but appears often in the Book of Enoch (in the "Pseudepigrapha") as a term for archangel. The second is used in Dan.8.13 for angel. 15: The

and share the lot of the beasts in  
 their pasture;  
 16 let his mind cease to be a man's  
 mind,  
 and let him be given the mind of a  
 beast.  
 Let seven times pass over him.  
 17 The issue has been determined by  
 the Watchers  
 and the sentence pronounced by  
 the Holy Ones.

Thereby the living will know that  
 the Most High is sovereign in the  
 kingdom of men: he gives the kingdom  
 to whom he will and he may set over  
 it the humblest of mankind."

18 'This is the dream which I, King  
 Nebuchadnezzar, have dreamed; now,  
 Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation;  
 for, though all the wise men of my  
 kingdom are unable to tell me what it  
 means, you can tell me, since the spirit  
 of the holy gods is in you.'

19 Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar,  
 was dumbfounded for a moment,  
 dismayed by his thoughts; but the king  
 said, 'Do not let the dream and its  
 interpretation dismay you.' Belteshaz-  
 zar answered, 'My lord, if only the  
 dream were for those who hate you  
 and its interpretation for your enemies!

20 The tree which you saw grow and  
 become strong, reaching with its top to  
 the sky and visible to earth's farthest  
 21 bounds, its foliage lovely and its fruit  
 abundant, a tree which yielded food  
 for all, beneath which the wild beasts  
 dwelt and in whose branches the birds  
 22 lodged, that tree, O king, is you. You  
 have grown and become strong. Your  
 power has grown and reaches the sky;  
 your sovereignty stretches to the ends  
 23 of the earth. Also, O king, you saw a  
 Watcher, a Holy One, coming down  
 from heaven and saying, "Hew down  
 the tree and destroy it, but leave its  
 stump with its roots in the ground. So,  
 tethered with an iron ring, let him eat  
 his fill of the lush grass; let him be  
 drenched with the dew of heaven and

share the lot of the beasts until seven  
 times pass over him." This is the 24  
 interpretation, O king—it is a decree  
 of the Most High which touches my  
 lord the king. You will be banished 25  
 from the society of men; you will have  
 to live with the wild beasts; you will  
 feed on grass like oxen and you will be  
 drenched with the dew of heaven.  
 Seven times will pass over you until  
 you have learnt that the Most High is  
 sovereign over the kingdom of men  
 and gives it to whom he will. The 26  
 command was given to leave the stump  
 of the tree with its roots. By this you  
 may know that from the time you  
 acknowledge the sovereignty of heaven  
 your rule will endure. Be advised by me, 27  
 O king: redeem your sins by charity  
 and your iniquities by generosity to the  
 wretched. So may you long enjoy  
 peace of mind.'

All this befell King Nebuchadnezzar. 28  
 At the end of twelve months the king 29  
 was walking on the roof of the royal  
 palace at Babylon, and he exclaimed, 30  
 'Is not this Babylon the great which I  
 have built as a royal residence by my  
 own mighty power and for the honour  
 of my majesty?' The words were still 31  
 on his lips, when a voice came down  
 from heaven: 'To you, King Nebu-  
 chadnezzar, the word is spoken: the  
 kingdom has passed from you. You are 32  
 banished from the society of men and  
 you shall live with the wild beasts; you  
 shall feed on grass like oxen, and seven  
 times will pass over you until you have  
 learnt that the Most High is sovereign  
 over the kingdom of men and gives it  
 to whom he will.' At that very moment 33  
 this judgement came upon Nebuchad-  
 nezzar. He was banished from the  
 society of men and ate grass like oxen;  
 his body was drenched by the dew of  
 heaven, until his hair grew long like  
 goats' hair and his nails like eagles'  
 talons.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>h</sup> goats' hair . . . eagles' talons: *prob. rdg.: Aram.*  
 eagles' and his nails like birds'.

metaphor changes from a tree to a beast to a human. 16: *Times*: years, as in 7.25. 25: *The Most High is sovereign*: see v. 30 n. 26: *Heaven* as a "euphemism" for God, common in the Apocrypha, is not found elsewhere in the OT. 30: The sin of pride is here given as the reason for his fall, as in Ezek.31.10; see v. 27. 33: A temporary lapse in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar is unknown, but does fit the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus, who (inexplicably) spent part of

34 At the end of the appointed time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes to heaven and I returned to my right mind. I blessed the Most High, praising and glorifying the Ever-living One:

His sovereignty is never-ending and his rule endures through all generations;

35 all dwellers upon earth count for nothing and he deals as he wishes with the host of heaven;<sup>i</sup> no one may lay hand upon him and ask him what he does.

36 At that very time I returned to my right mind and my majesty and royal splendour were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My courtiers and my nobles sought audience of me. I was established in my kingdom and  
37 my power was greatly increased. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven; for all his acts are right and his ways are just and those whose conduct is arrogant he can bring low.

#### *Belshazzar's feast*

5 BELSHAZZAR THE KING GAVE A BANQUET for a thousand of his nobles and was drinking wine in the presence of the  
2 thousand. Warmed by the wine, he gave orders to fetch the vessels of gold and silver which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the sanctuary at Jerusalem, that he and his nobles, his concubines and his courtesans, might  
3 drink from them. So the vessels of gold and silver from the sanctuary in the house of God at Jerusalem were brought in, and the king and his nobles, his concubines and his courtesans,  
4 drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze and iron, and of wood and  
5 stone. Suddenly there appeared the fingers of a human hand writing on the

plaster of the palace wall opposite the lamp, and the king could see the back of the hand as it wrote. At this the  
6 king's mind was filled with dismay and he turned pale, he became limp in every limb and his knees knocked together. He called loudly for the exorcists,  
7 Chaldaeans, and diviners to be brought in; then, addressing the wise men of Babylon, he said, 'Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be robed in purple and honoured with a chain of gold round his neck and shall rank as third in the kingdom.' Then all the king's wise men  
8 came in, but they could not read the writing or interpret it to the king. King  
9 Belshazzar sat there pale and utterly dismayed, while his nobles were perplexed.

The king and his nobles were talking  
10 when the queen entered the banqueting-hall: 'Long live the king!' she said. 'Why this dismay, and why do you look  
11 so pale? There is a man in your kingdom who has in him the spirit of the holy gods, a man who was known in your father's time to have a clear understanding and godlike wisdom. King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, appointed him chief of the magicians, exorcists, Chaldaeans, and diviners. This same Daniel, whom the king  
12 named Belteshazzar, is known to have a notable spirit, with knowledge and understanding, and the gift of interpreting dreams, explaining riddles and unbinding spells;<sup>j</sup> let him be summoned now and he will give the interpretation.' Daniel was then brought into the  
13 king's presence and the king said to him, 'So you are Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles whom the king my father brought from Judah. I have heard that  
14 you possess the spirit of the holy gods and that you are a man of clear understanding and peculiar wisdom. The wise men, the exorcists, have just  
15 been brought into my presence to read this writing and tell me its interpretation.  
i Prob. rdg.; Aram. adds and the dwellers upon earth.  
j Or and solving problems.

his reign at the north Arabian oasis of Taima. 34b-35: These verses are an expansion of v. 3.

5.1-31: **Corruption punished.** 1: *Belshazzar* was the son of Nabonidus, but is never referred to as king in Babylonian texts; he ruled as vice-regent while his father was away from the country; see 4.33 n. 7: *Shall rank as third*: that is, after the king and crown prince; compare 2.48.

tion, and they have been unable to  
 16 interpret it. But I have heard it said of  
 you that you are able to give interpretations  
 and to unbind spells.<sup>k</sup> So now, if you are  
 able to read the words and tell me what they  
 mean, you shall be robed in purple and  
 honoured with a chain of gold round your  
 neck and shall rank as third in the kingdom.  
 17 Then Daniel answered in the king's  
 presence, 'Your gifts you may keep for  
 yourself; or else give your rewards to  
 another. Nevertheless I will read the  
 writing to your majesty and tell you its  
 18 interpretation. My lord king, the Most  
 High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar  
 a kingdom and power and glory and  
 19 majesty; and, because of this power  
 which he gave him, all peoples and  
 nations of every language trembled  
 before him and were afraid. He put to  
 death whom he would and spared whom  
 he would, he promoted them at  
 20 will and at will degraded them. But,  
 when he became haughty, stubborn and  
 presumptuous, he was deposed from his  
 royal throne and his glory was taken  
 21 from him. He was banished from the  
 society of men, his mind became like  
 that of a beast, he had to live with the  
 wild asses and to eat grass like oxen,  
 and his body was drenched with the  
 dew of heaven, until he came to know  
 that the Most High God is sovereign  
 over the kingdom of men and sets up  
 22 over it whom he will. But you, his son  
 Belshazzar, did not humble your heart,  
 23 although you knew all this. You have  
 set yourself up against the Lord of  
 heaven. The vessels of his temple have  
 been brought to your table; and you,  
 your nobles, your concubines, and your  
 courtesans have drunk from them. You  
 have praised the gods of silver and  
 gold, of bronze and iron, of wood and  
 stone, which neither see nor hear nor  
 know, and you have not given glory to  
 God, in whose charge is your very  
 breath and in whose hands are all your

ways. This is why that hand was sent  
 24 from his very presence and why it wrote  
 this inscription. And these are the  
 25 words of the writing which was  
 inscribed: *Mene mene tekel u-pharsin*.  
 Here is the interpretation: *mene*:<sup>l</sup> God  
 26 has numbered the days of your  
 kingdom and brought it to an end;  
*tekel*:<sup>m</sup> you have been weighed in the  
 27 balance and found wanting; *u-pharsin*:<sup>n</sup>  
 28 and your kingdom has been divided  
 and given to the Medes and Persians.  
 Then Belshazzar gave the order and  
 29 Daniel was robed in purple and  
 honoured with a chain of gold round  
 his neck, and proclamation was made  
 that he should rank as third in the  
 kingdom.

That very night Belshazzar king of  
 30 the Chaldaeans was slain, and Darius  
 31 the Mede took the kingdom, being then  
 sixty-two years old.

#### *Daniel in the lions' pit*

IT PLEASSED DARIUS TO APPOINT SATRAPS  
 6 over the kingdom, a hundred and  
 twenty in number in charge of the  
 whole kingdom, and over them three  
 2 chief ministers, to whom the satraps  
 should send reports so that the king's  
 interests might not suffer; of these three,  
 Daniel was one. In the event Daniel  
 3 outshone the other ministers and the  
 satraps because of his ability, and the  
 king had it in mind to appoint him  
 over the whole kingdom. Then the  
 4 chief ministers and the satraps began  
 to look round for some pretext to  
 attack Daniel's administration of the  
 kingdom, but they failed to find any  
 malpractice on his part; for he was  
 faithful to his trust. Since they could  
 5 discover no neglect of duty or  
 malpractice, they said, 'There will be  
<sup>k</sup> Or and to solve problems.  
<sup>l</sup> That is numbered.  
<sup>m</sup> That is shekel or weight.  
<sup>n</sup> Prob. rdg.; Aram. pheres. There is a play on three  
 possible meanings halves or divisions or Persians.

18-21: A summary of ch. 4. 25: *Mene mene tekel u-pharsin*: *tekel*, Heb. *shekel*, was a sixtieth of a *mene*. Heb. *mina*. *U* means "and"; *pharsin* means two *pheres*, with one *pheres* being a half-shekel. The weights, or coins, are here in descending value; this is in accord with the comparable descending values of the metals in 2.32. The weights are symbolic of the five kings after Nebuchadnezzar, including Belshazzar. 31: See 2.37-40 n. No Darius is known as king of the Medes. The Persian king Darius ruled 521-486 b.c.

6.1-28: Daniel impresses Darius. The plot is a variant of that of ch. 3. 1: *Darius*: see 5.31 n. 2: A hundred and twenty: Persian sources refer to numbers of satrapies (province states) only

no charge to bring against this Daniel unless we find one in his religion.'

6 These chief ministers and satraps watched for an opportunity to approach the king, and said to him,  
7 'Long live King Darius! All we, the ministers of the kingdom, prefects, satraps, courtiers, and viceroys, have taken counsel and agree that the king should issue a decree and bring an ordinance into force, that whoever within the next thirty days shall present a petition to any god or man other than the king shall be thrown  
8 into the lions' pit. Now, O king, issue the ordinance and have it put in writing, so that it may be unalterable, for the law of the Medes and Persians  
9 stands for ever.' Accordingly King Darius issued the ordinance in written form.

10 When Daniel learnt that this decree had been issued, he went into his house. He had had windows made in his roof-chamber looking towards Jerusalem; and there he knelt down three times a day and offered prayers and praises to his God as his custom had always been.  
11 His enemies watched for an opportunity to catch Daniel and found him at his prayers making supplication to his God. Then they came into the king's presence and reminded him of the ordinance. 'Your majesty,' they said, 'have you not issued an ordinance that any person who, within the next thirty days, shall present a petition to any god or man other than your majesty shall be thrown into the lions' pit?' The king answered, 'Yes, it is fixed. The law of the Medes and  
13 Persians stands for ever.' So in the king's presence they said, 'Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles, has ignored the ordinance issued by your majesty, and is making petition to his god three  
14 times a day.' When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed. He tried to think of a way to save Daniel, and  
15 continued his efforts till sunset; then those same men watched for an oppor-

tunity to approach the king, and said to him, 'Your majesty must know that by the law of the Medes and Persians no ordinance or decree issued by the king may be altered.' So the king gave  
16 orders and Daniel was brought and thrown into the lions' pit; but he said to Daniel, 'Your own God, whom you serve continually, will save you.' A  
17 stone was brought and put over the mouth of the pit, and the king sealed it with his signet and with the signets of his nobles, so that no one might intervene to rescue Daniel.

The king went back to his palace  
18 and spent the night fasting; no woman was brought to him and sleep eluded him. At dawn, as soon as it was light,  
19 he rose and went in fear and trembling to the pit. When the king reached it,  
20 he called anxiously to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually been able to save you from the lions?' Then  
21 Daniel answered, 'Long live the king! My God sent his angel to shut the  
22 lions' mouths so that they have done me no injury, because in his judgement I was found innocent;<sup>o</sup> and moreover,  
23 O king, I had done you no injury.' The king was overjoyed and gave orders that Daniel should be lifted out of the pit. So Daniel was lifted out and no trace of injury was found on him, because he had put his faith in his God. By order of the king Daniel's accusers  
24 were brought and thrown into the lions' pit with their wives and children, and before they reached the floor of the pit the lions were upon them and crunched them up, bones and all.

Then King Darius wrote to all  
25 peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: 'May your prosperity increase! I have issued  
26 a decree that in all my royal domains men shall fear and reverence the God of Daniel;

<sup>o</sup> in his judgement . . . innocent: or before him success was granted me.

up to twenty-nine; this text uses a typical biblical round number; compare Esther 8.9. 7: A drastic form of punishment was to be thrown into the lions' pit. 8: The law of the Medes and the Persians: this phrase has passed into our everyday language to mean something unchangeable. 10: Looking towards Jerusalem: the sacred direction for Jewish prayer, as in 1 Kgs.8.44. 14: Darius here knows Daniel immediately, which is in contrast to situations in earlier chapters.

for he is the living God, the  
everlasting,  
whose kingly power shall not be  
weakened;  
whose sovereignty shall have no  
end—

27 a saviour, a deliverer, a worker of  
signs and wonders  
in heaven and on earth,  
who has delivered Daniel from the  
power of the lions.<sup>7</sup>

28 So this Daniel prospered during the  
reigns of Darius and Cyrus the Persian.

### Daniel's visions

7 IN THE FIRST YEAR OF BELSHAZZAR KING  
of Babylon, as Daniel lay on his bed,  
dreams and visions came into his head.  
Then he wrote down the dream, and  
here his account begins:

2 In my visions of the night I, Daniel,  
was gazing intently and I saw a great  
sea churned up by the four winds of  
3 heaven, and four huge beasts coming  
up out of the sea, each one different  
4 from the others. The first was like a  
lion but had an eagle's wings. I  
watched until its wings were plucked  
off and it was lifted from the ground  
and made to stand on two feet like a  
man; it was also given the mind of a  
5 man. Then I saw another, a second  
beast, like a bear. It was half crouching  
and had three ribs in its mouth,  
between its teeth. The command was  
given: 'Up, gorge yourself with flesh.'  
6 After this as I gazed I saw another, a  
beast like a leopard with four bird's  
wings on its back; this creature had  
four heads, and it was invested with  
7 sovereign power. Next in my visions  
of the night I saw a fourth beast,

dreadful and grisly, exceedingly strong,  
with great iron teeth and bronze  
claws.<sup>p</sup> It crunched and devoured, and  
trampled underfoot all that was left.  
It differed from all the beasts which  
preceded it in having ten horns. While 8  
I was considering the horns I saw  
another horn, a little one, springing up  
among them, and three of the first  
horns were uprooted to make room for  
it. And in that horn were eyes like the  
eyes of a man, and a mouth that spoke  
proud words. I kept looking, and then 9

thrones were set in place and one  
ancient in years took his seat,  
his robe was white as snow and the  
hair of his head like cleanest  
wool.

Flames of fire were his throne and  
its wheels blazing fire;  
a flowing river of fire streamed out 10  
before him.<sup>q</sup>

Thousands upon thousands served  
him  
and myriads upon myriads attended  
his presence.  
The court sat, and the books were  
opened.

Then because of the proud words 11  
that the horn was speaking, I went on  
watching until the beast was killed and  
its carcass destroyed: it was given to  
the flames. The rest of the beasts, 12  
though deprived of their sovereignty,  
were allowed to remain alive for a time  
and a season. I was still watching in 13  
visions of the night and I saw one like  
a man coming with the clouds of  
heaven; he approached the Ancient in  
Years and was presented to him.

<sup>p</sup> Or it.  
<sup>q</sup> and bronze claws: *prob. rdg. cp.verse 19; Aram. om.*

26b-27: This general hymn, similar to 4.34b-35, ends with a motif taken from the story; this is also the case in 2.23b. 28: See 5.31 n.

7.1-12.13: *Final manifestations.* These form the second half of the book. Two separate themes—the four beasts and the heavenly visions—become united. 2: *A great sea:* the ocean was viewed as the chaos dragon, slain by the deity; see e.g. Job 7.12; Isa.27.1; and Ps.89.9-10 n. 4-7: Compare the four creatures in Ezek.1.5-10. According to v. 17, the beasts probably represent kingdoms; see 2.37-40. 8: *A little horn:* the ten horns would represent a round number of successors of Alexander the Great in the Near East; see v. 24. The little horn would be the contemporaneous persecutor of the Jews, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see Introduction). See also 1 Macc.1.41-50. 9-10: A vision of heaven. 9: *Ancient in years:* God. On the scene depicted here, see 1 Kgs.22.19 and Ezek.1.26-28. 10: *The court . . . the books:* the picture of a courtroom scene is found in other writings, such as Enoch 47.3. 11-12: A continuation of v. 8. 13-14: A continuation of vv. 9-10. 13: *One like a man:* lit. one like a son of man. The term "son of

- 14 Sovereignty and glory and kingly power were given to him, so that all people and nations of every language should serve him; his sovereignty was to be an everlasting sovereignty which should not pass away, and his kingly power such as should never be impaired.
- 15 My spirit within me was troubled, and, dismayed by the visions which came into my head, I, Daniel, approached one of those who stood there and inquired from him what all this meant; and he told me the interpretation. 'These great beasts, four in number,' he said, 'are four kingdoms which shall rise from the ground. But the saints<sup>r</sup> of the Most High shall receive the kingly power and shall retain it for ever, for ever and ever.'
- 17 Then I desired to know what the fourth beast meant, the beast that was different from all the others, very dreadful with its iron teeth and bronze claws, crunching and devouring and trampling underfoot all that was left. I desired also to know about the ten horns on its head and the other horn which sprang up and at whose coming three of them fell—the horn that had eyes and a mouth speaking proud words and appeared larger than the others. As I still watched, that horn was waging war with the saints and overcoming them until the Ancient in Years came. Then judgement was given in favour of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints gained possession of the kingly power. He gave me this answer: 'The fourth beast signifies a fourth kingdom which shall appear upon earth. It shall differ from the other kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth, tread it down and crush it. The ten horns signify the appearance of
- ten kings in this kingdom, after whom another king shall arise, differing from his predecessors; and he shall bring low three kings. He shall hurl defiance at the Most High and shall wear down the saints of the Most High. He shall plan to alter the customary times and law; and the saints shall be delivered into his power for a time and times and half a time. Then the court shall sit, and he shall be deprived of his sovereignty, so that in the end it may be destroyed and abolished. The kingly power, sovereignty, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Their kingly power is an everlasting power and all sovereignties shall serve them and obey them.'
- Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts dismayed me greatly and I turned pale; and I kept these things in my mind.
- <sup>s</sup>In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, while I was in Susa, the capital city of the province of Elam, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, similar to my former vision. In this vision I was watching beside the stream of the Ulai. I raised my eyes and there I saw a ram with two horns standing between me and the stream. The two horns were long, the one longer than the other, growing up behind. I watched the ram butting west and north and south. No beasts could stand before it, no one could rescue from its power. It did what it liked, making a display of its strength. While I pondered this, suddenly a he-goat came from the west skimming over the whole earth without touching the ground; it had a prominent horn between its eyes. It approached the

<sup>r</sup> Or holy ones.

<sup>s</sup> Here the Hebrew text resumes (see note at 2. 4).

man" does not carry here all the levels of meaning it later acquired, such as "messiah." 14: The prerogatives are to be effective forever for the one like a man (v. 13), as anticipated in 2.44. 15: A continuation of v. 12. 18: *The saints*: the people persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes; see v. 27. In v. 14 such power was given to "the one like a man." 21: *The Ancient in Years*: God would save the saints, as he had delivered the young men in chs. 3 and 6. 25: *A time and times and half a time*: three and a half years. *Time* means year; *times*, two years; see 4.16.

8.1–27: *The ram, the goat and the little horn*. This chapter (it reverts to Heb.) alludes to the same events as ch. 7, though on a lower level of literary quality. 1: *Susa*: a royal city in southern Persia, the area being named Elam after the ancient Elamites. *My former vision*: that of ch. 7. 2: *Ulai*: a river at or near Susa. 3: *Ram* and the "goat" of v. 5 were probably signs of the zodiac. 5: Alexander the Great's conquest of the East was remarkably swift, 334–323 B.C.



two-horned ram which I had seen standing between me and the stream and rushed at it with impetuous force.

7 I saw it advance on the ram, working itself into a fury against it, then strike the ram and break its two horns; the ram had no strength to resist. The he-goat flung it to the ground and trampled on it, and there was no one to save the ram.

8 Then the he-goat made a great display of its strength. Powerful as it was, its great horn snapped and in its place there sprang out towards the four quarters of heaven four prominent horns. Out of one of them there issued one small horn, which made a prodigious show of strength south and east and towards the fairest of all lands. It aspired to be as great as the host of heaven, and it cast down to the earth some of the host and some of the stars and trod them underfoot. It aspired to be as great as the Prince of the host, suppressed his regular offering and even threw down his sanctuary.

12 The heavenly hosts were delivered up, and it raised itself<sup>t</sup> impiously against the regular offering and threw true religion to the ground; in all that it did it succeeded. I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one answering him, whoever he was. The one said, 'For how long will the period of this vision last? How long will the regular offering be suppressed, how long will impiety cause desolation,<sup>u</sup> and both the Holy Place and the fairest of all lands<sup>v</sup> be given over to be trodden down?' The answer came, 'For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the Holy Place shall emerge victorious.'

15 All the while that I, Daniel, was seeing the vision, I was trying to understand it. Suddenly I saw standing before me one with the semblance of a man; at the same time I heard a human voice calling to him across the

bend of the Ulai, 'Gabriel, explain the vision to this man.' He came up to where I was standing; I was seized with terror at his approach and threw myself on my face. But he said to me, 'Understand, O man: the vision points to the time of the end.' When he spoke to me, I fell to the ground in a trance; but he grasped me and made me stand up where I was. And he said, 'I shall make known to you what is to happen at the end of the wrath; for there is an end to the appointed time. The two-horned ram which you saw signifies the kings of Media and Persia, the he-goat is the kingdom<sup>w</sup> of the Greeks and the great horn on his forehead is the first king. As for the horn which was snapped off and replaced by four horns: four kingdoms shall rise out of that nation, but not with power comparable to his.

In the last days of those kingdoms, when their sin is at its height, a king shall appear, harsh and grim, a master of stratagem. His power shall be great, he shall work havoc untold; he shall succeed in whatever he does. He shall work havoc among great nations and upon a holy people. His mind shall be ever active, and he shall succeed in his crafty designs; he shall conjure up great plans and, when they least expect it, work havoc on many. He shall challenge even the Prince of princes and be broken, but not by human hands. This revelation which has been

<sup>t</sup> and it raised itself: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*  
<sup>u</sup> will impiety cause desolation: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>v</sup> fairest of all lands: *prob. rdg., cp. verse 9; Heb. host.*  
<sup>w</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. king.*

8: *Four...horns*: the successors to Alexander in Greece, Asia Minor, Syria and points east, and Egypt. 9: Antiochus IV Epiphanes; see 7.8 n. 10-11: See Isa.14.12-16. 13: *Regular offering suppressed*: as described in 1 Macc.1.45. 14: *Evenings and mornings*: this amounts to 1,150 days, a little less than the three and a half years of 7.25. 15: *Semblance of a man*: not to be confused with the figure of 7.13. 16: *Gabriel*: the name of an archangel; he appears often in the Book of Enoch. 17: *The end of time*, when God would finally judge the world. A concern with what would happen at the end of time was a major theme of apocalyptic literature. 23-25: See 7.8 n. 23: *Last days*: see v. 17. 25: *Not by human hands*: a theme in 7.26.

of the evenings and the mornings  
is true;

but you must keep the vision secret,  
for it points to days far ahead.'

27 As for me, Daniel, my strength failed me and I lay sick for a while. Then I rose and attended to the king's business. But I was perplexed by the revelation and no one could explain it.

9 IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF Darius son of Ahasuerus (a Mede by birth, who was appointed king over the kingdom of the Chaldaeans) I, Daniel, was reading the scriptures and reflecting on the seventy years which, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, were to pass while Jerusalem lay in ruins. Then I turned to the Lord God in earnest prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God, making confession thus:

'Lord, thou great and terrible God who faithfully keepest the covenant with those who love thee and observe thy commandments, we have sinned, we have done what was wrong and wicked; we have rebelled, we have turned our backs on thy commandments and thy decrees. We have not listened to thy servants the prophets, who spoke in thy name to our kings and princes, to our forefathers and to all the people of the land. O Lord, the right is on thy side; the shame, now as ever, belongs to us, the men of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem, and to all the Israelites near and far in every land to which thou hast banished them for their treachery towards thee. O LORD, the shame falls on us as on our kings, our princes and our forefathers; we have all sinned against thee. Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled against him. We have not obeyed the LORD our God, we have not conformed to the laws which he laid down for us through his servants the proph-

ets. All Israel has broken thy law and not obeyed thee, so that the curses set out in the law of Moses thy servant in the adjuration and the oath have rained down upon us; for we have sinned against him. He has fulfilled all that he said about us and about our rulers, by bringing upon us and upon Jerusalem a calamity greater than has ever happened in all the world. It was all foreshadowed in the law of Moses, this calamity which has come upon us; yet we have done nothing to propitiate the LORD our God; we have neither repented of our wrongful deeds nor remembered that thou art true to thy word. The LORD has been biding his time and has now brought this calamity upon us. In all that he has done the LORD our God has been right; yet we have not obeyed him.

'And now, O Lord our God who didst bring thy people out of Egypt by a strong hand, winning for thyself a name that lives on to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. O Lord, by all thy saving deeds we beg that thy wrath and anger may depart from Jerusalem, thy city, thy holy hill; through our own sins and our fathers' guilty deeds Jerusalem and thy people have become a byword among all our neighbours. And now, our God, listen to thy servant's prayer and supplication; for thy own sake, O Lord, make thy face shine upon thy desolate sanctuary. Lend thy ear, O God, and hear, open thine eyes and look upon our desolation and upon the city that bears thy name; it is not by virtue of our own saving acts but by thy great mercy that we present our supplications before thee. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act; for thy own sake do not delay, O God, for thy city and thy people bear thy name.'

Thus I was speaking and praying, confessing my own sin and my people Israel's sin, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God on behalf of his holy hill. While I was

9.1-27: Daniel's prayer, and another vision of things to come. 1: Continuing the chronology of ch. 6. 2: *The scriptures*: this rare example of an interpretation of a scriptural text by another scriptural book apparently alludes to Jer.25.11-12; 29.10. 4-19: This is a prayer of community confession of sins and a plea for forgiveness, formed from a series of biblical phrases; compare

praying, the man Gabriel, whom I had already seen in the vision, came close to<sup>x</sup> me at the hour of the evening  
 22 sacrifice, flying swiftly.<sup>y</sup> He spoke clearly to me and said, 'Daniel, I have now come to enlighten your understanding. As you were beginning your supplications a word went forth; this I have come to pass on to you, for you are a man greatly beloved. Consider well the word, consider the vision:  
 24 Seventy weeks are marked out for your people and your holy city; then rebellion shall be stopped,<sup>z</sup> sin brought to an end,<sup>a</sup> iniquity expiated, everlasting right ushered in, vision and prophecy sealed, and the Most Holy Place anointed. Know then and understand: from the time that the word went forth that Jerusalem should be restored and rebuilt, seven weeks shall pass till the appearance of one anointed, a prince; then for sixty-two weeks it shall remain restored, rebuilt with  
 26 streets and conduits. At the critical time, after the sixty-two weeks, one who is anointed shall be removed with no one to take his part; and the horde of an invading prince shall work havoc on city and sanctuary. The end of it shall be a deluge, inevitable war  
 27 with all its horrors. He shall make a firm league with the mighty<sup>b</sup> for one week; and, the week half spent, he shall put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And in the train of these abominations shall come an author of desolation; then, in the end, what has been decreed concerning the desolation will be poured out.'

10 IN THE THIRD YEAR OF CYRUS KING OF Persia a word was revealed to Daniel who had been given the name Belteshazzar. Though this word was true,

it cost him<sup>c</sup> much toil to understand it; nevertheless understanding came to him in the course of the vision.

In those days I, Daniel, mourned for 2 three whole weeks. I refrained from all 3 choice food; no meat or wine passed my lips, and I did not anoint myself until the three weeks had gone by. On 4 the twenty-fourth day of the first month, I found myself on the bank of the great river, that is the Tigris; I 5 looked up and saw a man clothed in linen with a belt of gold from Ophir round his waist. His body gleamed like 6 topaz, his face shone like lightning, his eyes flamed like torches, his arms and feet sparkled like a disc of bronze; and when he spoke his voice sounded like the voice of a multitude. I, Daniel, 7 alone saw the vision, while those who were near me did not see it, but great fear fell upon them and they stole away, and I was left alone gazing at this great vision. But my strength left 8 me; I became a sorry figure of a man, and retained no strength. I heard the 9 sound of his words and, when I did so, I fell prone on the ground in a trance. Suddenly a hand grasped me and 10 pulled me up on to my hands and knees. He said to me, 'Daniel, man 11 greatly beloved, attend to the words I am speaking to you and stand up where you are, for I am now sent to you.' When he addressed me, I stood up trembling and he said, 'Do not be 12 afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day that you applied your mind to understand and to mortify yourself before your God, your prayers have been heard, and I have come in answer to them. But the angel prince 13

<sup>x</sup> Or touched.  
<sup>y</sup> flying swiftly: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* thoroughly wearied.  
<sup>z</sup> Or restrained.  
<sup>a</sup> Or sealed.      <sup>b</sup> Or many  
<sup>c</sup> him: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

Bar.1.15-3.8. 21: See 8.16 n. 24: *Seventy weeks*: meaning seven times seventy, equaling 490 years, the elapsed time since the destruction of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) mentioned in v. 2. The end will be like that in 7.26-27. 25: *One anointed, a prince*: the first period of 49 years will be a time of waiting. The second period of 434 years will start with the appearance of one anointed as leader. 27: The third period of 7 years will bring a religious persecution by a leader like the one described in 8.11-13. *The week half spent*: compare the three and a half years of 7.25. *The end*: see 8.17 n.

10.1-12.13: A detailed vision of the reigns of Alexander and his successors and of the end. 1: *Third year of Cyrus*: 536 B.C. 4: Compare Ezek.1.1. 5-6: The passage uses some of the same terms as Ezek.1.15-28. *The man* is probably the angel Gabriel. 7: Compare Acts 9.7 for a vision seen by one person but not by his companions. 13: *Michael*, the guardian angel of Israel, came to the aid of Gabriel (vv. 5-6 n.) when the latter was battling the *angel prince of the*

of the kingdom of Persia resisted me for twenty-one days, and then, seeing that I had held out there, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me against the prince of the kingdom of Persia. And I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in days to come; for this too is a vision for those days.<sup>1</sup>

15 While he spoke to me I hung my head and was struck dumb. Suddenly one like a man touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth to speak and addressed him as he stood before me: 'Sir, this has pierced me to the heart, and I retain no strength. How can my lord's servant presume to talk with such as my lord, since my strength has failed me and no breath is left in me?'  
18 Then the figure touched me again and restored my strength. He said, 'Do not be afraid, man greatly beloved; all will be well with you. Be strong, be strong.' When he had spoken to me, I recovered strength and said, 'Speak, sir, for you have given me strength.'

20 He said, 'Do you know why I have come to you? I am first going back to fight with the prince of Persia, and, as soon as I have left, the prince of Greece will appear: I have no ally on my side to help and support me, except Michael your prince.<sup>d</sup> However I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. Here and now I will tell you what is true:

'Three more kings will appear in Persia, and the fourth will far surpass all the others in wealth; and when he has extended his power through his wealth, he will rouse the whole world against the kingdom of Greece. Then there will appear a warrior king. He will rule a vast kingdom and will do what he chooses. But as soon as he is established, his kingdom will be shattered and split up north, south, east and west. It will not pass to his descendants, nor will any of his success-

ors have an empire like his; his kingdom will be torn up by the roots and given to others as well as to them. Then the king of the south will become strong; but another of the captains will surpass him in strength and win a greater kingdom. In due course the two will enter into a friendly alliance; to redress the balance the daughter of the king of the south will be given in marriage to the king of the north, but she will not maintain her influence and their line will not last. She and her escort, her child, and also her lord and master, will all be the victims of foul play. Then another shoot from the same stock as hers will appear in his father's place, will penetrate the defences of the king of the north and enter his fortress, and will win a decisive victory over his people. He will take back as booty to Egypt even the images of their gods cast in metal and their precious vessels of silver and gold. Then for some years he will refrain from attacking the king of the north. After that the king of the north will overrun the southern kingdom but will retreat to his own land.

'His sons will press on to assemble a great armed horde. One of them will sweep on and on like an irresistible flood. And after that he will press on as far as his enemy's stronghold. The king of the south, his anger roused, will march out to do battle with the king of the north who, in turn, will raise a great horde, but it will be delivered into the hands of his enemy. When this horde has been captured, the victor will be elated and he will slaughter tens of thousands, yet he will not maintain his advantage. Then the king of the north will once more raise a horde even greater than the last and, when the years come round, will advance with a great army and a large

<sup>d</sup> *Prob. rdg.: Heb. adds and as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede.*

*kingdom of Persia.* 20: The battle of the angels reflects the battles of the people; *Greece* here is probably the kingdom of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, though it may be the empire of Alexander. 10.21–11.2: *The Book of Truth* revealed. This was apparently an explanation of history and its fulfillment, and not the same as the book of 12.1. 11.2: Since there were more than four kings in Persian history, it is not known which ones the author meant.

11.3–45: *Alexander and his successors.* 3–4: See Introduction and 8.8. 5–45: The south is the Egyptian Ptolemaic kingdom and the north is the Syrian Seleucid kingdom. The struggles between

14 baggage-train. During these times many will resist the king of the south, but some hotheads among your own people will rashly attempt to give substance to a vision and will come to  
 15 disaster. Then the king of the north will come and throw up siege-ramps and capture a fortified town, and the forces of the south will not stand up to him; even the flower of their army will  
 16 not be able to hold their ground. And so his adversary will do as he pleases and meet with no opposition. He will establish himself in the fairest of all lands and it will come wholly into his  
 17 power. He will resolve to subjugate all the dominions of the king of the south; and he will come to fair terms with him,<sup>e</sup> and he will give him a young woman in marriage, for the destruction of the kingdom; but she will not persist nor serve his purpose.  
 18 Then he will turn to the coasts and islands and take many prisoners, but a foreign commander<sup>f</sup> will put an end to his challenge by wearing him down;<sup>g</sup> thus he will throw back his challenge  
 19 on to him. He will fall back upon his own strongholds; there he will come to disaster and be overthrown and be seen no more.  
 20 'He will be succeeded by one who will send out an officer with a royal escort to extort tribute; after a short time this king too will meet his end, yet neither openly nor in battle.  
 21 'A contemptible creature will succeed but will not be given recognition as king; yet he will seize the kingdom by dissimulation and intrigue in time of  
 22 peace. He will sweep away all forces of opposition as he advances, and even the Prince of the Covenant will be  
 23 broken. He will enter into fraudulent alliances and, although the people behind him are but few, he will rise to  
 24 power and establish himself in time of peace. He will overrun the richest districts of the province and succeed in doing what his fathers and forefathers

failed to do, distributing spoil, booty, and property to his followers. He will lay his plans against fortresses, but only for a time.

'He will rouse himself in all his strength and courage and lead a great army against the king of the south, but the king of the south will press the campaign against him with a very great and numerous army; yet the king of the south will not persist, for traitors will lay their plots. Those who eat at his board will be his undoing; his army will be swept away, and many will fall on the field of battle. The two kings will be bent on mischief and, sitting at the same table, they will lie to each other with advantage to neither. Yet there will still be an end to the appointed time. Then one will return home with a long baggage-train, and with anger in his heart against the Holy Covenant; he will work his will and return to his own land.

'At the appointed time he will once more overrun the south, but he will not succeed as he did before. Ships from the west will sail against him, and he will receive a rebuff. He will turn and vent his fury against the Holy Covenant; on his way back he will take due note of those who have forsaken it. Armed forces dispatched by him will desecrate the sanctuary and the citadel and do away with the regular offering. And there they will set up "the abominable thing that causes desolation". He will win over by plausible promises those who are ready to condemn the covenant, but the people who are faithful to their God will hold firm and fight back. Wise leaders of the nation will give guidance to the common people; yet for a while they will fall victims to fire and sword, to captivity and pillage. But these victims will not want for help, though small, even if many who join them are

<sup>e</sup> and he . . . with him: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>f</sup> Or consul or legate.

<sup>g</sup> by wearing him down: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

the two countries is fairly accurately described. 21-45: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, as in chs. 7-9, is the great oppressor. 22-23: *Prince of the Covenant*: the Judean high priest Onias III deposed by Antiochus and supplanted by his brother Jason as part of the *fraudulent alliances*. 25-35: The two campaigns of Antiochus against Egypt. 30: *Ships from the west*: the Romans. They compelled Antiochus to withdraw from Egypt. On his return to Syria (168 B.C.), he desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 31; see 9.27). 32: *Fight back*: the Maccabean revolt;

35 insincere. Some of these leaders will themselves fall victims for a time so that they may be tested, refined and made shining white. Yet there will still be an end<sup>h</sup> to the appointed time.

36 The king will do what he chooses; he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and against the God of gods he will utter monstrous blasphemies. All will go well for him until the time of wrath ends, for what is determined

37 must be done. He will ignore his ancestral gods, and the god beloved of women; to no god will he pay heed but will exalt himself above them all.

38 Instead he will honour the god of the citadel, a god unknown to his ancestors, with gold and silver, gems and costly gifts. He will garrison his strongest fortresses with aliens, the people of a foreign god. Those whom he favours he will load with honour, putting them in office over the common people and distributing land at a price.

40 'At the time of the end, he and the king of the south will make feints at one another, and the king of the north will come storming against him with chariots and cavalry and many ships. He will overrun land after land, sweeping

41 over them like a flood, amongst them the fairest of all lands, and tens of thousands shall fall victims. Yet all these lands [including Edom and Moab and the remnant of the Ammonites]

42 will survive his attack. He will reach out to land after land, and Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of her hidden stores of gold and silver and of all her treasures; Libyans and Cushites

44 will follow in his train. Then rumours from east and north will alarm him, and he will depart in a great rage to

45 destroy and to exterminate many. He will pitch his royal pavilion between the sea and the holy hill, the fairest of all hills; and he will meet his end with no one to help him.

At that moment Michael shall appear,  
 Michael the great captain,  
 who stands guard over your fellow-countrymen;  
 and there will be a time of distress  
 such as has never been  
 since they became a nation till that moment.

But at that moment your people will be delivered,<sup>i</sup>  
 every one who is written in the book:  
 many of those who sleep in the dust 2  
 of the earth will wake,  
 some to everlasting life  
 and some to the reproach of eternal abhorrence.

The wise leaders shall shine like the 3  
 bright vault of heaven,  
 and those who have guided the people in the true path  
 shall be like the stars for ever and ever.

But you, Daniel, keep the words 4  
 secret and seal the book till the time of the end. Many will be at their wits' end, and punishment will be heavy.'

And I, Daniel, looked and saw two 5  
 others standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on the opposite bank. And I said to the man clothed 6  
 in linen who was above the waters of the river, 'How long will it be before these portents cease?' The man clothed 7  
 in linen above the waters lifted to heaven his right hand and his left, and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever: 'It shall be for a time, times, and a half. When the power of the holy people ceases to be dispersed, all these things shall come to an end.' 8  
 I heard but I did not understand, and so I said, 'Sir, what will the issue of these

<sup>h</sup> Yet . . . end: prob. rlg.; Heb. has different word order.  
<sup>i</sup> Or will escape.

see 1 Macc. ch. 2. 35: *End*: see 8.17 n. 36-45: Wars to occur as a result of the arrogance of Antiochus. 43: *Cushites*: the peoples living south of Egypt in Nubia (roughly today's Sudan) and Ethiopia.

12.1-13: *Concluding vision. 1*: Apocalyptic literature seems to flow directly from historical events (here the wars brought on by Antiochus) to events of the end times. As in 9.26-27, the period before the very end would be the most distressful. *The book*: containing a list of the names of the saints, as in Ps.69.28; compare 10.21-11.2 n. 2: This is a clear statement of resurrection, and unique in the OT. 4: The book here seems to be that of 11.1, rather than 12.1. 6: *Linen*: see Ezek.9.2. 7: *Time, times, and a half*: three and a half years, as it is in 7.25.

- 9 things be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are kept secret and sealed till the time of the end. abomination of desolation" is set up, there shall be an interval of one thousand two hundred and ninety days.
- 10 Many shall purify themselves and be refined, making themselves shining white, but the wicked shall continue in wickedness and none of them shall understand; only the wise leaders shall understand. From the time when the regular offering is abolished and "the Happy the man who waits and lives to see the completion of one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days! But go your way to the end and rest, and you shall arise to your destiny at the end of the age.'
- 11  
12  
13

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**11-12:** These figures, perhaps representing separate traditions, seem to be related to those of 7.25 and 8.14. **11:** See 9.27 n.

# THE TWELVE PROPHETS

## HOSEA

In the Hebrew Bible, the Minor Prophets (so named because their books are shorter than Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) are called the Book of the Twelve and are treated as a literary unit. The ancients arranged the twelve writings in what they considered chronological order; Hosea is in the first position. While modern scholars see reasons to date some of these writings at times other than the ancient sequence suggests, they regard Hosea as indeed the earliest writing.

The first verse places Hosea in the latter part of the eighth century B.C., when the Assyrians were about to overrun the Northern Kingdom of Israel. That menace gives the book, addressed to the north, its tension. The prophet knows both the people's corruption and Yahweh's love, and the book veers from judgment to love, from threats of destruction to promises of restoration.

A book such as Hosea can pose a problem for the reader in that it does not present a systematic argument. It consists of many poems and prose passages compiled into an anthology; hence there can be a surface impression of bewildering inconsistency. Moreover, Hosea seems to derive his message from his private marital experiences, related in chs. 1-3, which are searing and even bitter, though filled with his love. The portrait of the deity as partaking in man's feelings and agonies makes Hosea one of the most moving of Old Testament books.

1 **T**HE WORD OF THE LORD WHICH came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel.

### *Hosea's unfaithful wife*

2 **THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE LORD'S** message by Hosea. He said, Go, take a wanton for your wife and get children of her wantonness; for like a wanton  
3 this land is unfaithful to the LORD. So he went and took Gomer, a worthless woman;<sup>a</sup> and she conceived and bore  
4 him a son. And the LORD said to him,

Call him Jezreel,<sup>b</sup> for in a little while I will punish the line of Jehu for the blood shed in Jezreel and put an end to the kingdom of Israel.

5 On that day

I will break Israel's bow in the Vale of Jezreel.

She conceived again and bore a daughter, and the LORD said to him,

Call her Lo-ruhamah;<sup>c</sup> for I will never again show love to Israel, never again forgive them.<sup>d</sup>

After weaning Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son; and the LORD said,

Call him Lo-ammi;<sup>e</sup> for you are not my people, and I will not be your God. The Israelites shall become countless as the sands of the sea

a a worthless woman: or daughter of Diblaim.

b That is God shall sow.

c That is Not loved.

d Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds (7) Then I will love Judah and will save them. I will save them not by bow or sword or weapon of war, by horses or by horsemen, but by the LORD their God.

e That is Not my people.

**1.1: Introduction.** *Hosea* means "rescue." The names of the kings place Hosea in the 740s B.C.

**1.2-3.5: Hosea's unfaithful wife.** The figure of the unhappy marriage sets forth God's dissatisfaction with Israel.

**1.2-9: The three children.** **2: Wanton:** a harlot. **4: Jehu** became king in a bloody revolt at Jezreel in about 842 B.C. (see 2 Kgs.9.1-10.31). Jezreel was the name both of a town and of the valley between Galilee and Samaria. **5: Break Israel's bow:** destroy her power. **7:** See Tfn. *d*. This apparently was added so as to apply to the Southern Kingdom Hosea's message addressed to the Northern. **9: You are not my people:** the LORD renounces the covenant (compare Exod.6.7).

**1.10-2.1: Restoration.** **10:** The substance of v. 9 is here reversed. See Gen.22.17 and 32.12.



- which can neither be measured nor numbered;  
it shall no longer be said, 'They are not my people',  
they shall be called Sons of the Living God.
- 11 Then the people of Judah and of Israel shall be reunited and shall choose for themselves a single head, and they shall become masters of the earth;  
for great shall be the day of Jezreel.
- 2 Then you will say to your brothers, 'You are my people', and to your sisters, 'You are loved.'
- 2 Plead my cause with your mother; is she not my wife and I her husband?<sup>f</sup>  
Plead with her to forswear those wanton looks,  
to banish the lovers from her bosom.
- 3 Or I will strip her and expose her naked as the day she was born;  
I will make her bare as the wilderness, parched as the desert,  
and leave her to die of thirst.
- 4 I will show no love for her children;  
they are the offspring of wantonness,
- 5 and their mother is a wanton.  
She who conceived them is shameless;  
she says, 'I will go after my lovers; they give me my food and drink, my wool and flax, my oil and my perfumes.'
- 6 Therefore I will block her road with thorn-bushes  
and obstruct her path with a wall, so that she can no longer follow her old ways.
- 7 When she pursues her lovers she will not overtake them,
- when she looks for them she will not find them;  
then she will say,  
'I will go back to my husband again; I was better off with him than I am now.'
- For she does not know that it is I who gave her corn, new wine, and oil,  
I who lavished upon her silver and gold  
which they spent on the Baal.  
Therefore I will take back my corn at the harvest and my new wine at the vintage,  
and I will take away the wool and the flax  
which I gave her to cover her naked body;  
so I will show her up for the lewd thing she is,  
and no lover will want to steal her from me.
- I will ravage the vines and the fig-trees,  
which she says are the fee with which her lovers have hired her,  
and turn them into jungle where wild beasts shall feed.
- I will put a stop to her merry-making,  
her pilgrimages and new moons, her sabbaths<sup>h</sup> and festivals.
- I will punish her for the holy days when she burnt sacrifices to the Baalim,  
when she decked herself with earrings and necklaces,  
ran after her lovers and forgot me.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- But now listen,  
I will woo her, I will go with her into the wilderness

<sup>f</sup> is she . . . husband?: or for she is no longer my wife nor I her husband.

<sup>g</sup> Verses 11 and 12 transposed.

<sup>h</sup> Or her full moons.

11: *Reunited*: the division into two kingdoms came after Solomon (see 1 Kgs.12.1-20). *Jezreel* is here the son, standing for God's restoration of Israel.

2.2-17: *Israel, the harlot wife*. 2: *Plead my cause*: the phrase comes from the law court. *Is she not my wife . . . ?*: compare Tfn. *f*, which implies a divorce proceeding. *Lovers* can often mean foreign nations (compare Jer.4.30; Ezek. ch. 16); here it may also mean alien gods.

8: *Corn*: grain in general and not the American corn. *Baal*: the Canaanite fertility god, whose worship was viewed as disloyalty to Yahweh. 11: The list of rituals covers the various kinds of public worship. *Pilgrimages* are the feasts commanded in Exod.23.14-17. 13: *Baalim*: the plural of Baal. 14-17: *Wilderness*: the place of the first encounter between God and Israel,

and comfort her:  
 15 there I will restore her vineyards,  
 turning the Vale of Trouble into  
 the Gate of Hope,<sup>i</sup>  
 and there she will answer as in her  
 youth,  
 when she came up out of  
 Egypt.  
 On that day she shall call me 'My  
 husband'  
 16 and shall no more call me 'My  
 Baal';<sup>j</sup>  
 17 and I will wipe from her lips the  
 very names of the Baalim;  
 never again shall their names be  
 heard.  
 This is the very word of the  
 LORD.<sup>k</sup>

18 Then I will make a covenant on  
 behalf of Israel with the wild beasts,  
 the birds of the air, and the things that  
 creep on the earth, and I will break  
 bow and sword and weapon of war  
 and sweep them off the earth, so that  
 all living creatures may lie down  
 19 without fear. I will betroth you to  
 myself for ever, betroth you in lawful  
 wedlock with unfailing devotion and  
 20 love; I will betroth you to myself to  
 have and to hold, and you shall know  
 21 the LORD. At that time I will give  
 answer, says the LORD, I will answer  
 for the heavens and they will answer for  
 22 the earth, and the earth will answer  
 for the corn, the new wine, and the oil,  
 23 and they will answer for Jezreel. Israel  
 shall be my new sowing in the land,  
 and I will show love to Lo-ruhamah  
 and say to Lo-ammi, 'You are my  
 people', and he will say, 'Thou art my  
 God.'

The LORD said to me, 3  
 Go again and love a woman  
 loved by another man, an adulteress,  
 and love her as I, the LORD, love  
 the Israelites  
 although they resort to other gods  
 and love the raisin-cakes offered to  
 their idols.

So I got her back<sup>l</sup> for fifteen pieces of 2  
 silver, a homer of barley and a measure  
 of wine; and I said to her, 3

Many a long day you shall live in  
 my house  
 and not play the wanton,  
 and have no intercourse with a man,  
 nor I with you.

For the Israelites shall live many a 4  
 long day  
 without king or prince,  
 without sacrifice or sacred pillar,  
 without image or household gods;  
 but after that they will again seek 5  
 the LORD their God and David  
 their king,  
 and turn anxiously to the LORD for  
 his bounty in days to come.

#### God's case against Israel

Hear the word of the LORD, O 4  
 Israel;  
 for the LORD has a charge to bring  
 against the people of the land:

*i* turning . . . Hope: or Emek-achor to Pethah-tikvah.  
*j* Also means My husband.  
*k* This . . . LORD: transposed from after On that day in  
 verse 16.  
*l* I got her back: or bought her.

and viewed by the prophet as a time of perfect faith and ideal relations. Compare Jer.2.2-3. 15: *Vale of Trouble*: the Valley of Achor (see Josh.7.24-26). 16: The word *Baal* means husband as well as being the name of the god; hence its use is forbidden here.

2.18-23: *Restoring Israel's harmony with the earth*. Yahweh will resume his relationship with Israel, as shown in the image of the new betrothal and by the new love for the children (compare 1.10-2.1). 23: *My new sowing*: a play on the word Jezreel, which means "God sows"; see 1.4 Tfn. *b*. Israel, not Jezreel, is God's sowing.

3.1-5: *Redemption of the wife* is achieved by love (v. 1) and a high cost (v. 2). *Fifteen pieces of silver* is about seven ounces, and a *homer* is nearly 11½ bushels; see p. 1035. Love entails discipline: the *wanton* (v. 3) and Israel (v. 4) must be kept from further sin before receiving Yahweh's full *bounty*. 4: Israel's distress arises from corruption caused by kings and from observing Canaanite religious rituals. *Sacred pillar*: doubtless a phallus, a symbol of Baal, a god of fertility.

4.1-9.17: *God's case against Israel*. The oracles in this section follow the literary form of a court trial in which God presses charges (4.1), passes a judicial sentence (5.1), and imposes a juridical penalty (5.9).

<p>There is no good faith or mutual trust, no knowledge of God in the land, 2 oaths are imposed and broken, they kill and rob; there is nothing but adultery and licence,<sup>m</sup> one deed of blood after another. 3 Therefore the land shall be dried up, and all who live in it shall pine away, and with them the wild beasts and the birds of the air; even the fish shall be swept from the sea. 4 But it is not for any man to bring a charge, it is not for him to prove a case; the quarrel with you, false priest, is mine. 5 Priest?<sup>n</sup> By day and by night you blunder on, you and the prophet with you. 6 My people are ruined for lack of knowledge; your own countrymen are brought to ruin.<sup>o</sup> You have rejected knowledge, and I will reject you from serving me as priest. You have forgotten the teaching of God, and I, your God, will forget your sons. 7 The more priests there are, the more they sin against me; their dignity I will turn into dishonour. 8 They feed on the sin of my people and batten on their iniquity. 9 But people and priest shall be treated alike. I will punish them for their conduct and repay them for their deeds:</p>	<p>they shall eat but never be satisfied, behave wantonly but their lust will never be overtaxed, for they have forsaken the LORD to give themselves to sacred prostitution. 11 New wine and old steal my people's wits:<sup>p</sup> they ask advice from a block of wood and take their orders from a fetish; for a spirit of wantonness has led them astray and in their lusts they are unfaithful to their God. Your men sacrifice on mountain-tops 13 and burn offerings on the hills, under oak and poplar and the terebinth's pleasant shade. Therefore your daughters play the wanton and your sons' brides commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters 14 for playing the wanton nor your sons' brides for their adultery, because your men resort to wanton women and sacrifice with temple-prostitutes. A people without understanding comes to grief; they are a mother turned wanton. 15 Bring no guilt-offering,<sup>q</sup> Israel; do not come to Gilgal, Judah,</p>
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*m* and licence: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* they exceed.  
*n* the quarrel . . . Priest?: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and your people are like those who quarrel with a priest.  
*o* My people . . . ruin: or Your mother (Israel) is destroyed, my people destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
*p* steal . . . wits: or embolden my people.  
*q* Bring no guilt-offering: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Let him not be guilty.

4.1-4: **General charge.** The nation has broken the covenant. 1: *Mutual trust*: love between persons growing out of fidelity to a covenant. *Knowledge of God*: the experience of God in obedience and surrender, resulting in a close personal relationship (see Jer.9.23-24 n.). 2: The crimes are breaches of specific laws. 3: The rupture of the covenant meant the loss of natural vitality. Contrast 2.18-23, the vitality experienced in fidelity to the covenant.

4.5-5.7: **Undermining religion.** 5: The *prophet*, like the *priest*, is here a religious functionary, and unlike the charismatic Hosea. See Jer.23.9-12. 6: *Knowledge*: see 4.1 n. 11: *Sacred prostitution*, a fertility rite directed to Baal, was apparently practiced by Israel to gain control over the reproductive powers of nature. 12: *New wine and old*: an allusion to a pagan vintage festival. 13: Fertility worship (with sacred prostitutes) took place on *mountain-tops* and under trees. 15: *Gilgal*: an important shrine town near Jericho. *Beth-aven*: lit. "house of iniquity," a sarcastic name for Bethel, "house of God," Israel's religious center; Gen.28.16-19;

- do not go up to Beth-aven to swear  
by the life of the LORD,  
16 since Israel has run wild, wild as a  
heifer;  
and will the LORD now feed this  
people  
like lambs in a broad meadow?  
17 Ephraim, keeping company with  
idols,  
18 has held a drunken orgy,<sup>r</sup>  
they have practised sacred  
prostitution,  
they have preferred dishonour to  
glory.  
19 The wind shall sweep them away,  
wrapped in its wings,  
and they will find their sacrifices  
a delusion.
- 5 Hear this, you priests,  
and listen, all Israel; let the royal  
house mark my words.  
Sentence is passed on you;  
for you have been a snare at Mizpah,  
and a net spread out on Tabor.  
2 The rebels! they have shown base  
ingratitude,  
but I will punish them all.  
3 I have cared for Ephraim  
and I have not neglected Israel;  
but now Ephraim has played the  
wanton  
and Israel has defiled himself.  
4 Their misdeeds have barred their  
way back to their God;  
for a wanton spirit is in them,  
and they care nothing for the  
LORD.  
5 Israel's arrogance cries out against  
him;  
<sup>s</sup>Ephraim's guilt is his undoing,  
and Judah no less is undone.  
6 They go with sacrifices of sheep  
and cattle  
to seek the LORD, but do not find  
him.
- He has withdrawn himself from  
them;  
for they have been unfaithful to 7  
him,  
and their sons are bastards.  
Now an invader shall devour their  
fields.  
8 Blow the trumpet in Gibeah,  
the horn in Ramah,  
raise the battle-cry in Beth-aven:  
'Benjamin, we are with you!'  
9 On the tribes of Israel I have  
proclaimed this unalterable  
doom:  
on the day of punishment Ephraim  
shall be laid waste.  
10 The rulers of Judah act like men who  
move their neighbour's  
boundary;  
on them will I pour out my wrath  
like a flood.  
11 Ephraim is an oppressor trampling  
on justice,  
doggedly pursuing what is worthless.  
12 But I am a festering sore to  
Ephraim,  
a canker to the house of Judah.  
13 So when Ephraim found that he  
was sick,  
Judah that he was covered with  
sores,  
Ephraim went to Assyria,  
he went in haste to the Great King;  
but he has no power to cure you  
or to heal your sores.  
14 Yes indeed, I will be fierce as a  
panther to Ephraim,  
fierce as a lion to Judah—  
I will maul the prey and go,  
carry it off beyond hope of rescue—  
I, the LORD.  
15 I will go away and return to my  
place

<sup>r</sup> a drunken orgy; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*  
<sup>s</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. prefixes Israel.*

1 Kgs.12.25–30. 17: *Ephraim*, the main northern tribe, often means the whole Northern Kingdom. 5.1: What events *Mizpah* and *Tabor* allude to is not certain. 3–4: *Cared*: lit. "known"; expressive of God's active concern for Israel's well-being. See 4.1 n. 7: *Bastards*: because they were born to parents who repudiated covenant with God, but also possibly because of actually being born from fertility cult unions.

5.8–6.6: *Divine disappointment*. The three parts of the poem are: punishment by political upheavals (5.8–15), Israel's apparent remorse (6.1–3), and Yahweh's response (6.6). 8: *Gibeah*, *Ramah*, and *Beth-aven* (see 4.15 n.) were cities in *Benjamin*, possibly annexed by the Northern Kingdom, and first targets of an invasion by the Southern Kingdom. 10: The *rulers of Judah* in calling the Assyrians against their brethren in Israel were, in effect, taking land away from them; see 2 Kgs.16.7–9. 13: *Great King* was a title assumed by Assyrian kings.

- until in their horror they seek me,  
and look earnestly for me in their  
distress.
- 6 Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us and will heal us,  
he has struck us and he will bind  
up our wounds;  
2 after two days he will revive us,  
on the third day he will restore us,  
that in his presence we may live.
- 3 Let us humble ourselves, let us  
strive to know the LORD,  
whose justice dawns like morning  
light,<sup>t</sup>  
and its dawning is as sure as the  
sunrise.  
It will come to us like a shower,  
like spring rains that water the earth.
- 4 O Ephraim, how shall I deal with  
you?  
How shall I deal with you, Judah?  
Your loyalty to me is like the  
morning mist,  
like dew that vanishes early.
- 5 Therefore have I lashed you through  
the prophets  
and torn you<sup>u</sup> to shreds with my  
words;  
6 loyalty is my desire, not sacrifice,  
not whole-offerings but the  
knowledge of God.
- 7 At Admah<sup>v</sup> they have broken my  
covenant,  
there they have played me false.
- 8 Gilead is a haunt of evildoers,  
marked by a trail of blood;  
9 like robbers lying in wait for a man,  
priests are banded together  
to do murder on the road to  
Shechem;  
their deeds are outrageous.
- 10 At Israel's sanctuary I have seen a  
horrible thing:
- there Ephraim played the wanton  
and Israel defiled himself.  
And for you, too, Judah, comes a  
harvest of reckoning. 11
- When I would reverse the fortunes  
of my people,  
when I would heal Israel, 7  
then the guilt of Ephraim stands  
revealed,  
and all the wickedness of  
Samaria;  
they have not kept faith.  
They are thieves, they break into  
houses;<sup>w</sup>  
they are robbers, they strip people  
in the street,  
little thinking that I have their 2  
wickedness ever in mind.  
Now their misdeeds beset them  
and stare me in the face.  
They win over the king with their 3  
wickedness  
and princes with their treachery,  
lecherous all of them, hot as an oven 4  
over the fire  
which the baker does not stir  
after kneading the dough until it is  
proved.  
On their king's festal day the 5  
officers  
begin to be inflamed with wine,  
and he joins in the orgies of arrogant  
men;  
for their hearts are heated by it<sup>x</sup> 6  
like an oven.  
While they are relaxed all night  
long  
their passion slumbers,  
but in the morning it flares up  
like a blazing fire;  
they all grow feverish, hot as an 7  
oven,

<sup>t</sup> Line transposed from end of verse 5.

<sup>u</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. them.

<sup>v</sup> At Admah: prob. rdg.; Heb. Like Adam.

<sup>w</sup> houses: prob. rdg.; Heb. om.

<sup>x</sup> are heated by it: prob. rdg.; Heb. draw near.

6.1-6: Israel's apparent remorse. 1: *Torn*: the same Heb. word as maul (5.14). 2: *Two days, third day*: that is, soon; possibly, instead, the days of a pagan ritual observance. 6: *Loyalty, knowledge of God*: see 4.1 n. The qualities that maintain the covenant are beyond mere ritual, and hence Israel's repentance is unacceptable.

6.7-8.14: Israel's treachery. Influential persons, especially the king, have transgressed.

6.7-11: Murder and recklessness. 7: *Admah*: a city near the Dead Sea (see 11.8 n.). 8: *Gilead*: east of the Jordan. 9: *Shechem* was the ancient central shrine, site of the kingdom's most solemn festivities. 11: The prophecy is now applied here to the Southern Kingdom.

7.1-16: The evils of the kings. 1: *Samaria*: the capital. 4-6: The people of Israel hide the evil intrigue in their hearts like a baker who banks the fire in the oven after it has reached full intensity until the dough is proved, i.e. fully leavened and ready for baking. 7: The kingdom

- and devour their rulers.  
 King after king falls from power,  
 but not one of them calls upon me.  
 8 Ephraim and his aliens make a sorry  
 mixture;  
 Ephraim has become a cake half-baked.  
 9 Foreigners fed on his strength,  
 but he was unaware;  
 even his grey hairs turned white,  
 but he was unaware.  
 10 So Israel's arrogance cries out  
 against them;  
 but they do not return to the LORD  
 their God  
 nor seek him, in spite of it all.  
 11 Ephraim is a silly senseless pigeon,  
 now calling upon Egypt, now  
 turning to Assyria for help.  
 12 Wherever they turn, I will cast my  
 net over them  
 and will bring them down like  
 birds on the wing;  
 I will take them captive as soon  
 as I hear them flocking.  
 13 Woe betide them, for they have  
 strayed from me!  
 May disaster befall them for rebelling  
 against me!  
 I long to deliver them,  
 but they tell lies about me.  
 14 There is no sincerity in their cry  
 to me;  
 for all their howling on their pallets  
 and gashing of themselves over  
 corn and new wine,  
 they are turning away from me.  
 15 Though I support them, though I  
 give them strength of arm,  
 they plot evil against me.  
 16 Like a bow gone slack,  
 they relapse into the worship of  
 their high god;<sup>y</sup>  
 their talk is all lies,<sup>z</sup>  
 and so their princes shall fall by  
 the sword.
- Put the trumpet to your lips!  
 A<sup>a</sup> vulture hovers over the  
 sanctuary of the LORD:
- they have broken my covenant  
 and rebelled against my  
 instruction.  
 They cry to me for help: 2  
 'We know thee, God of Israel.'<sup>b</sup>  
 But Israel is utterly loathsome; 3  
 and therefore he shall run before  
 the enemy.  
 They make kings, but not by my 4  
 will;  
 they set up officers, but without  
 my knowledge;  
 they have made themselves idols of  
 their silver and gold.<sup>c</sup>
- Your calf-gods stink, O Samaria; 5  
 my anger flares up against them.  
 Long will it be before they prove  
 innocent.  
 For what sort of a god is this 6  
 bull?  
 It is no god,  
 a craftsman made it;  
 the calf of Samaria will be broken  
 in fragments.
- Israel sows the wind and reaps the 7  
 whirlwind;  
 there are no heads on the standing  
 corn, it yields no grain;  
 and, if it yielded any, strangers  
 would swallow it up.  
 Israel is now swallowed up, 8  
 lost among the nations,  
 a worthless nothing.  
 For, like a wild ass that has left the 9  
 herd,  
 they have run to Assyria.  
 Ephraim has bargained for lovers;  
 and, because they have bargained 10  
 among the nations,  
 I will now round them up,  
 and then they will soon abandon  
 this setting up of kings and princes.

<sup>y</sup> they relapse . . . god: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>z</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* that is their stammering speech in Egypt.

<sup>a</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Like a

<sup>b</sup> We . . . Israel: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* O my God, we know thee, Israel.

<sup>c</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* so that he may be cut off.

devoured its rulers; three of the six who ruled in the previous twenty years were murdered. See 2 Kgs.15.8–26. 11: Hoshea, the last king of Israel, became a vassal of Assyria but proved disloyal in seeking help from Egypt; see 2 Kgs.17.1–6. 14: Howling and gashing sarcastically describe Canaanite rites (see 1 Kgs.18.25–29). Corn: see 2.8 n.

8.1–14: False religion. Specific missteps are given. 4: Though one strand of the OT tradition sees kingship as Yahweh's gift, another strand of it considers kingship as rebellion against Yahweh. Hosea equates kingship with idolatry. 5: Calf alludes sarcastically to the statue of a

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|---|---|
| <p>11 For Ephraim in his sin has multiplied<br/>altars,<br/>altars have become his sin.<br/>12 Though I give him countless rules<br/>in writing,<br/>they are treated as invalid.<br/>13 Though they sacrifice flesh as offerings<br/>to me and eat them,<br/>I,<sup>d</sup> the LORD, will not accept them.<br/>Their guilt will be remembered<br/>and their sins punished.<br/>They shall go back to Egypt,<br/>or in Assyria they shall eat unclean<br/>food.</p> <p>14 Israel has forgotten his Maker<br/>and built palaces,<br/>Judah has multiplied walled cities;<br/>but I will set fire to his cities,<br/>and it shall devour his castles.</p> <p>Do not rejoice, Israel, do not exult<br/>like other peoples;<br/>9 for like a wanton you have forsaken<br/>your God,<br/>you have loved an idol<sup>e</sup><br/>on every threshing-floor heaped<br/>with corn.</p> <p>2 Threshing-floor and winepress<br/>shall know them no more,<br/>new wine shall disown<sup>f</sup> them.</p> <p>3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's<br/>land;<br/>Ephraim shall go back to Egypt,<br/>or in Assyria they shall eat unclean<br/>food.</p> <p>4 They shall pour out no wine to<br/>the LORD,<br/>they shall not bring their sacrifices<br/>to him;<br/>that would be mourners' fare for<br/>them,<br/>and all who ate it would be polluted.<br/>For their food shall only stay<br/>their hunger;</p> | <p>it shall not be offered in the<br/>house of the LORD.<br/>What will you do for the festal day, 5<br/>the day of the LORD's pilgrim-<br/>feast?<br/>For look, they have fled from a 6<br/>scene of devastation:<br/>Egypt shall receive them,<br/>Memphis shall be their grave;<br/>the sands of Syrtes shall wreck<br/>them,<br/>weeds shall inherit their land,<br/>thorns shall grow in their<br/>dwellings.<br/>The days of punishment are 7<br/>come,<br/>the days of vengeance are come<br/>when Israel shall be humbled.<br/>Then the prophet shall be made<br/>a fool<br/>and the inspired seer a madman<br/>by your great guilt.<br/>With great enmity Ephraim lies in 8<br/>wait for God's people<br/>while the prophet is a fowler's trap<br/>by all their paths,<br/>a snare in the very temple of God.<br/>They lead them deep into sin as 9<br/>at the time of Gibeah.<br/>Their guilt will be remembered and<br/>their sins punished.</p> <p>I came upon Israel like grapes in 10<br/>the wilderness,<br/>I looked on their forefathers<br/>with joy like the first ripe figs;<br/>but they resorted to Baal-peor<br/>and consecrated themselves to a<br/>thing of shame,<br/>and Ephraim became as loathsome 11<br/>as the thing he loved.<br/>Their honour shall fly away like a<br/>bird:</p> |
|---|---|

*d* Prob. rdg.; Heb. he.  
*e* an idol; or a harlot's fee.  
*f* Or fail.

bull (see 1 Kgs.12.28-30). 13: In captivity it will be impossible to observe laws of ritual cleanliness because of contact with pagans, hence *unclean food*.

9.1-13.16: Prosperity contrasted with exile. The poems use metaphors of agricultural plenty. 9.1-9: Untoward results of false worship. 1: Rejoice and exult are cultic acts. Threshing-floor: the place of pagan fertility worship at harvest time. 3: Egypt: see 8.13 n. 5: Pilgrim-feast: see 2.11 n. 6: Memphis, Syrtes: Egyptian cities. 7-8: A prophet attached to a temple was a snare to the people in being concerned only with worship and in not warning people about their guilt which would bring calamity, thereby making the prophet into a fool. See Ezek.13.1-16. 9: The allusion to Gibeah may mean Saul, whose throne was also there (1 Sam.10.26). See also Judg. ch. 19.

9.10-17: Israel's degeneration. 10: To find grapes in the wilderness was wondrous. Baal-Peor: see Judg.2.11-13; Num.25.1-5; Ps.106.28; Jer.11.13. 11: Childlessness was a dishonor.

- no childbirth, no fruitful womb, no  
conceiving;  
12 even if they rear their children,  
I will make them childless,  
without posterity.  
Woe to them indeed when I turn  
away from them!
- 13 As lion-cubs emerge only to be  
hunted,<sup>g</sup>  
so must Ephraim bring out his  
children for slaughter.  
14 Give them, O LORD—what wilt  
thou give them?  
Give them a womb that miscarries  
and dry breasts.
- 15 All their wickedness was seen at  
Gilgal; there did I hate them.  
For their evil deeds I will drive  
them from my house,  
I will love them no more: all their  
princes are in revolt.  
16 Ephraim is struck down:  
their root is withered, and they yield  
no fruit;  
if ever they give birth,  
I will slay the dearest offspring of  
their womb.
- 17 My God shall reject them,  
because they have not listened  
to him,  
and they shall become wanderers  
among the nations.
- God's judgement on Israel*
- 10 Israel is like a rank vine  
ripening its fruit:  
his fruit grows more and more, and  
more and more his altars;  
the fairer his land becomes, the fairer  
he makes his sacred pillars.  
2 They are crazy now, they are mad.  
God himself will hack down their  
altars  
and wreck their sacred pillars.
- Well may they say, 'We have no  
king,  
for we do not fear the LORD;  
and what can the king do for us?'  
There is nothing but talk,  
4 imposing of oaths and making of  
treaties, all to no purpose;  
and litigation spreads like a  
poisonous weed  
along the furrows of the fields.  
The inhabitants of Samaria tremble  
5 for the calf-god of Beth-aven;  
the people mourn over it<sup>h</sup> and its  
priestlings howl,  
distressed for their image, their  
glory,  
which is carried away into exile.  
It shall be carried to Assyria  
6 as tribute to the Great King;  
disgrace shall overtake Ephraim  
and Israel shall feel the shame of  
their disobedience.  
Samaria and her king are swept  
7 away  
like flotsam on the water;  
the hill-shrines of Aven are  
8 wiped out,  
the shrines where Israel sinned;  
thorns and thistles grow over her  
altars.  
So they will say to the mountains,  
'Cover us',  
and to the hills, 'Fall on us.'
- Since the day of Gibeah Israel has  
9 sinned;  
there they took their stand in  
rebellion.  
Shall not war overtake them in  
Gibeah?  
I have come against the rebels to  
10 chastise them,  
and the peoples shall mass against  
them  
in hordes for their two deeds of  
shame.

<sup>g</sup> As lion-cubs . . . hunted: *prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.*

<sup>h</sup> the people mourn over it: *or the high god and his people mourn.*

15: *Gilgal*: see 4.15 n; 12.11. *Princes in revolt*: see 5.2, where they "have shown base ingratitude."

10.1–13.16: *Israel's punishment and restoration*. The LORD's efforts to redeem Israel have been frustrated.

10.1–8: *The fruits of idolatry*. Cultic misdeeds produce political disasters. 1: *Sacred pillars*: see 3.4 n. 5: *Calf-god*: see 8.5 n. *Priestlings*: idolatrous priests. 6: *Great King*: see 5.13 n. 8: *Aven*: see 4.15 n.

10.9–15: *Punishment for rebellion*. 9: *Gibeah*: see 9.9 n. 10: Compare 4.9 and Ezek.5.13.



- 11 Ephraim is like a heifer broken in,  
 which loves to thresh corn,  
 across whose fair neck I have laid a  
 yoke;<sup>i</sup>  
 I have harnessed Ephraim to the  
 pole that he<sup>j</sup> may plough,  
 that Jacob may harrow his land.
- 12 Sow for yourselves in justice,  
 and you will reap what loyalty  
 deserves.  
 Break up your fallow;  
 for it is time to seek the LORD,  
 seeking him till he comes and gives  
 you just measure of rain.
- 13 You have ploughed wickedness  
 into your soil,  
 and the crop is mischief;  
 you have eaten the fruit of  
 treachery.
- Because you have trusted in your  
 chariots,  
 in the number of your warriors,  
 14 the tumult of war shall arise against  
 your people,  
 and all your fortresses shall be  
 razed  
 as Shalman razed Beth-arbel in the  
 day of battle,  
 dashing the mother to the ground  
 with her babes.
- 15 So it shall be done to you, Bethel,  
 because of your evil scheming;  
 as sure as day dawns, the king of  
 Israel shall be swept away.
- 11 When Israel was a boy, I loved  
 him;  
 I called my son out of Egypt;  
 2 but the more I called, the further  
 they went from me;  
 they must needs sacrifice to the  
 Baalim  
 and burn offerings before carved  
 images.
- 3 It was I who taught Ephraim to  
 walk,  
 I who had taken them in my  
 arms;
- 4 but they did not know that I harnessed  
 them in leading-strings<sup>k</sup>  
 and led them with bonds of love<sup>l</sup>—
- that I had lifted them like a little  
 child<sup>m</sup> to my cheek,  
 that I had bent down to feed them.  
 5 Back they shall go to Egypt,  
 the Assyrian shall be their king;  
 for they have refused to return  
 to me.
- 6 The sword shall be swung over  
 their blood-spattered altars  
 and put an end to the prattling  
 priests  
 and devour my people in return  
 7 for all their schemings,  
 bent on rebellion as they are.  
 Though they call on their high god,  
 even then he will not reinstate  
 them.
- 8 How can I give you up, Ephraim,  
 how surrender you, Israel?  
 How can I make you like Admah  
 or treat you as Zeboyim?  
 My heart is changed within me,  
 my remorse kindles already.
- 9 I will not let loose my fury,  
 I will not turn round and destroy  
 Ephraim;  
 for I am God and not a man,  
 the Holy One in your midst;  
 10 I will not come with threats<sup>n</sup> like a  
 roaring lion.  
 No; when I roar, I who am God,  
 my sons shall come with speed out  
 of the west.
- 11 They will come speedily, flying like  
 birds out of Egypt,  
 like pigeons from Assyria,  
 and I will settle them in their  
 own homes.
- This is the very word of the LORD.  
 12 Ephraim besets me with treachery,  
 the house of Israel besets me  
 with deceit;  
 and Judah is still restive under God,  
 still loyal to the idols he counts  
 holy.
- Ephraim is a shepherd whose flock  
 is but<sup>o</sup> wind, 12

*i* a yoke: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

*j* he: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. Judah.*

*k* leading-strings: *or* cords of leather.

*l* bonds of love: *or* reins of hide.

*m* I had . . . child: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* like those who lift up a yoke.

*n* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds they shall go after the LORD.  
*o* is a . . . but: *or* feeds on.

12: *Fallow*: land uncultivated for a time, and by implication, hardened and unproductive.  
 14: The allusion to *Shalman's* destruction of *Beth-arbel* is obscure.

11.1-12.1: *Fatherhood and ingratitude*. 5: *Back . . . Egypt*: see 8.13 n. 8: *Admah and Zeboyim*: destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut.29.23).

- a hunter chasing the east wind all day;<sup>p</sup>  
 he makes a treaty with Assyria and carries tribute of oil to Egypt.
- 2 The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah and is resolved to punish Jacob for his conduct;  
 he will requite him for his misdeeds.
- 3 Even in the womb Jacob overreached his brother, and in manhood he strove with God.
- 4 The divine angel stood firm and held his own;<sup>q</sup>  
 Jacob wept and begged favour for himself.  
 Then God met him at Bethel and there spoke with him.
- 5 The LORD the God of Hosts, the LORD is his name.
- 6 Turn back all of you by God's help; practise loyalty and justice and wait always upon your God.
- 7 False scales are in merchants' hands, and they love to cheat;  
 so Ephraim says,  
 'Surely I have become a rich man, I have made my fortune';  
 but all his gains will not pay for the guilt<sup>r</sup> of his sins.
- 9 Yet I have been the LORD your God since your days in Egypt;  
 I will make you live in tents yet again, as in the old days.
- 10 I spoke to the prophets, it was I who gave vision after vision; I spoke through the prophets in parables.
- 11 Was there idolatry in Gilead? Yes: they were worthless and sacrificed to bull-gods in Gilgal; their altars were common as heaps of stones beside a ploughed field.
- 12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram; Israel did service to win a wife, to win a wife he tended sheep.
- By a prophet the LORD brought up Israel out of Egypt and by a prophet he was tended.
- Ephraim has given bitter provocation; therefore his Lord will make him answerable for his own death and bring down upon his own head the blame for all that he has done.
- When the Ephraimites mumbled their prayers, God himself denounced Israel; they were guilty of Baal-worship and died.  
 Yet now they sin more and more; they have made themselves an image of cast metal, they have fashioned their silver into idols, nothing but the work of craftsmen; men say of them, 'Those who kiss calf-images offer human sacrifice.'
- Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like dew that vanishes early, like chaff blown from the threshing-floor or smoke from a chimney.
- But I have been the LORD your God since your days in Egypt, when you knew no other saviour than me, no god but me.  
 I cared for you in the wilderness, in a land of burning heat, as if you were in pasture.  
 So they were filled, and, being filled, grew proud;

<sup>p</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds* piling up treachery and havoc.  
<sup>q</sup> The divine . . . own: or He stood firm against an angel, but flagged.  
<sup>r</sup> for the guilt: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* for me, guilt.

12.2-14: Jacob and Moses. 2-6: Just as *Jacob*, the tribal father in whom Israel glories, sinned and *begged* God's favour, so his descendants should *turn back* and *wait* on God. See especially Gen.25.21-26; 32.22-32; 35.2-7; or 28.10-22. 7-9: Israel's ill-gotten *gains* on its land do not have the power to prevent God from reducing her to the poverty and loyalty of *tents* of the Exodus. 11: In Palestine the soil is so shallow and stony that fields cleared for plowing are hedged with *heaps of stones*. *Idolatry* was practiced in the whole land. *Gilead* was east of the Jordan and *Gilgal*, west of it. 13: *Prophet*: Moses.

13.1-16: Yahweh's patience ends. 1: *Baal*: see 2.8 n. 9-11: See 8.4 n. 12: God's lawsuit

and so they forgot me.  
 7 So now I will be like a panther to them,  
 I will prowl like a leopard by the wayside;  
 8 I will meet them like a she-bear robbed of her cubs  
 and tear their ribs apart,  
 like a lioness I will devour them on the spot,  
 I will rip them up like a wild beast.  
 9 I have destroyed you, O Israel; who is there to help you?  
 10 Where now is your king that he may save you,  
 or the rulers in all your cities for whom you asked me,  
 begging for king and princes?  
 11 I gave you a king in my anger, and in my fury took him away.  
 12 Ephraim's guilt is tied up in a scroll,  
 his sins are kept on record.  
 13 When the pangs of his birth came over his mother,  
 he showed himself a senseless child;  
 for at the proper time he could not present himself  
 at the mouth of the womb.  
 14 Shall I redeem him from Sheol?  
 Shall I ransom him from death?  
 Oh, for your plagues, O death! Oh, for your sting, Sheol!  
 I will put compassion out of my sight.  
 15 Though he flourishes among the reeds,<sup>a</sup>  
 an east wind shall come, a blast from the LORD,  
 rising over the desert;  
 Ephraim's spring will fail and his fountain run dry.  
 It will carry away as spoil his whole store of costly treasures.  
 16 Samaria will become desolate because she has rebelled against her God;

her babes will fall by the sword and be dashed to the ground,  
 her women with child shall be ripped up.

*Repentance, forgiveness, and restoration*

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God; **14**  
 for you have stumbled in your evil courses.  
 Come with your words ready, **2**  
 come back to the LORD;  
 say to him, 'Thou dost not endure iniquity.'<sup>f</sup>  
 Accept our plea,  
 and we will pay our vows with cattle from our pens.  
 Assyria shall not save us, nor will we **3**  
 seek horses to ride;  
 what we have made with our own hands  
 we will never again call gods;  
 for in thee the fatherless find a father's love.'<sup>g</sup>  
 I will heal their apostasy; of my own **4**  
 bounty will I love them;  
 for my anger is turned away from them.  
 I will be as dew to Israel **5**  
 that he may flower like the lily,  
 strike root like the poplar<sup>u</sup>  
 and put out fresh shoots, **6**  
 that he may be as fair as the olive  
 and fragrant as Lebanon.  
 Israel shall again dwell in my<sup>v</sup> **7**  
 shadow  
 and grow corn in abundance;  
 they shall flourish like a vine  
 and be famous as the wine of Lebanon.

<sup>a</sup> among the reeds: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* between (or a son of) brothers.  
<sup>f</sup> Thou . . . iniquity: or Thou wilt surely take away iniquity.  
<sup>u</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* like Lebanon.  
<sup>v</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* its.

against Israel ends in a judicial conviction of *guilt*, sealed officially in a *scroll*, and entered on record, as was the judiciary custom. See Isa.8.16. **13**: The verse seems to be a proverb for congenial awkwardness and ineptitude ending in disaster. **14**: *Sheol*: place of the dead. *Oh, for your plagues*: quoted in 1 Cor.15.55, though with the meaning altered from a rhetorical question, implying a negative, into a strong affirmation. **15**: The *east wind* is dry and hot.

**14.1-9**: *Repentance, forgiveness, and restoration*. In a serenely confident poem, Hosea uses

8 What has Ephraim any more to do  
with idols?

I have spoken and I affirm it:  
I am the pine-tree that shelters you;  
to me you owe your fruit.

Let the wise consider these things 9  
and let him who considers take note;  
for the LORD's ways are straight and  
the righteous walk in them, while  
sinners stumble.

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fertility images as signs of God's favor and Israel's restoration and new life. 9: A pious postscript from a later hand.

# JOEL

Few books can match Joel for drama. From the opening description of locust plagues, through pictures of ruin and restoration, visions and cosmic omens, and the war of Yahweh against "multitudes in the Valley of Decision," the poetry crackles with energy and stretches the mind with the visionary power of a remarkably gifted prophet.

We know nothing about this astonishing person, not even the date of his book. Some scholars place it as early as 600 B.C., others as late as 350. The references in 3.4-8 to foreign nations are too vague to allow precise dating, nor can the locust plague described in ch. 1 be identified by date. The picture of religious observances in chs. 1-2 leads most scholars to place Joel in the time of the Second Temple, perhaps 450-400 B.C.

Joel concentrates on God's ultimate victory, pursuing the eschatological implications of the locust plague and other contemporary events, and using a visionary, highly symbolic style. In Joel the prophetic manner carries on from the past, as in Ezekiel and Zechariah (chs. 1-6), toward such later apocalyptic books as Daniel and Revelation.

1	The word of the LORD which came to Joel son of Pethuel.	and left my fig-trees broken and leafless, they have plucked them bare and stripped them of their bark; they have left the branches white.	
<i>The day of the Lord</i>			
2	Listen, you elders; hear me, all you who live in the land: has the like of this happened in all your days or in your fathers' days?	Wail like a virgin wife in sackcloth, wailing over the bridegroom of her youth: the drink-offering and grain-offering are lost to the house of the LORD.	8 9
3	Tell it to your sons and they may tell theirs; let them pass it on from generation to generation.	Mourn, you priests, ministers of the LORD, the fields are ruined, the parched earth mourns;	10
4	What the locust has left the swarm eats, what the swarm has left the hopper eats, and what the hopper has left the grub eats.	for the corn is ruined, the new wine is desperate, the oil has failed. Despair, you husbandmen; you vinedressers, lament, because the wheat and the barley, the harvest of the field, is lost.	11
5	Wake up, you drunkards, and lament your fate; mourn for the fresh wine, all you wine-drinkers, because it is lost to you.	The vintage is desperate, and the fig-tree has failed; pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the country-side are parched, and none make merry over harvest.	12
6	For a horde has overrun my land, mighty and past counting; their teeth are a lion's teeth; they have the fangs of a lioness.	Priests, put on sackcloth and beat your breasts;	13
7	They have ruined my vines		

**1.1: Title.** The tone of the book may indicate that *Joel* was a Temple prophet.

**1.2-2.17: The Day of the LORD** (see 1.14-15 n.). A terrible locust plague seems the end of the world, and the people need to muster all their religious resources to meet it.

**1.4-2.17: The locusts ruin the entire country-side**, and all elements of the population are summoned to lament and repent. **4:** It is disputed whether the Heb. terms for *locust*, *swarm*, *hopper*, and *grub* mean various kinds of locusts or successive stages of growth of one kind.

**6-7:** The description of the locusts' ravages is poetically powerful. **9:** The gravity of the situation is indicated by the cessation of the regular sacrifices of the *drink-offering* and *grain-offering*. **10:** *Corn:* grain; see Hos.2.8 n. **12:** The fall *harvest* was possibly the occasion for a *merry*

<p>lament, you ministers of the altar;          come, lie in sackcloth all night long,          you ministers of my God;          for grain-offering and drink-offering          are withheld from the house of          your God.</p> <p>14 Proclaim a solemn fast, appoint a          day of abstinence.          You elders, summon all that live in          the land          to come together in the house of          your God,          and cry to the LORD.</p> <p>15 Alas! the day is near,          the day of the LORD: it comes,          a mighty destruction from the          Almighty.</p> <p>16 Look! it stares us in the face;          the house of our God has lost its          food,          lost all its joy and gladness.</p> <p>17 The soil is parched,          the dykes are dry,          the granaries are deserted,          the barns ruinous;          for the rains have failed.</p> <p>18 The cattle are exhausted,          the herds of oxen distressed          because they have no pasture;          the flocks of sheep waste away.</p> <p>19 To thee I cry, O LORD;          for fire has devoured the open          pastures          and the flames have burnt up all the          trees of the country-side.</p> <p>20 The very cattle in the field look up          to thee;          for the water-channels are dried up,          and fire has devoured the open          pastures.</p> <p>2 Blow the trumpet in Zion,          sound the alarm upon my holy hill;          let all that live in the land tremble,          for the day of the LORD has come,</p> <p>2 surely a day of darkness and          gloom is upon us,          a day of cloud and dense fog;</p>	<p>like a blackness spread over the          mountains          a mighty, countless host appears;          their like has never been known,          nor ever shall be in ages to come;          their vanguard a devouring fire, 3          their rearguard leaping flame;          before them the land is a garden          of Eden,          behind them a wasted wilderness;          nothing survives their march.          On they come, like squadrons of 4          horse,          like war-horses they charge;          bounding over the peaks they advance 5          with the rattle of chariots,          like flames of fire burning up the          stubble,          like a countless host in battle array.          Before them nations tremble, 6          every face turns pale.          Like warriors they charge, 7          they mount the walls like men at          arms,          each marching in line,          no confusion in the ranks,          none jostling his neighbour, 8          none breaking line.          They plunge through streams without          halting their advance;          they burst into the city, leap on to 9          the wall,          climb into the houses,          entering like thieves through the          windows.          Before them the earth shakes, 10          the heavens shudder,          sun and moon are darkened,          and the stars forbear to shine.          The LORD thunders before his host; 11          his is a mighty army,          countless are those who do his          bidding.          Great is the day of the LORD and          terrible,          who can endure it?          And yet, the LORD says, even now 12          turn back to me with your whole          heart,</p>
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religious festival. 14-15: The Pentateuch prescribes only one *fast* a year, the recurring Day of Atonement; see Lev.23.27. The *day of the LORD* was the future day of final judgment on the nations, and the purification and restoration of Israel as described in chs. 3 and 4. Some see the plague of locusts as part of that future judgment, which is conceived of as already beginning to arrive. 2.1: The *trumpet* (Heb., *shophar*) was blown on the most solemn occasions, especially at the new year. 10: The plague of locusts in its density darkens the *sun* and *moon* which are the traditional conditions accompanying the day of the LORD in apocalyptic literature. See 2.30-31; Isa.13.10. 12-14: Yahweh himself suggests the proper response, a genuine repentance

- fast, and weep, and beat your breasts.
- 13 Rend your hearts and not your garments;  
turn back to the LORD your God;  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
long-suffering and ever constant,  
always ready to repent of the threatened evil.
- 14 It may be he will turn back and repent  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
blessing enough for grain-offering  
and drink-offering  
for the LORD your God.
- 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion,  
proclaim a solemn fast, appoint a day of abstinence;
- 16 gather the people together, proclaim a solemn assembly;  
summon the elders,  
gather the children, yes, babes at the breast;  
bid the bridegroom leave his chamber  
and the bride her bower.
- 17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD,  
stand weeping between the porch  
and the altar  
and say, 'Spare thy people, O LORD,  
thy own people,  
expose them not to reproach,  
lest other nations make them a byword  
and everywhere men ask,  
"Where is their God?"'
- Israel forgiven and restored*
- 18 Then the LORD's love burned with zeal for his land,  
and he was moved with compassion for his people.
- 19 He answered their appeal and said,
- I will send you corn, and new wine,  
and oil,  
and you shall have your fill;  
I will expose you no longer  
to the reproach of other nations.  
I will remove the northern peril far  
away from you  
and banish them into a land  
parched and waste,  
their vanguard into the eastern sea  
and their rear into the western,  
and the stench shall rise from their rotting corpses  
because of their proud deeds!  
Earth, be not afraid, rejoice and be glad;  
for the LORD himself has done a proud deed.
- Be not afraid, you cattle in the field;  
for the pastures shall be green,  
the trees shall bear fruit,  
the fig and the vine yield their harvest.
- O people of Zion,  
rejoice and be glad in the LORD  
your God,  
who gives you good food in due measure<sup>a</sup>  
and sends down rain<sup>b</sup> as of old.  
The threshing-floors shall be heaped  
with grain,  
the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.
- So I will make good the years  
that the swarm has eaten,  
hopper and grub and locust,  
my great army which I sent against you;  
and you shall eat, you shall eat  
your fill  
and praise the name of the LORD  
your God

<sup>a</sup> Or gives you a sign pointing to prosperity.  
<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds spring rain and autumn rain.

(of the heart) and not merely an outward one (*garments*). For he is gracious: a frequent liturgical formula (compare Pss.86.15; 103.8; 145.8). Repent: God frequently so reverses his intentions; see Gen.6.6. Blessing: usually a tangible evidence of divine favor. 15-17: The solemn ritual is proclaimed again. The altar stood in front of the temple. Byword: mockery (more generally, a sententious saying, like a proverb). If Israel is not spared, the Gentiles will infer that Israel's God is ineffectual.

2.18-3.21: Israel repents and is delivered. The poems in this section are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

2.18-32: The day of the LORD has a positive side, for it is inaugurated by his love. 20: Danger in Palestine usually came from the north (compare Jer.1.13-14; 4.6); the north is the mythological dwelling of evil (Isa.14.13); the northern peril is a mythological monster, whose carcass

27 who has done wonders for you,<sup>c</sup>  
 and you shall know that I am present  
 in Israel,  
 that I and no other am the LORD  
 your God;  
 and my people shall not again be  
 brought to shame.  
 28 Thereafter the day shall come  
 when I will pour out my spirit on  
 all mankind;  
 your sons and your daughters shall  
 prophesy,  
 your old men shall dream dreams  
 and your young men see visions;  
 29 I will pour out my spirit in those  
 days  
 even upon slaves and slave-girls.  
 30 I will show portents in the sky and  
 on earth,  
 blood and fire and columns of  
 smoke;  
 31 the sun shall be turned into  
 darkness  
 and the moon into blood  
 before the great and terrible day of  
 the LORD comes.  
 32 Then everyone who invokes the  
 LORD by name  
 shall be saved:  
 for when the LORD gives the word  
 there shall yet be survivors on  
 Mount Zion  
 and in Jerusalem a remnant<sup>d</sup>  
 whom the LORD will call.<sup>e</sup>

3 When that time comes, on that day  
 when I reverse the fortunes of Judah  
 and Jerusalem,  
 2 I will gather all the nations  
 together  
 and lead them down to the Valley  
 of the LORD's Judgement  
 and there bring them to judgement  
 on behalf of Israel, my own  
 possession;  
 for they have scattered my people

throughout their own countries,  
 have taken each their portion of  
 my land  
 and shared out my people by lot,  
 3 bartered a boy for a whore,  
 and sold a girl for wine and drunk  
 it down.

What are you to me, Tyre and Sidon 4  
 and all the districts of Philistia? Can  
 you pay me back for anything I have  
 done? Is there anything that you can  
 do to me? Swiftly and speedily I will  
 make your deeds recoil upon your own  
 heads; for you have taken my silver 5  
 and my gold and carried off my costly  
 treasures into your temples; you have 6  
 sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem  
 to the Greeks, and removed them far  
 beyond their own frontiers. But I will 7  
 rouse them to leave the places to which  
 you have sold them. I will make your  
 deeds recoil upon your own heads: I 8  
 will sell your sons and your daughters  
 to the people of Judah, and they shall  
 sell them to the Sabaeans, a nation far  
 away. The LORD has spoken.

Proclaim this amongst the nations: 9-12<sup>f</sup>  
 Declare a holy war, call your troops  
 to arms!  
 Beat your mattocks into swords  
 and your pruning-hooks into  
 spears.<sup>g</sup>  
 Rally to each other's help, all you  
 nations round about.  
 Let the weakling say, 'I am strong',  
 and let the coward show himself  
 brave.<sup>h</sup>

*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds and my people shall not again be brought to shame (cp. verse 27).  
*d* a remnant: prob. rdg.; Heb. among the remnant.  
*e* Or when the LORD calls.  
*f* The order of lines in verses 9-12 has been re-arranged in several places.  
*g* Beat . . . spears: cp. Isa. 2. 4; Mic. 4. 3.  
*h* and let . . . brave: prob. rdg.; Heb. O LORD bring down thy warriors.

stretches from east to west; see Ezek.38.6. 28: The LORD's spirit, the animating force behind the prophets, is to come on all Israel; compare Ezek.36.26-27.

3.1-8: Punishment on Judah's oppressors. 1-2: An element in the day of the LORD is the reversal of the condition of the nations, the oppressor, and Israel, the oppressed; the nations will be gathered for judgment, just as they scattered Israel in carrying out God's judgment on them. 2: The Valley of the LORD's Judgement is probably not any actual place but a hypothetical site for the final judgment. 4-8: Merchants from Tyre and Sidon and the region of Philistia came with the Seleucid armies to buy the Jews as slaves in order to sell them. See 1 Macc.3.41; 2 Macc.1.27; 8.11. But the talion (Exod.21.23-24) will operate. Sabaeans: a people in Arabia.

3.9-21: The return of Paradise. 9-12: A battle is expected to precede Yahweh's culminating victory. Beat your mattocks into swords, etc., exactly reverses the familiar saying in Isa.2.4 and



- Let all the nations hear the call to arms  
and come to the Valley of the LORD's Judgement;  
let all the warriors come and draw near  
and muster there;  
for there I will take my seat  
and judge all the nations round about.
- 13 Ply the sickle, for the harvest is ripe;  
come, tread the grapes,  
for the press is full and the vats overflow;  
great is the wickedness of the nations.
- 14 The roar of multitudes, multitudes,  
in the Valley of Decision!  
The day of the LORD is at hand  
in the Valley of Decision;  
15 sun and moon are darkened  
and the stars forbear to shine.
- 16 The LORD roars from Zion  
and thunders from Jerusalem;  
heaven and earth shudder,  
but the LORD is a refuge for his people  
and the defence of Israel.
- Thus you shall know that I am the LORD your God,  
dwelling in Zion my holy mountain;  
Jerusalem shall be holy,  
and no one without the right shall pass through her again.  
When that day comes,  
18 the mountains shall run with fresh wine  
and the hills flow with milk.  
All the streams of Judah shall be full of water,  
and a fountain shall spring from the LORD's house  
and water the gorge of Shittim,  
but Egypt shall become a desert  
19 and Edom a deserted waste,  
because of the violence done to Judah  
and the innocent blood shed in her land;  
and I will spill their blood,  
20-21 the blood I have not yet spilt.  
Then there shall be people living in Judah for ever,  
in Jerusalem generation after generation;  
and the LORD will dwell in Zion.

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Mic.4.3. **13:** The image of the vintage for the final day is echoed in Isa.63.1-3. **14: Decision:** against the nations and for Jerusalem. **17:** The LORD's *dwelling in Jerusalem* gives the city its holy character. **18:** The picture of overflowing nature is the antithesis of the ruin caused by the locusts (1.4-20; 2.3). *Shittim:* a valley some nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. Compare a similar vision elaborated in Ezek.47.1-12. **19: Egypt** and *Edom* will become sterile in contrast to Israel's fertility. Edom and Egypt receive special condemnation, Edom because it despoiled Judah after the latter was laid low by the Babylonians (587 B.C.) and Egypt because it deceived Judah with promised help against the same Babylonians. See Jer.49.7-22; Ezek.25.12-14; Obad.1-11.

# AMOS

Amos speaks against the Northern Kingdom of Israel with a severity not exceeded in the stern denunciations delivered by other prophets.

The narrative of his confrontation with Amaziah the priest of Bethel (7.10–17) in the time of Jeroboam II places him in the vicinity of 750 B.C. At that time Israel was in the midst of a prosperity which would end with its devastating conquest by the Assyrians about 722. But along with the high prosperity there had arisen a social and moral corruption which appeared especially abominable to Amos, a native of the poorer Southern Kingdom of Judah and a shepherd and pruner of sycamore figs (7.14). Though in his view other nations were wicked (1.3–2.5), Israel was so deeply guilty of “countless sins” (5.12) that her doom, determined by the deity, was sealed and irrevocable.

Verses or passages here and there soften the unrelieved sternness of the words of Amos (for example, 5.14) by suggesting that a change of heart might still occur in time to save Israel from the divine judgment to come. Other passages (for example, 5.15) hold out at most a forlorn hope for Israel. More optimistically, the latter half of 9.8 and 9.13–15 assert that God’s will to sustain Israel surpasses Israel’s ability to go wrong. Such hopeful passages are often interpreted as additions to the book from a later hand. The “doxologies” in 4.13; 5.8–9; and 9.5–6 are sometimes also considered to be additions.

Although by his own statement (7.14) he was not the usual prophet, a striking series of visions (7.1–9; 8.1–3; 9.1–4) appear to reflect the personal experiences which culminated in his prophetic ministry, and determined the content of his message.

1 **T**HE WORDS OF AMOS, ONE OF THE sheep-farmers of Tekoa, which he received in visions concerning Israel during the reigns of Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel, two years before the  
2 earthquake. He said,

The LORD roars from Zion  
and thunders from Jerusalem;  
the shepherds’ pastures are scorched  
and the top of Carmel<sup>a</sup> is dried up.

### *The sins of Israel and her neighbours*

3 These are the words of the LORD:

For crime after crime of Damascus  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because they threshed Gilead under  
threshing-sledges spiked with  
iron.

4 Therefore will I send fire upon the  
house of Hazael,

fire that shall eat up Ben-hadad’s  
palaces;

I will crush the great men of  
Damascus

and wipe out those who live in the  
Vale of Aven

and the sceptred ruler of  
Beth-eden;

the people of Aram shall be exiled  
to Kir.

It is the word of the LORD.

These are the words of the LORD: 6

For crime after crime of Gaza  
I will grant them no reprieve,

because they deported a whole  
band of exiles

and delivered them up to Edom.

Therefore will I send fire upon  
the walls of Gaza,

fire that shall consume its palaces.

I will wipe out those who live in  
Ashdod

<sup>a</sup> top of Carmel: or choicest farmland.

**1.1:** Title. *Sheep-farmers*: see 7.14 n. *Tekoa*: a small town southeast of Jerusalem. *Uzziah* reigned over Judah about 783–742 B.C. and *Jeroboam* (II) over Israel about 781–746 B.C. *Earthquake*: see Zech. 14.5.

**1.2–2.16:** Judgment upon Israel and surrounding nations. After an opening threat (v. 2; compare Joel 3.16), the oracles traverse the nations surrounding Israel. On a map, the reader will see how the LORD’s judgment circles closer and closer until it strikes Israel (2.6). The episodes alluded to in these oracles are now unknown. **3–5:** *Damascus*: a long-time enemy of Israel. *Gilead*: Israelite territory east of the Jordan. *Hazael* and *Ben-hadad* are royal names. *Aram*: Syria. *Kir*: see 9.7 n. **6–8:** *Gaza*, with *Ashdod*, *Ashkelon*, and *Ekron*, were Philistine cities. *Edom*: see

- and the sceptred ruler of Ashkelon;  
I will turn my hand against Ekron,  
and the remnant of the Philistines  
shall perish.  
It is the word of the Lord GOD.
- 9 These are the words of the LORD:  
For crime after crime of Tyre  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because, forgetting the ties of  
kinship,  
they delivered a whole band of  
exiles to Edom.
- 10 Therefore will I send fire upon the  
walls of Tyre,  
fire that shall consume its palaces.
- 11 These are the words of the LORD:  
For crime after crime of Edom  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because, sword in hand, they hunted  
their kinsmen down,  
stifling their natural affections.  
Their anger raged unceasing,  
their fury stormed unchecked.
- 12 Therefore will I send upon Teman,  
fire that shall consume the palaces  
of Bozrah.
- 13 These are the words of the LORD:  
For crime after crime of the  
Ammonites  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because in their greed for land  
they invaded the ploughlands of  
Gilead.
- 14 Therefore will I set fire to the walls  
of Rabbah,  
fire that shall consume its palaces  
amid war-cries on the day of  
battle,  
with a whirlwind on the day of  
tempest;
- 15 then their king shall be carried into  
exile,  
he and his officers with him.  
It is the word of the LORD.
- These are the words of the LORD: 2  
For crime after crime of Moab  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because they burnt the bones of the  
king of Edom to ash.<sup>b</sup>  
Therefore will I send fire upon Moab, 2  
fire that shall consume the palaces  
in their towns;  
Moab shall perish in uproar,  
with war-cries and the sound of  
trumpets,  
and I will cut off the ruler from 3  
among them  
and kill all their officers with him.  
It is the word of the LORD.
- These are the words of the LORD: 4  
For crime after crime of Judah  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because they have spurned the law  
of the LORD  
and have not observed his decrees,  
and have been led astray by the  
false gods  
that their fathers followed.
- Therefore will I send fire upon 5  
Judah,  
fire that shall consume the palaces  
of Jerusalem.
- These are the words of the LORD: 6  
For crime after crime of Israel  
I will grant them no reprieve,  
because they sell the innocent for  
silver  
and the destitute for a pair of  
shoes.  
They grind the heads of the poor 7  
into the earth  
and thrust the humble out of their  
way.  
Father and son resort to the same  
girl,  
to the profanation of my holy name.  
Men lie down beside every altar 8  
on garments seized in pledge,  
<sup>b</sup> to ash: or for lime.

vv. 11–12. 9–10: *Tyre*: a Phoenician seaport. 11–12: Because *Edom* occupied Judah's territory after the latter was conquered by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., the two became bitter enemies. *Edom* lay south of Judah and southeast of the Dead Sea; its main cities were *Teman* and *Bozrah*. 13–15: Living adjacent to *Gilead*, east of the Jordan, the *Ammonites* had sporadic hostilities with the Hebrews. *Rabbah*: the Ammonite capital. 2.1–3: *Moab* was south of Ammon. 8: *Garments seized in pledge* (as collateral) were to be returned to the owner at night

<p>and in the house of their God<sup>c</sup> they drink liquor got by way of fines.</p> <p>9 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorites before them, though they were tall as cedars, though they were sturdy as oaks, I who destroyed their fruit above and their roots below.</p> <p>10 It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, I who led you in the wilderness forty years, to take possession of the land of the Amorites;</p> <p>11 I raised up prophets from your sons, Nazirites from your young men. Was it not so indeed, you men of Israel? says the LORD.</p> <p>12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and said to the prophets, 'You shall not prophesy.'</p> <p>13 Listen, I groan under the burden of you, as a wagon creaks under a full load.</p> <p>14 Flight shall not save the swift, the strong man shall not rally his strength. The warrior shall not save himself, the archer shall not stand his ground; the swift of foot shall not be saved, nor the horseman escape;</p> <p>16 on that day the bravest of warriors shall be stripped of his arms and run away. This is the very word of the LORD.</p>	<p>For you alone have I cared 2 among all the nations of the world; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.</p> <p>Do two men travel together 3 unless they have agreed?</p> <p>Does a lion roar in the forest 4 if he has no prey?</p> <p>Does a young lion growl in his den if he has caught nothing?</p> <p>Does a bird fall into a trap on the 5 ground if the striker is not set for it? Does a trap spring from the ground and take nothing?</p> <p>If a trumpet sounds the alarm, 6 are not the people scared? If disaster falls on a city, has not the LORD been at work?<sup>d</sup></p> <p>For the Lord GOD does nothing 7 without giving to his servants the prophets knowledge of his plans. The lion has roared; who is not 8 terrified? The Lord GOD has spoken; who will not prophesy?</p> <p>Stand upon the palaces in Ashdod 9 and upon the palaces of Egypt, and proclaim aloud: 'Assemble on the hills of Samaria, look at the tumult seething among her people and at the oppression in her midst; what do they care for honesty 10 who hoard in their palaces the gains of crime and violence?' This is the very word of the LORD.</p> <p>Therefore these are the words of the 11 Lord GOD:</p>
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*Israel's sins and threatened  
punishment*

**3 LISTEN, ISRAELITES, TO THESE WORDS**  
that the LORD addresses to you, to the  
whole nation which he brought up  
from Egypt:

An enemy shall surround<sup>e</sup> the land;  
your stronghold shall be thrown  
down  
and your palaces sacked.

<sup>c</sup> Or gods.  
<sup>d</sup> If disaster . . . work?; or If there is evil in a city, will  
not the LORD act?  
<sup>e</sup> shall surround: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and round.

(Deut.24.12-13). **9:** The *Amorites* (Gen.15.16) were Canaanites. **11-12:** *Nazirites* vowed to abstain from wine (see Num.6.2-4).

**3.1-6.14: Israel is pronounced guilty.** The three parts of the section begin with the word "Listen" (3.1; 4.1; 5.1).

**3.1-15: Promised destruction. 2:** *Cared:* see Hos.5.3-4 n. **3-8:** A series of causes and effects in the form of questions. V. 7 is in prose, and is regarded by some as a later addition since the passage is mostly in meter. **9-11:** The imperatives in v. 9 are plural, perhaps addressed to the prophets who are directed to *Ashdod* and *Egypt* as witnesses in a lawsuit against *Samaria*,

- 12 These are the words of the LORD:  
 As a shepherd rescues out of the jaws of a lion two shin bones or the tip of an ear, so shall the Israelites who live in Samaria be rescued like a corner of a couch or a chip from the leg of a bed.<sup>f</sup>
- 13 Listen and testify against the family of Jacob.  
 This is the very word of the Lord God, the God of Hosts.
- 14 On the day when I deal with Israel for all their crimes, I will most surely deal with the altars of Bethel: the horns of the altar shall be hacked off and shall fall to the ground.
- 15 I will break down both winter-house and summer-house; houses of ivory shall perish, and great houses be demolished. This is the very word of the LORD.
- 4 Listen to this, you cows of Bashan who live on the hill of Samaria, you who oppress the poor and crush the destitute, who say to your lords, 'Bring us drink':
- 2 the Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that your time is coming when men shall carry you away on their shields<sup>g</sup> and your children in fish-baskets.
- 3 You shall each be carried straight out through the breaches in the walls and pitched on a dunghill.<sup>h</sup> This is the very word of the LORD.
- 4 Come to Bethel—and rebel!  
 Come to Gilgal—and rebel the more!
- Bring your sacrifices for the morning, your tithes within three days. Burn your thank-offering without leaven; announce, proclaim your freewill offerings; for you love to do what is proper, you men of Israel! This is the very word of the Lord GOD.
- It was I who kept teeth idle in all your cities, who brought famine on all your settlements; yet you did not come back to me. This is the very word of the LORD.
- It was I who withheld the showers from you while there were still three months to harvest. I would send rain on one city and no rain on another; rain would fall on one field, and another would be parched for lack of it. From this city and that, men would stagger to another for water to drink, but would not find enough; yet you did not come back to me. This is the very word of the LORD.
- I blasted you with black blight and red; I laid waste<sup>i</sup> your gardens and vineyards; the locust devoured your fig-trees and your olives; yet you did not come back to me. This is the very word of the LORD.
- I sent plague upon you like the plagues of Egypt; I killed with the sword

<sup>f</sup> or a chip . . . bed: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*  
<sup>g</sup> Or baskets.  
<sup>h</sup> a dunghill: *prob. rdg.; Heb. the Harmon.*  
<sup>i</sup> I laid waste: *prob. rdg.; Heb. to increase.*

Israel's capital. The latter was ringed by hills. 12: This bitterly ironic statement means that the Israelites who will be rescued from the impending catastrophe will be merely a scrap, hardly worth the effort. 14: Altars had projecting corners, called horns, possessing special power. 15: The houses symbolize the corruption of wealth. Ivory: luxurious decorations.

4.1-13: "Prepare to meet your God." 1-3: The cows of Bashan are the rich Samaritan women. Bashan was famous for fine cattle (compare Ezek.39.18; Ps.22.12). 6a: Idle: lit. "clean," never soiled by food. 6b: Hag.2.17. 7: Deut.11.17. 10: Plagues: compare Exod.7.14-11.10; 12.29-32.

- your young men and your troops  
of horses.  
I made your camps stink in your  
nostrils;  
yet you did not come back to me.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- 11 I brought destruction amongst you  
as God destroyed Sodom and  
Gomorrah;  
you were like a brand snatched from  
the fire;  
yet you did not come back to me.  
This is the very word of the LORD.
- 12 Therefore, Israel, this is what I will  
do to you;  
and, because this is what I will do to  
you,  
Israel, prepare to meet your God.
- 13 It is he who forges the thunder and  
creates the wind,  
who showers abundant rain on the  
earth,<sup>j</sup>  
who darkens the dawn with thick  
clouds  
and marches over the heights of the  
earth—  
his name is the LORD the God of  
Hosts.
- 5 Listen to these words; I raise a dirge  
over you, O Israel:
- 2 She has fallen to rise no more,  
the virgin Israel,  
prostrate on her own soil, with no  
one to lift her up.
- 3 These are the words of the Lord GOD:  
The city that marched out to war a  
thousand strong  
shall have but a hundred left,  
that which marched out a hundred  
strong  
shall have but ten men of Israel left.
- 4 These are the words of the LORD to the  
people of Israel:
- Resort to me, if you would live, not 5  
to Bethel;  
go not to Gilgal, nor pass on to  
Beersheba;  
for Gilgal shall be swept away  
and Bethel brought to nothing.  
If you would live, resort to the 6  
LORD,  
or he will break out against Joseph  
like fire,  
fire which will devour Israel with  
no one to quench it;  
he who made the Pleiades and 8<sup>k</sup>  
Orion,  
who turned darkness into morning  
and darkened day into night,  
who summoned the waters of the  
sea  
and poured them over the earth,  
who makes Taurus rise after Capella 9  
and Taurus set hard on the rising  
of the Vintager<sup>l</sup>—  
he who does this, his name is the  
LORD.<sup>m</sup>  
You that turn justice upside down<sup>n</sup> 7  
and bring righteousness to the  
ground,  
you that hate a man who brings the 10  
wrongdoer to court  
and loathe him who speaks the  
whole truth:  
for all this, because you levy taxes 11  
on the poor  
and extort a tribute of grain from  
them,  
though you have built houses of  
hewn stone,  
you shall not live in them,  
though you have planted pleasant  
vineyards,  
you shall not drink wine from  
them.  
For I know how many your crimes 12  
are  
and how countless your sins,

<sup>j</sup> who showers . . . earth: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* who tells his thoughts to mankind.

<sup>k</sup> Verse 7 transposed to follow verse 9.

<sup>l</sup> who makes . . . Vintager: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* who smiles destruction on the strong, and destruction comes on the fortified city.

<sup>m</sup> his . . . LORD: *transposed from end of verse 8.*

<sup>n</sup> upside down: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* poison.

11: Compare Gen.19.24–28. 12: An oath, in which the threat (*this is what I will do*) is unspecified. 13: The verse is hymnic in style.

5.1–6.14: **Death and exile.** A miscellaneous group of poems unified by their pessimistic outlook. 1–2: The poetry of v. 2 has in *Heb.* the rhythm of the *dirge*.

5.4–15: **The possibility of life.** The hope that the LORD holds out is hedged with qualifications. *Bethel* and *Gilgal* were shrine towns in Benjamin; *Beersheba* a shrine town in Judah. As in

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <p>you who persecute the guiltless, hold men to ransom and thrust the destitute out of court.</p> <p>13 At that time, therefore, a prudent man will stay quiet, for it will be an evil time.</p> <p>14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live, that the LORD the God of Hosts may be firmly on your side, as you say he is.</p> <p>15 Hate evil and love good; enthrone justice in the courts; it may be that the LORD the God of Hosts will be gracious to the survivors of Joseph.</p> <p>16 Therefore these are the words of the LORD the God of Hosts:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There shall be wailing in every street, and in all open places cries of woe. The farmer shall be called to mourning, and those skilled in the dirge to<sup>o</sup> wailing;</p> <p>17 there shall be lamentation in every vineyard; for I will pass through the midst of you, says the LORD.</p> <p>18 Fools who long for the day of the LORD, what will the day of the LORD mean to you? It will be darkness, not light.</p> <p>19 It will be as when a man runs from a lion, and a bear meets him, or turns into a house and leans his hand on the wall, and a snake bites him.</p> | <p>The day of the LORD is indeed darkness, not light, a day of gloom with no dawn.</p> <p>I hate, I spurn your pilgrim-feasts; I will not delight in your sacred ceremonies.</p> <p>When you present your sacrifices and offerings I will not accept them, nor look on the buffaloes of your shared-offerings.</p> <p>Spare me the sound of your songs; I cannot endure the music of your lutes.</p> <p>Let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.</p> <p>Did you bring me sacrifices and gifts, you people of Israel, those forty years in the wilderness? No! but now you shall take up the shrine of your idol king and the pedestals of your images,<sup>p</sup> which you have made for yourselves, and I will drive you into exile beyond Damascus.</p> <p>So says the LORD; the God of Hosts is his name.</p> <p>Shame on you who live at ease in Zion, and you, untroubled on the hill of Samaria, men of mark in the first of nations, you to whom the people of Israel resort!</p> <p>Go, look at Calneh, travel on to Hamath the great, then go down to Gath of the Philistines— are you better than these kingdoms?</p> | <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p> <p>6</p> <p>2</p> |
|--|--|---|

<sup>o</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. places to before those skilled.  
<sup>p</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the star of your gods.

vv. 21–27, Amos rejects Israel's ritual worship. 14–15: The word *seek* (*resort*, vv. 5–6) reflects the ritual practice; the prophet insists that such seeking be fully genuine and not merely formal. Amos goes beyond mere adherence to tradition, demanding instead a new attitude: *Hate evil and love good*.

5.16–27: **Rejection of the cult.** 18: *The day of the LORD*: see Joel 1.14–15 n. 21–27: The prophet rejects the entire system of ritual, denying (vv. 25–26) that it was truly part of Israel's legacy from the formative Wilderness period. *Justice* and *righteousness* should replace the unacceptable ritualism.

6.1–7: "Are you better?" *Calneh*, perhaps the same as Calno (Isa.10.9) and Kanneh (Ezek.27.23), was a town in northern Syria. *Hamath*, an important Syrian center, was captured by the Assyrians in the 720s. *Gath*, one of the five Philistine cities, was destroyed many times.

Or is your<sup>q</sup> territory greater than theirs?<sup>r</sup>  
 3 You who thrust the evil day aside and make haste to establish violence.<sup>s</sup>  
 4 You who loll on beds inlaid with ivory and sprawl over your couches, feasting on lambs from the flock and fatted calves,  
 5 you who pluck the strings of the lute and invent musical instruments like David,  
 6 you who drink wine by the bowlful and lard yourselves with the richest of oils, but are not grieved at the ruin of Joseph—  
 7 now, therefore, you shall head the column of exiles; that will be the end of sprawling and revelry.  
 8 The Lord GOD has sworn by himself:  
 I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, I loathe his palaces; city and all in it I will abandon to their fate.  
 9 If ten men are left in one house, they shall die,  
 10 and a man's uncle and the embalmer shall take him up to carry his body out of the house for burial, and they shall call to someone in a corner of the house, 'Any more there?', and he shall answer, 'No.'  
 Then he will add, 'Hush!'— for the name of the LORD must not be mentioned.  
 11 For the LORD will command, and at the shock the great house will be rubble and the cottage matchwood.

Can horses gallop over rocks? 12  
 Can the sea be ploughed with oxen? Yet you have turned into venom the process of law and justice itself into poison, you who are jubilant over a nothing<sup>t</sup> and boast, 13  
 'Have we not won power<sup>u</sup> by our own strength?'  
 O Israel, I am raising a nation 14  
 against you, and they shall harry your land from Lebo-hamath to the gorge of the Arabah.  
 This is the very word of the LORD the God of Hosts.

*Visions foretelling doom upon Israel*

THIS WAS WHAT THE LORD GOD SHOWED 7  
 me: a swarm of locusts hatched out when the late corn, which comes after the king's early crop, was beginning to sprout. As they were devouring the 2  
 last of the herbage in the land, I said, 'O Lord GOD, forgive; what will Jacob be after this? He is so small.' Then the 3  
 LORD relented and said, 'This shall not happen.'

This was what the Lord GOD showed 4  
 me: the Lord GOD was summoning a flame of fire<sup>v</sup> to devour the great abyss, and to devour all creation. I said, 'O 5  
 Lord GOD, I pray thee, cease; what will Jacob be after this? He is so small.' The LORD relented and said, 6  
 'This also shall not happen.'

This was what the LORD showed me: 7  
 there was a man standing by a wall<sup>w</sup> with a plumb-line in his hand. The 8  
 LORD said to me, 'What do you see, Amos?' 'A plumb-line', I answered, and the Lord said, 'I am setting a

<sup>q</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. their.

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. yours.

<sup>s</sup> You . . . violence; or You who invoke the day of

wrongdoing and bring near the sabbath of violence.

<sup>t</sup> a nothing and power: Heb. Lo-debar and Karnaim, making a word-play on the two place-names.

<sup>u</sup> a flame of fire: prob. rdg.; Heb. to contend with fire.

<sup>v</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds of a plumb-line.

6.8-14: Punishment of Israel. The reduction of Israel to rubble (v. 11) is to be accompanied by the demoralization of the people. 13: *Nothing* and *power* represent city names; see Tfn. *t*. 14: *Lebo-hamath* was in the north, the *Arabah* in the south. The enemy overruns the land from one end to the other.

7.1-9.8: Visions foretelling doom upon Israel. A series of symbolic but accurate visions is interspersed with a narrative and other oracles. 1-3: A *locust* plague destroys the people's grain. *The king's early crop* has already been harvested. 4-6: *Abyss*: the waters beneath the earth; see Ps.77.16-20. 7-9: A *plumb-line* was used to make sure a wall was vertical and hence stable.



plumb-line to the heart of my people Israel; never again will I pass them by. The hill-shrines of Isaac shall be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste; I will rise, sword in hand, against the house of Jeroboam.<sup>9</sup>

Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, reported to Jeroboam king of Israel: 'Amos is conspiring against you in Israel; the country cannot tolerate what he is saying. He says, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be deported far from their native land."<sup>10</sup>

To Amos himself Amaziah said, 'Be off, you seer! Off with you to Judah! You can earn your living and do your prophesying there. But never prophesy again at Bethel, for this is the king's sanctuary, a royal palace.' 'I am<sup>w</sup> no prophet,' Amos replied to Amaziah, 'nor am I a prophet's son; I am<sup>w</sup> a herdsman and a dresser of sycomore-figs. But the LORD took me as I followed the flock and said to me, "Go and prophesy to my people Israel."<sup>11</sup> So now listen to the word of the LORD. You tell me I am not to prophesy against Israel or go drivelling on against the people of Isaac. Now these are the words of the LORD: Your wife shall become a city strumpet<sup>x</sup> and your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword. Your land shall be divided up with a measuring-line, you yourself shall die in a heathen country, and Israel shall be deported far from their native land and go into exile.'<sup>12</sup>

This was what the Lord GOD showed me: there was a basket of summer fruit, and he said, 'What are you looking at, Amos?' I answered, 'A basket of ripe summer<sup>y</sup> fruit.' Then the LORD said to me, 'The time is ripe<sup>y</sup> for my people Israel. Never again will I pass them by. In that day, says the Lord GOD, the singing women in the

palace shall howl, "So many dead men, flung out everywhere! Silence!"'

Listen to this, you who grind the destitute and plunder<sup>z</sup> the humble, you who say, 'When will the new moon be over so that we may sell corn? When will the sabbath be past so that we may open our wheat again, giving short measure in the bushel and taking overweight in the silver, tilting the scales fraudulently, and selling the dust of the wheat; that we may buy the poor for silver and the destitute for a pair of shoes?' The LORD has<sup>7</sup> sworn by the pride of Jacob: I will never forget any of their doings.

Shall not the earth shake for this? Shall not all who live on it grieve? All earth shall surge and seethe like the Nile and subside like the river of Egypt.

On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your pilgrim-feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation. I will make you all put sackcloth round your waists and have all your heads shaved. I will make it like mourning for an only son and the end of it a bitter day.

The time is coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send famine on the land, not hunger for bread or thirst for water,

<sup>w</sup> Or was.

<sup>x</sup> become . . . strumpet: or be carried off as a prostitute in a raid.

<sup>y</sup> ripe summer and ripe: a play on the Heb. qais (summer) and qes (end).

<sup>z</sup> and plunder: prob. rdg.; Heb. to destroy.

7.10-17: Amos' confrontation with Amaziah. Bethel was the main royal shrine in Israel. The narrative is about Amos, not by him; its origin is obscure. The charge against Amos was sedition. 14: Amos' reply, *I am no prophet . . . nor am I a prophet's son*, asserts that he was not the usual "professional" prophet (see 1 Sam.10.5), but rather someone specially called to prophesy. He terms himself a *herdsman and a dresser of sycomore-figs* (which had to be pricked to be edible); see 1.1, "sheep-farmer."

8.1-7: Summer fruit. This vision turns on a Heb. word-play (see Tfn. y.). 4-7: The mechanical observance of ritual, accompanied by derelictions from morality.

8.8-14: Cosmic catastrophe. 8: The allusion is to the annual flood of the Nile. 10: *Pilgrim-feasts*: the festivals commanded in Exod.23.14-17. *Sackcloth and shaved heads* were signs of mourning. 11: *Hunger for hearing the word*: lack of a prophet who speaks for the LORD.

but for hearing the word of the LORD.  
 12 Men shall stagger from north to south,<sup>a</sup>  
 they shall range from east to west, seeking the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.  
 13 On that day fair maidens and young men shall faint from thirst;  
 14 all who take their oath by Ashimah, goddess of Samaria, all who swear, 'By the life of your god, O Dan', and, 'By the sacred way to Beersheba', shall fall to rise no more.

9 I saw the LORD standing by the altar, and he said:

Strike the capitals so that the whole porch is shaken;  
 I will smash them all into pieces<sup>b</sup> and I will kill them to the last man<sup>c</sup> with the sword.

No fugitive shall escape, no survivor find safety;  
 2 if they dig down to Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down.  
 3 If they hide on the top of Carmel, there will I search out and take them;  
 if they conceal themselves from me in the depths of the sea, there will I bid the sea-serpent bite them.  
 4 If they are herded into captivity by their enemies, there will I bid the sword slay them, and I will fix my eye on them for evil and not for good.

5 The Lord the GOD of Hosts, at whose touch the earth heaves, and all who dwell on it wither,<sup>d</sup>

it surges like the Nile, and subsides like the river of Egypt,  
 who builds his stair up to the heavens  
 and arches his ceiling over the earth,  
 who summons the waters of the sea  
 and pours them over the land—  
 his name is the LORD.

Are not you Israelites like Cushites to me?  
 says the LORD.  
 Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, the Aramaeans from Kir?  
 Behold, I, the Lord GOD, have my eyes on this sinful kingdom, and I will wipe it off the face of the earth. 8

*A remnant spared and restored*

Yet I will not wipe out the family of Jacob root and branch,  
 says the LORD.  
 No; I will give my orders,  
 9 I will shake Israel to and fro through all the nations  
 as a sieve is shaken to and fro and not one pebble falls to the ground.  
 They shall die by the sword, all the sinners of my people,  
 10 who say, 'Thou wilt not let disaster come near us  
 or overtake us.'  
 On that day I will restore David's fallen house;  
 11 I will repair its gaping walls and restore its ruins;

<sup>a</sup> south: *prob. rdg.; Heb. west.*  
<sup>b</sup> I will . . . pieces: *prob. rdg.; Heb. I will hack them on the heads of them all.*  
<sup>c</sup> them to the last man: *or their children.*  
<sup>d</sup> Or mourn.

14: *Ashimah*: a fertility goddess. Since *Dan* was in the north and *Beersheba* in the south, when used together they were a frequent figure for all the land.

9.1-8a: Destruction of the "chosen people." 2: *Sheol*: the place of the dead; compare Ps.139.8. 3: *Carmel*: the famous mountain above modern Haifa. 7: Since the LORD has dealt with other nations as he has with Israel, Israel is not "chosen." *Cushites*: Ethiopians. *Caphtor*: Crete. *Aramaeans*: compare 1.3-5. *Kir* was possibly in Mesopotamia; it appears both as the place of origin of the Aramaeans as here, and as the place to which they were exiled (1.5; 2 Kgs.16.9).

9.8b-15: The future restoration of Israel. Many scholars believe that this glowing passage was added to give a positive ending. 11: *Fallen* suggests the period of the Babylonian conquest

12 I will rebuild it as it was long ago,  
that they may possess what is left of  
Edom  
and all the nations who were once  
named mine.

This is the very word of the LORD, who  
will do this.

13 A time is coming, says the LORD,  
when the ploughman shall follow  
hard on the vintager,<sup>e</sup>  
and he who treads the grapes after  
him who sows the seed.  
The mountains shall run with fresh  
wine,

and every hill shall wave with corn.  
I will restore the fortunes of my  
people Israel; 14  
they shall rebuild deserted cities and  
live in them,  
they shall plant vineyards and drink  
their wine,  
they shall plant vineyards and drink  
their wine,  
make gardens and eat the fruit.  
Once more I will plant them on 15  
their own soil,  
and they shall never again be  
uprooted  
from the soil I have given them.  
It is the word of the LORD your  
God.

<sup>e</sup> Or reaper.

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(587 B.C.) after which David's dynasty came to an end. 12: On the enmity of Judah and *Edom*, see 1.11–12 n. 13: Fertility would be so great that the labors of the agricultural seasons would press on each other.

# OBADIAH

Nothing is known about this Obadiah. The similarities between vv. 1–9 and Jer.49.7–22 suggest a common time of origin for both passages, and possibly a common prophetic circle.

The book consists of short poems of diverse origin, unified by the prediction that Israel's and Edom's national situations will be reversed. In the tradition (Gen.25.30), Edom (Esau) was the twin brother of Israel (Jacob); according to Obadiah, Edom has not been his brother's keeper (v. 10), and now the LORD will punish Edom.

This latter theme suggests that the book originated shortly after the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., in which the Edomites apparently participated.

## *Edom's pride and downfall*

1<sup>a</sup> The vision of Obadiah: what the Lord GOD has said concerning Edom.

When a herald was sent out among the nations, crying,

'Rouse yourselves;  
let us rouse ourselves to battle  
against Edom',

I heard this message from the LORD:

2 Look, I make you the least of all nations,  
an object of contempt.

3 Your proud, insolent heart has led you astray;  
you who haunt the crannies among the rocks,  
making your home on the heights,

you say to yourself, 'Who can bring me to the ground?'

4 Though you soar as high as a vulture  
and your nest is set among the stars,  
thence I will bring you down.  
This is the very word of the LORD.

5<sup>b</sup> If thieves or robbers come to you  
by night,  
though your loss be heavy,  
they will steal only what they want;  
if vintagers come to you,  
will they not leave gleanings?

6 But see how Esau's treasure is ransacked,

his secret wealth hunted out!

All your former allies march you to the frontier,

your confederates mislead you and bring you low,

your own kith and kin lay a snare for your feet,  
a snare that works blindly,  
without wisdom.

And on that very day  
I will destroy all the sages of Edom  
and leave no wisdom on the mount of Esau.

This is the very word of the LORD.  
Then shall your warriors, O

9 Teman, be so enfeebled,  
that every man shall be cut down  
on the mount of Esau.

For the murderous violence done  
to your brother Jacob  
you shall be covered with shame and cut off for ever.

On the day when you stood aloof,  
11 on the day when strangers carried off his wealth,  
when foreigners trooped in by his gates

and parcelled out Jerusalem by lot,  
you yourselves were of one mind  
with them.

Do not gloat over your brother on  
12 the day of his misfortune,  
nor rejoice over Judah on his day  
of ruin;

do not boast on the day of distress,

*a* Verses 1–4: cp. Jer. 49. 14–16.

*b* Verses 5 and 6: cp. Jer. 49. 9, 10.

**1:** Title. Obadiah means "the LORD's servant."

**1–4:** *Edom's pride and downfall.* The poem describes the downfall by opposites: *contempt and proud, heights and the ground.* Edom's capital, Teman (v. 9), was in rocky hills.

**5–7:** *Military conquest.* **5:** *Gleanings:* Harvesters were to leave fruit for the poor (Deut.24.19–21). **6:** *Esau* was Edom's progenitor (Gen.36.1) as *Jacob* (Obad.10) was Israel's.

**8–14:** *Edom's treachery.* **8:** Edom had a reputation for *wisdom*; the sages of 1 Kgs.4.31 are regarded by some as Edomites. **9:** *Teman:* the main Edomite city. **12–14:** On Edom's crimes at the time of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem, see Ezek.35.1–36.7.

- 13 nor enter my people's gates on the  
day of his downfall.  
Do not gloat over his fall on the day  
of his downfall  
nor seize his treasure on the day of  
his downfall.
- 14 Do not wait at the cross-roads to  
cut off his fugitives  
nor betray the survivors on the day  
of distress.
- 15 For soon the day of the LORD will  
come on all the nations:  
you shall be treated as you have  
treated others,  
and your deeds will recoil on your  
own head.
- 16 The draught that you have drunk  
on my holy mountain  
all the nations shall drink  
continually;  
they shall drink and gulp down  
and shall be as though they had  
never been;
- 17 but on Mount Zion there shall be  
those that escape,  
and it shall be holy,  
and Jacob shall dispossess those  
that dispossessed them.
- Then shall the house of Jacob be 18  
fire,  
the house of Joseph flame,  
and the house of Esau shall be  
chaff;  
they shall blaze through it and  
consume it,  
and the house of Esau shall have  
no survivor.  
The LORD has spoken.  
Then they shall possess the Negeb, 19  
the mount of Esau,  
and the Shephelah of the  
Philistines;  
they shall possess the country-side  
of Ephraim and Samaria,  
and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.  
Exiles of Israel<sup>c</sup> shall possess<sup>d</sup> Canaan 20  
as far as Zarephath,  
exiles of Jerusalem<sup>e</sup> shall possess the  
cities of the Negeb.  
Those who find safety on Mount 21  
Zion shall go up  
to hold sway over the mount of  
Esau,  
and dominion shall belong to the  
LORD.

*c* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds this army.  
*d* shall possess; prob. rdg.; Heb. which.  
*e* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds who are in Sepharad.

**15–21: The punishment.** **15:** *The day of the LORD*: the time of the LORD's judgment on men and nations. **16:** *Draught*: a symbol of divine wrath (see Jer.25.15–28; Ps.75.8). **19–21:** The areas mentioned are both in and around Israel. The *Negeb* was the southern wilderness, *Shephelah* the Judean hills just east of the coastal plain. *Gilead* was east of the Jordan. *Zarephath* was on the Phoenician coast. Sepharad (Tfn. *e*), in Asia Minor, is a later Heb. name for Spain.

# JONAH

Unlike the other prophetic books, Jonah takes the form of a story. The reader should begin by enjoying it as he would a short story, without concern about its historical accuracy; if, moreover, he views the story as in a satiric vein, he may enjoy it all the more.

A prophet Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kgs.14.25, yet with only the sketchiest information. He is a different man than the prophet who appears here.

We cannot be certain of the date of composition of this book. The author's exaggerations (the size of Nineveh, 3.3; its response to Jonah's threat, 3.5-9) suggest that he wrote after Nineveh, destroyed in 612, was only a memory. This would mean a date at least later than 600 B.C. Since the book (like Ruth) opposes the exclusiveness found in Ezra and Nehemiah, it may have originated about 450-400 B.C.

The story has its own pungency. Traditionally, Jonah is viewed as a hero. Perhaps, however, as some modern scholars hold, the author had something other than a hero in mind, for his Jonah says the right things (1.9; 2.2-9; 4.2) but does not follow them. Jonah cannot conceive that God could care for anyone, man or beast, except an Israelite; he becomes quite upset when God forgives Nineveh. The book's message of God's universal concern is borne along by the irony of a petulant prophet who is disappointed by the success of his preaching.

## *Jonah's mission to Nineveh*

1 **T**HE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO  
2 Jonah son of Amittai: 'Go to the  
3 great city of Nineveh, go now and  
4 denounce it, for its wickedness stares  
5 me in the face.' But Jonah set out for  
6 Tarshish to escape from the LORD. He  
7 went down to Joppa, where he found a  
8 ship bound for Tarshish. He paid his  
9 fare and went on board, meaning to  
10 travel by it to Tarshish out of reach of  
11 the LORD. But the LORD let loose a  
12 hurricane, and the sea ran so high in  
13 the storm that the ship threatened to  
14 break up. The sailors were afraid, and  
15 each cried out to his god for help. Then  
16 they threw things overboard to lighten  
17 the ship. Jonah had gone down into a  
18 corner of the ship and was lying sound  
19 asleep when the captain came upon  
20 him. 'What, sound asleep?' he said.  
21 'Get up, and call on your god; perhaps  
22 he will spare us a thought and we shall  
23 not perish.'  
24 At last the sailors said to each other,  
25 'Come and let us cast lots to find out  
26 who is to blame for this bad luck.' So  
27 they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.  
28 'Now then,' they said to him, 'what is

your business? Where do you come  
from? What is your country? Of what  
nation are you?' 'I am a Hebrew,' he  
9 answered, 'and I worship the LORD the  
10 God of heaven, who made both sea and  
11 land.' At this the sailors were even  
12 more afraid. 'What can you have done  
13 wrong?' they asked. They already knew  
14 that he was trying to escape from the  
15 LORD, for he had told them so. 'What  
16 shall we do with you', they asked, 'to  
17 make the sea go down?' For the storm  
18 grew worse and worse. 'Take me and  
19 throw me overboard,' he said, 'and the  
20 sea will go down. I know it is my fault  
21 that this great storm has struck you.'  
22 The crew rowed hard to put back to  
23 land but in vain, for the sea ran higher  
24 and higher. At last they called on the  
25 LORD and said, 'O LORD, do not let us  
26 perish at the price of this man's life; do  
27 not charge us with the death of an  
28 innocent man. All this, O LORD, is thy  
29 set purpose.' Then they took Jonah  
30 and threw him overboard, and the sea  
31 stopped raging. So the crew were filled  
32 with the fear of the LORD and offered  
33 sacrifice and made vows to him. But  
34 the LORD ordained that a great fish  
35 should swallow Jonah, and for three

1.1-16: **Jonah's flight by ship.** 2: *Nineveh*: the capital of Assyria, far to the east. 3: *Tarshish*: though often identified with Spain, it was probably a legendary place far to the west of Palestine. Jonah thus travels in the opposite direction from Nineveh. 9: *Worship*: in Heb., "fear." Jonah seems not to see the disparity between his adherence to the LORD who made both sea and land, and his attempt to *escape* by sea (vv. 3,10). 16: The sailors' *fear* is religiously more productive than Jonah's (see v. 9 n.).

1.17-2.10: **In the belly of the fish.** Not a whale but simply a *great fish*, it, unlike the prophet,

days and three nights he remained in its belly.

2 Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish:

2 I called to the LORD in my distress, and he answered me;  
out of the belly of Sheol I cried for help,  
and thou hast heard my cry.

3 Thou didst cast me into the depths, far out at sea,  
and the flood closed round me;  
all thy waves, all thy billows, passed over me.

4 I thought I was banished from thy sight  
and should never see thy holy temple again.

5 The water about me rose up to my neck;  
the ocean was closing over me.

6 Weeds twined about my head  
in the troughs of the mountains;  
I was sinking into a world  
whose bars would hold me fast for ever.

But thou didst bring me up alive  
from the pit, O LORD my God.

7 As my senses failed me I remembered the LORD,  
and my prayer reached thee in thy holy temple.

8 Men who worship false gods may abandon their loyalty,

9 but I will offer thee sacrifice with words of praise;

I will pay my vows; victory is the LORD's.

10 Then the LORD spoke to the fish and it spewed Jonah out on to the dry land.

The word of the LORD came to Jonah 3 a second time: 'Go to the great city of 2 Nineveh, go now and denounce it in the words I give you.' Jonah obeyed at 3-4 once and went to Nineveh. He began by going a day's journey into the city, a vast city, three days' journey across, and then proclaimed: 'In forty days 5 Nineveh shall be overthrown!' The people of Nineveh believed God's 5 word. They ordered a public fast and put on sackcloth, high and low alike. When the news reached the king of 6 Nineveh he rose from his throne, stripped off his robes of state, put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. Then he 7 had a proclamation made in Nineveh: 'This is a decree of the king and his nobles. No man or beast, herd or flock, is to taste food, to graze or to drink water. They are to clothe themselves in 8 sackcloth and call on God with all their might. Let every man abandon his wicked ways and his habitual violence. It may be that God will repent and turn 9 away from his anger: and so we shall not perish.' God saw what they did, 10 and how they abandoned their wicked ways, and he repented and did not bring upon them the disaster he had threatened.

Jonah was greatly displeased and 4 angry, and he prayed to the LORD: 2 'This, O LORD, is what I feared when I was in my own country, and to forestall it I tried to escape to Tarshish; I knew that thou art "a god gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and ever constant, and always willing to repent of the disaster".<sup>a</sup> And now, 3 LORD, take my life: I should be better

<sup>a</sup> a god . . . disaster: cp. Exod. 34. 6.

does whatever God commands. 2.1-9: Jonah's prayer, in form very like some of the psalms, is felt by many scholars to have been added. The images of drowning, however, are appropriate to the story, and the author himself may have used a psalm he already knew. *Sheol* (v. 2) and *the pit* (v. 6) signify the place of the dead. In terms of the satire, v. 8 is deeply ironic, as is perhaps *victory* (v. 9).

3.1-10: **The conversion of Nineveh.** 1-2: This *second time*, Jonah is not told why he is to denounce Nineveh, as he was before (1.2). 4-5: Nineveh was a large city by ancient standards, but not so *vast* as the storyteller measures. *Three days' journey* would be about fifty miles, a gross exaggeration of the size of Nineveh but consistent with the author's satire. When Jonah has gone only one-third of the way into the city, his work is finished! 10: The sincerity of Nineveh's response (like that of the sailors', ch. 1) prompts God on his own account to *repent*, the word meaning to regret and to change a previous decision.

4.1-11: **Jonah's conversation with God.** 1: Jonah is *angry* over his success! 2: Jonah quotes a conventional description of God's character, found in several other places (Exod.34.6; Num.14.18; Pss.103.8; 145.8; Joel 2.13), but he clearly wishes God were not so. 3: Compare this death wish with those of Moses (Num.11.15), of Elijah (1 Kgs.19.4), and of Job (Job ch. 3).

- 4 dead than alive.' 'Are you so angry?' faint. Then he prayed for death and  
 5 said the LORD. Jonah went out and sat said, 'I should be better dead than  
 down on the east of the city. There he alive.' At this God said to Jonah, 'Are 9  
 made himself a shelter and sat in its you so angry over the gourd?' 'Yes,'  
 shade, waiting to see what would he answered, 'mortally angry.' The 10  
 6 happen in the city. Then the LORD God LORD said, 'You are sorry for the  
 ordained that a climbing gourd<sup>b</sup> should gourd, though you did not have the  
 grow up over his head to throw its trouble of growing it, a plant which  
 shade over him and relieve his distress, came up in a night and withered in a  
 and Jonah was grateful for the gourd. night. And should not I be sorry for 11  
 7 But at dawn the next day God ordained the great city of Nineveh, with its  
 that a worm should attack the gourd, hundred and twenty thousand who  
 8 and it withered; and at sunrise God cannot tell their right hand from their  
 ordained that a scorching wind should left, and cattle without number?'  
 blow up from the east. The sun beat  
 down on Jonah's head till he grew

*b* a climbing gourd; or a castor-oil plant.

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6: As he had before ordained the fish (1.17), God now *ordained* a plant to shelter Jonah. *Gourd*: exactly what kind of plant is meant is unknown. The Heb. for *grateful* is lit. "very happy."  
 10: The basic idea of being *sorry* is that the tears flow in compassionate grief. 11: Since the *cattle* had previously repented (3.7-8), God is *sorry* for them too.



# MICAH

If the prophets have a single message, it may be summed up thus: God can be counted on to care. When his people have succumbed to corruption or to overweening pride, his care shows itself in punishment; when they are in despair or have been overrun by an arrogant enemy, his care shows itself in encouraging and restoring them. So especially with Micah.

The unity of the book lies in presenting a God who is concerned with men and their life. That unity transcends a diversity of times and authors found in the book. Chapters 1-3 seem to come from the eighth century B.C., with portions from before 721, when the Assyrians demolished Israel and her capital, Samaria (see 1.5-6). Chapters 4-7 (except, perhaps, 5.5-6) seem to stem from the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century, or possibly even later.

The specific historical settings were helpful to the book's ancient readers, but not essential to them, for they were seeking its message of judgment and hope. These two elements appear alternately in the book. Judgment predominates in chs. 1-3, hope in chs. 4-5, judgment again in 6.1-7.6, and hope again in 7.7-20.

1 **T**HIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD which came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; which he received in visions concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

## *The rulers of Israel and Judah denounced*

2 Listen, you peoples, all together;  
attend, O earth and all who are in it,  
that the Lord GOD, the Lord from  
his holy temple,  
may bear witness against you.  
3 For look, the LORD is leaving his  
dwelling-place;  
down he comes and walks on the  
heights of the earth.  
4 Beneath him mountains dissolve  
like wax before the fire,  
valleys are torn open,  
as when torrents pour down the  
hill-side—  
5 and all for the crime of Jacob and  
the sin of Israel.  
What is the crime of Jacob? Is it not  
Samaria?

What is the hill-shrine of Judah? Is  
it not Jerusalem?

So I will make Samaria 6  
a heap of ruins in open country,  
a place for planting vines;  
I will pour her stones down into  
the valley  
and lay her foundations bare. 7  
All her carved figures shall be  
shattered,  
her images burnt one and all;  
I will make a waste heap of all her  
idols.  
She amassed them out of fees for  
harlotry,  
and a harlot's fee shall they  
become once more.  
Therefore I must howl and wail, 8  
go naked and distraught;  
I must howl like a wolf, mourn like  
a desert-owl.  
Her wound cannot be healed; 9  
for the stroke has bitten deep  
into Judah,  
it has fallen on the gate of my  
people,  
upon Jerusalem itself.  
Will you not weep your fill, weep 10  
your eyes out in Gath?

1.1: Title. *Micah* means "Who is like?" and is probably a contraction of Micaiah, "Who is like the LORD?" *Moresheth*: a town in Judah, about twenty-three miles southwest of Jerusalem. The names of the kings date the man Micah between about 740 and 700 B.C. *Samaria*: the capital of Israel, conquered by Assyria in 721 B.C.

1.2-3.12: *The rulers of Israel and Judah denounced*. Several of the poems accuse leaders, others deal with the people.

1.2-9: *The crimes of Israel and Judah*. The LORD himself *walks on the earth* to destroy *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*. 5: That *Samaria* is the *crime of Jacob* appears in v. 7. *Hill-shrine*: an open-air fertility shrine; the prophet implies that Jerusalem is a center of idolatrous worship. 6: When a city was razed by an enemy, the site was leveled by pushing ruined *stones* into the valley surrounding it. 8: The prophet probably acted out this verse; see Jer.27.2; 28.10-11.

1.10-16: *An invasion of Judah*. The names of the towns seem to depict an invader's advance from the southwest toward Jerusalem. 10: *Gath*: a Philistine town. *Beth-aphrah*: northwest of

In Beth-apphrah sprinkle yourselves  
with dust;  
11 take the road, you that dwell in  
Shaphir;  
have not the people of Zaanan gone  
out in shame from their city?  
Beth-ezel is a place of  
lamentation,  
she can lend you support no longer.  
12 The people of Maroth are greatly  
alarmed,  
for disaster has come down from  
the LORD  
to the very gate of Jerusalem.  
13 Harness the steeds to the chariot, O  
people of Lachish,  
for you first led the daughter of Zion  
into sin;  
to you must the crimes of Israel be  
traced.  
14 Let Moreseth-gath be given her  
dismissal.  
Beth-achzib has<sup>a</sup> disappointed<sup>b</sup> the  
kings of Israel.  
15 And you too, O people of Mareshah,  
I will send others to take your  
place;  
and the glory of Israel shall hide in  
the cave of Adullam.  
16 Shave the hair from your head in  
mourning  
for the children of your delight;  
make yourself bald as a vulture,  
for they have left you and gone  
into exile.  
2 Shame on those who lie in bed  
planning evil and wicked deeds  
and rise at daybreak to do them,  
knowing that they have the power!  
2 They covet land and take it by  
force;  
if they want a house they seize it;

they rob a man of his home  
and steal every man's inheritance.  
Therefore these are the words of the LORD:  
Listen, for this whole brood I am  
planning disaster,  
whose yoke you cannot shake from  
your necks  
and walk upright; it shall be your  
hour of disaster.  
On that day  
they shall take up a poem about  
you  
and raise a lament thrice told,  
saying, 'We are utterly despoiled:  
the land of the LORD's<sup>c</sup> people  
changes hands.  
How shall a man have power<sup>d</sup>  
to restore our fields, now parcelled  
out<sup>e</sup>?'  
Therefore there shall be no one to  
assign to you  
any portion by lot in the LORD's  
assembly.  
How they rant! They may say, 'Do  
not rant';  
but this ranting is all their own,  
these insults are their<sup>f</sup> own  
invention.  
Can one ask, O house of Jacob,  
'Is the LORD's patience truly at an  
end?  
Are these his deeds?'

<sup>a</sup> Beth-achzib has: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* The houses of Achzib have.  
<sup>b</sup> *Heb.* achzab.  
<sup>c</sup> the LORD's: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* my.  
<sup>d</sup> have power: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* remove from me.  
<sup>e</sup> now parcelled out: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* he will parcel out.  
<sup>f</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb.* his.

Hebron; *dust* is a pun on its name, "house of dust." 11: *Shaphir*: probably near Beth-apphrah. *Zaanan*: perhaps near Lachish (v. 13); *gone out* is a pun on the name. *Beth-ezel*: to the south of Beth-apphrah. 12: *Maroth*: perhaps northeast of Beth-apphrah. 13: *Lachish*: an important fortress about thirty miles from Jerusalem; *to the chariot* may be a pun on the name. The historical allusion is obscure. 14: *Moreseth-gath*: the same as Moreseth, v. 1. *Beth-achzib*: east of Moreseth; *disappointed* puns on the name. 15: *Mareshah*: northeast of Lachish; *take your place*, puns on the name. *Adullam*: east of Achzib; its *cave* was once David's headquarters (2 Sam.23.13). 16: To *shave the hair* was a sign of deep mourning.

2.1-5: **Punishment for evil schemes.** Those who *plan* wickedness (v. 1) will find that the LORD is *planning* for them (v. 3). *Disaster*: the same Heb. word as *wicked*, v. 1. 5: A Hebrew acquired valid possession of a *portion* of land by *lot*: see Num.26.55; Josh.14.2.

2.6-11: **False prophecy.** 6: *Rant*: a sarcastic word for prophecy (in Amos 7.16 the Heb. word which is here rendered "rant," is there translated "go drivelling on"). 7: The false prophets cannot understand how any *words* said in the name of the LORD would not be acceptable. Vv. 8-10 show why.

- Does not good come of the LORD's words?  
 He is the upright man's best friend.'
- 8 But you are no<sup>g</sup> people for me, rising up as my enemy to my<sup>h</sup> face, to strip the cloak from him that was safe<sup>i</sup> and take away the confidence of returning warriors,
- 9 to drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes and rob the children of my glory for ever.
- 10 Up and be gone; this is no resting-place for you, you that to defile yourselves would commit any mischief, mischief however cruel.
- 11 If anyone had gone about in a spirit of falsehood and lies, saying, 'I will rant to you of wine and strong drink', his ranting would be what this people like.
- 12 I will assemble you, the whole house of Jacob;  
 I will gather together those that are left in Israel.  
 I will herd them like sheep in a fold, like a grazing flock which stampedes at the sight of a man.
- 13 So their leader breaks out before them, and they all break through the gate and escape, and their king goes before them, and the LORD leads the way.
- 3 And I said:  
 Listen, you leaders of Jacob, rulers of Israel, should you not know what is right?  
 2 You hate good and love evil, you flay men alive and tear the very flesh from their bones;  
 3 you devour the flesh of my people, strip off their skin, splinter their bones;
- you shred them like flesh into a pot, like meat into a cauldron.
- Then they will call to the LORD, and he will give them no answer; when that time comes he will hide his face from them, so wicked are their deeds.
- These are the words of the LORD concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who promise prosperity in return for a morsel of food, who proclaim a holy war against them if they put nothing into their mouths:
- Therefore night shall bring you no vision, darkness no divination; the sun shall go down on the prophets, the day itself shall be black above them.
- Seers and diviners alike shall blush for shame; they shall all put their hands over their mouths, because there is no answer from God.
- But I am full of strength,<sup>j</sup> of justice and power, to denounce his crime to Jacob and his sin to Israel.
- Listen to this, leaders of Jacob, rulers of Israel, you who make justice hateful and wrest it from its straight course, building Zion in bloodshed and Jerusalem in iniquity.
- Her rulers sell justice, her priests give direction in return for a bribe, her prophets take money for their divination, and yet men rely on the LORD. 'Is not the LORD among us?' they say; 'then no disaster can befall us.' Therefore, on your account

g But . . . no; prob. rdg.; Heb. But yesterday.  
 h my; prob. rdg.; Heb. om.  
 i the cloak . . . safe; prob. rdg.; Heb. mantle, cloak.  
 j Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the spirit of the LORD.

2.12-3.4: Against the leaders. The metaphor of a flock begins (2.12) as if a promise of protection, but becomes (3.1) a denunciation of the rulers. 4: Them: the rulers.

3.5-12: Against the prophets. Because the professional prophets suit their oracles to their employers, they will get no answer from God (v. 7). 12: The verse is quoted in Jeremiah's trial (Jer.26.18) as proof that prophets may say offensive things without being punished.

Zion shall become a ploughed field,  
 Jerusalem a heap of ruins,  
 and the temple hill rough heath.

*A remnant restored in  
 an age of peace*

4<sup>k</sup> In days to come  
 the mountain of the LORD's house  
 shall be set over all other mountains,  
 lifted high above the hills.  
 Peoples shall come streaming to it,  
 2 and many nations shall come and say,  
 'Come, let us climb up on to the  
 mountain of the LORD,  
 to the house of the God of Jacob,  
 that he may teach us his ways  
 and we may walk in his paths.'  
 For instruction issues from Zion,  
 and out of Jerusalem comes the  
 word of the LORD;  
 3 he will be judge between many  
 peoples  
 and arbiter among mighty nations  
 afar.  
 They shall beat their swords into  
 mattocks  
 and their spears into pruning-  
 knives;  
 nation shall not lift sword against  
 nation  
 nor ever again be trained for war,  
 4 and each man shall dwell under his  
 own vine,  
 under his own fig-tree,  
 undisturbed.  
 For the LORD of Hosts himself has  
 spoken.  
 5 All peoples may walk, each in the  
 name of his god,  
 but we will walk in the name of the  
 LORD our God  
 for ever and ever.

On that day, says the LORD, 6  
 I will gather those who are lost;  
 I will assemble the exiles and I will  
 strengthen the weaklings.  
 I will preserve the lost as a remnant 7  
 and turn the derelict into a mighty  
 nation.  
 The LORD shall be their king on  
 Mount Zion  
 now and for ever.  
 And you, rocky bastion, hill of 8  
 Zion's daughter,  
 the promises to you shall be  
 fulfilled;  
 and your former sovereignty shall  
 come again,  
 the dominion of the daughter of  
 Jerusalem.  
 Why are you now filled with alarm? 9  
 Have you no king?  
 Have you no counsellor left,  
 that you are seized with writhing  
 like a woman in labour?  
 Lie writhing on the ground like a 10  
 woman in childbirth,  
 O daughter of Zion;  
 for now you must leave the city  
 and camp in the open country;  
 and so you will come to Babylon.  
 There you shall be saved,  
 there the LORD will deliver you from  
 your enemies.  
 But now many nations are massed 11  
 against you;  
 they say, 'Let her suffer outrage,  
 let us gloat over 'Zion.'  
 But they do not know the LORD's 12  
 thoughts  
 nor understand his purpose;  
 for he has gathered them like sheaves  
 to the threshing-floor.  
 Start your threshing, daughter of 13  
 Zion;

*k Verses 1-3: cp. Isa. 2. 2-4.*

**4.1-5.15: A contrite people is restored in the LORD's favor.** Because these poems seem, in part, to presuppose the Babylonian Exile (beginning in 587 B.C.) they do not come from Micah's time, though 5.5-6 may. 1-3: Identical with Isa.2.2-4, the tone of the poem suggests a time after the sixth century B.C. 1: *Mountain*: the hill on which the Jerusalem Temple stands will be elevated to the highest position in the world. 4: A figure of peace and security. 5: In contradiction to v. 2, with its subordination of other peoples to the LORD, this verse is unusually tolerant of other deities.

**4.6-13: Suffering and triumph.** The poem moves back and forth between these two themes. 7: The *remnant* are the survivors of the Babylonian conquest and Exile; see 5.3 and compare Ezek.34.11-16. 9-11: Suffering must be undergone in order that Judah *shall be saved*. 12-13: Judah will now triumph over these enemies. *Horns and hooves*: The metaphor is of an animal tramping on grain to *thresh* it.

- for I will make your horns of iron,  
 your hooves will I make of bronze,  
 and you shall crush many peoples.  
 You shall devote their ill-gotten  
 gain to the LORD,  
 their wealth to the Lord of all the  
 earth.
- 5 Get you behind your walls, you  
 people of a walled city;  
 the siege is pressed home against you:  
 Israel's ruler shall be struck on the  
 cheek with a rod.
- 2 But you, Bethlehem in Ephrathah,  
 small as you are to be among  
 Judah's clans,  
 out of you shall come forth a  
 governor for Israel,  
 one whose roots are far back in the  
 past, in days gone by.
- 3 Therefore only so long as a woman  
 is in labour  
 shall he give up Israel;  
 and then those that survive of  
 his race  
 shall rejoin their brethren.
- 4 He shall appear and be their  
 shepherd  
 in the strength of the LORD,  
 in the majesty of the name of the  
 LORD his God.  
 And they shall continue, for now his  
 greatness shall reach  
 to the ends of the earth;
- 5 and he shall be a man of peace.
- When the Assyrian comes into our  
 land,  
 when he tramples our castles,  
 we will raise against him seven men  
 or eight  
 to be shepherds and princes.
- 6 They shall shepherd Assyria with  
 the sword  
 and the land of Nimrod with bare  
 blades;
- they shall deliver us from the Assyrians  
 when they come into our land,  
 when they trample our frontiers.
- All that are left of Jacob, surrounded 7  
 by many peoples,  
 shall be like dew from the LORD,  
 like copious showers on the grass,  
 which do not wait for man's  
 command  
 or linger for any man's bidding.  
 All that are left of Jacob among the 8  
 nations,  
 surrounded by many peoples,  
 shall be like a lion among the beasts  
 of the forest,  
 like a young lion loose in a flock  
 of sheep;  
 as he prowls he will trample and  
 tear them,  
 with no rescuer in sight.  
 Your hand shall be raised high over 9  
 your foes,  
 and all who hate you shall be destroyed.
- On that day, says the LORD, 10  
 I will destroy all your horses  
 among you  
 and make away with your chariots.  
 I will destroy the cities of your land 11  
 and raze your fortresses.  
 I will destroy all your sorcerers, 12  
 and there shall be no more  
 soothsayers among you.  
 I will destroy your images and all the 13  
 sacred pillars in your land;  
 you shall no longer bow in reverence  
 before things your own hands  
 made.  
 I will pull down the sacred poles in 14  
 your land,  
 and demolish your blood-  
 spattered altars.  
 In anger and fury will I take 15  
 vengeance  
 on all nations who disobey me.

5.1-6: A coming ruler. 1: *Struck*: some humiliation may have been part of the installation of a Hebrew king, as it was in Babylon. 2: *Bethlehem in Ephrathah* was David's city; his family was called Ephrathite (see 1 Sam.17.12). The poem predicts the restoration (v. 4) of David's dynasty. The verse is paraphrased in Mt.2.6. 3: *Those that survive*: the exiled Judeans. 5-6: See Introduction. Judah will beat back an Assyrian threat. *Shepherds*: as in v. 4, probably a term for kings. *Nimrod*: equivalent to Assyria; see Gen.10.8-12.

5.7-15: Future security and fidelity. 10-15: Although the context appears to suggest that these verses are addressed to Assyria, the prophets often denounced Israel for such illicit practices as those in vv. 12-14 (see, e.g. Isa.2.6-8). If Israel, rather than Assyria, is addressed, these verses are a separate poem. 13: *Sacred pillars*: phallic symbols. 14: *Sacred poles*: objects representing the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Their precise nature is not known.

Israel denounced for her people's sins

my children for my own sin?

6 Hear now what the LORD is saying:

Up, state your case to the  
mountains;  
let the hills hear your plea.

2 Hear the LORD's case, you  
mountains,  
you everlasting pillars that bear  
up the earth;  
for the LORD has a case against his  
people,  
and will argue it with Israel.

3 O my people, what have I done to  
you?

Tell me how I have wearied you;  
answer me this.

4 I brought you up from Egypt,  
I ransomed you from the land of  
slavery,  
I sent Moses and Aaron and Miriam  
to lead you.

5 Remember, my people,  
what Balak king of Moab schemed  
against you,  
and how Balaam son of Beor  
answered him;  
consider the journey<sup>l</sup> from Shittim  
to Gilgal,  
in order that you may know the  
triumph of the LORD.

6 What shall I bring when I approach  
the LORD?

How shall I stoop before God on  
high?

Am I to approach him with whole-  
offerings or yearling calves?

7 Will the LORD accept thousands of  
rams

or ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I offer my eldest son for my  
own wrongdoing,

God<sup>m</sup> has told you what is good;  
and what is it that the LORD asks  
of you?

Only to act justly, to love loyalty,  
to walk wisely before your God.

Hark, the LORD, the fear of whose  
name brings success,  
the LORD calls to the city.

10 Listen, O tribe of Judah and  
citizens in assembly,<sup>n</sup>  
can I overlook<sup>o</sup> the infamous false  
measure,<sup>p</sup>

the accursed short bushel?

Can I connive at false scales or a  
bag of light weights?

12 Your rich men are steeped in  
violence,  
your townsmen are all liars,  
and their tongues frame deceit.

But now I will inflict a signal  
punishment on you

to lay you waste for your sins:  
you shall eat but not be satisfied,  
14 your food shall lie heavy on your  
stomach;

you shall come to labour but not  
bring forth,

and even if you bear a child  
I will give it to the sword;

you shall sow but not reap,  
15 you shall press the olives but not use  
the oil,

you shall tread the grapes but not  
drink the wine.

You have kept the precepts of  
16 Omri;

what the house of Ahab did, you  
have done;

*l* consider the journey: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
*m* God: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*n* citizens in assembly: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. unintelligible.*

*o* can I overlook: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

*p* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. adds infamous treasures.*

6.1–16: God accuses a wayward people. The poem takes its form from a lawsuit.

6.1–2: Preamble. The *mountains* and *hills* are called as witnesses to the trial. The Hebrews believed that the earth rested upon *pillars* (compare Prov.8.29).

6.3–16: The LORD's past deeds. 4: *Aaron and Miriam*: brother and sister of *Moses* (see Exod.4.14; 15.20). 5: *Balaam*, the Mesopotamian diviner, was called by *Balak* to curse Israel but he blessed her instead; see Num. chs. 22–24. *Shittim*: east of the Jordan, where Israel was encamped after the Balaam episode (Num.25.1). *Gilgal*: Israel's first stopping place after crossing the Jordan under Joshua (Josh.4.19–5.9). The *journey* was the latter part of the Wilderness wandering before the conquest of Canaan. *Triumph*: the word also means "righteousness."

6: *Stoop*: bow humbly. 7: The overstatement suggests mild sarcasm or banter. *Eldest son*: Israelites at one time offered human sacrifices to Molech (see 2 Kgs.23.10; Jer.32.35). 8: The answer to the question implies the validity of ritual as a fulfillment of God's demands. *Justly*: to obey the legal side of the covenant. The injunction is to *love*, rather than merely to practice *loyalty*. 13–16: The punishment precludes any prosperity. 16: *Omri*: king of Israel

you have followed all their ways.  
So I will lay you utterly waste;  
the nations shall jeer at your  
citizens,  
and their insults you shall bear.

*Disappointment turned to hope*

7 Alas! I am now like the last  
gatherings of summer fruit,  
the last gleanings of the vintage,  
when there are no grapes left to  
eat,  
none of those early figs that I love.  
2 Loyal men have vanished from the  
earth,  
there is not one upright man.  
All lie in wait to do murder,  
each man drives his own kinsman  
like a hunter into the net.  
3 They are bent eagerly on  
wrongdoing,  
the officer who presents the  
requests,<sup>q</sup>  
the judge who gives judgement<sup>r</sup> for  
reward,  
and the nobleman who harps on his  
desires.  
4 Thus their goodness is twisted<sup>s</sup> like  
rank weeds  
and their honesty like briars.<sup>t</sup>  
As soon as thine eye sees, thy  
punishment falls;  
at that moment bewilderment seizes  
them.  
5 Trust no neighbour, put no confidence  
in your closest friend;  
seal your lips even from the wife of  
your bosom.  
6 For son maligns father,  
daughter rebels against mother,  
daughter-in-law against mother-  
in-law,  
and a man's enemies are his own  
household.  
7 But I will look for the LORD,  
I will wait for God my saviour; my  
God will hear me.

O my enemies, do not exult over 8  
me;  
I have fallen, but shall rise again;  
though I dwell in darkness, the LORD  
is my light.  
I will bear the anger of the LORD, 9  
for I have sinned against him,  
until he takes up my cause and gives  
judgement for me,  
until he brings me out into light, and  
I see his justice.  
Then may my enemies see and be 10  
abashed,  
those who said to me, 'Where is he,  
the LORD your God?'  
Then shall they be trampled like mud  
in the streets;  
I shall gloat over them;  
that will be a day for rebuilding 11  
your walls,  
a day when your frontiers will be  
extended,  
a day when men will come seeking 12  
you  
from Assyria to Egypt  
and from Egypt to the Euphrates,  
from every sea and every mountain;  
and the earth with its inhabitants 13  
shall be waste.  
This shall be the fruit of their  
deeds.

Shepherd thy people with thy crook, 14  
the flock that is thy very own,  
that dwells by itself on the heath and  
in the meadows;  
let them graze in Bashan and Gilead,  
as in days gone by.  
Show us<sup>u</sup> miracles as in the days 15  
when thou camest out of Egypt;  
let the nations see and be taken 16  
aback for all their might,  
let them keep their mouths shut,  
make their ears deaf,  
let them lick the dust like snakes, 17

q the requests: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
r who gives judgement: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
s twisted: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
t their honesty like briars: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*  
u *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. I will show him.*

(1 Kgs.16.16–28), about 876–869 B.C., father of Ahab (1 Kgs.16.29–22.40). Exactly what is meant by the precepts of Omri is not certain. Ahab fostered Baal worship in Israel; see 1 Kgs.16.32–33.

7.1–20: Penance and expectation of fulfillment. 1–6: Social chaos is vividly portrayed, from corrupt officials (v. 3) to the failure of trust even within the family (vv. 5–6). 7–20: Hope for the future comes from looking to the LORD, who will restore Israel. 14–20: The restoration of Israel. 14: The figure of the LORD as a shepherd (compare Ps.23) protecting his flock was a familiar one. Bashan and Gilead were fertile grazing areas. 15: Out of Egypt: the Exodus. 17: Lick the dust is a

	like creatures that crawl upon the ground.		but delightest in love that will not change.	
	Let them come trembling and fearful from their strongholds, let them fear thee, O LORD our God.		Once more thou wilt show us tender affection and wash out our guilt, casting all our sins into the depths of the sea.	19
18	Who is a god like thee? Thou takest away guilt, thou passest over the sin of the remnant of thy own people, thou dost not let thy anger rage for ever		Thou wilt show good faith to Jacob, unchanging love to Abraham, as thou didst swear to our fathers in days gone by.	20

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figure for complete defeat; see Gen.3.14. **18:** *Love* is the same Heb. word as "loyalty," 6.8 n.  
**20:** *Jacob* and *Abraham* are symbols for the descendants.



# NAHUM

Nahum stands at the end of an epoch. For 150 years, Assyria has oppressed the Near Eastern world, but now (612 B.C.) Nineveh, its capital, has fallen to the Babylonians (chs. 2-3). The victory over the Assyrians belongs to the LORD, who moves both men and mountains (1.6). (Nahum does not seem to know that a terrible blow will fall on Judah from the Babylonians in 597 B.C.).

As a prophet, Nahum emphasizes two matters: Nineveh has received what it deserves at the LORD's hands, and, as a result, Judah can return to normal life. As a poet, Nahum is exceedingly gifted. Though neither especially profound nor original, he is capable of superb pictorial effects, as in 2.1-10, and of vivid metaphor, as in 2.11-13. The remains of an originally effective, though now disordered, acrostic poem (one in which each couplet begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet) is to be found in 1.2-14.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 An oracle about Nineveh: the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The vengeance of the LORD<br/>on his enemies</i></p> <p>2<sup>a</sup> The LORD is a jealous god, a god of vengeance;<br/>the LORD takes vengeance and is quick to anger.<sup>b</sup></p> <p>3 <sup>c</sup>In whirlwind and storm he goes on his way,<br/>and the clouds are the dust beneath his feet.</p> <p>4 He rebukes the sea and dries it up and makes all the streams fail.<br/>Bashan and Carmel languish,<br/>and on Lebanon the young shoots wither.</p> <p>5 The mountains quake before him, the hills heave and swell,<br/>and the earth, the world and all that lives in it,<br/>are in tumult at his presence.</p> <p>6 Who can stand before his wrath?<br/>Who can resist his fury?<br/>His anger pours out<sup>d</sup> like a stream of fire,<br/>and the rocks melt<sup>e</sup> before him.</p> <p>7 The LORD is a sure refuge<br/>for those who look to him in time of distress;</p> | <p>he cares for all who seek his protection<br/>and brings them safely<sup>f</sup> through the sweeping flood;<br/>he makes a final end of all who oppose him<br/>and pursues his enemies into darkness.<br/>No adversaries dare oppose him twice;<br/>all are burnt up<sup>g</sup> like tangled briars.<br/>Why do you make plots against the LORD?<br/>He himself will make an end of you all.<br/>From you has come forth a wicked counsellor,<br/>plotting evil against the LORD.<br/>The LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries,<br/>against his enemies he directs his wrath;<br/>with skin scorched black, they are consumed<br/>like stubble that is parched and dry.</p> |
|---|--|

*a Verses 2-14 are an incomplete alphabetic acrostic poem; some parts have been re-arranged accordingly.*

*b The rest of verse 2, The LORD takes . . . wrath, transposed to verse 11.*

*c Prob. rdg.: Heb. inserts two lines The LORD is long-suffering and of great might, but the LORD does not sweep clean away.*

*d pours out: or fuses or melts.*

*e Prob. rdg.: Heb. are torn down.*

*f brings them safely: prob. rdg.: Heb. om.*

*g all are burnt up: prob. rdg.: Heb. for until.*

1.1: **Title.** *Nineveh*: see Introduction. *Nahum* means "comforted." The location of *Elkosh* is unknown.

1.2-11: **Turbulence, oppression, and revenge are rampant.** An acrostic; see Introduction. The imagery is cosmic in character (e.g., *whirlwind, storm, sea, earth, flood, darkness*); the victory over the unnamed but universal enemy is also in a cosmic setting. 4: *Bashan*: east of the Jordan. *Carmel*: a mountain range on the northern coast. *Lebanon*: mountains northwest of Canaan. All three places were notably fertile. 6: *Fire* and *rocks melting*: frequent images of the LORD's appearance (see, e.g. Mic.1.4). 9-11: *Wicked counsellor*: obscure; probably no specific individual is meant, unless it is Sennacherib, as some interpreters would have it. *Skin scorched*: a sign of defeat and adversity; see Lam.5.10.

*Israel and Judah rid of the invaders*

These are the words of the LORD:

- 13 Now I will break his yoke from  
your necks  
and snap the cords that bind you.  
14 Image and idol will I hew down in  
the house of your God.  
This is what the LORD has ordained  
for you:  
never again shall your offspring be  
scattered;  
and I will grant you burial, fickle  
though you have been.  
12 Has the punishment been so great?  
Yes, but it has passed away and is  
gone.  
I have afflicted you, but I will not  
afflict you again.  
15 See on the mountains the feet of  
the herald  
who brings good news.  
Make your pilgrimages, O Judah,  
and pay your vows.  
For wicked men shall never again  
overrun you;  
they are totally destroyed.  
2.2<sup>h</sup> The LORD will restore the pride of  
Jacob and Israel alike,  
although plundering hordes have  
stripped them bare  
and pillaged their vines.

*Nineveh's enemies triumphant*

- 1 The battering-ram is mounted  
against your bastions,  
the siege is closing in.  
Watch the road and brace yourselves;  
put forth all your strength.  
3 The shields of their warriors are  
gleaming red,  
their soldiers are all in scarlet;  
their chariots, when the line is  
formed,  
are like flickering<sup>i</sup> fire;

- squadrons of horse advance on the 4  
city in mad frenzy;<sup>j</sup>  
they jostle one another in the  
outskirts, like waving torches;  
the leaders display their prowess<sup>k</sup> 5  
as they dash to and fro like  
lightning,  
rushing<sup>l</sup> in headlong career;  
they hasten to the wall, and mantelets  
are set in position.  
The sluices of the rivers are opened, 6  
the palace topples down;  
the train of captives goes into exile, 7  
their slave-girls are carried off,  
moaning like doves and beating  
their breasts;  
and Nineveh has become like a 8  
pool of water,  
like the waters round her, which  
are ebbing away.  
'Stop! Stop!' they cry; but none  
turns back.  
Spoil is taken, spoil of silver and 9  
gold;  
there is no end to the store,  
treasure beyond the costliest that  
man can desire.  
Plundered, pillaged, stripped bare! 10  
Courage melting and knees giving  
way,  
writhing limbs, and faces drained of  
colour!  
Where now is the lions' den, 11  
the cave<sup>m</sup> where the lion cubs  
lurked,  
where the lion and<sup>n</sup> lioness and  
young cubs  
went unafraid,  
the lion which killed to satisfy its 12  
whelps  
and for its mate broke the neck of  
the kill,

<sup>h</sup> Verses 1 and 2 transposed.

<sup>i</sup> Flickering: *prob. rdg.; Heb. obscure.*

<sup>j</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds chariots.*

<sup>k</sup> display their prowess; or shout their own names.

<sup>l</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. stumbling.*

<sup>m</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. pasture.*

<sup>n</sup> and: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

1.13-15; 2.2: No more shall Israel and Judah be overrun. 13: Judah was Assyria's vassal from about 734 until into Josiah's reign (640-609 B.C.). 14: To be denied burial was the final and most ignominious punishment of the LORD's enemies; compare Ezek.39.4. 15: See on the mountains: compare Isa.52.7. Pilgrimages: the three yearly festivals of Exod.23.14-17; 34.23. 2.2: Here, as elsewhere, the restoration of Israel, exiled after being overrun in 721 B.C., is predicted.

2.1-3.19: The destruction of Nineveh. The poem is powerfully pictorial. We need not suppose that Nahum was present; an active imagination is enough. 6: Sluices: the sluice-gates of the Tigris River, the opening of which caused Nineveh to be flooded. 11-13: The lion is often a

- mauling its prey to fill its lair,  
filling its den with the mauled  
prey?
- 13 I am against you, says the LORD of  
Hosts,  
I will smoke out your pride,<sup>o</sup>  
and a sword shall devour your cubs.  
I will leave you no more prey on  
the earth,  
and the sound of your feeding<sup>p</sup>  
shall no more be heard.
- 3 Ah! blood-stained city, steeped in  
deceit,  
full of pillage, never empty of prey!
- 2 Hark to the crack of the whip,  
the rattle of wheels and stamping of  
horses,  
3 bounding chariots, chargers rearing,  
swords gleaming, flash of spears!  
The dead are past counting, their  
bodies lie in heaps,  
corpses innumerable, men stumbling  
over corpses—
- 4 all for a wanton's monstrous  
wantonness,  
fair-seeming, a mistress of sorcery,  
who beguiled nations and tribes  
by her wantonness and her  
sorceries.
- 5 I am against you, says the LORD of  
Hosts,  
I will uncover your breasts to your  
disgrace  
and expose your naked body to  
every nation,  
to every kingdom your shame.
- 6 I will cast loathsome filth over you,  
I will count you obscene and treat  
you like excrement.
- 7 Then all who see you will shrink  
from you and say,  
'Nineveh is laid waste; who will  
console her?'  
Where shall I look for anyone to  
comfort you?
- 8 Will you fare better than  
No-amon?—  
she that lay by the streams of the  
Nile,  
surrounded by water,
- whose rampart was the Nile, waters  
her wall;  
Cush and Egypt were her strength,  
and it was boundless,  
9 Put and the Libyans brought her  
help.  
She too became an exile and went  
10 into captivity,  
her infants too were dashed to the  
ground at every street-corner,  
her nobles were shared out by lot,  
all her great men were thrown into  
chains.  
You too shall hire yourself out,  
11 flaunting your sex;  
you too shall seek refuge from the  
enemy.  
Your fortifications are like figs when  
12 they ripen:  
if they are shaken, they fall into the  
mouth of the eater.  
The troops<sup>q</sup> in your midst are a  
13 pack of women,  
the gates of your country stand open  
to the enemy,  
and fire consumes their bars.  
14 Draw yourselves water for the siege,  
strengthen your fortifications;  
down into the clay, trample the  
mortar,  
repair the brickwork.  
Even then the fire will consume you,  
15 and the sword will cut you down.<sup>r</sup>  
Make yourselves many as the  
locusts,  
make yourselves many as the  
hoppers,  
16 a swarm which spreads out and  
then flies away.  
You have spies as numerous as the  
stars in the sky;  
17 your secret agents are like locusts,  
your commanders like the hoppers  
which lie dormant in the walls on a  
cold day;  
but when the sun rises, they scurry  
off,  
and no one knows where they have  
gone.

<sup>o</sup> your pride: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* her chariot.

<sup>p</sup> your feeding: *prob. rdg.*: *Heb.* your messenger.

<sup>q</sup> Or people.

<sup>r</sup> *Prob. rdg.*: *Heb. adds* and consume you like the locust (or hopper).

metaphor of a ruthless nation; the use here is ironic. Assyrian kings hunting lions are portrayed on some relief sculptures. **3.8:** *No-amon*: Thebes in Egypt, captured by the Assyrians in 662 B.C. **9:** *Cush*: Ethiopia. *Put*: west of Egypt, as was Libya. **10:** *Captivity*: compare Isa.20.4;

- 18 Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria,  
 your flock-masters lie down to rest;  
 your troops<sup>s</sup> are scattered over the hills,  
 and no one rounds them up.
- Your wounds cannot be assuaged, your injury is mortal;  
 all who have heard of your fate clap their hands in joy.  
 Are there any whom your ceaseless cruelty has not borne down?  
*s Or people.*
- 19

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*Shared out by lot: see Joel 3.3; Obad.11. 18-19: Written in dirgelike rhythm, this poem is not dirgelike in its gloating joy.*



- and dismayed are all those whose strength was their god.
- 12 Art thou not from of old, O LORD?—  
my God, the holy, the immortal.<sup>c</sup>  
O LORD, it is thou who hast appointed them to execute judgement;  
O mighty God, thou who hast destined them to chastise,
- 13 thou whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil,  
and who canst not countenance wrongdoing,  
why dost thou countenance the treachery of the wicked?  
Why keep silent when they devour men more righteous than they?
- 14 Why dost thou make men like the fish of the sea,  
like gliding creatures that obey no ruler?
- 15 They haul them up with hooks, one and all,  
they catch them in nets  
and drag them in their trawls;  
then they make merry and rejoice,  
sacrificing to their nets  
and burning offerings<sup>d</sup> to their trawls;  
for by these they live sumptuously  
and enjoy rich fare.
- 17 Are they then to unsheathe the sword every day,  
to slaughter the nations without pity?
- 2 I will stand at my post,  
I will take up my position on the watch-tower,  
I will watch to learn what he will say through me,  
and what I shall reply when I am challenged.<sup>e</sup>
- Then the LORD made answer: 2  
Write down the vision, inscribe it on tablets,  
ready for a herald to carry it with speed;<sup>f</sup>  
for there is still a vision for the appointed time. 3  
At the destined hour it will come in breathless haste,  
it will not fail.  
If it delays, wait for it;  
for when it comes will be no time to linger.
- The reckless will be unsure of himself, 4  
while the righteous man will live by being faithful;<sup>g</sup>  
as for the traitor in his overconfidence, 5  
still less will he ride out the storm,  
for all his bragging.  
Though he opens his mouth as wide as Sheol  
and is insatiable as Death,  
gathering in all the nations,  
making all peoples his own harvest,  
surely they will all turn upon him 6  
with insults and abuse, and say,  
'Woe betide you who heap up wealth that is not yours<sup>h</sup>  
and enrich yourself with goods taken in pledge!'  
Will not your creditors suddenly 7  
start up,  
will not all awake who would shake you till you are empty,  
and will you not fall a victim to them?

<sup>c</sup> the immortal: *prob. original rdg., altered in Heb. to we shall not die.*

<sup>d</sup> Or incense.

<sup>e</sup> when I am challenged: or concerning my complaint.

<sup>f</sup> ready . . . speed: or so that a man may read it easily.

<sup>g</sup> Or by his faithfulness (*cp. Romans 1. 17; Galatians 3. 11*).

<sup>h</sup> *Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds till when.*

1.12–2.1: Is God just? The first question (v. 12) carries a subtle uncertainty. Is God in charge? Has he indeed appointed the Chaldeans for judgement, to chastise? How can he countenance wrongdoing? How can he allow evil men to devour men more righteous? The images of fishing (vv. 14–16) imply man's insignificance before God and God's seeming unconcern at the inhuman tragedies in man's life. 2.1: The prophet sees himself as the outpost of human consciousness to pick up God's faintest message to man and regards himself as a responsible spokesman for man before God.

2.2–20: God's answer. 2: Habakkuk is to record the vision, so that others besides him can know it. *Speed*: older translations read: "that he who runs may read." 4: The vision contrasts what will happen to the *reckless* (the Chaldeans) and to the *righteous man*. The verse is quoted in Rom.1.17 and Gal.3.11, as well as in rabbinic literature; here, *being faithful* implies fidelity or loyalty to the deity rather than a belief-centered faith. 5: A delineation of the *traitor*, about whom a series of woes begins in v. 6b, is given. *Sheol*: the place of the dead.

2.6–8: First Woe. The exploiting creditor finds himself mercilessly exploited and despoiled.

- 8 Because you yourself have plundered  
mighty<sup>i</sup> nations,  
all the rest of the world will plunder  
you,  
because of bloodshed and  
violence done in the land,  
to the city and all its inhabitants.
- 9 Woe betide you who seek unjust  
gain for your house,  
to build your nest on a height,  
to save yourself from the grasp of  
wicked men!
- 10 Your schemes to overthrow mighty<sup>i</sup>  
nations  
will bring dishonour to your  
house  
and put your own life in jeopardy.
- 11 The very stones will cry out from  
the wall,  
and from the timbers a beam will  
answer them.
- 12 Woe betide you who have built a  
town with bloodshed  
and founded a city on fraud,  
so that nations toil for a pittance,  
and peoples weary themselves for a  
mere nothing!
- Is not all this the doing of the LORD  
of Hosts?
- 14 For the earth shall be full of the  
knowledge of the glory of the  
LORD  
as the waters fill the sea.
- 15 Woe betide you who make your<sup>j</sup>  
companions drink the  
outpouring of your wrath,  
making them drunk, that you may  
watch their naked orgies!
- 16 Drink deep draughts of shame, not  
of glory;  
you too shall drink until you stagger.
- The cup in the LORD's right hand  
is passed to you,  
and your shame will exceed<sup>k</sup> your  
glory.  
The violence done to Lebanon 17  
shall sweep over you,  
the havoc done to its beasts shall  
break your own spirit,  
because of bloodshed and violence  
done in the land,  
to the city and all its inhabitants.
- What use is an idol when its maker 18  
has shaped it?—  
it is only an image, a source of  
lies;  
or when the maker trusts what he  
has made?—  
he is only making dumb idols.
- Woe betide him who says to the 19  
wood, 'Wake up',  
to the dead stone, 'Bestir yourself'!<sup>l</sup>  
Why, it is firmly encased in gold and  
silver  
and has no breath in it.  
But the LORD is in his holy temple; 20  
let all the earth be hushed in his  
presence.
- A prayer for mercy*
- A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk. 3
- O LORD, I have heard tell of thy 2  
deeds;  
I have seen, O LORD, thy work.<sup>m</sup>  
In the midst of the years thou  
didst make thyself known,

*i* Or many.

*j* Prob. rdg.; Heb. his.

*k* will exceed; prob. rdg.; Heb. unintelligible.

*l* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds he will teach.

*m* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds in the midst of the years quicken it.

**8a:** See Isa.33.1; Zech.2.8. **8b:** The phrase, *to the city and all its inhabitants*, recurs in v. 17. **2.9–11:** **Second Woe.** The very attempts of the wicked to establish their honor and security become for them shame and destruction.

**2.12–14:** **Third Woe.** Against those who turn the conquered into slave labor. V. 14 is a liturgical formula (see also v. 20).

**2.15–17:** **Fourth Woe.** Against the conqueror's extreme cruelty. The cup of *wrath* is usually a symbol of the LORD's anger (Isa.51.17–23; Jer.25.15–29); here the conqueror is usurping the LORD's prerogative. *Lebanon:* mountains northwest of Israel.

**2.18–20:** **Fifth Woe.** Against the folly of idolatry. **20:** A liturgical formula; see v. 14. *Be hushed:* in awe; see also Zeph.1.7 and Zech.2.13.

**3.1–19:** **Habakkuk's supplication.** The text is poorly preserved (and hence the unusually large number of corrections the translators have made). The poem seems to be an old cultic prayer, celebrating the LORD's march from the region of Sinai to save his people; see also Judg.5.4;

	and in thy wrath thou didst remember mercy.	Thou goest forth to save thy people, thou comest to save thy anointed; thou dost shatter the wicked man's house from the roof down, <sup>v</sup> uncovering its foundations to the bare rock. <sup>w</sup>	13
3	God comes from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran; his radiance overspreads the skies, and his splendour fills the earth.	Thou piercest their <sup>x</sup> chiefs with thy <sup>y</sup> shafts, and their leaders are torn from them by the whirlwind, as they open <sup>z</sup> their jaws to devour their wretched victims in secret.	14
4	He rises like the dawn, with twin rays starting forth at his side; the skies are <sup>n</sup> the hiding-place of his majesty, and the everlasting <sup>o</sup> ways are for <sup>p</sup> his swift flight. <sup>q</sup>	When thou dost tread the sea with thy horses the mighty waters boil. I hear, and my belly quakes; my lips quiver at the sound; trembling comes over my bones, and my feet totter in their tracks; I sigh for the day of distress to dawn over my assailants.	15
5	Pestilence stalks before him, and plague comes forth behind.	Although the fig-tree does not burgeon, the vines bear no fruit, the olive-crop fails, the orchards yield no food, the fold is bereft of its flock and there are no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD	16
6	He stands still and shakes the earth, he looks and makes the nations tremble; the eternal mountains are riven, the everlasting <sup>r</sup> hills subside,	and rejoice in the God of my deliverance. The LORD God is my strength, who makes my feet nimble as a hind's and sets me to range the heights.	17
7	the tents of Cushan are snatched away, <sup>s</sup> the tent-curtains of Midian flutter.		
8	Art thou angry with the streams? Is thy wrath against the sea, O LORD? When thou dost mount thy horses, thy riding is to victory.		
9	Thou dost draw thy bow from its case <sup>t</sup> and charge thy quiver with shafts. Thou cleavest the earth with rivers;		
10-11	the mountains see thee and writhe with fear. The torrent of water rushes by, and the deep sea thunders aloud. The sun forgets to turn in his course, <sup>u</sup> and the moon stands still at her zenith, at the gleam of thy speeding arrows and the glance of thy flashing spear.		
12	With threats thou dost bstride the earth and trample down the nations in anger.		

*n* the skies are: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* there is.  
*o* Or ancient.  
*p* and . . . are for: *transposed from end of verse 6.*  
*q* his swift flight: *transposed, with slight change, from verse 7.*  
*r* Or ancient.  
*s* are snatched away: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* under wickedness.  
*t* Thou . . . case: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Thy bow was quite bared.  
*u* The sun . . . course: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* The sun raised the height of his hands.  
*v* the wicked . . . down: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* a head from the house of the wicked.  
*w* bare rock: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* neck.  
*x* their: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* om.    *y* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* his.  
*z* from them . . . open: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.

Deut.33.2; and Ps.68.7-8. 3: *Teman*: equivalent to Edom. *Paran*: see Num.10.11-12. 4: *The everlasting ways* are possibly the orbits of the planets. 7: *Cushan* . . . *Midian*: countries bordering on Edom. They lay along the route of the LORD's march (see 3.1-19 n.). 8: See Ps.89.10-11 and Isa.51.9. 9: See Gen.49.24. 10: *Deep sea*: see Exod.15.5-8. 13: *Thy anointed*: it is uncertain whether this alludes to the king or the people. 15: See Ps.77.17-19; Isa.43.16-17. 18-19: These verses may not be part of the original poem. They express confidence in God even in the face of adversity, perhaps referring to 2.4.



# ZEPHANIAH

Two important events occurred during the reign of Josiah, when Zephaniah lived (1.1): Josiah's religious reform in 621 B.C. (see 2 Kgs.22.1-23.30); and Assyria's complete disappearance as a power (see Introduction to Nahum). Zephaniah seems to know of neither of these events (unless 2.13-15 reflects the second); he can, therefore, be dated shortly before 621 B.C.

Corruption is the order of the day, and the LORD must "sweep the earth clean" of it (1.2). The "day of the LORD" will bring an end to all this wickedness, both in Judah (1.4-18) and in other nations (2.1-15). Guilt falls on the ruling elements, who have deliberately pursued illicit religious practices (1.4-6; 3.4-5) and oppressed the common people (3.1-3). In destroying those responsible for Israel's misery, the LORD will entrust the land to the poor and humble, who better deserve it (3.11-20).

1	<p><b>T</b>HIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the time of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Doom on Judah and her neighbours</i></p> <p>2 I will sweep the earth clean of all that is on it, says the LORD.</p> <p>3 I will sweep away both man and beast, I will sweep the birds from the air and the fish from the sea, and I will bring the wicked to their knees<sup>a</sup> and wipe out mankind from the earth. This is the very word of the LORD.</p> <p>4 I will stretch my hand over Judah and all who live in Jerusalem; I will wipe out from this place the last remnant of Baal and the very name of the heathen</p> <p>5 priests, those who bow down upon the house-tops to worship the host of heaven and who swear by Milcom,</p>	<p>those who have turned their backs on the LORD, who have not sought the LORD or consulted him.</p> <p>Silence before the Lord God! for the day of the LORD is near. The LORD has prepared a sacrifice and has hallowed his guests. On the day of the LORD's sacrifice I will punish the royal house and its chief officers and all who ape outlandish fashions. On that day I will punish all who dance on the temple terrace, who fill their master's<sup>b</sup> house with crimes of violence and fraud.</p> <p>On that day, says the LORD, an outcry shall be heard from the Fish Gate, wailing from the second quarter of the city, a loud crash from the hills; and<sup>c</sup> those who live in the Lower Town shall wail. For it is all over with the merchants, and all the dealers in silver are wiped out.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p>
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<sup>a</sup> I will bring . . . knees: *prob. rdg.; Heb.* the ruins with the wicked.  
<sup>b</sup> Or their Lord's.      <sup>c</sup> and: *prob. rdg.; Heb. om.*

1.1: Title. *Zephaniah* means "the LORD protects." It is not sure that *Hezekiah* means the king of Judah of that name. *Josiah* reigned from about 640-609 B.C.

1.2-6: The great doom that is to come. A terrifyingly vivid portrayal of the end of Judah and of all mankind. 2-3: Contrast with the creation in Gen. ch. 1. 4-6: *Judah* and *Jerusalem* will be destroyed because of their idolatrous worship. *Baal*: the Canaanite fertility god. *Host of heaven*: stars personified as gods. *Milcom*: an Ammonite god, probably the same as *Molech* (or *Moloch*) to whom human sacrifice was made (see Lev.20.2-5; Jer.32.35).

1.7-18: The day of the LORD is the future day when the LORD will execute judgment over the earth; see Joel 1.14-15. Amos 5.18-20 implies that it was once thought to be a joyous day, but most of the prophets picture it as a time of terror. 7: *Sacrifice*: the LORD hallowed his guests, the Israelites, purifying them with punishment instead of ritual purifications; compare 1 Chr.15.14; Job 1.5; Isa.66.17. 10-11: Various parts of Jerusalem are named; the *Fish Gate* (Neh.3.3) was the northern gate in the *second quarter*, but the location of the *Lower Town* is

- 12 At that time  
I will search Jerusalem with a lantern  
and punish all who sit in stupor over the dregs of their wine, who say to themselves, 'The LORD will do nothing, good or bad.'
- 13 Their wealth shall be plundered, their houses laid waste; they shall build houses but not live in them, they shall plant vineyards but not drink the wine from them.
- 14 The great day of the LORD is near, it comes with speed; no runner so fast as that day, no raiding band so swift.<sup>d</sup>
- 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of anguish and affliction, a day of destruction and devastation, a day of murk and gloom, a day of cloud and dense fog, a day of trumpet and battle-cry over fortified cities and lofty battlements.
- 16 I will bring dire distress upon men; they shall walk like blind men for their sin against the LORD. Their blood shall be spilt like dust and their bowels like dung;
- 17 neither their silver nor their gold shall avail to save them. On the day of the LORD's wrath, by the fire of his jealousy the whole land shall be consumed; for he will make an end, a swift end, of all who live in the land.
- 2 Gather together, you unruly nation, gather together,  
2 before you are sent far away and vanish<sup>e</sup> like chaff, before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you.
- Seek the LORD,  
all in the land who live humbly by his laws,  
seek righteousness, seek a humble heart;  
it may be that you will find shelter in the day of the LORD's anger. For Gaza shall be deserted,  
Ashkelon left desolate,  
the people of Ashdod shall be driven out<sup>f</sup> at noonday and Ekron uprooted.
- Listen, you who live by the coast, you Kerethite settlers. The word of the LORD is spoken against you; I will subdue you,<sup>g</sup> land of the Philistines, I will lay you waste and leave you without inhabitants, and you, Kereth, shall be all shepherds' huts<sup>h</sup> and sheepfolds; and the coastland shall belong to the survivors of Judah. They shall pasture their flocks by the sea<sup>i</sup> and lie down at evening in the houses of Ashkelon, for the LORD their God will turn to them and restore their fortunes.
- I have heard the insults of Moab, the taunts of Ammon, how they have insulted my people and encroached on their frontiers. Therefore, by my life, says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall be like Sodom, Ammon like Gomorrah,

*d* no runner . . . swift: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* hark, the day of the LORD is bitter, there the warrior cries aloud.  
*e* you are . . . vanish: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* obscure.  
*f* the people . . . out: or Ashdod shall be made an example.  
*g* I . . . you: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* Canaan.  
*h* you . . . huts: *Heb.* has these words in a different order.  
*i* by the sea: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* upon them.

uncertain. 15-18: These verses are the basis of the medieval Latin hymn *Dies irae, dies illa* ("a day of wrath will that day be"), formerly (i.e. before Vatican Council II) part of the Catholic Requiem Mass.

2.1-3.10: Oracles against nations and Jerusalem. 1-3: Zephaniah's predictions against the powerful (1.8,11,13; 3.3-4,6) are balanced by comfort for the poor.

2.4-7: Against the Philistines. 4: Four Philistine cities are named. 5: *Kereth* probably means Crete, from which the Philistines came, settling on the coastlands.

2.8-12: Against Moab, Ammon, and the Cushites. See Amos 1.13-15 n., 2.1-3 n. 9: *Like*

- a pile of weeds, a rotting heap of  
saltwort,  
waste land for evermore.  
The survivors of my people shall  
plunder them,  
the remnant of my nation shall  
possess their land.
- 10 This will be retribution for their  
pride, because they have insulted the  
people of the LORD of Hosts and  
11 encroached upon their rights. The  
LORD will appear against them with  
all his terrors; for he will reduce to  
beggary all the gods of the earth, and  
all the coasts and islands of the nations  
will worship him, every man in his own  
home.
- 12 You Cushites also shall be killed  
by the sword of the LORD.<sup>j</sup>  
13 So let him stretch out his hand over  
the north  
and destroy Assyria,  
make Nineveh desolate,  
arid as the wilderness.  
14 Flocks shall couch there,  
and all the beasts of the wild.  
Horned owl and ruffed bustard shall  
roost on her capitals;  
the tawny owl shall hoot in the  
window,  
and the bustard stand in the  
porch.<sup>k</sup>  
15 This is the city that exulted in fancied  
security,  
saying to herself, 'I am, and I alone.'  
And what is she now? A waste, a  
haunt for wild beasts,  
at which every passer-by shall hiss  
and shake his fist.
- 3 Shame on the tyrant city, filthy and  
foul!  
2 No warning voice did she heed, she  
took no rebuke to heart,  
she did not trust in the LORD or  
come near to her God.
- Her officers were lions roaring in her 3  
midst,  
her rulers wolves of the plain<sup>l</sup>  
that did not wait<sup>m</sup> till morning,  
her prophets were reckless, no true 4  
prophets.  
Her priests profaned the sanctuary  
and did violence to the law.  
But the LORD in her midst is just; 5  
he does no wrong;  
morning by morning he gives  
judgement,  
without fail at daybreak.<sup>n</sup>
- I have wiped out the proud; 6  
their battlements are laid in ruin.  
I have made their streets a desert  
where no one passes.  
Their cities are laid waste, deserted,  
unpeopled.  
In the hope that she would remember 7  
all my instructions,  
I said, 'Do but fear me  
and take my rebuke to heart';  
but they were up betimes and went  
about their evil deeds.
- Wait for me, therefore, says the 8  
LORD,  
wait for the day when I stand up  
to accuse you;  
for mine it is to gather nations  
and assemble kingdoms,  
to pour out on them my indignation,  
all the heat of my anger;  
the whole earth shall be consumed  
by the fire of my jealousy.  
I will give all peoples once again 9  
pure lips,  
that they may invoke the LORD by  
name  
and serve him with one consent.  
From beyond the rivers of Cush 10  
my suppliants of the Dispersion shall  
bring me tribute.

*j* the sword of the LORD; *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* my sword.  
*k* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds an unintelligible phrase.  
*l* Or evening. *m* Or carry off.  
*n* *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* adds but the wrongdoer knows no shame.

*Sodom . . . Gomorrah:* i.e. destroyed; see Gen.19.24–28; Deut.29.23; Isa.1.9–10; Lam.4.6; Amos 4.11. 10: See v. 8; Isa.16.6; Jer.48.29. 11: See Isa.45.23; Joel 2.11. 12: *Cushites:* Ethiopians. 2.13–15: *Against Assyria.* See Introduction. The oracle begins in looking forward to Nineveh's destruction, but ends as though this has already happened.

3.1–7: *Against Jerusalem.* In spite of warnings, the powerful (*officers, priests, prophets*) have gone deeper into wickedness, both civil and religious.

3.8–10: *The call to wait.* The judgment on all the nations will end with their redemption (*pure lips*) and worshiping the LORD. *Dispersion:* probably foreign nations, not scattered Judeans.

*A remnant preserved*

- 11 On that day, Jerusalem,  
you shall not be put to shame for  
all your deeds  
by which you have rebelled  
against me;  
for then I will rid you  
of your proud and arrogant  
citizens,  
and never again shall you flaunt  
your pride  
on my holy hill.
- 12 But I will leave in you a people  
afflicted and poor.
- 13 The survivors in Israel shall find  
refuge in the name of the LORD;  
they shall no longer do wrong or  
speak lies,  
no words of deceit shall pass their  
lips;  
for they shall feed and lie down  
with no one to terrify them.
- 14 Zion, cry out for joy;  
raise the shout of triumph, Israel;  
be glad, rejoice with all your  
heart,  
daughter of Jerusalem.
- 15 The LORD has rid you of your  
adversaries,  
he has swept away your foes;  
the LORD is among you as king, O  
Israel;  
never again shall you fear disaster.
- 16 On that day this shall be the message

- to Jerusalem:  
Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands  
fall slack.  
The LORD your God is in your  
midst,  
like a warrior, to keep you safe;  
he will rejoice over you and be glad;  
he will show you his love once  
more;  
he will exult over you with a shout  
of joy  
as in days long ago.<sup>o</sup>
- 17
- I will take your cries of woe<sup>p</sup> away  
from you;  
and you shall no longer endure  
reproach for her.  
When that time comes, see,  
I will deal with all your oppressors.  
I will rescue the lost and gather the  
dispersed;  
I will win my people praise and  
renown  
in all the world where once they  
were despised.
- 18
- When the time comes for me to  
gather you,<sup>q</sup>  
I will bring you home.  
I will win you renown and praise  
among all the peoples of the earth,  
when I bring back your prosperity;  
and you shall see it.  
It is the LORD who speaks.
- 19
- 20

<sup>o</sup> as . . . ago: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>p</sup> cries of woe: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. obscure.*

<sup>q</sup> When . . . you: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. and in the time, my gathering you.*

**3.11–20: The humble shall inherit. 11–13:** The fault of Jerusalem has lain in the *proud and arrogant*. With their removal, the city will be left for the *poor*. **14–15:** *Raise the shout . . . rejoice:* a reflection of ceremonies celebrating the *kingship* of the LORD. **16–20:** The LORD's care will produce security for Judah. The future will be as bright as the present is black.

# HAGGAI

When the Exile in Babylon was lifted about 539 B.C., civil and religious life in Judah was at a low ebb. The Temple (destroyed in 587) was in ruins, and the economy scarcely better. While the Persian rule proved more lenient than that of Babylonia, a simple return to the situation before the Exile was not possible.

By 520, the standard of living had improved, but there had been no progress in religious reestablishment. Along with Zechariah (see Introduction to Zechariah) Haggai addressed himself to this latter problem with such zeal that the rebuilding of the Temple began within a month after his first oracle. Haggai saw a correlation between prosperity and piety, in that he tended to ascribe adverse conditions to the failure to build the Temple and to predict favorable ones as a result of its construction. Moreover, he considered the restoration of David's dynasty necessary to Judah's full life, and hence the promise of kingship to Zerubbabel (2.20-23). The rebuilding of the Temple was completed about 516, four years after Haggai revealed that it would be so.

## *Zerubbabel restorer of the temple*

**I**N THE SECOND YEAR OF KING DARIUS, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: This nation says to itself that it is not yet time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt. Then this word came through Haggai the prophet: Is it a time for you to live in your own well-roofed houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now these are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Consider your way of life. You have sown much but reaped little; you eat but never as much as you wish, you drink but never more than you need, you are clothed but never warm, and the labourer puts his wages into a purse with a hole in it. These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Consider your way of life. Go up into the hills, fetch timber, and build a house acceptable to me, where I can show my glory,<sup>a</sup> says the LORD. You look for much and get little. At the moment when you would bring home the harvest, I blast it. Why? says the LORD of Hosts. Because my house

lies in ruins, while each of you has a house that he can run to. It is your fault that the heavens withhold their dew and the earth its produce. So I have proclaimed a drought against land and mountain, against corn, new wine, and oil, and all that the ground yields, against man and cattle and all the products of man's labour.

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the rest of the people listened to what the LORD their God had said and what the prophet Haggai said when the LORD their God sent him, and they were filled with fear because of the LORD. So Haggai the LORD's messenger, as the LORD had commissioned him, said to the people: I am with you, says the LORD. Then the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and of the rest of the people; they came and began work on the house of the LORD of Hosts their God on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

In the second year of King Darius, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, these words came from the LORD through the prophet Haggai:

<sup>a</sup> show my glory: or be honoured.

**1.1-15:** The first oracle, on the prompt rebuilding of the Temple, was designed to shame the people into beginning the work despite obstacles. The date was late August, 520 B.C. Darius began his reign as Persian emperor in 522. The Persians allowed Zerubbabel and Joshua to share in the local rule, dividing the civil and priestly offices between them (see Ezra 5.1-2; Zech. chs. 3-4). **2:** According to Ezra chs. 3-4, though the returned exiles began to rebuild the Temple on first coming to Jerusalem, they were compelled to stop. **9:** The nation's poor economic condition is attributed to the fact that the people have houses, but the LORD has not. **15:** The date is mid-September.

**2.1-9:** The second oracle urges the builders on in the face of discouragement. The date is

2 Say to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the rest of the people: Is there anyone still among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it appear to you now? Does it not seem to you as if it were not there? But now, Zerubbabel, take heart, says the LORD; take heart, Joshua son of Jehozadak, high priest. Take heart, all you people, says the LORD. Begin the work, for I am with you, says the LORD of Hosts, and my spirit is present among you. Have no fear. For these are the words of the LORD of Hosts: One thing more: I will shake heaven and earth, sea and land, I will shake all nations; the treasure of all nations shall come hither, and I will fill this house with glory;<sup>b</sup> so says the LORD of Hosts. Mine is the silver and mine the gold, says the LORD of Hosts, and the glory<sup>b</sup> of this latter house shall surpass the glory<sup>b</sup> of the former, says the LORD of Hosts. In this place will I grant prosperity and peace. This is the very word of the LORD of Hosts.

10 In the second year of Darius, on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, this word came from the LORD to the prophet Haggai: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Ask the priests to give their ruling: If a man is carrying consecrated flesh in a fold of his robe, and he lets the fold touch bread or broth or wine or oil or any other kind of food, will that also become consecrated? And the priests answered, 'No.' Haggai went on, But if a person defiled by contact with a corpse touches any one of these things, will

that also become defiled? 'It will', answered the priests. Haggai replied, 14 So it is with this people and nation and all that they do, says the LORD; whatever offering they make here is defiled in my sight. And now look back 15 over recent times down to this day: before one stone was laid on another in the LORD's temple, what was your 16 plight? If a man came to a heap of corn expecting twenty measures, he found but ten; if he came to a wine-vat to draw fifty measures, he found but twenty. I blasted you and all your 17 harvest with black blight and red and with hail, and yet you had no mind to return to me, says the LORD. Consider, 18 from this day onwards, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the day when the foundations of the temple of the LORD are laid, consider: will the seed still be diminished<sup>c</sup> in the 19 barn? Will the vine and the fig, the pomegranate and the olive, still bear no fruit? Not so, from this day I will bless you.

On that day, the twenty-fourth day 20 of the month, the word of the LORD came to Haggai a second time: Tell 21 Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, I will shake heaven and earth; I will over- 22 throw the thrones of kings, break the power of heathen realms, overturn chariots and their riders; horses and riders shall fall by the sword of their comrades. On that day, says the LORD 23 of Hosts, I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant, and will wear you as a signet-ring; for you it is that I have chosen. This is the very word of the LORD of Hosts.

*b* Or wealth. *c* diminished: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*

early October, 520. 2: *Former glory*: since Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., some of the returnees might remember it. 6: *Shake*: the verb often denotes an earthquake. Here it is used figuratively.

2.10-19: The third oracle comes on the day the foundations are laid (v. 18), in early December, 520. Its first part (vv. 10-14) has to do with ritual cleanliness. That which is *consecrated* (v. 12) does not affect what it touches, but that which is *defiled*, as a *corpse* is (v. 13), causes whatever it touches to become defiled. The second part (vv. 15-19) promises a change in economic fortune because of the work on the Temple.

2.20-23: The fourth oracle, dated also in December, 520, is addressed to Zerubbabel, grandson of the exiled king Jehoiachin (the Jeconiah of 1 Chr. 3.17-19). By *shaking heaven and earth* God will crumple all human authority and effort, setting in their place his own choice, Judah. 23: *Signet-ring*: a visible sign and seal which becomes the instrument of conveying authority and power. In Jer. 22.24, a king is called a signet-ring. The symbol shows that Haggai considered Zerubbabel to be *chosen* by the LORD as the future king.

# ZECHARIAH

Zechariah is really two books, not one. In the first, chs. 1–8, the setting is Jerusalem, beginning life anew after the Exile in Babylon and in the process of reestablishing herself as a living and worshipping city. The second book, chs. 9–14, takes place much later; the book is in prose and poetry, some perhaps stemming from a time after the Maccabean War, which ended about 160 B.C.

Zechariah, in chs. 1–8, is as anxious as his contemporary, Haggai (see Introduction to Haggai), to revive the social and religious order of Jerusalem. He states his message partly in oracles (especially in chs. 7–8), but mostly in visions of the LORD's purification of Jerusalem (chs. 1–6). These highly symbolic visions foreshadow the style that apocalyptic books, such as Daniel and Revelation, would later develop.

Chapters 9–14, often called Deutero-Zechariah, are so diverse as to defy any unified description. Ch. 11.4–16 recalls the symbolic acts of earlier prophets (compare Jer. 13.1–11; Ezek. 4.1–5.4). The battle scene in 14.1–5 has an apocalyptic cast. Other oracles of threat and promise are quite similar to those of earlier prophets. But much of chs. 9–14 is extremely enigmatic.

## *Zechariah's commission*

1 **I**N THE EIGHTH MONTH OF THE SECOND year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo:  
2 The LORD was very angry with your  
3 forefathers. Say to the people, These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Come back to me, and I will come back to you, says the LORD of Hosts.  
4 Do not be like your forefathers. They heard the prophets of old proclaim, 'These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Turn back from your evil ways and your evil deeds.' But they did not listen or pay heed to me, says the  
5 LORD. And where are your forefathers now? And the prophets, do they live  
6 for ever? But the warnings and the decrees with which I charged my servants the prophets—did not these overtake your forefathers? Did they not then repent and say, 'The LORD of Hosts has treated us as he purposed; as our lives and as our deeds deserved, so has he treated us?'

## *Eight visions with their interpretations*

7 **ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE**

eleventh month, the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo.

Last night I had a vision. I saw a  
8 man on a bay horse standing among the myrtles in a hollow; and behind him were other horses, black, dappled, and white. 'What are these, sir?' I  
9 asked, and the angel who talked with me answered, 'I will show you what they are.' Then the man standing  
10 among the myrtles said, 'They are those whom the LORD has sent to range through the world.' They reported to  
11 the angel of the LORD as he stood among the myrtles: 'We have ranged through the world; the whole world is still and at peace.' Thereupon the  
12 angel of the LORD said, 'How long, O LORD of Hosts, wilt thou withhold thy compassion from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, upon whom thou hast vented thy wrath these seventy years?' Then the LORD spoke kind and  
13 comforting words to the angel who talked with me, and the angel said to  
14 me, Proclaim, These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. I am full of  
15 anger against the nations that enjoy their ease, because, while my anger was but mild, they heaped evil on evil.

1.1–6: **Zechariah's commission.** *Darius*: see Hag. 1.1–15 n. The date is October–November, 520 B.C. *Zechariah* means "the LORD remembers."

1.7–6.15: **Eight visions with their interpretations.** 7: The date is early February, 519 B.C.

1.8–17: **Vision of the horsemen.** The vision (vv. 8–12) is of horsemen on *horses* of four different colors, who *range through the world* as a patrol. To the *angel's* urging that it is time that the *wrath* be lifted from Jerusalem, the answer is a *comforting* oracle (vv. 14–17). 14: *Jealous*: exclusively concerned, or zealous. 15: The LORD's *anger* against Jerusalem was *mild*; the

16 Therefore these are the words of the LORD: I have come back to Jerusalem with compassion, and my house shall be rebuilt in her, says the LORD of Hosts, and the measuring-line shall be stretched over Jerusalem. Proclaim once more, These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: My cities shall again overflow with good things; once again the LORD will comfort Zion, once again he will make Jerusalem the city of his choice.

18 I lifted my eyes and there I saw four horns. I asked the angel who talked with me what they were, and he answered, 'These are the horns which scattered Judah<sup>a</sup> and Jerusalem.' Then the LORD showed me four smiths. I asked what they were coming to do, and he said, 'Those horns scattered Judah and Jerusalem so completely that no man could lift his head. But these smiths have come to reunite them and to throw down the horns of the nations which had raised them against the land of Judah and scattered its people'.

2 I lifted my eyes and there I saw a man carrying a measuring-line. I asked him where he was going, and he said, 'To measure Jerusalem and see what should be its breadth and length.' Then, as the angel who talked with me was going away, another angel came out to meet him and said to him, Run to the young man there and tell him that Jerusalem shall be a city without walls, so numerous shall be the men and cattle within it. I will be a wall of fire round her, says the LORD, and a glory in the midst of her.

6 Away, away; flee from the land of

the north, says the LORD, for I will make you spread your wings like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD. Away, escape, ye people of Zion who live in Babylon.

For these are the words of the LORD of Hosts, spoken when he sent me on a glorious mission<sup>b</sup> to the nations who have plundered you, for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye: I raise<sup>c</sup> my hand against them; they shall be plunder for their own slaves. So you shall know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me. Shout aloud and rejoice, daughter of Zion; I am coming, I will make my dwelling among you, says the LORD. Many nations shall come over to the LORD on that day and become his people, and he will make his dwelling with you. Then you shall know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. The LORD will once again claim Judah as his own possession in the holy land, and make Jerusalem the city of his choice.

Silence, all mankind, in the presence of the LORD! For he has bestirred himself out of his holy dwelling-place.

The angel who talked with me came back and roused me as a man is roused from sleep. He asked me what I saw, and I answered, 'A lamp-stand all of gold with a bowl on it; it holds seven lamps, and there are seven pipes for the lamps on top of it, with two olive-trees standing by it, one on the right of the bowl and another on the left.' I asked him, 'What are these two olive-trees, the one on the right and

<sup>a</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds Israel.

<sup>b</sup> on a glorious mission: prob. rdg.; Heb. after glory.

<sup>c</sup> Or wave.

<sup>d</sup> 3. 1-10 transposed to follow 4. 14.

<sup>e</sup> 4. 4-10 transposed to follow 3. 10.

nations, his agents, went too far. 16: *My house*: the Temple. *Measuring-line*: used in building, and hence a symbol of reconstruction.

1.18-21: *Vision of the horns and smiths*. *Horns* signify innate strength, especially as it is manifested in external activity, either good or evil; see Ps.75.10. *Four* is obscure, but seems to mean Babylonia. The symbolism of the *smiths*, though their action is clear, is uncertain; they may suggest counterdestruction.

2.1-5: *Vision of the man with the measuring-line*. The *measuring-line* implies limits on the size of the city; the *angel*, however, says that Jerusalem will have no limits. It will be protected not by walls but by a *wall of fire*, the indwelling *glory* of the LORD.

2.6-13: *Oracle of promise to Jerusalem*. 6-7: *Land of the north, Babylon*: see Joel 2.20 n. 10: *Zion* was the hill on which the Temple stood; *daughter* is a figure of speech for Jerusalem.

4.1-3,11-14: *Vision of the lamp-stand and olive-trees*. The *lamp-stand* has seven branches, a bowl-shaped *lamp* on each, a *bowl* as an oil reservoir over the whole, and *pipes* conducting oil from the bowl to each lamp. *Seven* symbolizes completeness. The *olive-trees* probably stand for Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the future king (see 4.6-10; 6.9-15 n.). By implication, the lamp-stand signifies the LORD's presence.



the other on the left of the lamp-stand?"  
 12 I asked also another question, 'What are the two sprays of olive beside the golden pipes which discharge the golden oil from their bowls?' He said, 'Do you not know what these mean?'  
 13 'No, sir', I answered. 'These two', he said, 'are the two consecrated with oil who attend the Lord of all the earth.'  
 3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, with the Adversary<sup>f</sup> standing at  
 2 his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to the Adversary, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan, the LORD rebuke you who are venting your spite on Jerusalem.<sup>g</sup> Is not this man a brand  
 3 snatched from the fire?' Now Joshua was wearing filthy clothes as he stood  
 4 before the angel; and the angel turned and said to those in attendance on him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' Then he turned to him and said, 'See how I have taken away your guilt from you; I will clothe you in fine  
 5 vestments'; and he added, 'Let a clean turban be put on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him in clean garments, while the angel of the LORD stood by.  
 6 Then the angel of the LORD gave Joshua this solemn charge: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: If you will conform to my ways and carry out your duties, you shall administer my house and be in control of my courts, and I grant you the right to come and go amongst these in attendance here.  
 8 Listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your colleagues seated here before you, all you who are an omen of things to come: I will now bring my servant, the  
 9-10 Branch. In one day I will wipe away the guilt of the land. On that day, says the LORD of Hosts, you shall all of you

invite one another to come and sit each under his vine and his fig-tree.

Here is the stone that I set before Joshua, a stone in which are seven eyes. I will reveal its meaning to you, says the LORD of Hosts. Then I asked  
 4 4<sup>h</sup> the angel of the LORD who talked with me, 'Sir, what are these?' And he answered, 'Do you not know what these mean?' 'No, sir', I answered. 'These seven', he said, 'are the eyes of the LORD ranging over the whole earth.'<sup>i</sup>

Then he turned and said to me, This  
 6 is the word of the LORD concerning Zerubbabel: Neither by force of arms nor by brute strength, but by my spirit! says the LORD of Hosts. How  
 7 does a mountain, the greatest mountain, compare with Zerubbabel? It is no higher than a plain. He shall bring out the stone called Possession<sup>j</sup> while men acclaim its beauty. This word  
 8 came to me from the LORD: Zerubbabel  
 9 with his own hands laid the foundation of this house and with his own hands he shall finish it. So shall you know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. Who has despised the day of small  
 10 things? He shall rejoice when he sees Zerubbabel holding the stone called Separation.<sup>j</sup>

I looked up again and saw a flying  
 5 scroll. He asked me what I saw, and  
 2 I answered, 'A flying scroll, twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide.' This,  
 3 he told me, is the curse which goes out over the whole land; for by the writing on one side every thief shall be swept clean away, and by the writing on the other every perjurer shall be swept clean away. I have sent it out, the  
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<sup>f</sup> Heb. the Satan.

<sup>g</sup> the LORD . . . Jerusalem: or the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.

<sup>h</sup> See note on 4. 11 above.

<sup>i</sup> These seven . . . earth: transposed from verse 10.

<sup>j</sup> Cp. Lev. 20. 24-26.

3.1-10; 4.4-5: **Vision of Joshua's purification.** In the trial, the *Adversary* (v. 1; see Tfn. *f*) is the title of an angelic figure who, as in Job chs. 1-2, accuses wrongdoers before the heavenly court. Joshua is purified of *guilt*, symbolized by his *filthy clothes*. 9-10: *The Branch*: a title for the coming king, derived from Jer. 23.5; 33.15. See also 6.9-15 n. The accession of the king and the purification of the priesthood prepare Jerusalem for restoration. To *invite one's neighbor to sit under his vine and his fig-tree* (v. 10) is a sign of unusual prosperity (compare Mic. 4.4). *Seven eyes*: perhaps facets.

4.6-10: **Oracle about Zerubbabel.** *Zerubbabel* will build the Temple by the aid of the *spirit* of the LORD. The two stones, *Possession* and *Separation*, are taken to symbolize Judah's repossessing its land and being distinct from other peoples.

5.1-4: **Vision of the flying scroll.** The *scroll* contains *curses* designed to remove all crime from the land. 2: *Cubit*: about seventeen inches.

LORD of Hosts has said, and it shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the man who has perjured himself in my name; it shall stay inside that house and demolish it, timbers and stones and all.

5 The angel who talked with me came out and said to me, 'Raise your eyes and look at this thing that comes forth.'  
 6 I asked what it was, and he said, 'It is a great barrel coming forth,' and he added, 'so great is their guilt in all the  
 7 land.' Then a round slab of lead was lifted, and a woman was sitting there  
 8 inside the barrel. He said, 'This is Wickedness', and he thrust her down into the barrel and rammed the leaden  
 9 weight upon its mouth. I looked up again and saw two women coming forth with the wind in their wings (for they had wings like a stork's), and they carried the barrel between earth and  
 10 sky. I asked the angel who talked with me where they were taking the barrel,  
 11 and he answered, 'To build a house for it<sup>k</sup> in the land of Shinar; when the house is ready, it<sup>l</sup> shall be set on the place prepared for it<sup>k</sup> there.'  
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go and range over the whole earth; so he said, 'Go and range over the earth', and the chariots did so. Then he called me to look and said, 'Those going to the land of the north have given my spirit rest in the land of the north.'

The word of the LORD came to me: Take silver and gold from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobiah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah, who have come back from Babylon. Take it and make a crown; put the crown on the head of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and say to him, These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Here is a man named the Branch; he will shoot up from the ground where he is and will build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, he who will assume royal dignity, will be seated on his throne and govern, with a priest at his right side, and concord shall prevail between them. The crown shall be in the charge of Heldai, Tobiah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

Men from far away shall come and work on the building of the temple of the LORD; so shall you know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. If only you will obey the LORD your God!

### *Joy and gladness in the coming age*

THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO Zechariah in the fourth year of the reign of King Darius, on the fourth

*k* Or her. *l* Or she. *m* Or bronze.  
*n* to the far west: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* behind them.  
*o* to the land of the east: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. om.*  
*p* and: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* and go on that day yourself and go to the house of ...  
*q* Joshua . . . priest: *possibly an error for Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, cp. 3. 5; 4. 9.*

5.5-11: Vision of the barrel. *Wickedness* is symbolically removed from Judah. 6: *Barrel*: container for an ephah, a dry measure equal to about  $1\frac{1}{3}$  bushels. 11: *House*: a temple. *Shinar*: Babylon. *Wickedness* is returned to the Exile where the Jews suffered.

6.1-15: Vision of the chariots. As in the first vision (1.8-17), four differently colored *horses* go in the four directions. The symbolism of the colors is unknown. The crucial point of the patrol is the *north*, the direction of danger. Everything is ready for reestablishing the dynasty of David. 9-15: Almost certainly, *Joshua* (v. 11) is an error, or deliberate substitution, for Zerubbabel. See 3.8-9; the *Branch* (royal power) is not Joshua; and in 4.6-10, Zerubbabel is to build the Temple (compare v. 12). We do not know why the name Joshua was substituted. Some conjecture from 4.6 that Zerubbabel in some way offended.

7.1-8.23: Joy and gladness in the coming age. The oracles, taken together, give a wide-ranging answer to the question in 7.3, whether a fast in the *fifth month* (July-August) is still required. The date is mid-November, 518 B.C.

2 day of Kislev, the ninth month. Bethel-  
sharezer sent Regem-melech with his  
men to seek the favour of the LORD.  
3 They were to say to the priests in the  
house of the LORD of Hosts and to the  
prophets, 'Am I to lament and abstain  
in the fifth month as I have done for  
4 so many years?' Then the word of the  
5 LORD of Hosts came to me: Say to all  
the people of the land and to the  
priests, When you fasted and lamented  
in the fifth and seventh months these  
seventy years, was it indeed in my  
6 honour that you fasted? And when  
you ate and drank, was it not to  
7 please yourselves? Was it not this that  
the LORD proclaimed through the  
prophets of old, while Jerusalem was  
populous and peaceful, as were the  
cities round her, and the Negeb and  
the Shephelah?  
8 The word of the LORD came to  
9 Zechariah: These are the words of the  
LORD of Hosts: Administer true justice,  
show loyalty and compassion to one  
10 another, do not oppress the orphan  
and the widow, the alien and the poor,  
do not contrive any evil one against  
11 another. But they refused to listen,  
they turned their backs on me in  
defiance, they stopped their ears and  
12 would not hear. Their hearts were  
adamant; they refused to accept in-  
struction and all that the LORD of  
Hosts had taught them by his spirit  
through the prophets of old; and they  
suffered under the anger of the LORD  
13 of Hosts. As they did not listen when  
I called, so I did not listen when they  
14 called, says the LORD of Hosts, and I  
drove them out among all the nations  
to whom they were strangers, leaving  
their land a waste behind them, so that  
no one came and went. Thus they made  
their pleasant land a waste.  
8 The word of the LORD of Hosts came  
2 to me: These are the words of the LORD  
of Hosts: I have been very jealous for  
3 Zion, fiercely jealous for her. Now,  
says the LORD, I have come back to

Zion and I will dwell in Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem shall be called the City of  
Truth, and the mountain of the LORD  
of Hosts shall be called the Holy  
Mountain. These are the words of the  
4 LORD of Hosts: Once again shall old  
men and old women sit in the streets of  
Jerusalem, each leaning on a stick  
because of their great age; and the  
5 streets of the city shall be full of boys  
and girls, playing in the streets. These  
6 are the words of the LORD of Hosts:  
Even if it may seem impossible<sup>s</sup> to the  
survivors of this nation on that day,  
will it also seem impossible to me?<sup>t</sup>  
This is the very word of the LORD of  
7 Hosts. These are the words of the  
LORD of Hosts: See, I will rescue my  
people from the countries of the east  
and the west, and bring them back to  
8 live in Jerusalem. They shall be my  
people, and I will be their God, in  
truth and justice.

These are the words of the LORD of  
9 Hosts: Take courage, you who in  
these days hear, from the prophets  
who were present when the foundations  
were laid for the house of the LORD of  
Hosts, their promise that the temple is  
to be rebuilt. Till that time there was  
10 no hiring either of man or of beast, no  
one could safely go about his business  
because of his enemies, and I set all  
men one against another. But now I  
11 am not the same towards the survivors  
of this people as I was in former days,  
says the LORD of Hosts. For they shall  
12 sow in safety; the vine shall yield its  
fruit and the soil its produce, the  
heavens shall give their dew; with all  
these things I will endow the survivors  
of this people. You, house of Judah  
13 and house of Israel, have been the very  
symbol of a curse to all the nations;  
and now I will save you, and you shall  
become the symbol of a blessing.  
Courage! Do not be afraid.

<sup>r</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. he.

<sup>s</sup> Or wonderful.

<sup>t</sup> will . . . me?: or it will seem wonderful also to me.

7.4-14: The first oracle recapitulates the past. 5: *Seventy years*: the length of the Exile (compare Jer.25.11).

8.1-8: The second oracle describes a restored, *holy*, and happy Jerusalem. 2: *Jealous*: see 1.14 n. 8: *Justice*: lit. "righteousness."

8.9-13: The third oracle promises that the reconstruction of the Temple will bring  *blessing*  to Judah, prosperous crops and security of life.

14 For these are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Whereas I resolved to ruin you because your ancestors roused me to anger, says the LORD of Hosts, and I  
 15 did not relent, so in these days I have once more<sup>u</sup> resolved to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah;  
 16 do not be afraid. This is what you shall do: speak the truth to each other, administer true and sound  
 17 justice in the city gate. Do not contrive any evil one against another, and do not love perjury, for all this I hate. This is the very word of the LORD.  
 18 The word of the LORD of Hosts  
 19 came to me: These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: The fasts of the fourth month and of the fifth, the seventh, and the tenth, shall become festivals of joy and gladness for the house of Judah. Love truth and peace.  
 20 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: Nations and dwellers in great  
 21 cities shall yet come; people of one city shall come to those of another and say, 'Let us go and entreat the favour of the LORD, and resort to the LORD  
 22 of Hosts; and I will come too.' So great nations and mighty peoples shall resort to the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem and entreat his favour.  
 23 These are the words of the LORD of Hosts: In those days, when ten men from nations of every language pluck up courage, they shall pluck the robe of a Jew and say, 'We will go with you because we have heard that God is with you.'

and<sup>v</sup> established himself in Damascus;  
 for the capital city<sup>w</sup> of Aram is the LORD's,  
 as are all the tribes of Israel.  
<sup>z</sup>Sidon has closed her frontier against Hamath,  
 for she is very wary.  
 Tyre has built herself a rampart; she has heaped up silver like dust and gold like mud in the streets.  
 But wait, the Lord will dispossess her  
 and strike down the power of her ships,  
 and the city itself will be destroyed by fire.  
 Let Ashkelon see it and be afraid; Gaza shall writhe in terror,  
 and Ekron's hope shall be extinguished;  
 kings shall vanish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall be unpeopled;  
 half-breeds shall settle in Ashdod,  
 and I will uproot the pride of the Philistine.  
 I will dash the blood of sacrifices from his mouth  
 and his loathsome offerings from his teeth;  
 and his survivors shall belong<sup>y</sup> to our God  
 and become like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.  
 And I will post a garrison for my house  
 so that no one may pass in or out, and no oppressor shall ever overrun them.  
 [This I have lived to see with my own eyes.]

*Judah's triumph over her enemies*

9 An oracle: the word of the LORD.

He has come to the land of Hadrach

<sup>u</sup> once more: or changed my mind and.  
<sup>v</sup> He has come . . . and: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb.* In the land of Hadrach he has . . .  
<sup>w</sup> capital city: or chief part.  
<sup>x</sup> *Prob. rdg.*; *Heb. prefixes* Tyre and.  
<sup>y</sup> his survivors shall belong: or he shall become kin.

8.14-17: The fourth oracle sets out the quality of the social order. 16: At the city gate, legal cases were heard and decided.

8.18-19: The fifth oracle alters *fasts* from times at which to "lament and abstain" (7.3) to *festivals of joy and gladness*.

8.20-23: The sixth oracle describes the growing adherence to the LORD of foreign nations. 23: *Jew*: lit. a member of the tribe of Judah.

9.1-14.21: *Deutero-Zechariah*. See Introduction on this portion of the book.

9.1-8: The LORD's attack upon nations. 1: *Hadrach* and *Damascus* were in *Aram*, Syria. 2-4: *Sidon* and *Tyre*: Phoenician ports on the Mediterranean. *Hamath*: a city inland from Sidon. 5-7: *Ashkelon*, *Gaza*, *Ekron*, and *Ashdod* were *Philistine* cities, traditional enemies of Israel, which now become part of God's people. *Jebusite*: pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem who were assimilated into the Israelites after the capture of the city under David.

- 9 Rejoice, rejoice, daughter of Zion,  
shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem;  
for see, your king is coming to you,  
his cause won, his victory gained,  
humble and mounted on an ass,  
on a foal, the young of a she-ass.
- 10 He shall banish chariots from  
Ephraim  
and war-horses from Jerusalem;  
the warrior's bow shall be banished.  
He shall speak peaceably to every  
nation,  
and his rule shall extend from sea  
to sea,  
from the River to the ends of the  
earth.
- 11 And as for you, by your covenant  
with me sealed in blood  
I release your prisoners from the  
dungeon.<sup>z</sup>
- 12 (Come back to the stronghold, you  
prisoners who wait in hope.)  
Now is the day announced  
when I will grant you twofold<sup>a</sup>  
reparation.
- 13 For my bow is strung, O Judah;  
I have laid the arrow to it, O  
Ephraim;  
I have roused your sons, O Zion,<sup>b</sup>  
and made you into the sword of a  
warrior.
- 14 The LORD shall appear above them,  
and his arrow shall flash like  
lightning;  
the Lord GOD shall blow a blast on  
the horn  
and march with the storm-winds of  
the south.
- 15 The LORD of Hosts will be their  
shield;  
they shall prevail, they shall trample  
on the sling-stones;  
they shall be roaring drunk as if  
with wine,
- brimful as a bowl, drenched like the  
corners of the altar.  
So on that day the LORD their God 16  
will save them, his own people, like  
sheep,  
setting them all about his land,  
like<sup>c</sup> jewels set to sparkle in a  
crown.
- What wealth, what beauty, is 17  
theirs:  
corn to strengthen young men,  
and new wine for maidens!  
Ask of the LORD rain in the autumn; 10  
ask him for rain in the spring,  
the LORD who makes the storm-  
clouds,  
and he will give you showers of rain  
and to every man grass in his field;  
for the household gods make 2  
mischievous promises;  
diviners see false signs,  
they tell lying dreams<sup>d</sup>  
and talk raving nonsense.  
Men wander about like sheep  
in distress for lack of a shepherd.  
My anger is turned against the 3  
shepherds,  
and I will visit with punishment  
the leaders of the flock;  
but the LORD of Hosts will visit his  
flock,  
the house of Judah,  
and make them his royal war-horses.  
They shall be corner-stone and 4  
tent-peg,  
they shall be the bow ready for  
battle,  
and from them shall come every  
commander.

<sup>z</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds no water in it.

<sup>a</sup> Or equal.

<sup>b</sup> Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds against your sons, O Javan (or Greece).

<sup>c</sup> like: prob. rdg.; Heb. for.

<sup>d</sup> they . . . dreams: or dreaming women make empty promises.

9.9-16: Judah goes to war. 9-10: *Daughter*: see 2.10 n. But here, it may be only a woman of Jerusalem. Some scholars think the *king* is Alexander the Great, sweeping through Palestine in 332 B.C. Others interpret the passage to mean a coming Jewish king (compare Mt. 21.4-5). *Ephraim*: the leading Israelite tribe of the Northern Kingdom, exiled in 722 B.C. *The River*: Euphrates. 15: *Roaring drunk*: figure for the ecstatic exuberance of victors in battle; see 10.7; Ps. 78.65-66. The Israelites, covered with blood of the slain enemy, are compared to *corners of the altar* on which the blood of sacrifices was poured out daily, a symbol of overwhelming victory.

9.17-10.12: **The restoration of Israel.** 10.1: Parched summers make early *rain in the autumn* necessary to fill cisterns. Rains late *in spring* strengthened crops against the heat. 2: *Household gods*: idols, personal deities, who watched over families. Not they nor *diviners*, but the LORD gives real prosperity (v. 1). *Shepherd*: a leader. 3: The *anger* may be against specific leaders of Judah.

- 5 Together they shall be like warriors who tramp the muddy ways in battle, and they will fight because the LORD is with them; they will put horsemen shamefully to rout.
- 6 And I will give strength to the house of Judah and grant victory to<sup>e</sup> the house of Joseph; I will restore them, for I have pitied them, and they shall be as though I had never cast them off; for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.
- 7 So Ephraim shall be like warriors, glad like men cheerful with wine, and their sons shall see and be glad; so let their hearts exult in the LORD.
- 8 I will whistle to call them in, for I have redeemed them; and they shall be as many as once they were.
- 9 If I disperse them<sup>f</sup> among the nations, in far-off lands they will remember me and will rear their sons and then return.
- 10 Then will I fetch them home from Egypt and gather them in from Assyria; I will lead them into Gilead and Lebanon until there is no more room for them.
- 11 Dire distress<sup>g</sup> shall come upon the Euphrates and shall beat down its turbulent waters; all the depths of the Nile shall run dry.
- The pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall pass away; but Israel's strength shall be in the LORD, and they shall march proudly in his name. This is the very word of the LORD.
- Throw open your gates, O Lebanon, 11 that fire may feed on your cedars. Howl, every pine-tree; for the cedars 2 have fallen, mighty trees are ravaged. Howl, every oak of Bashan; for the impenetrable forest is laid low.
- Hark to the howling of the 3 shepherds, for their rich pastures are ravaged. Hark to the roar of the young lions, for Jordan's dense thickets are ravaged.
- These were the words of the LORD 4 my God: Fatten the flock for slaughter. Those who buy will slaughter it and 5 incur no guilt; those who sell will say, 'Blessed be the LORD, I am rich!' Its shepherds will have no pity for it. For 6 I will never again pity the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD. I will put every man in the power of his neighbour and his king, and as each country is crushed I will not rescue him from their hands.
- So I fattened the flock for slaughter 7 for the dealers. I took two staves: one I called Favour and the other Union, and so I fattened the flock. In one 8 month I got rid of the three shepherds,

<sup>e</sup> grant victory to: or expand.  
<sup>f</sup> Or scatter them like seed.  
<sup>g</sup> Dire distress: or An enemy.

Compare Ezek. ch. 34. 6: *House of Joseph*: often a term for northern Israel (see Amos 5.6,15). The predicted restoration includes the Northern Kingdom dispersed in 721 B.C., bringing the nation to its former unity. 10: The place of deportation in 721 was *Assyria*. After the Babylonian Exile, a colony of Jews lived in *Egypt*, at Elephantine. *Gilead* and *Lebanon* are at the north and northeastern edges of Israel's former territory, where the roads from Babylon and *Assyria* entered. 11: *Turbulent Euphrates* symbolizes warlike Assyria; *the depths of the Nile*, the wealth and fertility of Egypt.

11.1-3: A short poem threatening destruction. 1: *Cedars*, useful lumber, were the hallmark of the prosperity of Lebanon. 2: *Bashan*: fertile area east of the Sea of Galilee. 3: Compare Jer.49.19.

11.4-14: An allegorical narrative in which a prophet tending sheep quits his job, breaking his shepherd's staves, the action being symbolic of God, shepherd of men, breaking his covenant, *Favour* (v. 10), with all men (Gen.9.1-17), and his special covenant, *Union* (v. 14), with Israel (Exod.24.8). 8: The *three shepherds* here are specific leaders who cannot be identified.

9 for I had lost patience with them and they had come to abhor me. Then I said to the flock, 'I will not fatten you any more. Any that are to die, let them die; any that stray, let them stray; and the rest can devour one another.' I took my staff called Favour and snapped it in two, annulling the covenant which the LORD<sup>b</sup> had made with all nations. So it was annulled that day, and the dealers who were watching me knew that all this was the word of the LORD. I said to them, 'If it suits you, give me my wages; otherwise keep them.' Then they weighed out my wages, thirty pieces of silver. The LORD said to me, 'Throw it into the treasury.' I took the thirty pieces of silver—that noble sum at which I was valued and rejected by them!—and threw them into the house of the LORD, into the treasury. Then I snapped in two my second staff called Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

15 Then the LORD said to me, Equip yourself again as a shepherd, a worthless one; for I am about to install a shepherd in the land who will neither miss any that are lost nor search for those that have gone astray nor heal the injured nor nurse the sickly, but will eat the flesh of the fat beasts and throw away their broken bones.

17 Alas for the worthless shepherd who abandons the sheep!  
A sword shall fall on his arm and on his right eye;  
his arm shall be shrivelled  
and his right eye blinded.

13<sup>c</sup> This is the very word of the LORD of Hosts:

O sword, awake against my shepherd and against him who works with me. Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered,  
and I will turn my hand against the shepherd boys.

This also is the very word of the LORD:

It shall happen throughout the land

that two thirds of the people shall be struck down and die,  
while one third of them shall be left there.

Then I will pass this third through the fire

and I will refine them as silver is refined,

and assay them as gold is assayed.

Then they will invoke me by my name,

and I myself will answer them;

I will say, 'They are my people', and they shall say, 'The LORD is our God.'

*Jerusalem a centre of worship  
for all men*

AN ORACLE. THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD concerning Israel, the very word of the LORD who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth, and who formed the spirit of man within him: I am making the steep approaches to Jerusalem slippery for all the nations pressing round her; and Judah will be caught up in the siege of Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem a rock too heavy for any people to remove, and all who try to lift it shall injure themselves. On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness; I will keep watch over Judah, but I will strike all the horses of the other nations with blindness. Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem find their strength<sup>j</sup> in the LORD of Hosts their God.'

<sup>b</sup> the LORD: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. l.*

<sup>c</sup> 13, 7-9 transposed to this point.

<sup>j</sup> The . . . strength: *prob. rdg.*; *Heb. O inhabitants of Jerusalem, I am strong.*

12: In Exod.21.32, *thirty pieces of silver* is the value of a slave. Thirty pieces of silver appears in Mt.26.14-16 and parallels.

11.15-17; 13.7-9: A symbolic action and oracle against a coming king. *One-third* of Israel, purified by fire, will remain as the *people* of the LORD.

12.1-14.21: *Jerusalem repents and is delivered by the LORD.* The oracles convey the themes of the LORD's triumph, not a chronology or systematic account. Some are extremely obscure.

3: *Rock*: compare Dan.2.33-35. 7: Even the Davidic king's *glory* will not exceed that of the

6 On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a brazier in woodland, like a torch blazing among sheaves of corn. They shall devour all the nations round them, right and left, while the people of Jerusalem remain safe in their city. The LORD will first set free all the families<sup>k</sup> of Judah, so that the glory of David's line and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah.

8 On that day the LORD will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem; on that day the very weakest of them shall be like David, and the line of David like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them.

9 On that day I will set about destroying all the nations that come against Jerusalem, but I will pour a spirit of pity and compassion into the line of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then

They shall look on me, on him whom they have pierced,

and shall wail over him as over an only child, and shall grieve for him bitterly as for a first-born son.

11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem shall be as great as the mourning over Hadad-rimmon in the vale of Megiddo. The land shall wail, each family by itself: the family of David by itself and its women by themselves; the family of Nathan by itself and its women by themselves; the family of Levi by itself and its women by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself and its women by themselves; all the remaining families by themselves and their women by themselves.

13 On that day a fountain shall be opened for the line of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to remove all sin and impurity.

2 On that day, says the LORD of Hosts, I will erase the names of the idols from

the land, and they shall be remembered no longer; I will also remove the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land. Thereafter, if a man<sup>3</sup> continues to prophesy, his parents, his own father and mother, will say to him, 'You shall live no longer, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD.' His own father and mother will pierce him through because he has prophesied. On that day every prophet<sup>4</sup> shall be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, nor shall he wear a robe of coarse hair in order to deceive. He will<sup>5</sup> say, 'I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil who has been schooled in lust from boyhood.' 'What', someone will<sup>6</sup> ask, 'are these scars on your chest?' And he will answer, 'I got them in the house of my lovers.'<sup>7</sup>

A day is coming for the LORD to act,<sup>14</sup> and the plunder taken from you shall be shared out while you stand by. I<sup>2</sup> will gather all the peoples to fight against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses plundered and the women raped. Half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the nation in the city shall not be wiped out. The<sup>3</sup> LORD will come out and fight against those peoples, as in the days of his prowess on the field of battle. On that<sup>4</sup> day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east, and the mountain shall be cleft in two by an immense valley running east and west; half the mountain shall move northwards and half southwards. The valley between<sup>5</sup> the hills<sup>m</sup> shall be blocked, for the new valley between them will reach as far as Asal. Blocked it shall be as it was blocked by the earthquake in the time of Uzziah king of Judah, and the LORD my God will appear with all the holy ones.

On that day there shall be neither<sup>6</sup>

<sup>k</sup> Or tents.

<sup>l</sup> Verses 7-9 transposed to follow 11.17.

<sup>m</sup> Prod. rdg.; Heb. my hills.

people. 10: *Him whom they have pierced*: probably a contemporary allusion, now unrecoverable. Compare Jn.19.37. 11: *Hadad-rimmon*: a Canaanite fertility god, mourned in the seasonal death of vegetation. The *vale* was the most fertile plain near the city of *Megiddo* in northern Israel. 13.2-6: The oracle marks the end of the professional *prophets*. 6: *Scars* from ecstatic activities (compare Hos.7.14) are ascribed to a brothel brawl.

14.1-21: *The LORD's battle against Jerusalem's enemies*. 5: *Valley*: named the Kidron, between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. *Earthquake*: compare Amos 1.1. *Holy ones*:



- 7 heat nor cold nor frost. It shall be all one day, whose coming is known only to the LORD, without distinction of day or night, and at evening-time there shall be light.
- 8 On that day living water shall issue from Jerusalem, half flowing to the eastern sea and half to the western, in summer and winter alike. Then the LORD shall become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD shall be one LORD and his name the one name.
- 9 The whole land shall be levelled, flat as the Arabah from Geba to Rimmon southwards; but Jerusalem shall stand high in her place, and shall be full of people from the Benjamin Gate [to the point where the former gate stood,] to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine-vats.
- 10 Men shall live in Jerusalem, and never again shall a solemn ban be laid upon her; men shall live there in peace. The LORD will strike down all the nations who warred against Jerusalem, and the plague shall be this: their flesh shall rot while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths.
- 11 On that day a great panic, sent by the LORD, shall fall on them. At the very moment when a man would encourage his comrade his hand shall be raised to strike him down. Judah
- too shall join in the fray in Jerusalem, and the wealth of the surrounding nations will be swept away—gold and silver and apparel in great abundance. And slaughter shall be the fate of 15 horse and mule, camel and ass, the fate of every beast in those armies.
- All who survive of the nations which 16 attacked Jerusalem shall come up year by year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, and to keep the pilgrim-feast of Tabernacles. If any of the families 17 of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, no rain shall fall upon them. If 18 any family of Egypt does not go up and enter the city, then the same disaster shall overtake it as that which the LORD will inflict on any nation which does not go up to keep the feast. This 19 shall be the punishment of Egypt and of any nation which does not go up to keep the feast of Tabernacles.
- On that day, not a bell on a war- 20 horse but shall be inscribed 'Holy to the LORD', and the pots in the house of the LORD shall be like the bowls before the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem 21 and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of Hosts, and all who sacrifice shall come and shall take some of them and boil the flesh in them. So when that time comes, no trader shall again be seen in the house of the LORD of Hosts.

probably angels. 8: Compare Ezek.47.1-12; Joel 3.18. 10: The elevation of *Jerusalem* is similar to Isa.2.2; Mic.4.1. 16-19: As in 8.20-23, foreigners worship the LORD at Jerusalem. *Tabernacles*: the autumn vintage feast. 20-21: In the new age, everything, however common, is sanctified. *Holy to the LORD*: also inscribed on the rosette on the high priest's forehead (Exod.28.36). 21: *Trader*: lit. "Canaanite."

# MALACHI

After the return of the Judeans from the Exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple was completed (see Introduction to Haggai), Judah, subject to the Persians, was without political defense, a royal dynasty, and other marks of a nation. Yet to live as the LORD's people, she had to formulate laws to govern both civil and religious conduct, as permitted by the Persians. The book of Malachi reflects aspects of the problems and hardships that arose about 500-450 B.C.

Malachi (see 1.1 n.) delivers his message in a rather systematic regular form. First he gives a declaration from the LORD, then he proposes a question from his audience; he answers the question in the name of the LORD. The statement criticizes the behavior of people or priests, while the answer to a question contains both judgment and promise. In his view, Judah must live by the Law to maintain the people's purity and devotion to the LORD. The final day of the LORD will separate good from bad. Indeed, the issue of determining what are good and bad acts and who are good and bad persons, dominates the latest stage of Old Testament religion. At the same time that this stage fostered a confining legalism, it also fostered a religious devotion of great power and purity.

- 1 An oracle. The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.<sup>a</sup>

## *Religious decline and hope for recovery*

- 2 I LOVE YOU, SAYS THE LORD. YOU ASK, 'How hast thou shown love to us?' Is not Esau Jacob's brother? the LORD  
3 answers. I love Jacob, but I hate Esau; I have turned his mountains into a waste and his ancestral home into a  
4 lodging in the wilderness. When Edom says, 'We are beaten down; let us rebuild our ruined homes', these are the words of the LORD of Hosts: If they rebuild, I will pull down. They shall be called a realm of wickedness, a people whom the LORD has cursed for  
5 ever. You yourselves will see it with your own eyes; you yourselves will say, 'The LORD's greatness reaches beyond the realm of Israel.'  
6 A son honours his father, and a slave goes in fear of his master. If I am a father, where is the honour due to me? If I am a master, where is the fear due to me? So says the LORD of Hosts to you, you priests who despise my name.

You ask, 'How have we despised thy name?' Because you have offered 7 defiled food on my altar. You ask, 'How have we defiled thee?' Because you have thought that the table of the LORD may be despised, that if you 8 offer a blind victim, there is nothing wrong, and if you offer a victim lame or diseased, there is nothing wrong. If you brought such a gift to the governor, would he receive you or show you favour? says the LORD of Hosts. But 9 now, if you placate God, he may show you mercy; if you do this, will he withhold his favour from you? So the LORD of Hosts has spoken. Better far 10 that one of you should close the great door altogether, so that the light might not fall thus all in vain upon my altar! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of Hosts; I will accept no offering from you. From furthest east 11 to furthest west my name is great among the nations. Everywhere fragrant sacrifice and pure gifts are offered in my name; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of Hosts. But you profane it by 12

<sup>a</sup> Malachi: or my messenger.

1.1: Title. *Malachi* means "my messenger" or "my angel," and is probably not a proper name (compare 3.1).

1.2-3.12: Religious decline and hope for recovery.

1.2-5: The LORD's hatred of Esau. The Edomites were descended from Esau, the Israelites from Jacob. They were brother nations, but their relations were dominated by hostility. See Gen.25.19-23, Ezek. ch. 35, and Obad.

1.6-2.9: Against priests. Care for the details of sacrifice and ritual is a way to honour the LORD. 11: In contrast to the impurity of worship in Judah, the LORD is worshiped in purity by all the Gentile nations. See, too, v. 14. 12: *Profane*: to treat an object set aside for worship as if

thinking that the table of the LORD may be defiled, and that you can offer on it food you yourselves despise. You sniff at it, says the LORD of Hosts, and say, 'How irksome!' If you bring as your offering victims that are mutilated, lame, or diseased, shall I accept them from you? says the LORD. A curse on the cheat who pays his vows by sacrificing a damaged victim to the Lord, though he has a sound ram in his flock! I am the great king, says the LORD of Hosts, and my name is held in awe among the nations.

2 And now, you priests, this decree is for you: if you will not listen to me and pay heed to the honouring of my name, says the LORD of Hosts, then I will lay a curse upon you. I will turn your blessings into a curse; yes, into a curse, because you pay no heed. I will cut off your arm,<sup>b</sup> fling offal in your faces, the offal of your pilgrim-feasts, and I will banish you from my presence. 4 Then you will know that I have issued this decree against you: my covenant with Levi falls to the ground, says the LORD of Hosts. My covenant was with him: I bestowed life and prosperity on him; I laid on him the duty of reverence, he revered me and lived in awe of my name. The instruction he gave was true, and no word of injustice fell from his lips; he walked in harmony with me and in uprightness, and he turned many back from sin. For men hang upon the words of the priest and seek knowledge and instruction from him, because he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts. But you have turned away from that course; you have made many stumble with your instruction; you have set at nought the covenant with the Levites, says the

LORD of Hosts. So I, in my turn, have made you despicable and mean in the eyes of the people, in so far as you disregard my ways and show partiality in your instruction.

Have we not all one father? Did not one God create us? Why do we violate the covenant of our forefathers by being faithless to one another? Judah is faithless, and abominable things are done in Israel and in Jerusalem; Judah has violated the holiness of the LORD by loving and marrying daughters of a foreign god. May the LORD banish any who do this from the dwellings of Jacob, nomads or settlers, even though they bring offerings to the LORD of Hosts.

Here is another thing that you do: you weep and moan, and you drown the altar of the LORD with tears, but he still refuses to look at the offering or receive an acceptable gift from you. You ask why. It is because the LORD has borne witness against you on behalf of the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner and your wife by solemn covenant. Did not the one God make her, both flesh and spirit? And what does the one God require but godly children? Keep watch on your spirit, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. If a man divorces or puts away his spouse, he overwhelms her with cruelty, says the LORD of Hosts the God of Israel. Keep watch on your spirit, and do not be unfaithful.

You have wearied the LORD with your talk. You ask, 'How have we wearied him?' By saying that all evildoers are good in the eyes of the

<sup>b</sup> Or posterity.

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it were a matter of secular business, subject to scheming and bargaining. 2.2: The business of priests is to convey God's blessings to people; dishonorable priests will have their blessings turned into curses that will fall upon themselves. 3: Contact with *offal* made one unfit for worship; here the blemished sacrifices do the same (1.13). 4: *Levi* was the priestly tribe, and the covenant acknowledged Levi's priestly functions.

2.10-16: **Responsibility of Judah.** Two aspects of covenants are discussed, the first (vv. 10-12) is Judah's covenant obligating fidelity to the LORD, and the second (vv. 13-16), divorce. 11: *Daughters of a foreign god*: though this may mean foreign women, it more probably refers to the worship of alien deities. 13-16: Divorce violates the covenant, for it entails inhuman cruelty. 14: *Wife of your youth*: this probably means that men were faithlessly divorcing older women to take up with young ones; it may possibly be a protest against forced divorces of foreign wives, narrated in Ezra ch. 10 and Neh. 13.23-29, but this is unlikely.

2.17-3.5: **The refinement of the priests.** The prophet threatens that the priests, who ostensibly seek God's nearness, will be shocked and pained when he actually comes near.

LORD, that he is pleased with them, or by asking, 'Where is the God of justice?' Look, I am sending my messenger<sup>c</sup> who will clear a path before me. Suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight is here, here already, says the LORD of Hosts. Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand firm when he appears? He is like a refiner's fire, like fuller's soap; he will take his seat, refining and purifying;<sup>d</sup> he will purify the Levites and cleanse them like gold and silver, and so they shall be fit to bring offerings to the LORD. Thus the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the LORD as they were in days of old, in years long past. I will appear before you in court, prompt to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, against those who wrong<sup>e</sup> the hired labourer, the widow, and the orphan, who thrust the alien aside and have no fear of me, says the LORD of Hosts.

I am the LORD, unchanging; and you, too, have not ceased to be sons of Jacob. From the days of your forefathers you have been wayward and have not kept my laws. If you will return to me, I will return to you, says the LORD of Hosts. You ask, 'How can we return?' May man defraud God, that you defraud me? You ask, 'How have we defrauded thee?' Why, in tithes and contributions. There is a curse, a curse on you all, the whole nation of you, because you defraud me. Bring the tithes into the treasury, all of them; let there be food in my house. Put me to the proof, says the LORD of Hosts, and see if I do not open windows in the sky and pour a blessing on you as long as there is need. I will forbid pests to destroy the produce of your soil or make your vines barren, says the LORD

of Hosts. All nations shall count you happy, for yours shall be a favoured land, says the LORD of Hosts.

*Murmurers warned, the  
righteous triumphant*

YOU HAVE USED HARD WORDS ABOUT me, says the LORD, and then you ask, 'How have we spoken against thee?' You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; what do we gain from the LORD of Hosts by observing his rules and behaving with deference? We ourselves count the arrogant happy; it is evildoers who are successful; they have put God to the proof and come to no harm.'

Then those who feared the LORD talked together, and the LORD paid heed and listened. A record was written before him of those who feared him and kept his name in mind. They shall be mine, says the LORD of Hosts, my own possession against the day that I appoint, and I will spare them as a man spares the son who serves him. You will again tell good men from bad, the servant of God from the man who does not serve him.

The day comes, glowing like a furnace; all the arrogant and the evildoers shall be chaff, and that day when it comes shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of Hosts, it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings, and you shall break loose like calves released from the stall. On the day that I act, you shall trample down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, says the LORD of Hosts.

*c* my messenger: Heb. Malachi.  
*d* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds silver.  
*e* Prob. rdg.; Heb. adds the wages of.

**3.6-12: Fraud.** *Sons of Jacob*: the people as a whole, not only the priests. *Tithe* is Heb. for a tenth. In Deut.14.28, the tithe of produce every third year is given to the Levites to support them.

**3.13-18: How and when the good will triumph over the bad.** To the complaint that *evildoers are successful* (compare Job ch. 21), the answer is that the good are in the LORD's possession and in his *day* and way, the *good* will be separated from the *bad*. 16: *A record was written*: compare Exod. 32.32-34; Dan.12.1.

**4.1-6: The day of the LORD.** The *day* is the time of distinction between good and evil men, and its fire consumes rather than purifies; see Joel 1.14-15 n. The image of the *healing winged*

- 4 Remember the law of Moses my servant, the rules and precepts which I bade him deliver to all Israel at Horeb. of the LORD comes. He will reconcile fathers to sons and sons to fathers, lest I come and put the land under a ban to destroy it. 6
- 5 Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day

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*sun* (v. 2) may come, ultimately, from Egyptian symbolism. 4: Obedience to the *law* is the criterion for surviving the day. *Horeb*: Mount Sinai. 5-6: The expectation of the return of Elijah (2 Kgs.2.11) before the end may have already been a popular tradition, as it became later, based on this passage (Mt.11.13-14; Mk.9.11-13; and in the late Jewish expectations). He is probably not the same person as the messenger of 3.1. *Ban*: consignment to total destruction of anything or anyone connected with idolatry, including whole cities, as repugnant to God.



# APPENDIX

## MEASURES OF LENGTH

	span	cubit	rod <sup>a</sup>
span	1	..	
cubit	2	1	..
rod <sup>a</sup>	12	6	1

The 'short cubit' was traditionally the measure from the elbow to the knuckles of the closed fist; and what seems to be intended as a 'long cubit' measured a 'cubit and a hand-breadth', i.e. 7 instead of 6 hand-breadths (Ezek.40.5). What is meant by cubits 'according to the old standard of measurement' (2 Chr.3.3) is presumably this pre-exilic cubit of 7 hand-breadths. Modern estimates of the Hebrew cubit range from 12 to 25.2 inches, without allowing for varying local standards.

## MEASURES OF CAPACITY

<i>liquid measures</i>	<i>equivalences</i>	<i>dry measures</i>
'log'	1 'log'	..
..	4 'log'	'kab'
..	7½ 'log'	'omer'
'hin'	12 'log'	..
'bath'	72 'log'	'ephah'
'kor'	720 'log'	'homer' or 'kor'

According to ancient authorities the Hebrew 'log' was of the same capacity as the Roman *sextarius*; this according to the best available evidence was equivalent to 0.99 pint of the English standard.

## WEIGHTS AND COINS

	<i>heavy (Phoenician) standard</i>			<i>light (Babylonian) standard</i>		
	shekel	mina	talent	shekel	mina	talent
shekel	1	..		1	..	..
mina	50	1	..	60	1	..
talent	3,000	60	1	3,600	60	1

The 'gerah' was 1/20 of the sacred or heavy shekel and probably 1/24 of the light shekel.

<sup>a</sup> Hebrew literally 'reed', the length of Ezekiel's measuring-rod.

The 'sacred shekel' according to tradition was identical with the heavy shekel; while the 'shekel of the standard recognized by merchants' (Gen.23.16) was perhaps a weight stamped with its value as distinct from one not so stamped and requiring to be weighed on the spot.

The weight and value of the shekel varied so greatly according to the district and with the passing centuries that its evaluation in modern terms is impossible. Recent discoveries suggest that it may have weighed approximately 11.5 grammes.

Coins are not mentioned before the Exile. Only the 'daric' (1 Chr.29.7) and the 'drachma' (Ezra 2.69; Neh.7.70-72), if this is a distinct coin, are found in the Old Testament; the former is said to have been a month's pay for a soldier in the Persian army; while the latter will have been the Greek silver drachma, estimated at approximately 4.4 grammes. The 'shekel' of this period (Neh.5.15) as a coin was probably the Graeco-Persian *siglos* weighing 5.6 grammes.



THE NEW  
ENGLISH BIBLE

THE APOCRYPHA  
OXFORD STUDY EDITION

# CONTENTS

Introduction to the Apocrypha	iii
The Place of the Apocrypha	vi
Marginal Numbers	viii
The First Book of Esdras	1
The Second Book of Esdras	19
Tobit	53
Judith	67
The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther	84
The Wisdom of Solomon	97
Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach	115
Baruch	176
A Letter of Jeremiah	182
The Song of the Three	185
Daniel and Susanna	188
Daniel, Bel, and the Snake	191
The Prayer of Manasseh	193
The First Book of the Maccabees	195
The Second Book of the Maccabees	232

# INTRODUCTION

## TO THE APOCRYPHA

The term 'Apocrypha', a Greek word meaning 'hidden (things)', was early used in different senses. It was applied to writings which were regarded as so important and precious that they must be hidden from the general public and reserved for the initiates, the inner circle of believers. It came to be applied to writings which were hidden not because they were too good but because they were not good enough, because, that is, they were secondary or questionable or heretical. A third usage may be traced to Jerome. He was familiar with the Scriptures in their Hebrew as well as their Greek form, and for him apocryphal books were those outside the Hebrew canon, hence the alternative term deuterocanonical.

The usage here adopted is based on that of Jerome. The Apocrypha in this translation consists of fifteen books or parts of books. They are:

1. The First Book of Esdras
2. The Second Book of Esdras
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach
8. Baruch
9. A Letter of Jeremiah
10. The Song of the Three
11. Daniel and Susanna
12. Daniel, Bel, and the Snake
13. The Prayer of Manasseh
14. The First Book of the Maccabees
15. The Second Book of the Maccabees

These works are outside the Palestinian canon; that is, they form no part of the Hebrew Scriptures, although the original language of some of them was Hebrew. With the exception, however, of the Second Book of Esdras, they are all in the Greek version of the Old Testament made for the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. As such they were accepted as biblical by the early Church and were quoted as Scripture by many early Christian writers, for their Bible was the Greek Bible.

In Greek and Latin manuscripts of the Old Testament these books are dispersed throughout the Old Testament, generally in the places most in accord with their contents. The practice of collecting them into a separate unit, a practice which dates back no farther than A.D. 1520, explains why certain of the items are but fragments; they are passages not found in the Hebrew Bible, and

so have been removed from the books in which they occur in the Greek version. To help the reader over this disunity and lack of context the present translators have resorted to various devices. We have added the name Daniel to the titles of the stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Snake as a reminder that these tales are to be read with the Book of Daniel. A note we have inserted after the title, The Song of the Three, indicates that this item is to be found in the third chapter of the Greek form of Daniel. And the six additions to the Book of Esther are so disjointed and unintelligible as they stand in most editions of the Apocrypha that we have provided them with a context by rendering the whole of the Greek version of Esther.

The text used in this translation of the Apocrypha is that edited by H. B. Swete in *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*. In places Swete includes two texts, and we have chosen to translate the Codex Sinaiticus text of Tobit and Theodotion's version of the additions to the Book of Daniel, namely, The Song of the Three, Daniel and Susanna, and Daniel, Bel, and the Snake. For Ecclesiasticus we have used, in addition to Codex Vaticanus as printed in Swete's edition, the text edited by J. H. A. Hart in *Ecclesiasticus: the Greek Text of Codex 248*, and constant reference has been made to the various forms of the Hebrew text. For the Second Book of Esdras, which apart from a few verses is not extant in a Greek form, we have based our translation on the Latin text of R. L. Bensly's *The Fourth Book of Ezra*. Throughout we have consulted the variant readings given in critical editions of the Greek, the texts of the versions, and the suggestions of editors and commentators.

Alternative readings cited from Greek manuscripts (referred to as *witnesses*) and the evidence of early translations (*Vss.*, that is Versions) are given, as footnotes, only when they are significant either for text or for meaning. In a few places where the text seems to have suffered in the course of transmission and in its present form is obscure or unintelligible we have made a slight change in the text and marked our rendering of it *probable reading*, and we have indicated any evidence other than the evidence afforded by the context. Where an alternative interpretation seemed to deserve serious consideration it has been recorded as a footnote with *Or* as indicator.

In order to preserve the verse numbering of the Authorized (King James) Version of 1611 we have, when necessary, added at the foot of the page those passages which are found in the manuscripts on which the Authorized Version ultimately rests but which are absent from the earlier manuscripts now available.

We have not sought to achieve consistency in the treatment of proper names any more than did our predecessors. We have continued to use familiar English forms, especially when the reference is to well-known Old Testament characters or places. Sometimes as an aid to the correct pronunciation we have had recourse to such expedients as the affixing of an acute accent to the word Sidé or the introduction of a diphthong, as in our Soud fur Sud. In general it may be said that Greek spellings have been Latinized, but the Greek forms of place-names have not been brought into line with the Hebrew.

We have not aimed at consistency in our treatment of weights and measures. We have rendered terms into the nearest English equivalents only when these seemed suitable and natural in the context.

*Introduction to the Apocrypha*

In the text of the First and Second Books of the Maccabees the dates given are reckoned according to the Greek or Seleucid era. As a help to the reader we have added at the foot of the page the nearest dates according to the Christian era.

This translation of the Apocrypha shares with other parts of The New English Bible the aim of providing a rendering which will be both faithful to the text translated and genuinely English in idiom. The translators have endeavoured to convey the meaning of the original in language which will be the closest natural equivalent. They have tried to avoid free paraphrase on the one hand and, on the other, formal fidelity resulting in a translation which would read like a translation. It is their hope that by their labours these documents, valuable in themselves and indispensable for the study of the background of the New Testament, have been made more intelligible and more readily accessible.

W. D. McH.

## The Place of the Apocrypha

The place of the Apocrypha in the biblical canon has long been the center of controversy.

Written between 200 (or somewhat earlier)–50 B.C., certain of the books contain doctrines not uniformly accepted at that time by Jews, namely, a clear teaching on the resurrection of the body (2 Macc.7.9–12) and angelology (Tob.12.15), both of which were opposed by the powerful party, the Sadducees (Acts 23.6–8). Questions concerning the Apocrypha raised among Jews were also raised in the same or divergent form in Christian circles, especially by those church writers who were in contact with the Hebrew tradition. Some Christian writers, Augustine among them, put these books on a par with the rest of the Old Testament and quoted them equally. Jerome, who in 390 A.D. was commissioned to make a new translation of the whole Bible into Latin, studied Hebrew with a rabbi. His avowed purpose was to translate the Old Testament according to the “Hebrew original” (*secundum Hebraicam veritatem*), with the result that he was opposed to translating the Apocrypha because they were not in the Hebrew. In the end, he yielded to the pressure of the bishops and included these writings in the translation which came to be known as the Vulgate and which remained the official translation of the Latin church for many centuries. Paradoxically, Jerome himself often quoted the Apocrypha without distinguishing them from the books of the Hebrew canon.

Following the decrees by the synods of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.), the Apocrypha were uniformly included in the canon of the Latin church. Nevertheless, questions concerning them continued to be raised right up to the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

It had been natural for the leaders of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, with their emphasis on the supremacy and the purity of the Bible, to reject the Apocrypha, especially because an appeal was made for these books by Catholics against some of the basic positions of the Reformation. In 1546 A.D. the Council of Trent published a list of books to be received “with equal devotion and reverence,” which included the Apocrypha, with the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. In time, the Apocrypha came to be designated by Roman Catholics as “deuterocanonical,” in distinction to the “protocanonical” books of the Hebrew canon. This special designation is not intended to suggest an inferior status, but simply a reception into the canon later than the protocanonical books. For the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Synod of Jerusalem (1672 A.D.) affirmed the validity of the longer canon; however, a universally binding conciliar decision has not been made, and hence a diversity of opinion still exists.

Today, the question of the canonical status of the Apocrypha is no longer so vehemently argued either in Protestant or Catholic circles. Scholarly biblical criticism has shown the presence of the same literary forms in both proto- and deuterocanonical writings. One of the results of biblical scholarship in the second

### *The Place of the Apocrypha*

half of the twentieth century has been to reduce the controversy, while not completely eliminating it, as witnessed by the inclusion of these books in the present Bible, though in a location and sequence different from those in Bibles published exclusively under Catholic auspices. Theologians now find themselves comfortable with a much more flexible concept of scriptural inerrancy, and consequently of inspiration, than was possible after the great religious controversies of the sixteenth century and before the era of modern biblical scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The usefulness of a book is less likely to be judged on the basis of its inclusion in, or exclusion from, the canon, but rather by the light it sheds for understanding the rest of the Bible. The Apocrypha have something in common with what came before them and with what followed them; they therefore act as a link between the Old and the New Testaments and so help us to understand both.

## Marginal Numbers

The conventional verse divisions in the Apocrypha date only from editions printed in the sixteenth century and have no basis in the manuscripts. Any system of division into numbered verses is foreign to the spirit of this translation, which is intended to convey the meaning in continuous natural English.

For purposes of reference, verse numbers are placed in the margin opposite the line in which the first word belonging to the verse in question appears. Sometimes, however, successive verses are combined in a continuous translation so that the precise point where a new verse begins cannot be fixed; in these cases the verse numbers, joined by a hyphen, are placed at the point where the passage begins.



# THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS

1 Esdras presents the material found in 2 Chr. chs. 35–36, the Book of Ezra (with one minor omission), and Nehemiah 7.38–8.12, dealing with Ezra. This material is at places presented in a sequence different from that found in the Masoretic Text. One section, 3.1–5.6, a story of a debate at the Persian court, is exceptional in completely lacking a parallel in Old Testament texts.

1 Esdras is a Greek translation of a Hebrew-Aramaic original (no longer extant) that closely resembled the Masoretic Text. It differed, however, at several points (e.g. compare 1.11 n. and 2.13–15 n.), with some differences being enigmatic (e.g. 5.69 and 8.41). The exact relationship of the Hebrew-Aramaic original to the corresponding material in the Hebrew canon, and to a (hypothetical) common forerunner to these cannot be determined. 1 Esdras is not related to the Septuagint translation of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is a curiosity that Josephus, for his history of the period, followed 1 Esdras.

A possible point of confusion lies in the name: 1 Esdras has also been called 2 Esdras (with 1 Esdras then being reserved for the Septuagint translation of Ezra-Nehemiah, originally a single book) and 3 Esdras (as in the Vulgate, where Ezra is 1 Esdras and Nehemiah is 2 Esdras). Others have called it the "Greek Ezra" (*Esdras* being a Greek rendering of the Hebrew *Ezra*).

Many scholars believe that 1 Esdras was written between 200 B.C. and 90 A.D., with 150 B.C. a likely date.

The reader is invited to consult the annotations prepared for the parallel material in the Old Testament books, as indicated in the first paragraph above.

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## *Exile and return*

1 **J**OSIAH KEPT THE PASSOVER AT JERUSALEM in honour of his Lord and sacrificed the Passover victims on the fourteenth day of the first month.  
2 The priests, duly robed in their vestments, he stationed in the temple of the Lord according to the order of daily  
3 service. He commanded the Levites, who served the temple in Israel, to purify themselves for the Lord, in order to place the holy Ark of the Lord in the house which was built by  
4 King Solomon, son of David. Josiah said to them, 'You are no longer to carry it on your shoulders. Make yourselves ready now, family by family and clan by clan, to do service to the Lord your God and to minister to his  
5 people Israel in the manner prescribed by King David and provided for so magnificently by his son Solomon. Take your places in the temple as Levites in the prescribed order of your families in the presence of your brother

Israelites; sacrifice the Passover victims, and prepare the sacrifices for your brothers. Observe the Passover according to the ordinance of the Lord which was given to Moses.'

To those who were present Josiah 7 made a gift of thirty thousand lambs and kids and three thousand calves. These he gave from the royal estates in fulfilment of his promise to the people and to the priests and Levites. The 8 temple-wardens, Chelkias, Zacharias, and Esyelus, gave the priests two thousand six hundred sheep and three hundred calves for the Passover. Jechonias, Samaeas, his brother Na- 9 thanael, Sabias, Ozielus, and Joram, army officers of high rank, gave the Levites five thousand sheep and seven hundred calves for the Passover.

This was the procedure. The priests 10 and the Levites, bearing the unleavened bread, stood in all their splendour before the people, in the order of their clans and families, to make offerings to 11 the Lord as is laid down in the book of

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1.1–33: **Josiah's Passover and his last days**; parallel to 2 Chr.35.1–27. Why 1 Esd. begins with this account is not known. Some speculate that the author wished to highlight the role of Josiah, and possibly to show a connection between his worthy acts and the return from the Exile in the days of Cyrus. The conclusion at 9.55 seems abrupt, as if more material was once included; possibly the beginning was also lost. 4: *It: the Ark. Family and clan*: see 1 Chr. chs. 24–26. 8: *Esyelus*: 2 Chr.35.8 reads "Jehiel." 11: *In the morning*: 2 Chr.35.12 has "so with

Moses. This took place in the morning.  
 12 They roasted the Passover victims over the fire in the prescribed way and boiled the sacrifices in the vessels and cauldrons, and a pleasant smell went  
 13 up; then they carried portions round to the whole assembly. After this they made preparations both for themselves and for their brothers the priests, the  
 14 sons of Aaron. The priests went on offering the fat until nightfall, while the Levites made the preparations both for themselves and for their brothers  
 15-16 the priests, the sons of Aaron. The sons of Asaph, the temple singers, with Asaph, Zacharias, and Eddinous of the royal court, and the door-keepers at each gateway remained at their station according to the ordinances of David, which prescribe that no one may lawfully default in his daily duty; their brothers the Levites made the preparations for them. All that pertained to the Lord's sacrifice was completed that day: the keeping of the Passover and the offering of the sacrifices on the altar of the Lord according to the command of King Josiah. The Israelites who were present on this occasion kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. Such a Passover had not been kept in Israel since the time of the prophet Samuel; none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, the priests and the Levites, the men of Judah, and those Israelites who happened to be resident in Jerusalem. It was in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign that this Passover was celebrated.  
 23 All that Josiah did he did rightly and in whole-hearted devotion to his Lord.  
 24 The events of his reign are to be found in ancient records which tell a story of sin and rebellion against the Lord graver than that of any other nation or kingdom, and of offences against him which brought down his judgement upon Israel.  
 25 After all these doings of Josiah's it

happened that Pharaoh king of Egypt was advancing to attack Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah took the field against him. The king of Egypt 26 sent him this message: 'What is your business with me, king of Judah? It is 27 not against you that the Lord God has sent me to fight; my campaign is on the Euphrates. The Lord is with me, the Lord, I say, is with me, driving me on. Withdraw, and do not oppose the Lord.' Josiah did not turn his chariot 28 but went forward to the attack. He disregarded what the Lord had said through the prophet Jeremiah and 29 joined battle with Pharaoh in the plain of Megiddo. Pharaoh's captains swept down upon King Josiah. The king said 30 to his servants, 'Take me out of the battle, for I am badly hurt.' At once his servants took him out of the line and lifted him into his second chariot. 31 He was brought back to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried in his ancestral tomb.

All Judah mourned Josiah, and the 32 prophet Jeremiah lamented him. The lamentation for Josiah has been observed by the chief men and their wives from that day to this; it was proclaimed that it should be a custom for ever for the whole people of Israel. These things 33 are recorded in the book of the histories of the kings of Judah; every deed that Josiah did which won him fame and showed his understanding of the law of the Lord, both what he did earlier and what is told of him here, is related in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

His compatriots took Joachaz the 34 son of Josiah and made him king in succession to his father. He was twenty-three years old, and he reigned over 35 Judah and Jerusalem for three months. Then the king of Egypt deposed him, fined the nation a hundred talents of 36 silver and one talent of gold, and 37 appointed his brother Joakim king of Judah and Jerusalem. Joakim im- 38

the bulls"; the Heb. words for "morning" and "bulls," having identical consonants, were easily confused. 22: *The eighteenth year of Josiah's reign*: 621 B.C. 23-24: Not paralleled in 2 Chr. 25: *Pharaoh*: Necho (reigned 609-594 B.C.); 2 Chr.35.20. In 609 the Egyptians moved north to *attack Carchemish*, to aid the Assyrians, who were making a last-ditch stand against the Medes and Babylonians.

1.34-58: *The fall of Judah and Jerusalem*; parallel to 2 Chr.36.1-21. 38: A confused version

prisoned the leading men and had his brother Zarius arrested and brought back from Egypt.

39 Joakim was twenty-five years old when he became king of Judah and Jerusalem; he did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against him; he put him in chains of bronze and took him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the sacred vessels of the Lord, carried them off, and put them in his temple in Babylon. The stories about Joakim, his sacrilegious and godless conduct, are recorded in the chronicles of the kings.

43 Joakim was succeeded on the throne by his eighteen-year-old son Joakim. He reigned in Jerusalem for three months and ten days, and did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

45 A year later Nebuchadnezzar had him deported to Babylon together with the sacred vessels of the Lord. He made Zedekiah king of Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old and reigned eleven years. He did what was wrong in the eyes of the Lord and disregarded what the Lord had said through the prophet Jeremiah. King Nebuchadnezzar had made him take an oath of allegiance by the Lord, but he broke it and revolted. He was stubborn and defiant, and transgressed the commandments of the Lord, the God of Israel.

49 The leaders of the people and the chief priests committed many wicked and lawless acts, outdoing even the heathen in sacrilege, and they defiled the holy temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. The God of their fathers sent his messenger to reclaim them, because he wished to spare them and his dwelling-place. But they derided his messengers, and on the very day when the Lord spoke they were scoffing at his prophets. At last he was roused to fury against his people for their impieties,

and ordained that the kings of the Chaldeans should attack them. These 53 put their young men to the sword all round the holy temple, sparing neither old nor young, neither boy nor girl; the Lord handed them all over to their enemies. All the sacred vessels of the Lord, large and small, the furnishings of the Ark of the Lord, and the royal treasures were carried off to Babylon. The house of the Lord was set on fire, 54 the walls of Jerusalem destroyed, its towers burnt, and all its splendours 56 ruined. Nebuchadnezzar carried off to Babylon the survivors from the slaughter, and they remained slaves to him 57 and his sons until the Persians took his empire. This fulfilled the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: 'Until the 58 land has run the full term of its sabbaths, it shall keep sabbath all the time of its desolation till the end of the seventy years.'

DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF CYRUS KING 2 1-2 of Persia, the Lord, in order to fulfil his word spoken through Jeremiah, moved Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his empire, which he also put in writing: 'This is the 3 decree of Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord of Israel, the most high Lord, has made me king of the world and has 4 directed me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judaea. Whoever among 5 you belongs to his people, may his Lord be with him; let him go up to Jerusalem in Judaea and build the house of the Lord of Israel, the Lord who dwells in Jerusalem. Wherever each man 6 lives let his neighbours help him with gold and silver and other gifts, with 7 horses and pack-animals, together with other things set aside as votive offerings for the Lord's temple in Jerusalem.'

Then the chiefs of the clans of the 8 tribe of Judah and of Benjamin, the priests, the Levites, came forward, and

of 2 Chr.36.4; see 2 Chr.36.1-4, 9-11. The name *Zarius*, otherwise unknown, is likely an error for Zedekiah, the brother of Joakim and successor to his nephew Jehoiachin (vv. 45-48; 2 Kgs.24.17-25.7). The "bringing back" of Zarius-Zedekiah reflects further confusion. 43: *Joakim* . . . *Joakim*: for the second *Joakim*, read "Jehoiachin"; *eighteen* is correct, not eight (2 Chr.36.9).

2.1-15: The ascendancy and decree of Cyrus; parallel to Ezra 1.1-11. 1: *First year*: 539 B.C. 3: *The Lord of Israel*: Ezra 1.2 has "The LORD the God of heaven," a title perhaps more agree-

all whose spirit the Lord had moved to go up to build the Lord's temple in Jerusalem. Their neighbours helped with everything, with silver and gold, horses and pack-animals; and many were also moved to help with votive offerings in great quantity. King Cyrus brought out the sacred vessels of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem and set up in his idolatrous temple. Cyrus king of Persia brought them out and delivered them to Mithradates his treasurer, by whom they were delivered to Sanabassar, the governor of Judaea. This is the inventory: a thousand gold cups, a thousand silver cups, twenty-nine silver censers, thirty gold bowls, two thousand four hundred and ten silver bowls, and a thousand other articles. In all, five thousand four hundred and sixty-nine gold and silver vessels were returned, and taken from Babylon to Jerusalem by Sanabassar together with the exiles. In the time of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Belemus, Mithradates, Tabellius, Rathymus, Beeltethmus, Semellius the secretary, and their colleagues in office in Samaria and other places, wrote him a letter denouncing the inhabitants of Judaea and Jerusalem in the following terms:

17 To our Sovereign Lord Artaxerxes your servants Rathymus the recorder, Semellius the secretary, the other members of their council, and the magistrates in Coele-syria and Phoenicia:  
18 This is to inform Your Majesty that the Jews who left you to come here have arrived in Jerusalem and

are rebuilding that wicked and rebellious city. They are repairing its streets and walls and laying the foundation of the temple. If this city is rebuilt and the walls completed, they will cease paying tribute and will rebel against the royal house. Since work on the temple is in hand, we have thought it well not to neglect this important matter but to bring it to Your Majesty's notice, in order that, if it is Your Majesty's pleasure, search may be made in the records left by your predecessors. You will find in the archives evidence about these matters and will learn that this is a city that has resisted authority and given trouble to kings and to other states, and has been a centre of armed rebellion by the Jews from the earliest times. That is why it was laid in ruins. Now we submit to Your Majesty that, if this city be rebuilt and its walls rise again, you will no longer have access to Coele-syria and Phoenicia.

Then the king wrote to Rathymus the recorder, Beeltethmus, Semellius the secretary, and their colleagues in office in Samaria, Syria, and Phoenicia this reply:

I have read your letter. I ordered search to be made and it was discovered that this city has always been opposed to its overlords, and its inhabitants have raised rebellions and made wars. There were kings in Jerusalem, powerful and ruthless men, who in their time controlled Coele-syria and Phoenicia and ex-

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able to the Persian rulers; see 2 Chr.36.23 and Ezra 5.11-12. 10: *Idolatrous temple* is pointedly monotheistic; compare Ezra 1.7, which has "in the temple of his god." 12,15: *Sanabassar* is Sheshbazzar in Ezra 1.8. 13-15: The inventory here is probably more accurate than the parallel in Ezra 1.9-11. The total here, 5,469, is correct, not the figure 5,400 in Ezra, though a miscellaneous category "other vessels," is mentioned there.

2.16-30: **Opposition to rebuilding the Temple and the walls;** parallel to Ezra 4.7,11-24. The account is somewhat confusing. V. 1 mentions Cyrus (died 529 B.C.) and v. 30, Darius I (521-486 B.C.); Cambyses (529-521 B.C.) is omitted. Artaxerxes (v. 16) reigned in 464-424 B.C. The section seems misplaced, perhaps belonging originally between the end of Ezra and the beginning of Nehemiah. 16: *Beeltethmus*: the translator here mistook a title ("high commissioner," Ezra 4.9) for a personal name. 17: The men ruled over the area which included Palestine; the area, from Persian perspective, is called "Beyond-Euphrates" (Ezra 4.10). 18: *The temple* is not mentioned in Ezra 4.14; 4.24, however, speaks of the cessation of building it. Many scholars believe that the mention of the Temple here, in v. 30, and in Ezra 4.24 are late insertions, occasioned by the mention of sacred vessels (v. 10). The opposition at this time was to rebuilding the walls. 25: *Beeltethmus*: see v. 16 n.

28 acted tribute from them. I therefore  
command that the men you mention  
be prevented from rebuilding the city,  
29 and that measures be taken to en-  
force this order and to check the  
spread of an evil likely to be a  
nuisance to the royal house.

30 When the letter from King Ar-  
taxerxes had been read, Rathymus,  
Semellius the secretary, and their  
colleagues set out at once for Jerusalem  
with cavalry and a large body of other  
troops and stopped the builders. The  
building of the temple was broken off  
until the second year of the reign of  
Darius king of Persia.

*A debate at the Persian court*

3 KING DARIUS HELD A GREAT FEAST FOR  
all those under him, his household, the  
2 chief men of Media and Persia, and the  
satraps and commanders and governors  
of his empire in the hundred and  
3 twenty-seven satrapies from India to  
Ethiopia. When they had eaten and  
drunk their fill, they went away, and  
King Darius withdrew to his bed-  
chamber; he went to sleep but woke up  
4 again. Then the three young men of the  
king's personal bodyguard said to each  
5 other: 'Let each one of us name the  
thing which he judges the strongest;  
and to the one whose opinion seems  
6 wisest King Darius will give rich gifts  
and prizes: he shall be clothed in  
purple, drink from gold vessels, and  
sleep on a golden bed; and he shall  
have a chariot with gold-studded  
bridles, and a fine linen turban, and a  
7 chain about his neck. His wisdom shall  
give him the right to sit next to Darius  
and to be given the title Kinsman of

Darius.' Then each wrote down his  
8 own statement, sealed it, and put it  
under the king's pillow. 'When the king  
9 wakes again,' they said, 'the writing  
will be given him. The king and the  
three chief men of Persia shall judge  
whose statement is wisest, and the  
award will be made on the merits of the  
written statement.'

One wrote 'Wine is strongest', the 10,11  
second wrote 'The king is strongest',  
and the third wrote 'Women are 12  
strongest, but truth conquers all'.  
When the king got up he was pre- 13  
sented with what they had written. He  
read it, and summoned all the chief 14  
men of Persia and Media, satraps,  
commanders, governors, and chief  
officers. Then he took his seat in the 15  
council chamber, and what they had  
written was read out before them. He 16  
said, 'Call the young men and let them  
expound their statements.' They were 17  
called and came in. They were asked,  
'Tell us about what you have written.'

The first, who spoke about the 18  
strength of wine, began. 'Sirs,' he said,  
'how true it is that wine is strongest!  
It sends astray the wits of all who 19  
drink it; king and orphan, slave and  
free, rich and poor, it has the same 20  
effect on them all. It turns all thoughts  
to revelry and mirth; it brings forget- 21  
fulness of grief and debt. It makes all  
feel rich, cares nothing for king or 22  
satrap, and makes men always talk in  
millions. When they are in their cups, 23  
they forget to be friendly to friends and  
relations, and are quick to draw their  
swords; when they have recovered from 24  
their wine, they cannot remember what  
they have done. Sirs, is not wine the  
strongest, seeing that it forces men  
to behave in this way?' With this he  
ended.

3.1-5.6: *A debate at the Persian court.* This interpolated story is unique to Esdras. It aggrandizes Zerubbabel. The author adapted a popular account of a debate, which originally contained only three statements (about wine, the king, and women). To that account he added the statement, "but truth conquers all" (v. 12), both in order to include a theme more akin to Jewish sensibilities, and also to introduce the return from the Babylonian Exile. The third speaker, Zerubbabel, proposes two separate statements, thus effacing the expected symmetry of three men and three statements.

3.1-17a: *The setting of the debate.* 1: *Darius I*, reigned 521-486 B.C. 2: *The hundred and twenty-seven satrapies*: compare Esther 1.1; the number is greatly exaggerated; twenty would be accurate. 3: *Went to sleep*: Josephus *Ant.* XI. 3.2 relates that the king suggested the debate after a sleepless night.

3.17b-24: *Wine is strongest.* 18: *It sends astray the wits*: compare Eccles.19.2.

4 Then the second, the one who spoke  
 of the strength of the king, began his  
 2 speech: 'Sirs, is not man the strongest,  
 man who masters the earth and the sea  
 3 and all that is in them? But the  
 strongest of men is the king; he is their  
 lord and master, and they obey all his  
 4 commands. If he bids them make war  
 upon one another they do it; if he  
 dispatches them against his enemies,  
 they march and level mountains and  
 5 walls and towers. They kill and are  
 killed; they do not disobey the king's  
 order. If they are victorious they bring  
 everything to the king, their spoils and  
 6 everything else. Or take those who do  
 not serve as soldiers or go to war, but  
 work the land: they sow and reap, and  
 bring their produce to the king. They  
 compel each other to bring him their  
 7 tribute. Though he is no more than one  
 man, if he orders them to kill, they kill;  
 if he orders them to release, they re-  
 8 lease; he orders them to attack and they  
 attack, to lay waste and they lay waste,  
 9 to build and they build, to cut down  
 and they cut down, to plant and they  
 10 plant. So all his people and his troops  
 obey him. Besides this, while he himself  
 sits at table, eats and drinks, and goes  
 11 to sleep, they stand in attendance  
 round about him and none can leave  
 and see to his own affairs; they never  
 12 disobey him in anything. Sirs, of course  
 the king must be strongest when he  
 commands such obedience!' So he  
 stopped speaking.

13 The third, who spoke about women  
 and truth—and this was Zerubbabel—  
 14 said: 'Sirs, it is true the king is great,  
 men are many, and wine is strong, but  
 who rules over them? Who is the  
 15 sovereign power? Women, surely! The  
 king and all his people who rule land  
 16 and sea were born of women, and from  
 them they came. Women brought up  
 the men who planted the vineyards

which yield the wine. They make 17  
 clothes for men and they bring honour  
 to men; men cannot do without women.  
 If they have amassed gold and silver 18  
 and all kinds of beautiful things, and  
 then see a woman with a lovely face  
 and figure, they leave all these things to 19  
 gape and stare at her with open mouth,  
 and all choose her in preference to gold  
 or silver or beautiful things. A man 20  
 will desert his father who brought him  
 up, desert even his country, and become  
 one with his wife. He forgets father, 21  
 mother, and country, and stays with his  
 wife to the end of his days. Here is the 22  
 proof that women are your masters: do  
 you not toil and sweat and then bring  
 all you earn and give it to your wives?  
 A man will take his sword and sally 23  
 forth to plunder and rob, to sail on sea  
 and river; he faces lions, he travels in 24  
 the dark; and when he has robbed and  
 plundered he brings the spoil home to  
 his beloved.

'A man loves his wife more than his 25  
 father or mother. For women's sakes 26  
 many men have been driven out of  
 their minds, many have been sold into  
 slavery, many have died or come to 27  
 grief or ruined their lives. Do you 28  
 believe me now? Certainly the king  
 wields great authority; no country dare  
 lift a finger against him. Yet I watched 29  
 him with Apame, his favourite con-  
 cubine, daughter of the famous Barta-  
 cus. She was sitting on the king's right;  
 she took the diadem off his head and 30  
 put it on her own, and slapped his face  
 with her left hand; and the king only 31  
 gazed at her open-mouthed. When she  
 laughed at him he laughed; when she  
 was cross with him he coaxed her to  
 make it up. Sirs, if women do as well 32  
 as this, how can their strength be  
 denied?' The king and the chief men 33  
 looked at one another.

He then went on to speak about

4.1-12: **The king is strongest.** The passage is often misinterpreted as depicting the supposed arbitrary power of oriental kings; rather, it is a general discourse on the power of those who govern, whoever or wherever they may be. Sources indicate that oriental kings' powers were most usually circumscribed more effectively—though there were exceptions—than those of western kings.

4.13-33: **Women are strongest.** 29: The identity of this *Apame* is uncertain. An Apame, daughter of Spitamenes, was given as wife to Seleucus Nicator, the Syrian ruler; and an Apame, daughter of Artabazus, was given to Ptolemy I Soter, the Egyptian king. *Bartacus* appears in various forms in manuscripts; the words *the famous* may be a corruption of an ancestral name, rather than the implication that Bartacus was well-known.

34 truth: 'Sirs, we have seen that women  
are strong. The earth is vast, the sky is  
lofty, the sun swift in his course, for he  
moves through the circle of the sky and  
35 speeds home in a single day. How great  
is he who does all this! But truth too  
36 is great and stronger than all else. The  
whole earth calls on truth; the sky praises  
her. All created things shake and trem-  
ble; with her there is no injustice. There  
is injustice in wine, in kings, in women,  
in all men, and in all their works, and so  
37 forth. There is no truth in them; they  
38 shall perish in their injustice. But truth  
abides and is strong for ever; she lives  
39 and rules for ever and ever. With her  
there is no favouritism or partiality;  
she chooses to do justice rather than  
what is unjust and evil. All approve her  
40 works; in her judgements there is no  
injustice. Hers are strength and royalty,  
the authority and majesty of all ages.  
Praise be to the God of truth!

41 So he ended his speech, and all the  
people shouted and said, 'Great is  
42 truth: truth is strongest!' Then the king  
said to him, 'Ask what you will, even  
beyond what is in the writing, and I  
will grant it you. For you have been  
proved the wisest; and you shall sit by  
me and be called my Kinsman.'

43 Then he said to the king: 'Remember  
the vow you made on the day when  
you came to the throne. You promised  
44 to rebuild Jerusalem and to send back  
all the vessels taken from it which  
Cyrus set aside. When he vowed to  
destroy Babylon he also vowed to re-  
45 store these vessels; and you too made a  
vow to rebuild the temple which the  
Edomites burnt when Judaea was  
46 ravaged by the Chaldaeans. This is the  
favour that I now beg of you, my lord  
king, this is the magnanimity I request:  
that you should perform the vow which  
you made to the King of heaven.'

King Darius stood up and kissed 47  
him, and wrote letters for him to all  
the treasurers, governors, commanders,  
and satraps instructing them to give  
safe conduct to him and to all those  
who were going up with him to rebuild  
Jerusalem. To all the governors in 48  
Coele-syria and Phoenicia and in  
Lebanon he wrote letters ordering them  
to transport cedar-wood from Lebanon  
to Jerusalem and join with Zerubbabel  
in building the city. He gave all Jews 49  
going up from the kingdom to Judaea  
letters assuring their liberties: that no  
officer, satrap, governor, or treasurer  
should interfere with them, that all land 50  
which they should acquire should be  
immune from taxation, and that the  
Edomites should surrender the villages  
they had seized from the Jews. Each 51  
year twenty talents were to be contri-  
buted to the building of the temple  
until it was finished, and a further ten 52  
talents annually for<sup>a</sup> burnt-offerings to  
be sacrificed daily upon the altar in  
accordance with their law. All those 53-54  
who were going from Babylonia to  
build the city were to enjoy freedom,  
and their descendants after them. He  
gave written orders that all the priests  
going there should also receive main-  
tenance and the vestments in which  
they would officiate; that the Levites 55  
too should receive maintenance, until  
the day when the building of the  
temple and Jerusalem was completed;  
and that all who guarded the city 56  
should be given land and pay. He sent 57  
back all the vessels from Babylon  
which Cyrus had set aside. All that  
Cyrus had commanded, he reaffirmed,  
ordering everything to be restored to  
Jerusalem.

When the young man, Zerubbabel, 58  
went out, he turned his face toward

*a Some witnesses add seventeen.*

4.34-42: Truth is strongest. 41: The Latin translation became an oft-quoted line: "Great is truth, and it prevails." 42: *Sit by me and be called my Kinsman*: see 3.7.

4.43-60: Permission granted to rebuild Jerusalem. 43-46: Darius' vow. This section contains historical improbabilities. It is unlikely that Darius would have made a vow (v. 43) such as here, particularly on his coronation day! Next, the vessels had already been sent back to Jerusalem in the days of Cyrus (2.1-15). Again, the idea that Cyrus vowed to destroy Babylon (v. 44) is contradicted by the fact that the city yielded to him without a struggle. Furthermore, not the Edomites (v. 45) but the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. Hence, this section is a literary construction to introduce the theme of the return to Zion. 58-60: Like Daniel, Zerubbabel turned his face toward Jerusalem (compare Dan.6.10). The prayer is kindred to that in Dan.2.20-23.

Jerusalem, looked up to heaven, and  
 59 praised the King of heaven. 'From  
 thee comes victory,' he said, 'from thee  
 comes wisdom; thine is the glory and  
 60 I am thy servant. All praise to thee who  
 hast given me wisdom; to thee I give  
 thanks, O Lord of our fathers.'  
 61 He took the letters and set off for  
 Babylon, where he told his fellow-Jews.  
 62 They praised the God of their fathers  
 because he had given them full freedom  
 63 to go and rebuild Jerusalem and the  
 temple called by his name, and they  
 feasted for a week with music and  
 rejoicing.

### *The temple rebuilt*

5 AFTER THIS THE HEADS OF FAMILIES,  
 tribe by tribe, were chosen to go to  
 Jerusalem, with their wives, their sons  
 and daughters, their male and female  
 2 slaves, and their pack-animals. Darius  
 sent a thousand horsemen to accom-  
 pany them until they had brought them  
 safely back to Jerusalem, with a band  
 3 of drums and flutes, and all their  
 brothers dancing. So he sent them off  
 with their escort.  
 4 These are the names of the men who  
 went to Jerusalem, according to their  
 5 families, tribes, and allotted duties. The  
 priests, the sons of Phineas son of  
 Aaron, with Jeshua son of Josedek son  
 of Saraeas, and Joakim his son; and<sup>b</sup>  
 Zerubbabel son of Salathiel of the  
 6 house of David of the line of Phares of  
 the tribe of Judah, who spoke wise  
 words before Darius king of Persia.  
 They went in the second year of his  
 reign, in Nisan the first month.  
 7 Now these are the men of Judah who  
 came up from amongst the captive  
 exiles, those whom Nebuchadnezzar  
 king of Babylon had transported to  
 8 Babylon. They returned to Jerusalem  
 and the rest of Judaea, each to his own  
 city: they came with Zerubbabel and  
 Jeshua, Nehemiah, Zaraeas, Resaeas,  
 Eneuius, Mardocheus, Beelsarus,

Aspharasus, Reelias, Romelius, and  
 Baana, their leaders. The numbers of  
 9 those from the nation who returned  
 with their leaders were: the line of  
 Phoros two thousand one hundred and  
 seventy-two; the line of Saphat four  
 hundred and seventy-two; the line of  
 10 Ares seven hundred and fifty-six; the  
 line of Phaath-moab, deriving from  
 the line of Jeshua and Joab, two  
 thousand eight hundred and twelve;  
 the line of Elam one thousand two  
 hundred and fifty-four; the line of  
 12 Zathui nine hundred and forty-five;  
 the line of Chorbe seven hundred and  
 five; the line of Banei six hundred and  
 13 forty-eight; the line of Bebae six  
 hundred and twenty-three; the line of  
 Astaa one thousand three hundred and  
 twenty-two. The line of Adonikam six  
 14 hundred and sixty-seven; the line of  
 Bagoi two thousand and sixty-six; the  
 line of Adinus four hundred and fifty-  
 four; the line of Ater son of Hezekias  
 15 ninety-two; the line of Keilan and  
 Azetas sixty-seven; the line of Azurus  
 four hundred and thirty-two; the line  
 16 of Annias one hundred and one; the  
 line of Arom and the line of Bassa three  
 hundred and twenty-three; the line of  
 Arsiphurith one hundred and twelve;  
 the line of Baeterus three thousand and  
 17 five. The line of Bethlomon one hun-  
 dred and twenty-three; the men of  
 18 Netophae fifty-five; the men of Ana-  
 toth one hundred and fifty-eight; the  
 men of Bethasmoth forty-two; the men  
 19 of Cariathiarus twenty-five; the men of  
 Caphira and Beroth seven hundred and  
 forty-three; the Chadasiens and Ammi-  
 20 daeans four hundred and twenty-two;  
 the men of Kirama and Gabbes six  
 hundred and twenty-one; the men of  
 21 Macalon one hundred and twenty-two;  
 the men of Betolio fifty-two; the line of  
 Phinis one hundred and fifty-six; the  
 22 line of Calamolalus and Onus seven  
 hundred and twenty-five; the line of

<sup>b</sup> his son; and: probable reading (compare Nehemiah 12. 10).

4.61-5.6: The departure from Babylon. The Judeans leave Babylon; the Persian capital, where Zerubbabel served in the court, was presumably at Susa. Perhaps Zerubbabel went from Susa to Babylon to find leaders and stimulate the return. 5.5: The genealogy of Zerubbabel clashes with that in 1 Chr.3.17-24.

5.7-46: Tally of returnees; parallel to Ezra 2.1-70 and Neh.7.6-73, but with many differences.



Jerechus three hundred and forty-five;  
 23 the line of Sanaas three thousand three hundred and thirty.  
 24 The priests: the line of Jeddu son of Jeshua, deriving from the line of Anasib, nine hundred and seventy-two. The line of Emmeruth one thousand  
 25 and fifty-two. The line of Phassurus one thousand two hundred and forty-seven. The line of Charme one thousand and seventeen.  
 26 The Levites: the line of Jesue, Cadmielus, Bannus, and Sudius seventy-four. The temple singers: the line of  
 27 Asaph one hundred and twenty-eight.  
 28 The door-keepers: the line of Salum, of Atar, of Tolman, of Dacubi, of Ateta, of Sabi, in all one hundred and thirty-nine.  
 29 The temple-servitors: the line of Esau, of Asipha, of Taboth, of Keras, of Susa, of Phaleas, of Labana, of  
 30 Aggaba, of Acud, of Uta, of Ketab, of Gaba, of Subai, of Anan, of Cathua, of Geddur, of Jairus, of Desan, of  
 31 Noeba, of Chaseba, of Gazera, of Ozius, of Phinoe, of Asara, of Basthae, of Asana, of Maani, of Naphisi, of Acum, of Achipha, of Asur, of Pharakim, of Baaloth, of Meedda, of Coutha,  
 32 of Charea, of Barchue, of Serar, of Thomi, of Nasith, of Atepha. The descendants of Solomon's servants: the line of Asaphthioth, of Pharida, of Jeeli, of Lozon, of Isdael, of Saphyithi,  
 34 of Hagia, of Phacareth, of Sabie, of Sarothie, of Masias, of Gas, of Addus, of Subas, of Apherra, of Barodis, of  
 35 Saphat, of Adlon. All the temple-servitors and the descendants of Solomon's servants numbered three hundred and seventy-two.  
 36 The following came from Thermeleth and Thelsas with their leaders Charathalar and Alar, and could not prove by their families and genealogies that they were Israelites: the line of Dalan, the line of Ban, and the line of Necodan  
 37 six hundred and fifty-two.

From among the priests the claimants 38 to the priesthood whose record could not be traced: the line of Obdia, of Accos, of Joddus, who married Augia one of the daughters of Zorzelleas, and took his name; when search was made 39 for their family record in the register it could not be traced, and so they were excluded from priestly service. Nehemiah the governor<sup>c</sup> told them that they should not participate in the sacred offerings until a high priest arose wearing the breast-piece of Revelation and Truth.

They were in all: Israelites from 41 twelve years old, not counting slaves male and female, forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty; their slaves 42 seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; musicians and singers two hundred and forty-five; camels four 43 hundred and thirty-five, horses seven thousand and thirty-six, mules two hundred and forty-five, donkeys five thousand five hundred and twenty-five.

Some of the heads of families, when 44 they arrived at the temple of God in Jerusalem, made a vow to erect the house again on its site as best they could, and to give to the sacred treasury for the fabric fund one thousand minas of gold and five thousand minas of silver and one hundred vestments.

The priests, the Levites, and some of 46 the people settled in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, with the temple musicians and the door-keepers; and all Israel settled in their villages.

WHEN THE SEVENTH MONTH CAME AND 47 the Israelites were in their homes they gathered as one man in the broad square of the first gateway toward the east. Jeshua son of Josedek and his 48 brother priests and Zerubbabel son of Salathiel and his colleagues came forward and made ready the altar of the

<sup>c</sup> the governor: *probable meaning*: Gk. and Atharrias.

24-25: The priestly divisions here number four, but twenty-four in 1 Chr. 24.7-19. 40: *Nehemiah the governor*: the name here (and in Neh. 8.9) is a late insertion, for it is missing from Ezra 2.1-70 and Neh. 7.6-73; see 9.49 n. *Revelation and Truth*: probably a rendering of Heb. "Urim" and "Thummim" (Exod. 28.30).

5.47-73: **The setting up of the altar and the attempted construction of the Temple**; parallel to Ezra 3.1-4.5. In Ezra we read only of the foundation of the Temple, whereas here there is apparently a more extensive effort, indeed, the construction of the entire edifice. 47: *The seventh*

49 God of Israel, to offer on it whole  
burnt-offerings according to the direc-  
tions in the book of Moses the man  
50 of God. They were joined<sup>d</sup> by men  
from the other peoples of the land and  
they set up the altar on its site (for the  
peoples in the land as a whole were  
hostile to them and were too strong for  
them); and they offered sacrifices to  
the Lord at the proper time, and whole  
burnt-offerings morning and evening.  
51 They observed the Feast of Tabernacles  
as enjoined in the law, and the proper  
sacrifices day by day; and thereafter the  
52 continual offerings, and sacrifices on  
sabbaths, at new moons, and on all  
solemn feasts. All who had made a  
53 vow to God offered sacrifices to God  
from the new moon of the seventh  
month, although the temple of God was  
54-55 not yet built. Money was paid to the  
stonemasons and carpenters; the  
Sidonians and Tyrians were supplied  
with food and drink, and with carts to  
bring cedar-trees from Lebanon, float-  
ing them down as rafts to the anchorage  
at Joppa, as decreed by Cyrus king of  
Persia.  
56 In the second month of the second  
year, Zerubbabel son of Salathiel came  
to the temple of God in Jerusalem and  
started the work. There were with him  
Jeshua son of Josedek, their kinsmen,  
the levitical priests, and all who had  
57 come to Jerusalem from the exile; and  
they laid the foundation of the temple  
of God. This was at the new moon, in  
the second month of the second year  
after they had returned to Judaea and  
58 Jerusalem. The Levites from the age of  
twenty and upwards were set over the  
works of the Lord. Jeshua, his sons,  
his brothers, his brother Cadoel, the  
sons of Jeshua Emadabun, and the sons  
of Joda son of Iliadun with their sons  
and brothers, all the Levites, super-  
visors of the work, were active as one  
man on the works in the house of God.

While the builders built the temple of  
the Lord, the priests in their vestments  
59 with musical instruments and trumpets,  
and the Levites the sons of Asaph with  
their cymbals, stood singing to the  
60 Lord and praising him as David king of  
Israel had appointed. They sang psalms  
61 praising the Lord, 'for his goodness  
and glory is for ever toward all Israel'.  
62 All the people blew their trumpets and  
gave a loud shout, singing to the Lord  
as the building rose.

The priests, the Levites, and heads  
63 of families, the older men who had  
seen the former house, came to the  
building of this one with cries of  
lamentation; and so, while many were  
64 sounding the trumpets loudly for joy—  
so loudly as to be heard far away—the  
65 people could not hear the trumpets  
for the noise of lamentation.

The enemies of Judah and Benjamin  
66 heard the noise of the trumpets and  
came to see what it meant. They found  
67 the returned exiles building the temple  
for the Lord God of Israel; they came  
68 to Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the  
leaders of the families, and said: 'We  
will build with you; for like you we  
69 obey your Lord and have sacrificed to  
him from the time of Asbasareth king  
of Assyria who transported us here.'  
70 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the  
leaders of the families of Israel replied:  
'You can have no share in building the  
71 house for the Lord our God; we alone  
will build for the Lord of Israel, as  
72 Cyrus king of Persia decreed.' But the  
peoples of the land harassed<sup>e</sup> the men  
of Judaea, blockaded them, and inter-  
73 rupted the building. Their plots, agita-  
tions, and riots held up the completion  
of the building all the lifetime of King  
Cyrus. They were prevented from  
building for two years until Darius  
became king.

<sup>d</sup> Or attacked; the clauses are perhaps in a confused order.  
<sup>e</sup> Probable reading: Gk. obscure.

*month*: Tishri (September–October). **51**: *The Feast of Tabernacles as enjoined in the law*: Lev.23.33–43. *The proper sacrifices day by day*: Num.29.12–38. **52**: *The continual offerings . . . sabbaths . . . new moons . . . solemn feasts* follow the sequence of Num.28.1–29.11. **56**: *The second month*: Iyyar (April–May). **69**: Compare 2 Kgs.17.24–41. The name *Asbasareth* is hopelessly corrupt; the attempt at emendation (e.g. to Esarhaddon) is arbitrary. **73**: *For two years until Darius became king*: as at 2.16, the eight-year reign of Cambyses is ignored. Some scholars believe that two separate returns, one under Cyrus led by Sheshbazzar, and a second under Zerubbabel, have become merged.

6 In the second year of the reign of Darius, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Addo prophesied to the Jews in Judaea and Jerusalem in the name of the Lord the God of Israel.

2 Then Zerubbabel son of Salathiel and Jeshua son of Josedek began to rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The prophets of the Lord were at their

3 side to help them. At that time Sisinnes, the governor-general of Syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes and their colleagues, came to them and said:

4 'Who has authorized you to put up this building, complete with roof and everything else? Who are the builders

5 carrying out this work?' But, thanks to the Lord who protected the returned

6 exiles, the elders of the Jews were not prevented from building during the time that Darius was being informed and directions issued.

7 Here is a copy of the letter written to Darius, and sent by Sisinnes, the governor-general of Syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes and their colleagues the authorities in Syria and Phoenicia:

To King Darius our humble duty.

8 Be it known to our lord the king: we visited the district of Judaea and entered the city of Jerusalem, and there we found the elders of the Jews

9 returned from exile building a great new house for the Lord with costly hewn stone and with beams set in

10 the walls. This work was being done with all speed and the undertaking was making good progress; it was being executed in great splendour

11 and with the utmost care. We then inquired of these elders by whose authority they were building this house and laying such foundations.

12 We questioned them so that we could inform you in writing who their leaders were, and asked for a list of

13 their names. They answered as follows: 'We are servants of the

Lord who made heaven and earth. This house was built and completed

14 many years ago by a great and powerful king of Israel. When our

15 fathers sinned against the heavenly Lord of Israel and provoked him, he delivered them over to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, king of the Chaldaeans; and they pulled

16 down the house, set it on fire, and took the people into exile in Babylon. In the first year of the reign of King

17 Cyrus over Babylonia, the king decreed that this house should be rebuilt. The sacred vessels of gold

18 and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the house in Jerusalem, and set up in his own temple, he brought back out of the temple

in Babylon and delivered to Zerubbabel and Sanabassar the governor, with orders to take all these vessels

19 and to put them in the temple at Jerusalem, and to rebuild this temple of the Lord on the same site as before. Then Sanabassar came and laid

20 the foundations of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. From then till now the building has continued and is still unfinished.' Therefore, if it

21 is Your Majesty's pleasure, let search be made in the royal archives in Babylon, and if it is found that the

22 building of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem took place with the approval of king Cyrus, and if our lord the king so decide, let directions be issued to us on this subject.

Then King Darius ordered the

23 archives in Babylon to be searched, and a scroll was found in the castle at Ecbatana in the province of Media which contained the following record:

In the first year of his reign King

24 Cyrus ordered that the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, where they sacrifice with fire continually, should be rebuilt. Its height should be sixty

25

6.1-7.15: Building continued, correspondence with Darius, completion of the work, parallel to Ezra 5.1-6.22. 1: See Hag.1.1-4; 2.1-4; Zech.4.9; 6.15. Zech.1.1 reads "Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo." 2: *Jeshua* is the same as Joshua. 7: *Sisinnes* and *Sathrabuzanes* are Grecianized from Tattenai and Shethar-bozenai (Ezra 5.3). The "letter" (vv. 8-22) is one of bureaucratic inquiry rather than hostility. 14: *King*: Solomon. 18: *Zerubbabel*, not mentioned in Ezra 5.14, is probably an addition. 19-20: *Sanabassar*: see 2.12,15 n. 23: On *Ecbatana*, see

cubits and its breadth sixty cubits, with three courses of hewn stone to one of new local timber; the expenses to be met from the royal treasury.

26 The sacred gold and silver vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar removed from the house in Jerusalem, and took to Babylon, should be restored to the house in Jerusalem and replaced where they formerly were.

27 Darius therefore instructed Sisinnes, the governor-general of Syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes, their colleagues, and the governors in office in Syria and Phoenicia, to be careful not to interfere with the place, but to allow the servant of the Lord, Zerubbabel, governor of Judaea, and the elders of the Jews to build the house of the Lord on its old site. 'I have also given instructions', he continued, 'that it should be completely rebuilt, and that they should not fail to co-operate with the returned exiles in Judaea until the house of the Lord is finished.

29 From the tribute of Coele-syria and Phoenicia let a contribution be duly given to these men for sacrifices to the Lord, payable to Zerubbabel the governor, for bulls, rams, and lambs; and similarly wheat, salt, wine, and oil are to be provided regularly each year without question, as the priests in Jerusalem may require day by day. Let all this be expended in order that sacrifices and libations may be offered to the Most High God for the king and his children, and that intercession may be made on their behalf.' He also gave these orders: 'If anyone disobeys or neglects any of these orders written above or here set down, let a beam be taken from his own house and let him be hanged on it and his estate forfeited

33 to the king. May the Lord himself, therefore, to whom this temple is dedicated, destroy any king or people who shall lift a finger to delay or damage the Lord's house in Jerusalem.

I, Darius the king, decree that these 34 orders be obeyed to the letter.'

Then, in accordance with the orders 7 of King Darius, Sisinnes, governor-general of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, with Sathrabuzanes and their colleagues, carefully supervised the sacred 2 works, co-operating with the elders of the Jews and the temple officers. With 3 the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, good progress was made with the sacred works, and 4 they were finished by the ordinance of the Lord God of Israel and with the approval of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. It was on the 5 twenty-third of Adar in the sixth year of King Darius that the house was completed. The Israelites, the priests, 6 the Levites, and the rest of the former exiles who had joined them carried out the directions in the book of Moses. For the dedication of the temple of 7 the Lord they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve goats for the sin of 8 all Israel corresponding to the twelve patriarchs of Israel. The priests and the 9 Levites in their vestments stood family by family to preside over the services of the Lord God of Israel according to the book of Moses. The door-keepers took their stand at every gateway.

The Israelites who had returned 10 from exile kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. The priests and the Levites were purified together; not all the returned exiles 11 were purified with the priests, but the Levites were. They slaughtered the 12 Passover victims for all the returned exiles and for their brother priests and for themselves. All those Israelites 13 participated who had returned from exile and had segregated themselves from the abominations of the peoples of the land to seek the Lord. They kept 14 the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, rejoicing before the Lord;

*f* not all . . . but: *probable meaning; Gk. obscure; some witnesses omit not.*

Ezra 6.2 n. 32: Contrast Ezra 6.11. 7.2: *Carefully supervised . . . co-operating*; Ezra 6.13 depicts less enthusiasm, stating that the officials "carried out to the letter" their instructions. 4: *Artaxerxes* (see 2.16 n.) is anachronistic. 5: *The sixth year of Darius* was 516 B.C. 8: *Twelve patriarchs*: Ezra 6.17 reads "tribes." 13: Only those *who had returned from exile* celebrated, in contrast with Ezra 6.21, where "all who had separated themselves" are included. See also Neh.9.2; 10.28.

15 for he had changed the policy of the Assyrian king towards them and strengthened them for the service of the Lord the God of Israel.

### *Ezra in Jerusalem*

8 AFTER THESE EVENTS, IN THE REIGN of Artaxerxes king of Persia, came Ezra, son of Saraeas, son of Ezerias, 2 son of Chelkias, son of Salemus, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amarias, son of Ezias, son of Mare-roth, son of Zaraeas, son of Savia, son of Bocca, son of Abishua, son of Phineas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron 3 the chief priest. This Ezra came from Babylon as a talented scholar in the law of Moses which had been given by the 4 God of Israel. The king held him in high regard and looked with favour 5 upon all the requests he made. He was accompanied to Jerusalem by some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple singers, door-keepers, and temple- 6 servitors, in the fifth month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign.<sup>g</sup> They left Babylon at the new moon in the first month and reached Jerusalem at the new moon in the fifth month; for the Lord gave them a safe journey. 7 Ezra's knowledge of the law of the Lord and the commandments was exact in every detail, so that he could teach all Israel the ordinances and judgements. 8 The following is a copy of the mandate from King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Lord:

9 King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Lord, greeting.

10 I have graciously decided, and now command, that those of the Jewish nation and of the priests and Levites, in our kingdom, who so choose, shall 11 go with you to Jerusalem. I and my council of seven Friends have de-

12 cided that all who so desire may accompany you. Let them look to the 13 affairs of Judaea and Jerusalem in pursuance of the law of the Lord, and bring to Jerusalem for the Lord 14 of Israel the gifts which I and my Friends have vowed, all the gold and silver in Babylonia that may be found to belong to the Lord in Jerusalem, together with what has 15 been given by the nation for the temple of the Lord their God in Jerusalem. Let the gold and silver be expended upon<sup>h</sup> bulls, rams, lambs, and so forth, so that sacrifices may 16 be offered upon the altar of the Lord their God in Jerusalem. Make use of 17 the gold and silver in whatever ways you and your colleagues desire, according to the will of your God, and deliver the sacred vessels of the 18 Lord which have been given you for the use of the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

Any other expenses that you may 19 incur for the needs of the temple of your God you shall defray from the royal treasury. I, Artaxerxes the 20 king, direct the treasurers of Syria and Phoenicia to give without fail to Ezra the priest, doctor of the law of the Most High God, whatever he may request up to a hundred talents 21 of silver, and similarly up to a hundred sacks of wheat and a hundred casks of wine, and salt without limit. Let him diligently fulfil in 22 honour of the Most High God all the requirements of God's law, so that divine displeasure may not befall the kingdom of the king and of his descendants. You are also 23 informed that no tax or other impost is to be laid on the priests, the Levites, the temple singers, the door-keepers, the temple-servitors, and the lay officers of this temple; no one is permitted to impose any burden on them. You, Ezra, under God's

<sup>g</sup> Probable reading; one witness adds this was the king's second year.  
<sup>h</sup> Or collected for.

15: *Assyrian king* is not meant to be taken literally; it merely denotes an emperor from beyond the Euphrates.

8.1-9.55: **The story of Ezra** (Ezra 7.1-10.44; Neh.7.73-8.12). Nehemiah is ignored. 1-67: Ezra's return to Jerusalem, parallel to Ezra 7.1-8.36. 1: *Artaxerxes* I reigned from 464-424 B.C. However, this is probably Artaxerxes II (404-359 B.C.); see Introduction to Ezra. 6: *The fifth*

guidance, are to appoint judges and magistrates to judge all who know the law of your God in all Syria and Phoenicia; you yourself shall see to the instruction of those who do not know it. All who transgress the law of your God and of the king shall be duly punished with death, degradation, fine, or exile.

25 Then Ezra said: All praise to the Lord alone, who put this into the king's mind, to glorify his house in Jerusalem.  
26 He singled me out for honour before the king, his counsellors, and all his  
27 Friends and dignitaries. I took courage from the help of the Lord my God and gathered men of Israel to go up with me.

28 These are the leaders according to clans and divisions who went with me from Babylon to Jerusalem in the reign of King Artaxerxes: from the line of Phineas, Gershom; from the line of Ithamar, Gamael; from the line of  
30 David, Attus son of Sechenias; from the line of Phoros, Zacharias and a hundred and fifty men with him  
31 according to the register; from the line of Phaath-moab, Eliaonias son of Zaraeas and with him two hundred  
32 men; from the line of Zathoe, Sechenias son of Jezelus and with him three hundred men; from the line of Adin, Obeth son of Jonathan and with him  
33 two hundred and fifty men; from the line of Elam, Jessias son of Gotholias and with him seventy men; from the  
34 line of Sophotias, Zaraeas son of Michael and with him seventy men;  
35 from the line of Joab, Abadias son of Jezelus and with him two hundred and  
36 twelve men; from the line of Bani, Assalimoth son of Josaphias and with  
37 him a hundred and sixty men; from the line of Babi, Zacharias son of Bebae and with him twenty-eight men;  
38 from the line of Astath, Joannes son of Hacatan and with him a hundred and

ten men; last came those from the line  
39 of Adonikam, by name Eliphaltus, Jeuel, and Samaeas, and with them seventy men; from the line of Bago,  
40 Uthi son of Istalcurus and with him seventy men.

I assembled them at the river called  
41 Theras, where we encamped for three days, and I inspected them. As I found  
42 no one there who was of priestly or levitical descent, I sent to Eleazar,  
43 Iduelus, Maasmas, Elnathan, Samaeas,  
44 Joribus, Nathan, Ennatas, Zacharias, and Mosollamus, who were prominent and discerning men. I told them to go  
45 to Doldaeus the chief man at the treasury. I instructed them to speak  
46 with Doldaeus, his colleagues, and the treasurers there, and ask them to send us priests to officiate in the house of our Lord. Under the providence of  
47 God they brought us discerning men from the line of Mooli son of Levi son of Israel, Asebebias and his sons and brothers, eighteen men in all, also  
48 Asebias and Annunus and Hosaeas his brother. Those of the line of Chanunaeus and their sons amounted to twenty men; and those of the  
49 temple-servitors whom David and the leading men appointed for the service of the Levites amounted to two hundred and twenty. A register of all these names was compiled.

There I made a vow that the young  
50 men should fast before our Lord to beg him to give us a safe journey for ourselves, our children who accompanied us, and our pack-animals. I was  
51 ashamed to ask the king for an escort of infantry and cavalry against our enemies; for we had told the king that  
52 the strength of our Lord would ensure success for those who looked to him. So once more we laid all these things  
53 before our Lord in prayer and found him gracious.

I set apart twelve men from among  
54 the heads of the priestly families, and

*month* was Ab (July–August), the *first month* was Nisan (March–April). 41,61: *Theras*: Ezra 8.21,31 reads "Ahava"; neither name can be identified, nor the location ascertained. 42: *Of . . . levitical descent*: Ezra 8.15, in contrast, speaks of the absence of Levites among the people and the priests. Perhaps the Ezra version makes better sense; we can assume that the priests were anxious to return to resume their cultic duties in Jerusalem, whereas the subordinate Levites were less eager to leave their comforts in Babylonia. 51: *I was ashamed*: contrast Neh.2.7–9 for a different response in a similar situation.

with them Sarabias and Asamias and  
 55 ten of their brother priests. I weighed  
 out for them the silver, the gold, and  
 the sacred vessels of the house of our  
 Lord; these had been presented by the  
 king himself, his counsellors, the chief  
 56 men, and all Israel. When I had  
 weighed it all I handed over to them  
 six hundred and fifty talents of silver,  
 and vessels of silver weighing a  
 hundred talents, a hundred talents of  
 57 gold, and twenty pieces of gold plate,  
 and twelve vessels of brass so fine that  
 it gleamed like gold. I said to them:  
 58 'You are consecrated to the Lord, and  
 so are the vessels; the silver and the  
 gold are vowed to the Lord, the Lord  
 59 of our fathers. Be vigilant and keep  
 guard until you hand them over at  
 Jerusalem, in the priests' rooms in the  
 house of our Lord, to the heads of the  
 priestly and levitical families and to  
 60 the leaders of the clans of Israel.' The  
 priests and the Levites who received  
 the silver, the gold, and the vessels in  
 Jerusalem brought them to the temple  
 of the Lord.

61 We left the river Theras on the  
 twelfth day of the first month, and  
 under the powerful protection which  
 our Lord gave us we reached Jerusalem.  
 He guarded us against every enemy on  
 our journey, and so we arrived at  
 62 Jerusalem. Three days passed, and on  
 the fourth the silver and gold were  
 weighed and handed over in the  
 house of our Lord to the priest  
 63 Marmathi son of Uri, with whom was  
 Eleazar son of Phineas. With them  
 also were the Levites Josabodus son of  
 Jeshua and Moeth son of Sabannus.  
 Everything was numbered and weighed  
 64 and every weight recorded there and  
 65 then. The returned exiles offered  
 sacrifices to the Lord the God of Israel,  
 twelve bulls for all Israel, with ninety-  
 66 six rams and seventy-two lambs, and  
 also twelve goats for a peace-offering,  
 the whole as a sacrifice to the Lord.  
 67 They delivered the king's orders to the  
 royal treasurers and the governors of  
 Coele-syria and Phoenicia, and so  
 added lustre to the nation and the  
 temple of the Lord.

WHEN THESE MATTERS HAD BEEN SETTLED 68  
 the leaders came to me and said: 'The 69  
 nation of Israel, the rulers, the priests,  
 and the Levites, have not kept them-  
 selves apart from the alien population  
 of the land with all their pollutions,  
 that is to say the Canaanites, Hittites,  
 Perizzites, Jebusites, Moabites, Egyp-  
 70 tians, and Edomites. For they and their  
 sons have intermarried with the daugh-  
 ters of these peoples, and the holy  
 race has been mingled with the alien  
 population of the land; and the leaders  
 and principal men have shared in this  
 violation of the law from the very  
 beginning.'

As soon as I heard of this I tore my 71  
 clothes and sacred vestment, plucked  
 out the hair of my head and my beard,  
 and sat down perplexed and miserable.  
 Those who at that time were moved by 72  
 the word of the Lord of Israel gathered  
 round me, while I grieved over this  
 disregard of the law, and sat in my  
 misery until the evening sacrifice. Then 73  
 I rose from my fast with my clothes and  
 sacred vestment torn, and knelt down  
 and, stretching out my hands to the  
 Lord, said: 74

'O Lord, I am covered with shame  
 and confusion in thy presence. Our 75-76  
 sins tower above our heads; from the  
 time of our fathers our offences have  
 reached the sky, and today we are as  
 deep in sin as ever. Because of our 77  
 sins and the sins of our fathers, we and  
 our brothers, our kings and our priests,  
 were given over to the kings of the  
 earth to be killed, taken prisoner,  
 plundered, and humiliated down to  
 this very day. And now, Lord, how 78  
 great is the mercy thou hast shown us!  
 We still have a root and a name in the  
 place of thy sanctuary, and thou hast 79  
 rekindled our light in the house of our  
 Lord, and given us food in the time of  
 our servitude. Even when we were 80  
 slaves we were not deserted by our  
 Lord; for he secured for us the favour  
 of the kings of Persia, who have  
 provided our food and added lustre to 81  
 the temple of our Lord and restored  
 the ruins of Zion, giving us a firm  
 foothold in Judaea and Jerusalem. And 82

8.68-9.36: The problem of mixed marriages; parallel to Ezra 9.1-10.44. 69: *Pollutions*:

now, Lord, what are we to say, we who have received all this? For we have broken thy commandments given us through thy servants the prophets.

83 Thou didst say: "The land which you are to occupy is a land defiled with the pollution of its heathen peoples; they

84 have filled it with their impurities. Do not marry your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters for your sons;

85 never try to make peace with them if you want to be strong and enjoy the good things of the land and take possession of it for your children for ever."

86 All our misfortunes have come upon us through our evil deeds and our great sins. Although thou, Lord, hast

87 lightened the burden of our sins and given us so firm a root, yet we have fallen away again and broken thy law by sharing in the impurities of the

88 heathen peoples of this land. But thou wast not so angry with us, Lord, as to destroy us, root, seed, and name; thou

89 keepest faith, O Lord of Israel; the root is left, we are here today. Behold us, now before thee in our sins; because of all we have done we can no longer hold up our heads before thee.'

91 While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping prostrate on the ground before the temple, a very large crowd gathered, men, women, and youths of Jerusalem, and there was widespread lamentation among the people. Jechonias son of Jeel, one of the Israelites, called out to Ezra: 'We have sinned against the Lord in taking alien wives from the heathen population of this land; and yet there is still hope for

92 Israel. Let us take an oath to the Lord to expel all our wives of alien race

93 with their children, in accordance with your judgement and the judgement of all who are obedient to the law of the

94 Lord. Come now, set about it, it is in your hands; take strong action and we are with you.' Ezra got up and laid

95 an oath upon the principal priests and Levites of all Israel that they would act in this way, and they swore to it.

9 Ezra left the court of the temple and entered the room of the priest Joanan son of Eliasibus. There he stayed, 2 eating no food and drinking no water, while he mourned over the serious violations of the law by the community. A proclamation was made 3 throughout Judaea and in Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble at Jerusalem; those 4 who failed to arrive within two or three days, according to the decision of the elders in office, were to have their cattle confiscated for temple use and would themselves be excluded from the community of the returned exiles.

Three days later all Judah and 5 Benjamin had assembled in Jerusalem; the date was the twentieth of the ninth month. They all sat together in the 6 open space before the temple, shivering because winter had set in. Ezra stood 7 up and said to them: 'You have broken the law and married alien wives, bringing a fresh burden of guilt on Israel. Now make confession to the 8 Lord God of our fathers; do his will 9 and separate yourselves from the heathen population of this land and from your alien wives.'

The whole company answered with a 10 shout: 'We will do as you have said!' 'But', they said, 'our numbers are 11 great, and we cannot stay here in the open in this wintry weather. Nor is this the work of a day or two only; the offence is widespread among us. Let 12 the leaders of the community stay here, and let all members of our settlements who have alien wives attend at an appointed time along with the elders 13 and judges of each place, until we turn away the Lord's anger at what has been done.'

Jonathan son of Azael and Hezekias 14 son of Thocanus took charge on these terms, and Mosollamus, Levi, and Sabbataeus were their assessors. The 15 returned exiles duly carried all this out.

Ezra the priest selected men by name, 16 all chiefs of their clans, and on the new

customs viewed as idolatrous practices; see v. 83 n. 83: *Thou didst say*: the quotation is not found in Scripture, but Lev.18.19-30, dealing with similar practices, contains like language. 9.1: *Joanan* was actually the grandson of *Eliasibus*. 5: *The twentieth of the ninth month*: Kislev (November-December). 6: *Winter had set in*: Ezra 10.9 mentions "heavy rain." 16: *The tenth month* was Tebeth (December-January).



17 moon of the tenth month they sat to investigate the matter. This affair of the men who had alien wives was settled by the new moon of the first month.

18 Among the priests some of those who had come together were found to have alien wives; these were Mathelas, Eleazar, Joribus, and Jodanus of the line of Jeshua son of Josedek and his brothers, who undertook to send away their wives and to offer rams in expiation of their error. Of the line of Emmer: Ananias, Zabdaeus, Manes, Samaeus, Jereel, and Azarias; of the line of Phaesus: Elionas, Massias, Ishmael, Nathanael, Okidelus, and Saloas. Of the Levites: Jozabadus, Semis, Colius (this is Calitas), Phathaeus, Judah, and Jonas. Of the temple singers: Eliasibus, Bacchurus.

25 Of the door-keepers: Sallumus and Tolbanes.

26 Of the people of Israel there were, of the line of Phoros: Jermas, Jeddias, Melchias, Maelus, Elcazar, Asibias, and Bannaeas. Of the line of Ela: Matthanias, Zacharias, Jezrielus, Oabdius, Jeremoth, and Aedias. Of the line of Zamoth: Eliadas, Eliasimus, Othonias, Jarimoth, Sabathus, and Zardaeas. Of the line of Bebae: Joannes, Ananias, Ozabadus, and Emathis. Of the line of Mani: Olamus, Mamuchus, Jedaesus, Jasubus, Asaelus, and Jeremoth. Of the line of Addi: Naathus, Moossias, Laccunus, Naidus, Matthanias, Sesthel, Balnuus, and Manasseas. Of the line of Annas: Elionas, Asaeas, Melchias, Sabbaeas, and Simon Chosomaesus. Of the line of Asom: Altannaesus, Mattathias, Bannaeus, Eliphalat, Manasses, and Semi.

34 Of the line of Baani: Jeremias, Momdis, Ismaerus, Juel, Mandae, Paedias, Anos, Carabasion, Enasibus, Marnitanaemus, Eliasis, Bannus, Eliali, Somis, Selemias, and Nathanas. Of the line of Ezora: Sessis, Ezril, Azael,

35 Samatus, Zambris, and Josephus. Of the line of Nooma: Mazitias, Zaba-

daeas, Edaes, Juel, and Banaeas. All these had married alien wives; they sent them away with their children.

THE PRIESTS, THE LEVITES, AND SUCH 37 Israelites as were in Jerusalem and its vicinity, settled down there on the new moon of the seventh month; the other Israelites remained in their settlements. The entire body assembled as one in the open space before the east gateway of the temple and asked Ezra the high priest and doctor of the law to bring the law of Moses given by the Lord God of Israel. On the new moon of the seventh month he brought the law to all the multitude of men and women alike, and to the priests, for them to hear. He read it in the open space before the temple gateway from daybreak until noon, in the presence of both men and women, and the whole body listened intently. Ezra the priest and doctor of the law stood upon the wooden platform which had been prepared. There stood with him, on his right, Mattathias, Sammus, Ananias, Azarias, Urias, Hezekias, and Baalsamus, and on his left, Phaldaeus, Misael, Melchias, Lothasubus, Nabarias, and Zacharias. Ezra took up the book of the law; everyone could see him, for he was seated in a conspicuous place in front of them all, and when he opened it they all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord God the Most High God of hosts, the Almighty. All the multitude cried 'Amen, Amen', and lifting up their hands fell to the ground and worshipped the Lord. Jeshua, Annus, Sarabias, Jadinus, Jacobus, Sabbataeas, Autaeas, Maeannas, Calitas, Azarias, Jozabodus, Ananias, and Phiathas, the Levites, taught the law of the Lord; they read the law of the Lord to the whole company, at the same time instilling into their minds what was read.

Then the governor<sup>l</sup> said to Ezra the <sup>49</sup>  
i Gk. Attharates.

9.37-55: The reading of the law; parallel to Neh.7.73-8.12. 37,40: The new moon of the seventh month: the first day of Tishri (September-October) was a "day of sacred assembly" (Lev.23.24 and Num.29.1), later called Rosh Hashanah, the New Year festival. 39: High priest: only here is Ezra so designated. 48: They read: contrast v. 41, which states that Ezra read it. Apparently, the Levites relayed Ezra's words to those not within earshot, at the same time adding words of explanation and exhortation. 49: The Heb. of Neh.8.9 reads "Nehemiah the tirshata" (i.e.

high priest and doctor of the law and to each of the Levites who taught the multitude: 'This day is holy to the Lord.' All were weeping as they heard the law. 'Go then, refresh yourselves with rich food and sweet wine, and send shares to those who have none; for the day is holy to the Lord. Let there be no sadness; for the Lord will give you glory.' The Levites issued the

command to all the people: 'This day is holy, do not be sad.' So they all departed to eat and drink and make merry, and to send shares to those who had none, and to hold a great celebration; because the teaching given them had been instilled into their minds.

They gathered together.<sup>1</sup>

*1 Probably the text originally carried on from this point; compare Nehemiah 8. 13.*

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*governor*). Since the name Nehemiah is missing here, the name is probably a late insertion in Neh.8.9 and in 1 Esd.5.40. **51,54**: The merriment and such phrases as *send shares to those who had none* are reminiscent of Esther 9.19 and 22, in connection with the Feast of Purim. **55**: The ending is so abrupt that it is believed that the continuation, probably paralleling Neh.8.13-18 (or further), has been lost.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF ESDRAS

This book is known in the Vulgate as 4 Esdras. *Esdras* is the Greek form of the name *Ezra*, to whom the book is attributed. The Second Book of Esdras is distinctive in the Apocrypha as an apocalyptic book. "Apocalypse" means "unveiling"; and apocalyptic literature usually involves the disclosure of previously unknown truths about reality and the future in visions and highly symbolic language. In this literary genre, the author, under the pseudonym of a famous person of the past, describes events that are taking place in his own day. In this way he tries to console innocent sufferers by showing that what is happening is under God's Providence and that injustices will be reversed at the end of time, which he proceeds to describe as also revealed.

2 Esdras contains a core of seven visions (chs. 3–14). To these were added a prefix (chs. 1–2) and a suffix (chs. 15–16) which differ markedly in content. The core section was probably written by a Palestinian Jew in Hebrew or Aramaic about 100 A.D.; the additions were written in Greek by Christian writers in the second and third centuries respectively.

A small fragment of the Greek has come down to us, but 2 Esdras survives only in ancient translations whose great number and variety reflect the popularity of the book in early centuries.

Echoing Old Testament Job and Habakkuk, the author of 2 Esdras dealt with the problem of human suffering. Though the writer is particularly concerned about the fall of Jerusalem and the triumphs of the persecuting Roman Empire, he also agonizes about the misery of human existence in general, finding some respite only in his conviction of restitution and reward in the world to come.

Roman Catholic tradition excludes 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh from its canon but accepts the rest of the Apocrypha.

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## *Israel's rejection and glory to come*

1 **T**HE SECOND BOOK OF THE PROPHET  
Ezra, son of Seraiah, son of  
Azariah, son of Hilkiyah, son of  
Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,  
2 son of Ahijah, son of Phinehas, son of  
Eli, son of Amariah, son of Aziah, son  
of Marimoth, son of Arna, son of  
Uzzi, son of Borith, son of Abishua,  
3 son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of  
Aaron, of the tribe of Levi.

4 I, EZRA, WAS A CAPTIVE IN MEDIA IN  
the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia,  
5 when the word of the Lord came to  
me: 'Go to my people and proclaim  
their crimes; tell their children how  
they have sinned against me, and let  
6 them tell their children's children. They

have sinned even more than their  
fathers; they have forgotten me and  
sacrificed to alien gods. Was it not I  
7 who rescued them from Egypt, the  
country where they were slaves? And  
yet they have provoked me to anger  
and ignored my warnings.

8 'Now, Ezra, pluck out your hair and  
let calamities loose upon these people  
who have disobeyed my law. They are  
9 beyond correction. How much longer  
shall I endure them, I who have  
lashed on them such benefits? Many  
10 are the kings I have overthrown for  
their sake; I struck down Pharaoh  
with his court and all his army. I  
11 destroyed every nation that stood in  
their way, and in the east I routed the  
peoples of two provinces, Tyre and Sidon,  
and killed all the enemies of Israel.

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1.1–2.48: **Israel's rejection and glory to come.** Israel's past infidelity and its dire consequences are enumerated. God's fidelity is shown in a promised restoration.

1.1–3a: **Ezra's lineage.** The list varies slightly from Ezra 7.1–5 and 1 Esd.8.1–2. 1: *Ezra*, a priest and scribe in the OT (Ezra 7.11), is here termed a *prophet*.

1.3b–11: **Ezra called to prophesy doom.** 3: *Artaxerxes II* ruled from 404 to 359 B.C. 5: *Proclaim their crimes*: make the people aware of their wickedness and condemn it; see Jer.1.16. 8: *Pluck . . . hair*: sign of consternation and grief; see Ezra 9.3. 10: *Pharaoh*: see Exod.14.28. 11: *Tyre and Sidon* were Phoenician cities, to the west of Media and not *east*; Tyre was not destroyed until the time of Alexander (332 B.C.), which was after the reign of Artaxerxes.

12 'Say to them, "These are the words  
13 of the Lord: Was it not I who brought  
you through the sea, and made safe  
roads for you where no road had been?  
I gave you Moses as your leader, and  
14 Aaron as your priest; I gave you light  
from a pillar of fire, and performed  
great miracles among you. And yet  
you have forgotten me, says the Lord.

15 "These are the words of the Lord  
Almighty: I gave you the quails as a  
sign; I gave you a camp for your  
protection. But all you did there was  
16 to grumble and complain—instead of  
celebrating the victory I had given you  
when I destroyed your enemies. From  
that day to this you have never  
17 stopped complaining. Have you for-  
gotten what benefits I conferred on  
you? When you were hungry and  
thirsty in your journey through the  
18 desert, you cried out to me, 'Why have  
you brought us into this desert to kill  
us? Better to have remained in Egypt  
as slaves than to die here in the  
19 desert!' I was grieved by your com-  
plaints, and gave you manna for food;  
20 you ate the bread of angels. When you  
were thirsty, I split open the rock, and  
out flowed water in plenty. Against  
the summer heat I gave you the  
21 shelter of leafy trees. I gave you fertile  
lands to divide among your tribes,  
expelling the Canaanites, Perizzites,  
and Philistines who opposed you.  
What more could I do for you? says  
the Lord.

22 "These are the words of the Lord  
Almighty: When you were in the  
desert, suffering thirst by the stream of  
23 bitter water and cursing me, I did not  
bring down fire upon you for your  
blasphemy; I cast a tree into the  
24 stream and made the water sweet. What  
am I to do with you, Jacob? Judah,  
you have refused to obey me. I will  
turn to other nations; I will give them  
my name, and they will keep my

statutes. Because you have deserted 25  
me, I will desert you; when you cry for  
mercy, I will show you none; when 26  
you pray to me, I will not listen. You  
have stained your hands with blood;  
you run hot-foot to commit murder.  
It is not I whom you have deserted, but 27  
yourselves, says the Lord.

"These are the words of the Lord 28  
Almighty: Have I not pleaded with  
you as a father with his sons, as a  
mother with her daughters or a nurse  
with her children? Have I not said, 'Be 29  
my people, and I will be your God; be  
my sons, and I will be your father'? I 30  
gathered you as a hen gathers her  
chickens under her wings. But now  
what am I to do with you? I will toss  
you away. When you offer me sacrifice, 31  
I will turn from you; I have rejected  
your feasts, your new moons, and your  
circumcisions. I sent you my servants 32  
the prophets, but you took them and  
killed them, and mutilated their dead  
bodies. For their murder I will call you  
to account, says the Lord.

"These are the words of the Lord 33  
Almighty: Your house is abandoned. I  
will toss you away like straw before the  
wind. Your children shall have no 34  
posterity, because like you they have  
ignored my commandments and done  
what I have condemned. I will hand 35  
over your home to a people soon to  
come; a people who will trust me,  
though they have not known me; who  
will do my bidding, though I gave  
them no signs; who never saw the 36  
prophets, and yet will keep in mind  
what the prophets taught of old. I vow 37  
that this people yet to come shall have  
my favour. Their little ones shall jump  
for joy. They have not seen me with  
their eyes, but they shall perceive by  
the spirit and believe all that I have  
said."

'Now, father Ezra, look with triumph 38  
at the nation coming from the east.

1.12–21: God's past mercies recounted; these are events of the Exodus. 13: See Exod.14.29; 3.10; 28.1. 14: See Exod.13.21. 15: See Exod.16.13. 18: See Num.14.2–3. 19: See Ps.78.25. 20: See Num.20.11.

1.22–32: Israel to be rejected. 22–23: See Exod.15.22–25. 24: I will turn to other nations: compare Mt.21.43. Reflections of NT here show that the author of this preface was a Christian. 30–32: Compare Mt.23.34–37.

1.33–40: A new people replaces Israel. 35–37: A people: Gentile Christians; compare 1 Cor.2.6–15. 38: Father: in rabbinic Judaism, Ezra is equated in eminence with both the patriarchs and prophets.

39 The leaders I shall give them are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Hosea and Amos, Micah and Joel, Obadiah  
40 and Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah, and Malachi, who is also called the Lord's Messenger.

2 'These are the words of the Lord: I freed this people from slavery, and gave them commandments through my servants the prophets; but they shut their ears to the prophets, and let my  
2 precepts become a dead letter. The mother who bore them says to them: "Go, my sons; I am widowed and  
3 deserted. Joyfully I brought you up; I have lost you with grief and sorrow, because you have sinned against the Lord God and done what I know to  
4 be wrong. What can I do for you now, widowed and deserted as I am? Go, my sons, ask the Lord for mercy."  
5 Now I call upon you, father Ezra, to add your testimony to hers, that her children have refused to keep my  
6 covenant; and let your words bring confusion on them. May their mother be despoiled, and may they themselves  
7 have no posterity. Condemn them to be scattered among the nations, and their name to vanish from the earth, because they have spurned my covenant.

8 'Woe to you, Assyria, for harbouring sinners! Remember, you wicked nation, what I did to Sodom and Gomorrah:  
9 their land lies buried under lumps of pitch and heaps of ashes. That is how I will deal with those who have disobeyed me, says the Lord Almighty.

10 'These are the words of the Lord to Ezra: Tell my people that I will give to them the kingdom of Jerusalem which  
11 once I offered to Israel. I will withdraw the splendour of my presence from Israel, and the home that was to be

theirs for ever I will give to my own people. The tree of life shall spread its  
12 fragrance over them; they shall not toil or grow weary. Ask, and you shall  
13 receive; so pray that your short time of waiting may be made shorter still. The kingdom is ready for you now; be on the watch! Call heaven, call earth, to  
14 witness: I have cancelled the evil and brought the good into being; for I am the Living One, says the Lord.

'Mother, cherish your sons. Rear  
15 them joyfully as a dove rears her nestlings; teach them to walk without stumbling. You are my chosen one, says the Lord. I will raise up the dead  
16 from their resting-places, and bring them out of their tombs, for I have acknowledged that they bear my name. Have no fear, mother of many sons; I  
17 have chosen you, says the Lord.

'I will send my servants Isaiah  
18 and Jeremiah to help you. As they prophesied, I have set you apart to be my people. I have made ready for you twelve trees laden with different kinds  
19 of fruit, twelve fountains flowing with milk and honey, and seven great mountains covered with roses and lilies. There will I fill your sons with  
20 joy. Champion the widow, defend the cause of the fatherless, give to the poor, protect the orphan, clothe the naked. Care for the weak and the helpless, and  
21 do not mock at the cripple; watch over the disabled, and bring the blind to the vision of my brightness. Keep safe  
22 within your walls both old and young.

'When you find the dead unburied,  
23 mark them with the sign and commit them to the tomb; and then, when I cause the dead to rise, I will give you the chief place. Be calm, my people; for  
24 your time of rest shall come. Care for your children like a good nurse, and train them to walk without falling. Of  
26

2.1-9: God to destroy sinful Israel. 6: Jerusalem, Israel's "mother city" (see Ezek. ch. 16), was despoiled in 70 A.D. The writer views this as just retribution. 8: Assyria probably stands for Rome. Sodom: see Gen.19.24-25.

2.10-14: Israel's place given to others. 10: My people: the new people of 1.24,35,38. 12: Tree of life: see Rev.2.7 n.; 22.2,14. 13: Ask: compare Mt.7.7; time of waiting: Mt.24.22; kingdom: Mt.25.34.

2.15-32: The new people exhorted. The church, addressed as mother (contrast 2.6), is admonished to good works (vv. 20-25) and patient endurance (vv. 26-32). 18: Send... Isaiah and Jeremiah: compare 1.39-40. As they prophesied: see Isa.65.1. Twelve trees: possibly an allusion to the twelve apostles. Seven mountains: seven deacons of the early church; compare Acts 6.1-6. 23: To bury the dead was an act of piety; the sign was possibly a Christian symbol

my servants whom I have given you not one shall be lost; I will demand them back from among your number.

27 Do not be anxious when the time of trouble and hardship comes; others shall lament and be sad, but you shall

28 have happiness and plenty. All nations shall envy you, but shall be powerless against you, says the Lord.

29 'My power shall protect you, and

30 save your sons from hell. Be joyful, mother, you and your sons, for I will

31 come to your rescue. Remember your children who sleep in the grave; I will bring them up from the depths of the earth, and show mercy to them; for I

32 am merciful, says the Lord Almighty. Cherish your children until I come, and proclaim my mercy to them; for my favour flows abundantly from springs that will never run dry.'

33 I, EZRA, RECEIVED ON MOUNT HOREB A commission from the Lord to go to Israel; but when I came, they scorned me and rejected the Lord's commandment. Therefore I say to you Gentiles, you who hear and understand: 'Look forward to the coming of your shepherd, and he will give you everlasting rest; for he who is to come at the end

35 of the world is close at hand. Be ready to receive the rewards of the kingdom; for light perpetual will shine upon you

36 for ever and ever. Flee from the shadow of this world, and receive the joy and splendour that await you. I

37 bear witness openly to my Saviour. It is he whom the Lord has appointed; receive him and be joyful, giving thanks to the One who has summoned you to

38 the heavenly realms. Rise, stand up, and see the whole company of those

who bear the Lord's mark and sit at his table. They have moved out of the shadow of this world and have received shining robes from the Lord. Receive, O Zion, your full number, and close the roll of those arrayed in white who have faithfully kept the law of the Lord. The number of your sons whom you so long desired is now complete. Pray that the Lord's kingdom may come, so that your people, whom he summoned when the world began, may be set apart as his own.'

I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a crowd too large to count, all singing hymns of praise to the Lord. In the middle stood a very tall young man, taller than all the rest, who was setting a crown on the head of each one of them; he stood out above them all. I was enthralled at the sight, and asked the angel, 'Sir, who are these?' He replied, 'They are those who have laid aside their mortal dress and put on the immortal, those who acknowledged the name of God. Now they are being given crowns and palms.' And I asked again, 'Who is the young man setting crowns on their heads and giving them palms?'; and the angel replied, 'He is the Son of God, whom they acknowledged in this mortal life.' I began to praise those who had stood so valiantly for the Lord's name. Then the angel said to me: 'Go and tell my people all the great and wonderful acts of the Lord God that you have seen.'

### *The mystery of human destiny*

IN THE THIRTIETH YEAR AFTER THE FALL 3  
of Jerusalem, I, Salathiel (who am also

which identified the dead person as belonging to God's "people" (v. 38) and so protected by him; see Rev.14.1. 29: *Hell*: lit. Gehenna, place of torment; compare Mk.9.42-48.

2.33-48: Ezra turns to Gentiles, envisioning a faithful multitude. This is the most overtly Christian section of the book. 33: Ezra receives his *commission* as the leader of the "new people of God" at *Mount Horeb* where Moses was called; see Exod.3.1-12. 34: The early Christians believed that *the end of the world* and the second coming of Jesus were *close at hand*; see 1 Thess.4.15-18; 2 Thess.2.1-2. 36: *The shadow of this world* is the aspect of the world that passes away or changes; compare 1 Cor.7.29-31; 1 Jn.2.15-17. 38: *To sit at table* may be a symbol for accepting Christianity (Lk.14.15-24; Rev.19.9) or for the Eucharist (see 1 Cor.10.21; 11.17-32). 40-41: *The full number* of the righteous is regarded as determined by God. See 4.36-37 and compare Rev.6.11. 42: *On Mount Zion*: compare Heb.12.22-23. *A crowd ... singing*: compare Rev.7.9-12.

3.1-5.19: *Vision I*. 1-36: A difficult question is raised in these verses. Why does God allow Israel to suffer at the hands of a more wicked people? The writer prefaces the question by a survey of history stressing the origin of sin and the election of Israel. 1: Mention of *the thirtieth*

Ezra), was in Babylon. As I lay on my bed I was troubled; my mind was filled with perplexity, as I considered the desolation of Zion and the prosperity of those who lived in Babylon. My spirit was deeply disturbed; and I uttered my fears to the Most High. 'My Lord, my Master,' I said, 'was it not you, and you alone, who in the beginning spoke the word that formed the world? You commanded the dust, and Adam appeared. His body was lifeless; but yours were the hands that had moulded it, and into it you breathed the breath of life. So you made him a living person. You led him into paradise, which you yourself had planted before the earth came into being. You gave him your one commandment to obey; he disobeyed it, and thereupon you made him subject to death, him and his descendants.

'From him were born nations and tribes, peoples and families, too numerous to count. Each nation went its own way, sinning against you and scorning you; and you did not stop them. But then again, in due time, you brought the flood upon the inhabitants of the earth and destroyed them. The same doom came upon all: death upon Adam, and the flood upon that generation. One man you spared—Noah, with his household, and all his righteous descendants.

'The population of the earth increased; families and peoples multiplied, nation upon nation. But then once again they began to sin, more wickedly than those before them. When they sinned, you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; him you loved, and to him alone,

secretly, at dead of night, you showed how the world would end. You made an everlasting covenant with him and promised never to abandon his descendants. You gave him Isaac, and to Isaac you gave Jacob and Esau; of these you chose Jacob for yourself and rejected Esau; and Jacob grew to be a great nation.

'You rescued his descendants from Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai. There you bent the sky, shook the earth, moved the round world, made the depths shudder, and turned creation upside down. Your glory passed through the four gates of fire and earthquake, wind and frost; and you gave the commandments of the law to the Israelites, the race of Jacob. But you did not take away their wicked heart and enable your law to bear fruit in them. For the first man, Adam, was burdened with a wicked heart; he sinned and was overcome, and not only he but all his descendants. So the weakness became inveterate. Although your law was in your people's hearts, a rooted wickedness was there too; so that the good came to nothing, and what was bad persisted.

'Years went by, and when the time came you raised up a servant for yourself, whose name was David. You told him to build the city that bears your name and there offer to you in sacrifice what was already your own. This was done for many years; until the inhabitants of the city went astray, behaving just like Adam and all his line; for they had the same wicked heart. And so you gave your own city over to your enemies.

*a So some Vss.: Lat. fixed.*

year after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, i.e. 557/556 B.C. (see Jer.52.4-11; compare Ezek.1.1), may suggest that the book was written thirty years after the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 A.D. *Salathiel* is the Gk. form of Shealtiel, oldest son of King Jehoiachin and father of Zerubbabel (1 Chr.3.17; Ezra 3.2). *Ezra* flourished a century after Shealtiel; the erroneous identification of the two may be an interpolation. 4-7: Gen. chs. 1-3. According to rabbinic tradition, *paradise* was created before the *earth*. 7: That Adam's sin made *him and his descendants subject to death* became heightened into the doctrine of "original sin." The view here is the earliest recording in Jewish literature; see vv. 20-22 for a fuller statement. 15: The author stresses that God made an *everlasting covenant* with a representative of the fallen race, Abraham; see Gen.15.18; 17.2-8. 19: Speaking of God's appearance at Sinai (see Exod.19.16-18; Ps.68.7-8), the writer identifies *fire and earthquake, wind and frost* as *four gates* of heavenly regions, perhaps the gates of the four lowest of the "seven heavens" known in Jewish tradition. 20: The *wicked heart* is the rabbinical "evil *yezer*" or "evil inclination," considered, like its counterpart, the "good *yezer*," to be implanted in man. That God had given Israel a law, but had not removed the evil nature inherited from Adam, the obstacle to its

28 'I said to myself: "Perhaps those in  
Babylon lead better lives, and that is  
29 why they have conquered Zion." But  
when I arrived here, I saw more  
wickedness than I could reckon, and  
these thirty years I have seen many  
evil-doers with my own eyes. My  
30 heart sank, because I saw how you  
tolerate sinners and spare the godless;  
how you have destroyed your own  
people, but protected your enemies.  
31 You have given no hint whatever to  
anyone how to understand your ways.<sup>b</sup>  
Is Babylon more virtuous than Zion?  
32 Has any nation except Israel ever  
known you? What tribes have put their  
trust in your covenants as the tribes of  
33 Jacob have? But they have seen no  
reward, no fruit for their pains. I have  
travelled up and down among the  
nations, and have seen how they  
prosper, heedless though they are of  
34 your commandments. So weigh our sins  
in the balance against the sins of the  
rest of the world; and it will be clear  
35 which way the scale tips. Has there  
ever been a time when the inhabitants  
of the earth did not sin against you?  
Has any nation ever kept your com-  
36 mandments like Israel? You may find  
one man here, one there; but nowhere  
a whole nation.'

4 The angel who was sent to me, whose  
2 name was Uriel, replied: 'You are at a  
loss to explain this world; do you then  
expect to understand the ways of the  
3 Most High?' 'Yes, my lord,' I replied.  
'I have been sent to propound to you  
three of the ways of this world,' he  
continued, 'to give you three illustra-  
4 tions. If you can explain to me any one  
of them, then I will answer your  
question about the way of the Most  
High, and teach you why the heart is  
wicked.'

5 I said, 'Speak, my lord.' 'Come  
then,' he said, 'weigh me a pound of

fire, measure me a bushel<sup>c</sup> of wind, or  
call back a day that has passed.'

'How can you ask me to do that?' I <sup>6</sup>  
replied; 'no man on earth can do it.'  
He said: 'Suppose I had asked you, <sup>7</sup>  
'How many dwellings are there in the  
heart of the sea? or how many streams  
to feed the deep? or how many water-  
courses above the vault of heaven?  
Where are the paths out of the grave,  
and the roads into<sup>d</sup> paradise?', you <sup>8</sup>  
might then have replied, "I have never  
been down into the deep, I have not  
yet gone down into the grave, I have  
never gone up into heaven." But, as it <sup>9</sup>  
is, I have only asked you about fire,  
about wind, and about yesterday,  
things you are bound to have met; and  
yet you have failed to tell me the  
answers.

'If then,' he went on, 'you cannot <sup>10</sup>  
understand things you have grown up  
with, how can your small capacity <sup>11</sup>  
comprehend the ways of the Most  
High? A man corrupted by the  
corrupt world can never know the way  
of the incorruptible.'<sup>e</sup>

When I heard that, I fell<sup>f</sup> prostrate <sup>12</sup>  
and exclaimed: 'Better never to have  
come into existence than be born into a  
world of wickedness and suffering  
which we cannot explain!' He replied, <sup>13</sup>  
'I went out into a wood, and the trees  
of the forest were making a plan. They <sup>14</sup>  
said, "Come, let us make war on the  
sea, force it to retreat, and win ground  
for more woods." The waves of the sea <sup>15</sup>  
made a similar plan: they said, "Come,  
let us attack the trees of the forest,  
conquer them, and annex their terri-  
16 tory." The plan made by the trees came  
to nothing, for fire came and burnt  
them down. The plan made by the <sup>17</sup>

<sup>b</sup> how . . . ways: so some Vss.; Lat. obscure.

<sup>c</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. the blast.

<sup>d</sup> the grave . . . into: so some Vss.; Lat. omits.

<sup>e</sup> A man . . . incorruptible: reading based on other  
Vss.; Lat. obscure.

<sup>f</sup> When . . . fell: so some Vss.; Lat. defective.

obedience, adds a new dimension to the writer's troubling question. 28: *Babylon* stands for Rome as in Rev.14.8. 30: Having laid the foundation, the writer now poses his question in words reminiscent of Hab.1.12-17.

4.1-5.19: The response: Man cannot comprehend God's ways. The human spirit is limited. The future age will show the answer. 1: *Uriel* ("God is my light") is one of seven archangels who are God's "watchers" in Enoch 20.1. 4: *If you can explain*: Echoing Job chs.38-41, the passage goes on to stress man's total inability to understand God's ways (v. 11). 7: *The vault of heaven* (Gen.1.6-7) was considered to support a reservoir of water fed by *watercourses*; compare Ps.29.10.

4.12-21: Parable of sea and forest depicts the folly of the quest. 21: Compare Isa.55.8-9.



waves failed just as badly, for the sand stood its ground and blocked their way. If you had to judge between the two, which would you pronounce right, and which wrong?

I answered, 'Both were wrong; their plans were impossible, for the land is assigned to the trees, and to the sea is allotted a place for its waves.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'you have judged rightly. Why then have you failed to do so with your own question? Just as the land belongs to the trees and the sea to the waves, so men on earth can understand earthly things and nothing else; only those who live<sup>g</sup> above the skies can understand the things above the skies.'

'But tell me, my lord,' I said, 'why then have I been given the faculty of understanding? My question is not about the distant heavens, but about the things which happen every day before our eyes. Why has Israel been made a byword among the Gentiles; why has the people you loved been put at the mercy of godless nations? Why has the law of our fathers been brought to nothing, and the written covenants made a dead letter? We pass like a flight of locusts, our life is but a vapour, and we are not worth the Lord's pity, though we bear his name; what then will he do for us? These are my questions.'

He answered: 'If you survive, you will see; if you live long enough, you will marvel.<sup>h</sup> For this present age is quickly passing away; it is full of sorrow and frailties, too full to enjoy what is promised in due time for the godly. The evil about which you ask me has been sown, but its reaping has not yet come. Until the crop of evil has been reaped as well as sown, until the ground where it was sown has vanished, there will be no room for the field which has been sown with the good. A grain of the evil seed was sown in the heart of Adam from the first; how

much godlessness has it produced already! How much more will it produce before the harvest! Reckon this up: if one grain of evil seed has produced so great a crop of godlessness, how vast a harvest will there be when good seeds beyond number have been sown!

I asked, 'But when? How long have we to wait? Why are our lives so short and so miserable?' He replied, 'Do not be in a greater hurry than the Most High himself. You are in a hurry for yourself alone; the Most High for many. Are not these the very questions which were asked by the righteous in the storehouse of souls: "How long must we stay here? When will the harvest begin, the time when we get our reward?" And the archangel Jeremiel gave them this answer: "As soon as the number of those like yourselves is complete. For the Lord has weighed the world in a balance, he has measured and numbered the ages; he will move nothing, alter nothing, until the appointed number is achieved."'

'But, my lord, my master,' I replied, 'we are all of us sinners through and through. Can it be that because of us, because of the sins of mankind, the harvest and the reward of the just are delayed?' 'Go,' he said, 'ask a pregnant woman whether she can keep the child in her womb any longer after the nine months are complete.' 'No, my lord,' I said, 'she cannot.' He went on: 'The storehouses of souls in the world below are like the womb. As a woman in travail is impatient to see the end of her labour, so they are impatient to give back all the souls committed to them since time began. Then all your questions will be answered.'

I said, 'If it is possible for you to tell and for me to understand, will you be gracious enough to disclose one thing more: which is the longer—the future

<sup>g</sup> Or he who lives.

<sup>h</sup> So one Vs.; Lat. live, you will often marvel.

4.22–25: The seer objects, continues to question.

4.26–32: The future age to show the answer. 30: *Evil seed*: the evil *yeşer*. See 3.20 n.

4.33–50: The seer asks when the new age will dawn. 35: Talmudic sources speak of a *storehouse of souls* of the righteous dead beneath the throne of God. 36: *The archangel Jeremiel*: probably the archangel *Remiel* of Enoch 20.1–8. 37: *The appointed number*: see 2.40–41 n. 44: *Which is the longer*: the seer seeks to determine the end-time more closely.

46 still to come, or the past that has gone  
47 by? What is past I know, but not what  
48 is still to be.<sup>7</sup> 'Come and stand on my  
right,' he said; 'you shall see a vision,  
and I will explain what it means.'

48 So I stood and watched, and there  
passed before my eyes a blazing fire;  
when the flames had disappeared from  
sight, there was still some smoke left.  
49 After that a dark rain-cloud passed  
before me; there was a heavy storm,  
and when it had gone over, there were  
50 still some raindrops left. 'Reflect on  
this', said the angel. 'The shower of  
rain filled a far greater space than the  
drops of water, and the fire more than  
the smoke. In the same way, the past  
far exceeds the future in length; what  
remains is but raindrops and smoke.'

51 'Pray tell me,' I said, 'do you think  
that I shall live to see those days? Or  
52 in whose lifetime will they come?' 'If  
you ask me what signs will herald  
them,' he said, 'I can tell you in part.  
But the length of your own life I am  
not commissioned to tell you; of that I  
know nothing.'

5 'But now to speak of the signs: there  
will come a time when the inhabitants  
of the earth will be seized with panic.<sup>4</sup>  
The way of truth will be hidden from  
sight, and the land will be barren of  
2 faith. There will be a great increase in  
wickedness, worse than anything you  
3 now see or have ever heard of. The  
country you now see governing the  
world will become a trackless desert,  
4 laid waste for all to see. After the  
third period (if the Most High grants  
you a long enough life) you will see  
confusion everywhere. The sun will  
suddenly begin to shine in the middle  
of the night, and the moon in the  
5 day-time. Trees will drip blood, stones  
will speak, nations will be in confusion,  
and the courses of the stars will be  
6 changed. A king unwelcome to the  
inhabitants of earth will succeed to the  
throne; even the birds will all fly away.

The Dead Sea will cast up fish, and at 7  
night a voice will sound, unknown to  
the many but heard by all.<sup>7</sup> Chasms<sup>k</sup> 8  
will open in many places and spurt out  
flames incessantly. Wild beasts will  
range far afield, women will give birth  
to monsters, fresh springs will run with 9  
salt water, and everywhere friends will  
become enemies. Then understanding  
will be hidden, and reason withdraw to  
her secret chamber. Many will seek her, 10  
but not find her; the earth will overflow  
with vice and wickedness. One country 11  
will ask another, "Has justice passed  
your way, or any just man?", and it  
will answer, "No." In those days men 12  
will hope, but hope in vain; they will  
strive, but never succeed.

'These are the signs I am allowed to 13  
tell you. But turn again to prayer,  
continue to weep and fast for seven  
days; and then you shall hear further  
signs, even greater than these.'

I awoke with a start, shuddering; my 14  
spirit faltered, and I was near to  
fainting. But the angel who had come 15  
and talked to me gave me support and  
strength, and set me on my feet.

The next night Phaltiel, the leader 16  
of the people, came to me. 'Where  
have you been?' he asked, 'and why  
that sad look? Have you forgotten that 17  
Israel in exile has been entrusted  
to your care? Rouse yourself, take 18  
nourishment. Do not abandon us like a  
shepherd abandoning his flock to  
savagely wolves.' I replied: 'Leave me; 19  
for seven days do not come near me,  
then you may come again.' When he  
heard this, he left me.

FOR SEVEN DAYS I FASTED, WITH TEARS 20  
and lamentations, as the angel Uriel  
had told me to do. By the end of the 21  
seven days my mind was again deeply  
disturbed, but I recovered the power 22

*i* So some Vss.; Lat. corrupt.

*j* Some Vss.; read and at night one whom the many  
do not know will utter his voice, and all will hear it.

*k* So one Vss.; Lat. Chaos.

4.51-5.12: Signs of end-time revealed. Compare Mt.24.4-35; Mk.13.3-31; Lk.21.7-33.  
5.3: The country . . . governing is Rome. 6: Birds were thought capable of foreseeing disaster.  
7: Fish cannot live in the Dead Sea.

5.13-19: Vision ended, but further revelations promised. 13: Fasting accompanied by prayer  
and weeping seems to be set forth as a condition for receiving divine revelation. See 5.20;  
6.35; 9.24; 12.51. 14: I awoke: from the dream vision. 17-18: The seer was regarded as the last  
prophet left in Babylon (12.42) to whom Israel was entrusted.

5.20-6.34: Vision II. 5.20-55: The seer's complaint and God's response. 20: Fasted: see 5.13 n.

of thought and spoke once more to the Most High.

23 'My Lord, my Master,' I said, 'out of all the forests of the earth, and all their trees, you have chosen one vine; 24 from all the lands in the whole world you have chosen one plot; and out of all the flowers in the whole world you 25 have chosen one lily. From all the depths of the sea you have filled one stream for yourself, and of all the cities ever built you have set Zion apart 26 as your own. From all the birds that were created you have named one dove, and from all the animals that were fashioned you have taken one 27 sheep. Out of all the countless nations, you have adopted one for your own, and to this chosen people you have given the law which all men have 28 approved. Why then, Lord, have you put this one people at the mercy of so many? Why have you humiliated' this one stock more than all others, and scattered your own people among the 29 hordes of heathen? Those who reject your promises have trampled on the 30 people who trust your covenants. If you so hate your people, they should be punished by your own hand.'

31 When I had finished speaking, the angel who had visited me that previous 32 night was sent to me again. 'Listen to me,' he said, 'and I will give you instruction. Attend carefully, and I 33 will tell you more.' 'Speak on, my lord', I replied.

He said to me, 'You are in great sorrow of heart for Israel's sake. Do you love Israel more than Israel's 34 Maker does?' 'No, my lord,' I said, 'but sorrow has forced me to speak; my heart is tortured every hour as I try to understand the ways of the Most High and to fathom some part of his judgements.'

35 He said to me, 'You cannot.' 'Why not, my lord?' I asked. 'Why then was I born? Why could not my mother's

womb have been my grave? Then I should never have seen Jacob's trials and the weariness of the race of Israel.'

He said to me, 'Count me those who 36 are not yet born, collect the scattered drops of rain, and make the withered flowers bloom again; unlock me the 37 storehouses and let loose the winds shut up there; or make visible the shape of a voice. Then I will answer your question about Israel's trials.'

'My lord, my master,' I said, 'how 38 can there be anyone with such knowledge except the One whose home is not among men? I am only a fool; how 39 then can I answer your questions?'

He said to me, 'Just as you cannot 40 do any of the things I have put to you, so you will not be able to find out my judgements or the ultimate purpose of the love I have promised to my people.'

I said, 'But surely, lord, your 41 promise<sup>m</sup> is to those who are alive at the end. What is to be the fate of those who lived before us, or of ourselves, or of those who come after us?'

He said to me, 'I will compare the 42 judgement to a circle: the latest will not be too late, nor the earliest too early.'

To this I replied, 'Could you not 43 have made all men, past, present, and future, at one and the same time? Then you could have held your assize with less delay.' But he answered, 'The 44 creation may not go faster than the Creator, nor could the world support at the same time all those created to live on it.'

'But, my lord,' I said, 'you have told 45 me that you will at one and the same time restore to life every creature you have made; how can that be? If it is going to be possible for all of them to be alive at the same time and for the world to support them all, then it

<sup>l</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. prepared.  
<sup>m</sup> So one Vs.; Lat. obscure.

23-30: Drawing from OT imagery, the author stresses Israel's election as God's *chosen people*, v. 27. 35: The seer is told that God's ways are beyond human comprehension. *Womb . . . grave*: compare Job 3.11; 10.18-19. 36-40: Compare Job 38.24,28,34. If one cannot comprehend earthly things, how can he understand divine judgments? 40: Instead of the angel (v. 31) God himself speaks to the troubled seer during the rest of Vision II. Such variation is found elsewhere (as in Gen. ch. 22) and is of limited significance, or none at all.

5.41-55: The seer asks about the end-time. 42: Just as no one is first or last or in the middle of

could support all of them together  
 46 now.' 'Put your question in terms of a woman's womb', he replied. 'Say to a woman, "If you give birth to ten children, why do you do so at intervals? Why not give birth to ten at one and  
 47 the same time?"' 'No, my lord, she cannot do that,' I said; 'the births must  
 48 take place at intervals.' 'True,' he answered; 'and I have made the earth's  
 49 womb to bring forth at intervals those conceived in it. An infant cannot give  
 50 birth, nor can a woman who is too old; and I have made the same rule for the  
 51 world I have created.'  
 52 I continued my questions. 'Since you have opened the way,' I said, 'may I  
 53 now ask: is our mother that you speak of still young, or is she already  
 54 growing old?' He replied, 'Ask any  
 55 mother why the children she has lately borne are not like those born earlier,  
 56 but smaller. And she will tell you, "Those who were born in the vigour  
 57 of my youth are very different from those born in my old age, when my  
 58 womb is beginning to fail." Think of it  
 59 then like this: if you are smaller than those born before you, and those who  
 60 follow you are smaller still, the reason is that creation is growing old and  
 61 losing the strength of youth.'  
 62 I said to him, 'If I have won your favour, my lord, show me through  
 63 whom you will visit your creation.' He said to me, 'Think of the beginning of  
 64 this earth: the gates of the world had not yet been set up; no winds gathered  
 65 and blew, no thunder pealed, no lightning flashed; the foundations of  
 66 paradise were not yet laid, nor were its fair flowers there to see; the powers  
 67 that move the stars were not established, nor the countless hosts of angels  
 68 assembled, nor the vast tracts of air set up on high; the divisions of the  
 69 firmaments had not received their names. Zion had not yet been chosen  
 70 as God's own footstool; the present

age had not been planned; the schemes of its sinners had not yet been outlawed, nor had God's seal yet been set on those who have stored up a treasure of fidelity. Then did I think my  
 71 thought; and the whole world was created through me and through me  
 72 alone. In the same way, through me and through me alone the end shall  
 73 come.'

'Tell me', I went on, 'about the  
 74 interval that divides the ages. When will the first age end and the next age  
 75 begin?' He said, 'The interval will be  
 76 no bigger than that between Abraham and Abraham; for Jacob and Esau  
 77 were his descendants, and Jacob's hand was grasping Esau's heel at the  
 78 moment of their birth. Esau represents  
 79 the end of the first age, and Jacob the beginning of the next age. The  
 80 beginning of a man is his hand, and the end of a man is his heel.<sup>n</sup> Between the  
 81 heel and the hand, Ezra, do not look for any interval.'

'My lord, my master,' I said, 'if I  
 82 have won your favour, make known to me the last of your signs, of which  
 83 you showed me a part that former night.'

'Rise to your feet,' he replied, 'and  
 84 you will hear a loud resounding voice. When it speaks, do not be frightened  
 85 if the place where you stand trembles and shakes; it speaks of the end, and  
 86 the earth's foundations will understand that it is speaking of them. They will  
 87 tremble and shake; for they know that at the end they must be transformed.'  
 88 On hearing this I rose to my feet and listened; and a voice began to speak.  
 89 Its sound was like the sound of rushing waters. The voice said:

'The time draws near when I shall  
 90 come to judge those who live on the earth, the time when I shall inquire  
 91 into the wickedness of wrong-doers,

<sup>n</sup> The beginning of a man . . . heel: reading based on other Vss.; Lat. defective.

those standing on a circle's circumference, so God's judgment embraces living and dead in a simultaneous action. 50-55: That creation is growing old, hence, soon to end, is shown by the smaller stature of recent generations.

5.56-6.34: Questions concerning the end-time. 6.6: See Gen. chs. 1 and 2; contrast Jn.1.3. 7-10: As Jacob's hand grasped Esau's heel without interval (see Gen.25.26), so the new age will follow this one immediately. 12: Compare 5.1-12. 17: The roar of the rushing waters voices God's great power and majesty. See Ezek.1.24; Rev.1.15; 14.2; compare Ps.29.3-4.

the time when Zion's humiliation will  
 20 be over, the time when a seal will be  
 set on the age about to pass away.  
 Then I will perform these signs: the  
 books shall be opened in the sight of  
 heaven, and all shall see them at the  
 21 same moment. Children only one year  
 old shall be able to talk, and pregnant  
 women shall give birth to premature  
 babes of three and four months, who  
 22 shall live and leap about. Fields that  
 were sown shall suddenly prove un-  
 sown, and barns that were full shall  
 23 suddenly be found empty. There shall be  
 a loud trumpet-blast and it shall  
 24 strike terror into all who hear it. At  
 that time friends shall make war on  
 friends as though they were enemies,  
 and the earth and all its inhabitants  
 shall be terrified. Running streams shall  
 stand still; for three hours they shall  
 cease to flow.  
 25 'Whoever is left after all that I have  
 foretold, he shall be preserved, and  
 shall see the deliverance that I bring  
 26 and the end of this world of mine. They  
 shall all see the men who were taken up  
 into heaven without ever knowing  
 death. Then shall men on earth feel a  
 change of heart and come to a better  
 27 mind. Wickedness shall be blotted out  
 and deceit destroyed, but fidelity shall  
 28 flourish, corruption be overcome, and  
 truth, so long unfruitful, be brought to  
 light.'  
 29 While the voice was speaking to me,  
 the ground under me began to quake.<sup>o</sup>  
 30 Then the angel said to me, 'These,  
 then, are the revelations I have  
 31 brought you this night.<sup>p</sup> If once again  
 you pray and fast for seven days, then  
 I will return to tell you even greater  
 32 things.<sup>q</sup> For be sure your voice has  
 been heard by the Most High. The  
 Mighty God has seen your integrity  
 and the chastity you have observed all  
 33 your life. That is why he has sent me

to you with all these revelations, and  
 with this message: "Be confident, and  
 have no fear. Do not rush too quickly  
 34 into unprofitable thoughts now in the  
 present age; then you will not act  
 hastily when the last age comes."

THEREUPON I WEPT AND FASTED AGAIN 35  
 for seven days in the same way as  
 before, thus completing the three  
 weeks enjoined on me. On the eighth 36  
 night I was again disturbed at heart,  
 and spoke to the Most High. With 37  
 spirit aflame and in great agony of  
 mind I said: 38

'O Lord, at the beginning of creation  
 you spoke the word. On the first day  
 you said, "Let heaven and earth be  
 made!", and your word carried out its  
 work. At that time the hovering spirit 39  
 was there, and darkness circled round;  
 there was silence, no sound as yet of  
 human voice.' Then you commanded a 40  
 ray of light to be brought out of your  
 store-chambers, to make your works  
 visible from that time onwards. On the 41  
 second day you created the angel<sup>s</sup> of  
 the firmament, and commanded him  
 to make a dividing barrier between the  
 waters, one part withdrawing upwards  
 and the other remaining below. On the 42  
 third day you ordered the waters to  
 collect in a seventh part of the earth;  
 the other six parts you made into dry  
 land, and from it kept some to be  
 sown and tilled for your service. Your 43  
 word went forth, and at once the work  
 was done. A vast profusion of fruits 44  
 appeared instantly, of every kind and  
 taste that can be desired, with flowers  
 of the most subtle colours and  
 mysterious scents. These were made on  
 the third day. On the fourth day by 45

<sup>o</sup> the ground . . . quake: reading based on other Vss.;

<sup>p</sup> Lat. obscure.

<sup>q</sup> So one Vss.; Lat. this coming night.

<sup>r</sup> So other Vss.; Lat. adds in the day-time.

<sup>s</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. adds from you.

<sup>t</sup> Literally spirit.

20: Books: heavenly records of human deeds; see Dan.7.10; Rev.20.12. 23: Trumpet-blast: see 1 Cor.15.52; 1 Th.4.16 n. 26: Enoch (Gen.5.24) and Elijah (2 Kgs.2.11) did not experience death. Mal.4.5-6 pictures a second Elijah who leads men to repent, i.e. to feel a change of heart. 29: The quaking of the ground makes known God's presence in power; see Isa.6.4; Jer.10.10. 31: Fast: see 5.13 n.

6.35-9.25: Vision III. More questions about the end-time.

6.35-59: Was the world created for Israel? 35: The three weeks: apparently a week of fasting preceded each of the first three visions. 38-54: Compare Gen. ch. 1. 41: A Jewish belief that God governed the elements of the universe as well as people and nations through angels was widespread at this time; hence, Gen.1.6 is here presumed to be addressed to an angel of the

your command you created the splendour of the sun, the light of the moon, and the stars in their appointed places; and you ordered them to be at the service of man, whose creation was about to take place. On the fifth day you commanded the seventh part, where the water was collected, to bring forth living things, birds and fishes. And so, at your command, dumb lifeless water brought forth living creatures, and gave the nations cause to tell of your wonders. Then you set apart two creatures: one you called Behemoth and the other Leviathan. You put them in separate places, for the seventh part where the water was collected was not big enough to hold them both. A part of the land which was made dry on the third day you gave to Behemoth as his territory, a country of a thousand hills. To Leviathan you gave the seventh part, the water. You have kept them to be food for whom you will and when you will. On the sixth day you ordered the earth to produce for you cattle, wild beasts, and creeping things. To crown your work you created Adam, and gave him sovereignty over everything you had made. It is from Adam that we, your chosen people, are all descended.

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world really made for us? Why, then, may we not take possession of our world? How much longer shall it be so?

When I had finished speaking, the same angel was sent to me as on the previous nights. He said to me, 'Rise to your feet, Ezra, and listen to the message I have come to give you.' 'Speak, my lord', I said.

He said to me: 'Imagine a sea set in a vast open space, spreading far<sup>1</sup> and wide, but the entrance to it narrow like the gorge of a river. If anyone is determined to reach this sea, whether to set eyes on it or to gain command of it, he cannot arrive at its open waters except through the narrow gorge. Or again, imagine a city built in a plain, a city full of everything you can desire, but the entrance to it narrow and steep, with fire to the right and deep water to the left. There is only the one path, between the fire and the water; and that is only wide enough for one man at a time. If some man has been given this city as a legacy, how can he take possession of his inheritance except by passing through these dangerous approaches?' 'That is the only way, my lord', I agreed.

He said to me: 'Such is the lot of Israel. It was for Israel that I made the world, and when Adam transgressed my decrees the creation came under judgement. The entrances to this world were made narrow, painful, and arduous, few and evil, full of perils and grinding hardship. But the entrances to the greater world are broad and safe, and lead to immortality. All men must therefore enter this narrow and futile existence; otherwise they can never attain the blessings in store. Why then, Ezra, are you so deeply disturbed at the

<sup>1</sup> spreading far: reading based on other Vss.; Lat. deep.

*firmament.* Compare Jude 6; Rev.14.18; 16.5. **49:** *Behemoth . . . Leviathan:* compare Job 3.8; 40.15-41.34; Ps.74.12-14. **55:** *You made this first world for our sake:* see 7.11. Not found in the canonical OT, this idea was deduced by the rabbis from such texts as Deut.14.2. **58:** Israel is called the *first-born* and *only son* because the Lord brought it into existence at the Exodus, which he did for no other nation; see Hos.11.1; Jer.31.9. **59:** Apocalyptic and apocryphal literature which describes the end-time is in part an answer to this question: *How much longer before we take possession of our world?* See Ecclus.36.1-17.

**7.1-25:** *Because of sin the path to the next world is arduous.* **1:** *The same angel:* Uriel (4.1 n.). **11:** *When Adam transgressed:* judgment brought by Adam's sin explains why Israel does not enjoy the world made for her. See 6.55-59; compare 3.7 n.; 4.30.

16 thought that you are mortal and must die? Why have you not turned your mind to the future instead of the present?"

17 "My lord, my master," I replied, "in your law you have laid it down that the just shall come to enjoy these blessings but the ungodly shall be lost.

18 The just, therefore, can endure this narrow life and look for the spacious life hereafter; but those who have lived a wicked life will have gone through the narrows without ever reaching the open spaces."

19 He said to me: "You are not a better judge than God, nor wiser than the

20 Most High. Better that many now living should be lost, than that the law God has set before them should be

21 despised! God has given clear instructions for all men when they come into this world, telling them how to attain

22 life and how to escape punishment. But the ungodly have refused to obey him; they have set up their own empty ideas,

23 and planned deceit and wickedness; they have even denied the existence of the Most High and have not acknowl-

24 edged his ways. They have rejected his law and refused his promises, have neither put faith in his decrees nor done

25 what he commands. Therefore, Ezra, emptiness for the empty, fullness for the full!

26 "Listen! The time shall come when the signs I have foretold will be seen; the city which is now invisible<sup>u</sup> shall

27 appear and the country now concealed be made visible. Everyone who has

28 been delivered from the evils I have foretold shall see for himself my marvellous acts. My son the Messiah<sup>v</sup>

shall appear with his companions and bring four hundred years of happiness to all who survive. At the end of that

29 time, my son the Messiah shall die, and so shall all mankind who draw breath. Then the world shall return to its

30 original silence for seven days as at the beginning of creation, and no one shall be left alive. After seven days the

31 age which is not yet awake shall be roused and the age which is corruptible shall die. The earth shall give up those

32 who sleep in it, and the dust those who rest there in silence; and the store-

houses shall give back the souls entrusted to them. Then the Most

33 High shall be seen on the judgement-seat, and there shall be an end of all pity and patience. Judgement alone

34 shall remain; truth shall stand firm and faithfulness be strong; requital<sup>w</sup>

35 shall at once begin and open payment be made; good deeds shall awake and wicked deeds shall not be allowed to

36 sleep.<sup>x</sup> Then the place of torment shall appear, and over against it the place of rest; the furnace of hell shall be displayed, and on the opposite side the

paradise of delight.

"Then the Most High shall say to the

37 nations that have been raised from the dead: "Look and understand who it is you have denied and refused to serve, and whose commandment you have

38 despised. Look on this side, then on that: here are rest and delight, there

<sup>u</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. the city, the bride, which is now seen . . .

<sup>v</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. My son Jesus.

<sup>w</sup> Probable meaning; literally work.

<sup>x</sup> The passage from verse [36] to verse [105], missing from the text of the Authorized Version, but found in ancient witnesses, has been restored.

7.17–25: The angel answers concerning punishment of wicked. 17: The seer thinks not only of Israel but of all men. The rabbis held that the Gentiles rejected God's law before it was offered to Israel. 18–25: Even though the wicked have to go through the narrows like the just, they will be lost because they despised the law and so refused God's promises.

7.26–[44]: The angel speaks of the messianic kingdom and the end of the world. 26: The signs: see 5.1–12; 6.20–24. The city . . . the country: the heavenly Jerusalem and paradise. See 8.52. 28: In place of four hundred years some ancient versions have "thirty" or "one thousand," or omit the figure entirely. The idea of a temporary messianic reign is known from rabbinic sources. 31–32: The age to come will awake when those who sleep in death will rise to new life. After the temporary messianic reign comes the resurrection (v. 32), and the judgment, hell and heaven (vv. 33–[44]). 32: The storehouses: see 4.35 n. 34: When the opportunity for obedience has passed, the final judgement is to be conducted with rigorous justice. 35: Both good and wicked deeds will be brought to light and given the attention they deserve. [36–105]: These verses are missing from the standard Vg., and thus from the King James Version, but are found in two Latin MSS. and in several secondary versions. The passage may have been omitted from the Vg. for doctrinal reasons because it excludes prayer on behalf of the dead; see 7.[105] n.

7.[37–44]: Judgment Day described. Here judgment is not the end, but a prelude to subsequent blessings. See Mt.25.46, which summarizes the discourse in Mt. ch. 24 on Judgment Day.

fire and torments." That is what he will say to them on the day of judgement.

[39] "That day will be a day without sun,  
 [40] moon, or stars; without cloud, thunder,  
 or lightning; wind, water, or air;  
 [41] darkness, evening, or morning; without  
 summer, spring, or winter; without  
 heat, frost, or cold; without hail, rain,  
 [42] or dew; without noonday, night, or  
 dawn; without brightness, glow, or  
 light. There shall be only the radiant  
 glory of the Most High, by which all  
 men will see everything that lies before  
 [43] them. It shall last as it were for a week  
 [44] of years. Such is the order that I have  
 appointed for the Judgement. I have  
 given this revelation to you alone.'

[45] I replied: 'My lord, I repeat what I  
 said before: "How blest are the living  
 who obey the decrees you have laid  
 [46] down!" But as for those for whom I  
 have been praying, is there any man  
 alive who has never sinned, any man  
 who has never transgressed your  
 [47] covenant? I see now that there are few  
 to whom the world to come will bring  
 happiness, and many to whom it will  
 [48] bring torment. For the wicked heart  
 has grown up in us, which has estranged  
 us from God's ways,<sup>y</sup> brought us into  
 corruption and the way of death,  
 opened out to us the paths of ruin, and  
 carried us far away from life. It has  
 done this, not merely to a few, but to  
 almost all who have been created.'

[49] The angel replied: 'Listen to me and  
 I will give you further instruction and  
 [50] correction. It is for this reason that the  
 Most High has created not one world  
 [51] but two. There are, you say, not many  
 who are just, but only a few, whereas  
 the wicked are very numerous; well  
 [52] then, hear the answer. Suppose you had  
 a very few precious stones; would you  
 add to their number by putting  
 common lead and clay among them?'  
 [53] 'No,' I said, 'no one would do that.'  
 [54] 'Look at it also in this way,' he  
 continued; 'speak to the earth and  
 humbly ask her; she will give you the

answer. Say to her: "You produce [55]  
 gold, silver, and copper, iron, lead,  
 and clay. There is more silver than [56]  
 gold, more copper than silver, more  
 iron than copper, more lead than iron,  
 more clay than lead." Then judge for [57]  
 yourself which things are valuable and  
 desirable—those that are common, or  
 those that are rare.' 'My lord, my [58]  
 master,' I said, 'the common things are  
 cheaper, and the rarer are more  
 valuable.' He replied, 'Consider then [59]  
 what follows from that: the owner of  
 something hard to get has more cause  
 to be pleased than the owner of what is  
 common. In the same way, at my [60]  
 promised judgement,<sup>a</sup> I shall have joy  
 in the few who are saved, because it is  
 they who have made my glory prevail,  
 and through them that my name has  
 been made known. But I shall not [61]  
 grieve for the many who are lost; for  
 they are no more than a vapour, they  
 are like flame or smoke; they catch  
 fire, blaze up, and then die out.'

Then I said: 'Mother Earth, what [62]  
 have you brought forth! Is the mind of  
 man, like the rest of creation, a  
 product of the dust? Far better then [63]  
 if the very dust had never been created,  
 and so had never produced man's  
 mind! But, as it is, we grow up with [64]  
 the power of thought and are tortured  
 by it; we are doomed to die and we  
 know it. What sorrow for mankind; [65]  
 what happiness for the wild beasts!  
 What sorrow for every mother's son;  
 what gladness for the cattle and flocks!  
 How much better their lot than ours! [66]  
 They have no judgement to expect, no  
 knowledge of torment or salvation  
 after death. What good to us is the [67]  
 promise of a future life if it is going  
 to be one of torment? For every man [68]  
 alive is burdened and defiled with  
 wickedness, a sinner through and  
 through. Would it not have been [69]

<sup>y</sup> Literally from these things.

<sup>z</sup> by putting . . . them: probable reading, based on other Vss.; Lat. obscure.

<sup>a</sup> Reading based on other Vss.; Lat. creation.

[42]: *The radiant glory* of God gives light at the judgment. Compare Isa.60.19–20; Rev.21.23. 7.[45–74]: *That few are to be saved is justified by angel but lamented by seer.* [48]: *Wicked heart*: see 3.20 n. [61]: *The fire* in which the wicked *die out* is not one of annihilation (see v. [67]), but one in which their worth goes up in smoke. [64–68]: *The seer* insists on the unity of the human race in doom, including himself in the *wickedness* and *sorrow* of every mother's



better for us if there had been no judgement awaiting us after death?"

[70] The angel replied: 'When the Most High was creating the world and Adam and his descendants, he first of all planned the judgement and what goes with it. Your own words, when you said that man grows up with the power of thought, will give you the answer. [71] It was with conscious knowledge that the people of this world sinned, and that is why torment awaits them; they received the commandments but did not keep them, they accepted the law [72] but violated it. What defence will they be able to make at the judgement, what answer at the last day? How patient the Most High has been with the men of this world, and for how long!—not for their own sake, but for the sake of the destined age to be.'

[75] Then I said: 'If I have won your favour, my lord, make this plain to me: at death, when every one of us gives back his soul, shall we be kept at rest until the time when you begin to create your new world, or does our torment begin at once?' 'I will tell you that also', he replied. 'But do not include yourself among those who have despised my law; do not count yourself with those who are to be [77] tormented. For you have a treasure of good works stored up with the Most High, though you will not be shown it [78] until the last days. But now to speak of death: when the Most High has given final sentence for a man to die, the spirit leaves the body to return to the One who gave it, and first of all to [79] adore the glory of the Most High. But as for those who have rejected the ways of the Most High and despised his law, [80] and who hate all that fear God, their spirits enter no settled abode, but roam thenceforward in torment, grief, and sorrow. And this for seven reasons. [81] First, they have despised the law of the Most High. Secondly, they have [82] lost their last chance of making a good

repentance and so gaining life. Thirdly, [83] they can see the reward in store for those who have trusted the covenants of the Most High. Fourthly, they [84] begin to think of the torment that awaits them at the end. Fifthly, they [85] see that angels are guarding the abode of the other souls in deep silence. Sixthly, they see that they are soon<sup>b</sup> to [86] enter into torment. The seventh cause for grief, the strongest cause of all, is [87] this: at the sight of the Most High in his glory, they break down in shame, waste away in remorse, and shrivel with fear remembering how they sinned against him in their lifetime, and how they are soon to be brought before him for judgement on the last day.

'As for those who have kept to the way laid down by the Most High, this is what is appointed for them when their time comes to leave their mortal bodies. During their stay on earth they [88] served the Most High in spite of constant hardship and danger, and kept to the last letter the law given them by the lawgiver. Their reward is [89] this: first they shall exult to see the glory of God who will receive them as his own, and then they shall enter into rest in seven appointed stages of joy. [90] Their first joy is their victory in the long fight against their inborn impulses [91] to evil, which have failed to lead them astray from life into death. Their [92] second joy is to see the souls of the wicked wandering ceaselessly, and the punishment in store for them. Their [93] third joy is the good report given of them by their Maker, that throughout their life they kept the law with which they were entrusted. Their fourth joy [94] is to understand the rest which they are now to share in the storehouses, guarded by angels in deep silence, and the glory waiting for them in the next age. Their fifth joy is the contrast [95] between the corruptible world they have escaped and the future life that [96] b *So some Vss.; Lat. obscure.*

son; see also vv. [75–77]. [70]: According to rabbinic theology, paradise and hell which go with judgement were among seven things created before the world.

7.[75–101]: State of the dead before judgment. [77]: Treasure of good works: compare 8.33–36. [79–87]: Wicked spirits roam . . . in sorrow, tormented by deep mental anguish. [85]: The other souls: the righteous.

7.[88–99]: The destiny of the just. [92]: Inborn impulses refers to the evil *yeşer*: see 3.20 n.

is to be their possession, between the cramped laborious<sup>c</sup> life from which they have been set free and the spacious life which will soon be theirs to enjoy for ever and ever. Their sixth joy will be the revelation that they are to shine like stars, never to fade or die, with faces radiant as the sun. Their seventh joy, the greatest joy of all, will be the confident and exultant assurance which will be theirs, free from all fear and shame, as they press forward to see face to face the One whom they served in their lifetime, and from whom they are now to receive their reward in glory.

[97] 'The joys I have been declaring are the appointed destiny for the souls of the just; the torments I described before are the sufferings appointed for the rebellious.'

[100] Then I asked: 'When souls are separated from their bodies, will they be given the opportunity to see what you have described to me?' 'They will be allowed seven days,' he replied; 'for seven days they will be permitted to see the things I have told you, and after that they will join the other souls in their abodes.'

[102] Then I asked: 'If I have won your favour, my lord, tell me more. On the day of judgement will the just be able to win pardon for the wicked, or pray for them to the Most High? Can fathers do so for their sons, or sons for their parents? Can brothers pray for brothers, relatives and friends<sup>d</sup> for their nearest and dearest?'

[104] 'You have won my favour,' he replied, 'and I will tell you. The day of judgement is decisive,<sup>e</sup> and sets its seal on the truth for all to see. In the present age a father cannot send his son in his place, nor a son his father, a master his slave, nor a man his best friend, to be ill<sup>f</sup> for him, or sleep, or eat, or be cured for him. In the same way no one shall ever ask pardon for

another; when that day comes, every individual will be held responsible for his own wickedness or goodness.'

To this I replied: 'But how is it, then, that we read of intercessions in scripture? First, there is Abraham, who prayed for the people of Sodom; then Moses, who prayed for our ancestors when they sinned in the desert. Next, there is Joshua, who prayed for the Israelites in the time of Achan, then Samuel in the time of Saul,<sup>g</sup> David during the plague,<sup>h</sup> and Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Elijah prayed for rain for the people, and for a dead man that he might be brought back to life. Hezekiah prayed for the nation in the time of Sennacherib; and there are many more besides. If, then, in the time when corruption grew and wickedness increased, the just asked pardon for the wicked, why cannot it be the same on the day of judgement?'

The angel gave me this answer: 'The present world is not the end, and the glory of God does not stay in it continually.<sup>i</sup> That is why the strong have prayed for the weak. But the day of judgement will be the end of the present world and the beginning of the eternal world to come, a world in which corruption will be over, all excess abolished, and unbelief uprooted, in which justice will be full-grown, and truth will have risen like the sun. On the day of judgement, therefore, there can be no mercy for the man who has lost his case, no reversal for the man who has won it.'

I replied, 'But this is my point, my first point and my last: how much better it would have been if the earth had never produced Adam at all, or,

<sup>c</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. obscure.

<sup>d</sup> Friends: so some Vss.; Lat. the faithful.

<sup>e</sup> So one V.; Lat. stern.

<sup>f</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. to understand.

<sup>g</sup> In the time of Saul: so some Vss.; Lat. omits.

<sup>h</sup> During the plague: so some Vss.; Lat. for the destruction.

<sup>i</sup> Does . . . continually: so some Vss.; Lat. regularly stays in it.

[97]: Shine like stars, never to fade: compare Dan.12.3; Mt.13.43. [101]: Abodes: see 4.35 n.

7.[102-115]: No intercession can be made for the wicked at Judgment Day. Compare Ezek. 18.4,20. [105]: See v. 35 n. That the practice, later popular, of prayer for the dead is here excluded probably accounts for the omission of this section from some MSS. Its restoration has necessitated the double numbering of subsequent verses. [106]: Abraham: see Gen.18.23-32. Moses: see Exod.32.11-14. [107]: Joshua: see Josh.7.6-9. [108]: Samuel: see 1 Sam.7.9; 12.19-25. David: see 2 Sam.24.17. Solomon: see 1 Kgs.8.22-30. [109]: Elijah: see 1 Kgs.18.41-45; 17.20-21. [110]: Hezekiah: see 2 Kgs.19.15-19. [112-115]: Compare v. 35 n.

- 47[117] since it has done so, if he had been restrained from sinning! For what good does it do us all to live in misery now and have nothing but punishment to expect after death? O Adam, what have you done? Your sin was not your fall alone; it was ours also, the fall of all your descendants. What good is the promise of immortality to us, when we have committed mortal sins; or the hope of eternity, in the wretched and futile state to which we have come; or the prospect of dwelling in health and safety, when we have lived such evil lives? The glory of the Most High will guard those who have led a life of purity; but what help is that to us whose conduct has been so wicked?
- 53[123] What good is the revelation of paradise and its imperishable fruit, the source of perfect satisfaction and healing? For we shall never enter it, since we have made depravity our home. Those who have practised self-discipline shall shine with faces brighter than the stars; but what good is that to us whose faces are darker than the night?
- 56[126] For during a lifetime of wickedness we have never given a thought to the sufferings awaiting us after death.
- 57[127] The angel replied, 'This is the thought for every man to keep in mind during his earthly contest: if he loses, he must accept the sufferings you have mentioned, but if he wins, the rewards I have been describing will be his. For that was the way which Moses in his time urged the people to take, when he said, "Choose life and live!" But they did not believe him, nor the prophets after him, nor me when I spoke to them. Over their damnation there will be no sorrow; there will only be joy for the salvation of those who have believed.'
- 62[132] 'My lord,' I replied, 'I know that the Most High is called "compassionate", because he has compassion on those yet unborn; and called "merciful", because he shows mercy to those who repent and live by his law; and "patient", because he shows patience to those who have sinned, his own creatures as they are; and "benefactor", because he prefers giving to taking; and "rich in forgiveness", because again and again he forgives sinners, past, present, and to come. For without his continued forgiveness there could be no hope of life for the world and its inhabitants. And he is called "generous", because without his generosity in releasing sinners from their sins, not one ten-thousandth part of mankind could hope to be given life; and he is also called "judge", for unless he grants pardon to those who have been created by his word, and blots out their countless offences, I suppose that of the entire human race only very few would be spared.'
- The angel said to me in reply: 'The Most High has made this world for many, but the next world for only a few. Let me give you an illustration, 2 Ezra. Ask the earth, and it will tell you that it can produce plenty of clay for making earthenware, but very little gold-dust. The same holds good for the present world: many have been 3 created, but only a few will be saved.'
- I SAID: 'MY SOUL, DRINK DEEP OF 4 understanding and eat your fill of wisdom! Without your consent<sup>k</sup> you 5 came here, and unwillingly you go away; only a brief span of life is given you. O Lord above, if I may be 6 allowed to approach you in prayer, plant a seed in our hearts and minds,
- <sup>j</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. for those who are convinced of salvation.  
<sup>k</sup> Without your consent: so one Vss.; Lat. To obey.

7.[116-131]: Lament on man's sinful lot. [118]: O Adam: see 3.7 n. [123]: The imperishable fruit comes from the restored tree of life. See Gen.3.22-24; Ezek.47.12; Rev.22.2. [125]: Shall shine: see Dan.12.3. [126]: A lifetime of wickedness: see [64-68]n. [129]: Choose life: see Deut. 30.19-20.

7.[132]-8.3: The seer appeals to God's mercy. [132-140]: The divine attributes are apparently derived from Exod.34.6-7 but here all involve the forgiveness of sin. [139]: God is called judge in the biblical sense of one who saves the oppressed, here from sin; compare Judg.2.16-18. 8.1-3: The seer is told strict justice will obtain and few will be saved. Compare 7.49-61 and Mt.22.14.

8.4-62: The seer prays for mercy upon the wicked but is denied. 4-19a: Why should men, so carefully created and sustained by God, be doomed to perish? 6: Plant a seed: give a sure

and make it grow until it bears fruit, so that fallen man may obtain life.  
 7 For you alone are God, and we are all shaped by you in one mould, as your  
 8 word declares. The body moulded in the womb receives from you both life and limbs; that which you create is kept safe amid fire and water; for nine months the body moulded by you bears what you have created in it.  
 9 Both the womb which holds safely and that which is safely held will be safe only because you keep them so. And after the womb has delivered up what  
 10 has been created in it, then from the human body itself, that is from the breasts, milk, the fruit of the breasts,  
 11 is supplied by your command. For a certain time what has been made is nourished in that way; and afterwards  
 12 it is still cared for by your mercy. You bring it up to know your justice, train it in your law, and correct it by your  
 13 wisdom. It is your creature and you made it; you can put it to death or give  
 14 it life, as you please. But if you should lightly destroy one who was fashioned by your command with so much labour, what was the purpose of  
 15 creating him?  
 16 'And now let me say this: about mankind at large, you know best; but it is for your own people that I grieve,  
 17 for your inheritance that I mourn; my sorrow is for Israel and my distress for the race of Jacob. For them and for myself, therefore, I will address my prayer to you, since I perceive how low we have fallen, we dwellers on earth;  
 18 and I know well how quickly your judgement will follow. Hear my words then, and consider the prayer which I make to you.'  
 19 Here begins the prayer which Ezra made, before he was taken up to heaven.  
 20 'O Lord, who dost inhabit eternity, to whom the sky and the highest  
 21 heavens belong; whose throne is beyond imagining, and whose glory is past conceiving; who art attended by

the host of angels trembling as they  
 22 turn themselves into wind and fire at thy bidding; whose word is true and constant; whose commands are mighty and terrible; whose glance dries up the  
 23 deeps, whose anger melts the mountains, and whose truth stands for ever:<sup>1</sup> hear  
 24 thy servant's prayer, O Lord, listen to my petition, for thou hast fashioned me, and consider my words. While I  
 25 live I will speak; while understanding lasts, I will answer.

'Do not look upon thy people's  
 26 offences, look on those who have served thee faithfully; pay no heed to  
 27 the godless and their pursuits, but to those who have observed thy covenant and suffered for it. Do not think of  
 28 those who all their life have been untrue to thee, but remember those who have acknowledged and feared  
 29 thee from the heart. Do not destroy  
 30 those who have lived like animals, but take account of those who have borne shining witness to thy law. Do not be  
 31 angry with those judged to be worse than beasts; but show love to those who have put unflinching trust in thy glory. For we and our fathers have  
 32 lived in mortal sin,<sup>m</sup> yet it is on our account that thou art called merciful; for if it is thy desire to have mercy on  
 33 us sinners, who have no just deeds to our credit, then indeed thou shalt be called merciful. For the reward which  
 34 will be given to the just, who have many good works stored up with thee, will be no more than their own deeds have earned.

'What is man, that thou shouldst be  
 35 angry with him? or the race of mortals, that thou shouldst treat them so harshly? The truth is, no man was ever  
 36 born who did not sin; no man alive is innocent of offence. It is through thy mercy towards those with no store of good deeds to their name that thy justice and kindness, O Lord, will be made known.'

<sup>1</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. bears witness.  
<sup>m</sup> in mortal sin: so some Vss.; Lat. obscure.

inclination to righteousness which alone can offset the evil inclination in man's heart; see 3.7 and 3.20 nn. 16: *My sorrow is for Israel*: see the opening complaint, 3.4–36. 19b: Because of its liturgical beauty, the following prayer appears separately in the special hymn section of many Latin MSS. under the title *Confessio Esdrae*. Hence, the superscription in the text: *here begins the prayer*. 34: Man is so insignificant that it is unworthy of God to be *angry with him*

37 The angel said to me in reply: 'Much of what you have said is just, and it will be as you say. Be sure that I shall not give any thought to sinners, to their creation, death, judgement, or damnation; but I shall take delight in the just, in their creation, their departure from this world, their salvation, and their final reward. So I have said, and so it is. The farmer sows many seeds in the ground and plants many plants, but not all the seeds soon come up safely in season, nor do all the plants strike root. So too in the world of men: not all who are sown will be preserved.'

42 To that I replied: 'If I have won your favour, let me speak. The farmer's seed may never come up because it is given no rain at the right time, or it may rot because of too much rain. But man, who was formed by your hands and made in your image, and for whose sake you made everything—will you compare him with seed sown by a farmer? Surely not, O Lord above! Spare your own people and pity them, for you will be pitying your own creation.'

46 He answered: 'The present is for those now alive, the future for those yet to come. You cannot love my creation with a love greater than mine—far from it! But never again rank yourself among the unjust, as you have so often done. Yet the Most High approves of the modesty you have rightly shown; you have not sought great glory by including yourself among the godly. In the last days, then, the inhabitants of the world will be punished for their arrogant lives by bitter sufferings. But you, Ezra, should direct your thoughts to yourself and the glory awaiting those like you. For all of you, paradise lies open, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is

made ready, and rich abundance is in store; the city is already built, rest from toil is assured, goodness and wisdom are brought to perfection. The root of evil has been sealed off from you; for you there is no more illness, death<sup>n</sup> is abolished, hell has fled, and decay is quite forgotten. All sorrows are at an end, and the treasure of immortality has been finally revealed. Ask no more questions, therefore, about the many who are lost. For they were given freedom and used it to despise the Most High, to treat his law with contempt and abandon his ways. Yes, and they trampled on his just servants; they said to themselves, "There is no God", though well aware that they must die. Yours, then, will be the joys I have predicted; theirs the thirst and torments which are prepared. It is not that the Most High has wanted any man to be lost, but that those he created have themselves brought dishonour on their Creator's name, and shown ingratitude to the One who had put life within their reach. My day of judgement is now close at hand, but I have not made this known to all; only to you and a few like you.'

'My lord,' I replied, 'you have now revealed to me the many signs which you are going to perform in the last days; but you have not told me when that will be.'

The angel answered: 'Keep a careful count yourself; when you see that some of the signs predicted have already happened, then you will understand that the time has come when the Most High will judge the world he has created. When the world becomes the scene of earthquakes, insurrections, plots among the nations, unstable government, and panic among rulers, n death: so some Vss.; Lat. omits.

or to treat fragile mortals harshly. 37: It will be as you say: the seer's prayer, pay no heed (v. 27), is accepted, but is turned to an opposite meaning: God will forget the doomed sinners and rejoice in the righteous. 41: The farmer rejoices in his crop and disregards the seeds that fail. 46: The seer's objection (vv. 43-44) seems dismissed as inapplicable to the future age. 47: The angel asserts that God's love for his creation includes the doing of justice in vindication of those who have been trampled (v. 57). 52: Now in existence, paradise lies open for contemplation. Tree of life: see 7.[123] n. 53: The root of evil: see 3.20 n. 62: A few like you: prophets like the seer, called apocalypticists because they have claimed to draw back the veil hiding the end-time.

8.63-9.13: Description of the end. 63: The many signs: see 5.1-13; 6.18-24. The present passage is a resumé. 9.1: Keeping a careful count of the signs will enable the seer to judge the

4 then you will recognize these as the events which the Most High has foretold since first the world began.  
 5 Just as everything that is done on earth has its beginning and end clearly marked,<sup>o</sup> so it is with the times which the Most High has determined: their beginning is marked by portents and miracles, their end by manifestations of power.  
 7 'Whoever comes safely through and escapes destruction, thanks to his good deeds or the faith he has shown, will survive all the dangers I have foretold and witness the salvation that I shall bring to my land, the country I have marked out from all eternity as my own. Then those who have misused my law will be taken by surprise; their contempt for it will bring them continual torment. All who in their lifetime failed to acknowledge me in spite of all the good things I had given them, all who disdained my law while freedom still was theirs, who scornfully dismissed the thought of penitence while the way was still open—all these will have to learn the truth through torments after death. Do not be curious any more, Ezra, to know how the goddess will be tormented, but only how and when the just will be saved; the world is theirs and it exists for their sake.'  
 14,15 I answered, 'I repeat what I have said again and again: the lost outnumber the saved as a wave exceeds a drop of water.'  
 17 The angel replied: 'The seed to be sown depends on the soil, the colour on the flower, the product on the workman, and the harvest on the farmer.  
 18 There was once a time before the world had been created for men to dwell in; at that time I was planning it for the sake of those who now exist.  
 19 No one then disputed my plan, for no one existed. I supplied this world with

unfailing food and a mysterious law; but those whom I created turned to a life of corruption. I looked at my world, and there it lay spoilt, at my earth in danger from men's wicked thoughts; and at the sight I could scarcely bring myself to spare them. One grape I saved out of a cluster, one tree out of a forest.<sup>p</sup> So then let it be: destruction for the many who were born in vain, and salvation for my grape and my tree, which have cost me such labour to bring to perfection.

'You, Ezra, must wait one more week. Do not fast this time, but go to a flowery field where no house stands, and eat only what grows there—no meat or wine—and pray unceasingly to the Most High. Then I will come and talk to you again.'

#### Visions of the last days

SO I WENT OUT, AS THE ANGEL TOLD ME, to a field called Ardat. There I sat among the flowers; my food was what grew in the field, and I ate to my heart's content. The week ended, and I was lying on the grass, troubled again in mind with all the same perplexities. I broke my silence and addressed the Most High. 'O Lord,' I said, 'you showed yourself to our fathers in the desert at the time of the exodus from Egypt, when they were travelling through the barren and untrodden waste. You said, "Hear me, Israel; listen to my words, race of Jacob. This is my law, which I sow among you to bear fruit and bring you glory for ever." But our fathers who received your law did not keep it; they did not observe your commandments. Not that the fruit of the law perished; that was impossible, for it was yours.

<sup>o</sup> has . . . marked: so one Vs.; Lat. defective.  
<sup>p</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. tribe.

nearness of the end. 4: The writer expects to see and to recognize the end in his lifetime. 12: Learn the truth: the real meaning of their ruinous but willful rebellion.

9.14-25: Summary. 14: I repeat: see 7.[140]. 21: Because of corruption (vv. 19-20), to spare even one grape in a vineyard is a marvelous act of grace. 23: Do not fast: see 6.35 n.

9.26-10.59: Vision IV. Zion's present mourning and future glory. The transformation is sudden, complete, and terrifying.

9.26-37: The seer ponders the law's permanence and Israel's instability. 26: Ardat: an unidentifiable place, perhaps of mystic significance. 29: See Exod.19.9; 24.10; 24.15; Jer.2.2.

33 Those who received it perished, because they failed to keep safe the good seed that had been sown in them. Now the usual way of things is that when seed is put into the earth, or a ship on the sea, or food or drink into a jar, then if the seed, or the ship, or the contents of the jar should be destroyed, what held or contained them does not perish with them. But with us sinners it is different. Destruction will come upon us, the recipients of the law, and upon our hearts, the vessel that held the law. The law itself is not destroyed, but survives in all its glory.<sup>3</sup>

38 While these thoughts were in my mind, I looked round, and on my right I saw a woman in great distress, mourning and loudly lamenting; her dress was torn, and she had ashes on her head. Abandoning my meditations, I turned to her, and said: 'Why are you weeping? What is troubling you?' 'Sir,' she replied, 'please leave me to my tears and my grief; great is my bitterness of heart, great my distress.' 'Tell me,' I asked, 'what has happened to you?' 'Sir,' she replied, 'I was barren and childless through thirty years of marriage. Every hour of every day during those thirty years, day and night alike, I prayed to the Most High. Then after thirty years, my God answered my prayer and had mercy on my distress; he took note of my sorrow and granted me a son. What happiness he brought to my husband and myself and to all our neighbours! What praise we gave to the Mighty God! I took great pains over his upbringing. When he came of age, I chose a wife for him, and fixed the date of the wedding.

10 'But when my son entered his wedding-chamber, he fell down dead. So we all put out our lamps, and all my neighbours came to comfort me; I controlled my grief till the evening of the following day. When they had all ceased urging me to take comfort and

control my grief, I rose and stole away in the night, and came here, as you can see, to this field. I have made up my mind never to go back to the town, but to stay here eating nothing and drinking nothing, and to continue my mourning and fasting unbroken till I die.'

At that I interrupted the train of my thoughts, and I spoke sternly to the woman: 'You are the most foolish woman in the world,' I said; 'are you blind to the grief and sufferings of our nation? It is for the sorrow and humiliation of Zion, the mother of us all, that you should mourn so deeply; you should share in our common mourning and sorrow. But you are deep in sorrow for your one son. Ask the earth and she will tell you; she must mourn for the thousands and thousands who come to birth upon her. From her we all originally sprang, and there are more to come. Almost all her children go to perdition, and their vast numbers are wiped out. Who then has the better right to be in mourning—the earth, who has lost such vast numbers, or you, whose sorrow is for one alone? You may say to me, "But my grief is very different from the earth's grief; I have lost the fruit of my own womb, which I brought to birth with pain and travail, but it is only in the course of nature that the vast numbers now alive on earth should depart in the same way as they have come." My answer to that is: at the cost of pain you have been a mother, but in the same way the earth has always been the mother of mankind, bearing fruit to earth's creator.

'Keep your sorrow to yourself, therefore, and bear your misfortunes bravely. If you will accept God's decree as just, then in due time you will receive your son back again, and win an honoured name among women. So go back to the town and to your husband.'

33: The whole generation that sinned at Sinai *perished* and did not enter the promised land; see Num.32.13.

9.38–10.28: The woman in mourning. 38: *Ashes on her head*, like the *torn dress*, were a sign of grief. 10.2: Weddings took place at night, hence, the *lamps*; see Mt.25.1–13. 7: *Zion, the mother*: compare Bar.4.8–20; Gal.4.26. 16: To *accept God's decree as just* is to submit humbly to his will. The mother would receive her son back again after the resurrection in the new age; compare 2 Macc.7.9,23,29. An *honoured name*: childbearing was regarded as a blessing, barrenness as a

- 18 'No, I will not,' she replied; 'I will not go back to the town; I will stay here to die.'
- 19 But I continued to argue with her.
- 20 'Do not do what you say,' I urged; 'be persuaded because of Zion's misfortunes, and take comfort to yourself
- 21 from the sorrow of Jerusalem. You see how our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar demolished, and our
- 22 temple destroyed. Our harps are unstrung, our hymns silenced, our shouts of joy cut short; the light of the sacred lamp is out, and the ark of our covenant has been taken as spoil; the holy vessels are defiled, and the name which God has conferred on us is disgraced; our leading men<sup>q</sup> have been treated shamefully, our priests burnt alive, and the Levites taken off into captivity; our virgins have been raped and our wives ravished, our godfearing men carried off, and our children abandoned; our youths have been enslaved, and our strong warriors
- 23 reduced to weakness. Worst of all, Zion, once sealed with God's own seal, has forfeited its glory and is in the hands of our enemies. Then
- 24 throw off your own heavy grief, and lay all your sorrows aside; may the Mighty God restore you to his favour, may the Most High give you rest and peace after your troubles!'
- 25 Suddenly, while I was still speaking to the woman, I saw her face begin to shine; her countenance flashed like lightning, and I shrank from her in terror. While I wondered what this
- 26 meant, she suddenly uttered a loud and terrible cry, which shook the
- 27 earth. I looked up and saw no longer a woman but a complete city, built<sup>r</sup> on massive foundations. I cried aloud in terror, 'Where is the angel Uriel, who visited me before? It is his doing that I have fallen into this bewilderment, that all my hopes are shattered,<sup>s</sup> and all my prayers in vain.'
- 29 I was still speaking when the angel
- appeared who had visited me before. When he saw me lying in a dead faint, 30 unconscious on the ground, he grasped me by my right hand, put strength into me, and raised me to my feet. 'What 31 is the matter?' he asked. 'Why are you overcome? What was it that disturbed your mind and made you faint?' 'It 32 was because you deserted me', I replied. 'I did what you told me: I came out to the field; and what I have seen here and can still see is beyond my power to relate.'
- 'Stand up like a man,' he said, 'and 33 I will explain it to you.'
- 'Speak, my lord,' I replied; 'only do 34 not abandon me and leave me to die unsatisfied. For I have seen and I hear 35 things beyond my understanding— unless this is all an illusion and a 36 dream. I beg you to tell me, my lord, 37 the meaning of my vision.'
- 'Listen to me,' replied the angel, 38 'while I explain to you the meaning of the things that terrify you; for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you. He has seen your blameless 39 life, your unceasing grief for your people, and your deep mourning over Zion. Here then is the meaning of the 40 vision. A little while ago you saw a 41 woman in mourning, and tried to give her comfort; now you no longer see 42 that woman, but a whole city. She 43 told you she had lost her son, and this is the explanation. The woman you 44 saw is Zion, which you now see as a city with all its buildings. She told you 45 she was childless for thirty years; that was because there were three thousand years in which sacrifices were not yet offered in Zion. But then, after the 46 three thousand years, Solomon built the city and offered the sacrifices; that was the time when the barren woman bore her son. She took great pains, she 47 said, over his upbringing; that was the

<sup>q</sup> So some Vss.; Lat. our children.

<sup>r</sup> Probable meaning, based on other Vss.; Lat. but a city was being built . . .

<sup>s</sup> Or that my destiny turns out to be corruption.

curse. 20-22: These verses are a poignant enumeration of the misfortunes that attended the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; see 2 Kgs. 25.8-12. *Hymns silenced*: compare Ps. 137.1-4. The *ark of the covenant* was lost in the destruction. The holy vessels were defiled by being put to pagan worship (Ezra 1.7) or to profane use (see Dan. 5.2-3). 28: *Uriel*: see 4.1 n.

10.29-59: *The vision interpreted*. 30: *In a dead faint*: compare Rev. 1.17. 33: *Stand up*: see 5.15; 6.13, 17. 44: *City*: the heavenly Jerusalem. 46-48: *Her son*: the earthly Jerusalem. His



period when Jerusalem was inhabited.  
 48 Then she told you of the great loss she suffered, how her son died on the day he entered his wedding-chamber; that was the destruction which overtook  
 49 Jerusalem. Such then was the vision that you saw—the woman mourning for her son—and you tried to comfort her in her sufferings; this was the  
 50 revelation you had to receive. Seeing your sincere grief and heartfelt sympathy for the woman, the Most High is now showing you her radiant glory  
 51 and her beauty. That was why I told you to stay in a field where no house  
 52 stood, for I knew that the Most High intended to send you this revelation. I  
 53 told you to come to this field, where no foundation had been laid for any  
 54 building; for in the place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed, no building made by man could stand.  
 55 'Have no fear then, Ezra, and set your trembling heart at rest; go into the city, and see the magnificence of the buildings, so far as your eyes have  
 56 power to see it all. Then, after that, you shall hear as much as your ears  
 57 have power to hear. You are more blessed than most other men, and few have such a name with the Most High  
 58 as you have. Stay here till tomorrow night, when the Most High will show you in dreams and visions what he intends to do to the inhabitants of earth in the last days.' I did as I was told and slept there that night and the next.

**11** ON THE SECOND NIGHT I HAD A VISION in a dream; I saw, rising from the sea, an eagle with twelve wings and three  
 2 heads. I saw it spread its wings over the whole earth; and all the winds blew  
 3 on it, and the clouds<sup>i</sup> gathered. Out of its wings I saw rival wings sprout, which proved to be only small and  
 4 stunted. Its heads lay still; even the

middle head, which was bigger than the others, lay still between them. As I  
 5 watched, the eagle rose on its wings to set itself up as ruler over the earth and its inhabitants. I saw it bring into  
 6 subjection everything under heaven; it met with no opposition at all from any creature on earth. I saw the eagle stand  
 7 erect on its talons, and it spoke aloud to its wings: 'Do not all wake at once,'  
 8 it said; 'sleep in your places, and each wake up in turn; and the heads are to be  
 9 kept till the last.' I saw that the  
 10 sound was not coming from its heads, but from the middle of its body. I  
 11 counted its rival wings, and saw that there were eight of them.

As I watched, one of the wings on  
 12 its right side rose and became ruler over the whole earth. After a time, its  
 13 reign came to an end, and it disappeared from sight completely. Then the next one arose and established its rule, which it held for a long time.  
 14 When its reign was coming to an end and it was about to disappear like the  
 15 first one, a voice could be heard saying to it: 'You have ruled the world  
 16 for so long; now listen to my message before your time comes to disappear.  
 17 None of your successors will achieve a reign as long as yours, nor even half as  
 18 long.' Then the third wing arose, ruled the world for a time like its predecessors, and like them disappeared. In the  
 19 same way all the wings came to power in succession, and in turn disappeared from sight.

As time went on, I saw the wings on  
 20 the left<sup>u</sup> side also raise themselves up to seize power. Some of them did so, and passed immediately from sight, while others arose but never came to  
 21 power. At this point I noticed that two  
 22 of the little wings were, like the twelve, no longer to be seen. Nothing was now  
 23

<sup>i</sup> the clouds: so some Vss.; Lat. omits.  
<sup>u</sup> So one Vs.; Lat. right.

death symbolized Jerusalem's fall. **50:** Heavenly Zion continues, and its *radiant glory* will be seen; see Ezek.40.2; 48.35; Heb.11.10; Rev. 21.10.

**11.1–12.51:** Vision V. Rome to be destroyed. This strange vision with its bizarre and mysterious details is more apocalyptic in tone than the previous ones.

**11.1–12.3a:** The mighty eagle and the strong lion. **1:** *Rising from the sea:* see Dan.7.3; Rev.13.1. As viewed from the east, Roman forces came from the Mediterranean. *An eagle:* the military emblem of Imperial Rome. **2:** *Spread its wings:* establish its dominion. **3:** *Rival wings* probably symbolize rebellious army officers. Being *small and stunted*, unequal to the task, the rebellion hopelessly failed. **12:** The *wings* and heads (vv. 4, 29) seem to represent successive Roman rulers.

left of the eagle's body except the three motionless heads and six little wings. 24 As I watched, two of the six little wings separated from the rest and took up a place under the head on the right. The other four remained where they were; 25 and I saw them planning to rise up and seize power. One rose, but disappeared 27 immediately; so too did the second, vanishing even more quickly than the 28 first. I saw the last two planning to seize the kingship for themselves. But 29 while they were still plotting, suddenly one of the heads woke from sleep, the one in the middle, the biggest of the 30 three. I saw how it joined with the other two heads, and along with them 31 turned and devoured the two little wings which were planning to seize 32 power. This head got the whole earth into its grasp, establishing an oppressive rule over all its inhabitants and a world-wide kingdom mightier than any 33 of the wings had ruled. But after that I saw the middle head vanish just as 34 suddenly as the wings had done. There were two heads left, and they also seized power over the earth and its 35 inhabitants, but as I watched, the head on the right devoured the head on the left. 36 Then I heard a voice which said to me: 'Look carefully at what you see 37 before you.' I looked, and saw what seemed to be a lion roused from the forest; it roared as it came, and I heard it address the eagle in a human 38 voice. 'Listen to what I tell you', it said. 'The Most High says to you: Are 39 you not the only survivor of the four beasts to which I gave the rule over my world, intending through them to 40-41 bring my ages to their end? You are the fourth beast, and you have conquered all who went before, ruling over the whole world and holding it in the grip of fear and harsh oppression. You 42 have lived<sup>v</sup> long in the world, governing it with deceit and with no regard for

truth. You have oppressed the gentle and injured the peaceful, hating the truthful and loving liars; you have destroyed the homes of the prosperous, and razed to the ground the walls of those who had done you no harm. Your insolence is known to the Most 43 High, and your pride to the Mighty One. The Most High has surveyed the 44 periods he has fixed: they are now at an end, and his ages have reached their completion. So you, eagle, must 45 now disappear and be seen no more, you and your terrible great wings, your evil small wings, your cruel heads, your grim talons, and your whole worthless body. Then all the earth will 46 feel relief at its deliverance from your violence, and look forward hopefully to the judgement and mercy of its Creator.<sup>7</sup>

While the lion was still addressing 12 the eagle, I looked and saw the one 2 remaining head disappear. Then the two<sup>w</sup> wings which had gone over to him arose and set themselves up as rulers. Their reign was short and troubled, and when I looked at them 3 they were already vanishing. Then the eagle's entire body burst into flames, and the earth was struck with terror.

So great was my alarm and fear that I awoke, and said to myself: 'See the 4 result of your attempt to discover the ways of the Most High! My mind is 5 weary; I am utterly exhausted. The terrors of this night have completely drained my strength. So I will now 6 pray to the Most High for strength to hold out to the end.' Then I said: 'My 7 Master and Lord, if I have won your favour and stand higher in your approval than most men, if it is true that my prayers have reached your presence, then give me strength; reveal 8 to me, my Lord, the exact interpreta-

<sup>v</sup> You are the fourth . . . lived: so some Vss.; Lat. The fourth beast came and conquered . . . It has lived.  
<sup>w</sup> So other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.

35: *The head . . . devoured*: successful insurrection. 37: *A lion*: the Messiah; see 12.31-32. 39: *The four beasts* are those of Dan.7.3 which the present passage recalls (12.11). 43: *Your insolence*: compare Dan.5.20. 44: The apocalyptic writers see the *periods* of human life before the *completion* of the end as *fixed* like the scenes of a pageant, brought on and removed from the stage of history by God, with no historical preparation, conditioning, or interconnection between them.

12.3b-39: *The eagle vision interpreted*. 11: *The fourth kingdom* of Dan.7.7,23 is here, as in

tion of this terrifying vision, and so  
 9 bring full consolation to my soul. For  
 you have already judged me worthy to  
 be shown the end of the present age.’  
 10 He said to me: ‘Here is the inter-  
 11 pretation of your vision. The eagle you  
 saw rising from the sea represents the  
 fourth kingdom in the vision seen by  
 12 your brother Daniel. But he was not  
 given the interpretation which I am  
 now giving you or have already given  
 13 you. The days are coming when the  
 earth will be under an empire more  
 14 terrible than any before. It will be  
 ruled by twelve kings, one after  
 15 another. The second to come to the  
 throne will have the longest reign of  
 16 all the twelve. That is the meaning of  
 the twelve wings you saw.  
 17 ‘As for the voice which you heard  
 speaking from the middle of the eagle’s  
 body, and not from its heads, this is  
 18 what it means: After this second  
 king’s reign, great conflicts will arise,  
 which will bring the empire into  
 danger of falling; and yet it will not fall  
 then, but will be restored to its original  
 strength.  
 19 ‘As for the eight lesser wings which  
 you saw growing from the eagle’s  
 20 wings, this is what they mean: The  
 empire will come under eight kings  
 whose reigns will be trivial and short-  
 21 lived; two of them will come and go  
 just before the middle of the period,  
 four will be kept back until shortly  
 before its end, and two will be left  
 until the end itself.  
 22 ‘As for the three heads which you  
 saw sleeping, this is what they mean:  
 23 In the last years of the empire, the  
 Most High will bring to the throne  
 three kings, who will restore much of  
 its strength, and rule<sup>x</sup> over the earth  
 24 and its inhabitants more oppressively

than anyone before. They are called  
 the eagle’s heads, because they will  
 25 complete and bring to a head its long  
 series of wicked deeds. As for the  
 26 greatest head, which you saw disappear,  
 it signifies one of the kings, who will  
 die in his bed, but in great agony. The  
 27 two that survived will be destroyed  
 by the sword; one of them will fall by  
 28 the sword of the other, who will  
 himself fall by the sword in the last  
 days.

‘As for the two little wings that went  
 29 over to the head on the right side, this  
 30 is what they mean: They are the ones  
 whom the Most High has reserved until  
 the last days, and their reign, as you  
 saw, was short and troubled.

‘As for the lion which you saw  
 31 coming from the forest, roused from  
 sleep and roaring, which you heard  
 addressing the eagle, taxing it with its  
 wicked deeds and words, this is the  
 32 Messiah whom the Most High has  
 kept back until the end. He will  
 address<sup>y</sup> those rulers, taxing them  
 openly with their sins, their crimes, and  
 their defiance. He will bring them alive  
 33 to judgement; he will convict them and  
 then destroy them. But he will be  
 34 merciful to those of my people that  
 remain, all who have been kept safe in  
 my land; he will set them free and give  
 them gladness, until the final day of  
 judgement comes, about which I told  
 you at the beginning.

‘That, then, is the vision which you  
 35 saw, and its meaning. It is the secret of  
 36 the Most High, which no one except  
 yourself has proved worthy to be told.  
 37 What you have seen you must therefore  
 write in a book and deposit it in a  
 hiding-place. You must also disclose  
 38

<sup>x</sup> who . . . rule: so some Vss.; Lat. and he will restore . . .  
 and they will rule . . .  
<sup>y</sup> He will address: probable reading; Lat. defective.

rabbinic writings, understood to be the Roman Empire. 13: The apocalyptic writers describe contemporary or past events as *days that are coming* to show that they had been foretold by the prophets and so were in God’s plan. The objective was to provide consolation in the present trials and confidence in God’s Providence for the future, as well as credibility in the descriptions of the end. Here the seer’s visions are set in the exilic period (1.3; 3.1) even though he is describing events that followed it and continued up to his own day. 14: *Twelve kings* are twelve emperors, beginning with Julius Caesar. 15: *The second*: Augustus. 17: See 11.10. 18: *The great conflicts* seems to allude to the anarchy after Nero’s death in 68 A.D. 19: *Eight lesser wings*: see 11.3 n. 21: *The period*: the duration of the empire. 22: The three heads (see 11.1,4,29–35) may symbolize the Flavian emperors, Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian. 31: *The lion*: see 11.37–12.3. 32: The verse implies the heavenly preexistence of *the Messiah*; compare Dan.7.13–14. 34: *My people that remain* are those who survive the messianic woes. See 7.26–28. 37–38: The book is to be put into a *hiding place* because of its esoteric contents which only the

these secrets to those of your people whom you know to be wise enough to understand them and to keep them safe. But stay here yourself for seven more days, to receive whatever revelation the Most High thinks fit to send you.' Then the angel left me.

40 When all the people heard that seven days had passed without my returning to the town, they assembled and came to me. 'What wrong or injury have we done you,' they asked me, 'that you have deserted us and settled here? Out of all the prophets you are the only one left to us. You are like the last cluster in a vineyard, like a lamp in the darkness, or a safe harbour for a ship in a storm. Have we not suffered enough? If you desert us, we had far better have been destroyed in the fire that burnt up Zion. We are no better than those who perished there.' Then they raised a loud lamentation.

46 I replied: 'Take courage, Israel; house of Jacob, lay aside your grief. 47 The Most High bears you in mind, and the Mighty One has not for ever<sup>z</sup> forgotten you. I have not left you, nor abandoned you; I came here to pray for Zion in her distress, and to beg for mercy for your sanctuary that has fallen so low. Go to your homes now, every one of you; and in a few days' time I will come back to you.'

50 So the people returned to the town as I told them, while I remained in the field. I stayed there for seven days in obedience to the angel, eating nothing but what grew in the field, and living on that for the whole of the time.

13 THE SEVEN DAYS PASSED; AND THE NEXT 2 night I had a dream. In my dream, a wind came up out of the sea and set 3 the waves in turmoil. And this wind

brought a human figure rising from the depths,<sup>a</sup> and as I watched, this man came flying<sup>b</sup> with the clouds of heaven. Wherever he turned his eyes, everything that they fell on was seized with terror; and wherever the sound of his voice 4 reached, all who heard it melted like wax at the touch of fire.

Next I saw an innumerable host of 5 men gathering from the four winds of heaven to wage war on the man who had risen from the sea. I saw that the 6 man hewed out a vast mountain for himself, and flew up on to it. I tried to 7 see from what quarter or place the mountain had been taken, but I could not. Then I saw that all who had 8 gathered to wage war against the man were filled with fear, and yet they dared to fight against him. When he 9 saw the hordes advancing to attack, he did not so much as lift a finger against them. He had no spear in his hand, no weapon at all; only, as I watched, he 10 poured what seemed like a stream of fire out of his mouth, a breath of flame from his lips, and a storm of sparks from his tongue. All of them 11 combined into one mass—the stream of fire, the breath of flame, and the great storm. It fell on the host advancing to join battle, and burnt up every man of them; suddenly all that enormous multitude had disappeared, leaving nothing but dust and ashes and a reek of smoke. I was dumb-founded at the sight.

After that, I saw the man coming 12 down from the mountain and calling to himself a different company, a peaceful one. He was joined by great 13 numbers of men, some with joy on their faces, others with sorrow. Some came from captivity; some brought

<sup>z</sup> So one Vss.; Lat. in strife.

<sup>a</sup> And . . . depths: so other Vss.; Lat. defective.

<sup>b</sup> So other Vss.; Lat. grew strong.

wise, i.e. the initiated, can *understand* and be *safe* in reading. Hence, the name Apocrypha, lit. "hidden," given to this class of books.

12.40–51: **The seer comforts his people.** 40: *Seven days*: see 9.23. 42: The apocalyptic writer puts himself into the category of the *prophets*; see 5.17–18 n. *A lamp*: see 2 Pet.1.19. 50: Compare v. 39 and 9.24–26.

13.1–58: **Vision VI. The Messiah's activity.**

13.1–20: **The man risen from the sea.** 3: *A human figure*: the Messiah, called God's son in v. 32. Compare Dan.7.13. 4: *All . . . melted like wax* suggests a divine manifestation. See Ps.97.5; Mic.1.4. 6: *Hewed out*: see Dan.2.34,45. 10: *A breath of flame*: without weapon or allies the Messiah destroys his enemies supernaturally, i.e. by the words of judgment that come from his *mouth*: see Isa.11.4; 2 Th.2.8. 13: *As an offering*: see Isa.66.20; compare Isa.49.22.

others to him as an offering. I woke up in terror, and prayed to the Most High. I said, 'You have revealed these marvels to me, your servant, all the way through; you have judged me worthy to have my prayers answered. Now show me the meaning of this dream also. How terrible, to my thinking, it will be for all who survive to those days! But how much worse for those who do not survive! Those who do not survive will have the sorrow of knowing what is in store in the last days and yet missing it. Those who do survive are to be pitied for the terrible dangers and trials which, as these visions show, they will have to face. But perhaps after all it is better to endure the dangers and reach the goal than to vanish out of the world like a cloud and never see the events of the last days.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I will explain the meaning of this vision, and tell you all that you ask. As for your question about those who survive, this is the answer: the very person from whom the danger will then come will protect in danger those who have works and fidelity laid up to their credit with the Most High. You may be assured that those who survive are more highly blessed than those who die.'

'This is what the vision means: The man you saw rising from the depths of the sea is he whom the Most High has held in readiness through many ages; he will himself deliver the world he has made, and determine the lot of those who survive. As for the breath, fire, and storm which you saw pouring from the mouth of the man, so that without a spear or any weapon in his hand he destroyed the hordes advancing to wage war against him, this is the meaning: The day is near when the Most High will begin to bring deliverance to those on earth. Then men will

all be filled with great alarm; they will plot to make war on one another, city on city, region on region, nation on nation, kingdom on kingdom. When this happens, and all the signs that I have shown you come to pass, then my son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man rising from the sea. On hearing his voice, all the nations will leave their own territories and their separate wars, and unite in a countless host, as you saw in your vision, with a common intent to go and wage war against him. He will take his stand on the summit of Mount Zion, and Zion will come into sight before all men, complete and fully built. This corresponds to the mountain which you saw hewn out, not by the hand of man. Then my son will convict of godless deeds the nations that confront him. This will correspond to the storm you saw. He will taunt them with their evil plottings and the tortures they are soon to endure. This corresponds to the flame. And he will destroy them without effort by means of<sup>c</sup> the law—and that is like the fire.

'Then you saw him collecting a different company, a peaceful one. They are the ten tribes which were taken off into exile in the time of King Hoshea, whom Shalmaneser king of Assyria took prisoner. He deported them beyond the River, and they were taken away into a strange country. But then they resolved to leave the country populated by the Gentiles and go to a distant land never yet inhabited by man, and there at last to be obedient to their laws, which in their own country they had failed to keep. As they passed through the narrow passages of the Euphrates, the Most High performed miracles for them, stopping up the channels of the river until they had crossed over. Their

<sup>c</sup> by means of: *so one Vs.; Lat. and.*

**18:** *What is in store:* see 7.26–[44]; 9.1–12. **19:** Compare Mt.24.21–22. **20:** The just who endure the dangers of the last days seem to have an advantage over those who died before; compare 1 Th.4.15–18. See also v. 24.

**13.21–58:** *The vision interpreted.* **23:** *The very person* is the Messiah, whose coming is presaged by the messianic woes. **26:** See 12.32 n. **27:** See vv. 9–11. **32:** *My son will be revealed:* see 7.28; compare Mt.24.30. **36:** *Mount Zion* is thus the mountain hewn out (v. 6). *Zion:* the heavenly Jerusalem; see 7.26 and Rev.21.2–4. **40:** *The ten tribes:* the Northern Kingdom, 2 Kgs.17.3,6. Perhaps an ideal group, including proselytes, is meant. *The River:* the Euphrates. **44:** *The Most High performed miracles* as in the original entrance into Canaan (Josh.3.14–17). **45:** *Arzareth:*

journey through that region, which is called Arzareth, was long, and took a year and a half. They have lived there ever since, until this final age. Now they are on their way back, and once more the Most High will stop the channels of the river to let them cross.

46 That is the meaning of the peaceful  
47 assembly that you saw. With them too  
48 are the survivors of your own people,  
49 all who are found inside my sacred  
50 boundary. So then, when the time  
51 comes for him to destroy the nations  
52 assembled against him, he will protect  
53 his people who are left, and show  
54 them many prodigies.'

51 'My lord, my master,' I asked,  
'explain to me why the man that I saw  
rose up out of the depths of the sea.'  
52 He replied: 'It is beyond the power of  
53 any man to explore the deep sea and  
54 discover what is in it; in the same way  
55 no one on earth can see my son and  
56 his company until the appointed day.  
57 Such then is the meaning of your  
58 vision. The revelation has been given  
59 to you, and to you alone, because you  
60 have given up your own affairs, and  
61 devoted yourself entirely to mine, and  
62 to the study of my law. You have  
63 taken wisdom as your guide in every-  
64 thing, and called understanding your  
65 mother. That is why I have given this  
66 revelation to you; there is a reward in  
67 store for you with the Most High. In  
68 three days' time I will speak with you  
again, and tell you some momentous  
and wonderful things.'

57 So I went away to the field, giving  
worship and praise to the Most High  
for the wonders he performed from  
58 time to time and for his providential  
control of the passing ages and what  
happens in them. There I remained for  
three days.

*The writing of the sacred books*

ON THE THIRD DAY I WAS SITTING 14  
under an oak-tree, when a voice came  
to me from a bush, saying, 'Ezra,  
Ezra!' 'Here I am, Lord', I answered, 2  
and rose to my feet. The voice went on: 3  
'I revealed myself in the bush, and  
spoke to Moses, when my people  
Israel was in slavery in Egypt, and 4  
sent him to lead my people out of  
Egypt. I brought him up on to Mount  
Sinai, and kept him with me for many  
days. I told him of many wonders, 5  
showing him the secrets of the ages  
and the end of time, and instructed  
him what to make known and what to 6  
conceal. So too I now give this order 7  
to you: commit to memory the signs I 8  
have shown you, the visions you have  
seen, and the explanations you have  
been given. You yourself are about to 9  
be taken away from the world of men,  
and thereafter you will remain with  
my son and with those like you, until  
the end of time. The world has lost its 10  
youth, and time is growing old. For the 11  
whole of time is in twelve divisions;  
nine<sup>d</sup> divisions and half the tenth have  
already passed, and only two and a 12  
half still remain. Set your house in 13  
order, therefore; give warnings to  
your nation, and comfort to those in  
need of it; and take your leave of  
mortal life. Put away your earthly 14  
cares, and lay down your human  
burdens; strip off your weak nature,  
set aside the anxieties that vex you, 15  
and be ready to depart quickly from  
this life. However great the evils you 16  
have witnessed, there are worse to  
come. As this ageing world grows 17  
weaker and weaker, so will evils

*d* Probable reading; Lat. ten.

shortened transliteration of Heb. for "another land," taken from Deut.29.28. 47: See Isa.11.15-16. 49: *His people who are left*: righteous Israel enlarged by the return of the ten tribes. 50: *Many prodigies* were to occur at the outset of the messianic age. See 5.1-13; 6.11-28. 52: *His company*: probably angels, as in Mt.24.31; 25.31; 2 Th.1.7. 57: *The field*: Ardat (9.26).

14.1-48: Vision VII. The writing of the sacred books.

14.1-18: God admonishes Ezra to prepare to leave this life. 1: *A bush*: see Exod.3.4. Ezra is set forth as a second Moses. 4: *Many days*: forty days (Exod.34.28). 6: *What to conceal*: see v. 46 n. 8: *Signs . . . visions . . . explanations*: i.e. the contents of the preceding chapters. 9: *To be taken away*: to be taken alive out of this world like Enoch and Elijah; see 6.26 n. 10: Compare 5.50-55. 11-12: *Nine divisions and half the tenth* had passed at the time the seer allegedly was writing, i.e. the reign of Artaxerxes II (404-359 B.C.; see 1.3 n.). What the measure of the divisions was is unknown but the two and a half divisions would have been greatly reduced at

18 increase for its inhabitants. Truth will move farther away, and falsehood come nearer. The eagle that you saw in your vision is already on the wing.  
 19 'May I speak<sup>e</sup> in your presence,  
 20 Lord?' I replied. 'I am to depart, by your command, after giving warning to those of my people who are now alive. But who will give warning to those born hereafter? The world is shrouded in darkness, and its inhabitants are without light. For your law was destroyed in the fire, and so no one can know about the deeds you have done or intend to do. If I have won your favour, fill me with your holy spirit, so that I may write down the whole story of the world from the very beginning, everything that is contained in your law; then men will have the chance to find the right path, and, if they choose, gain life in the last days.'  
 23 'Go,' he replied, 'call the people together, and tell them not to look for you for forty days. Have a large number of writing-tablets ready, and take with you Seraiah and Dibri, Shelemiah, Ethan, and Asiel, five men all trained to write quickly. Then return here, and I will light a lamp of understanding in your mind, which will not go out until you have finished all that you are to write. When your work is complete, some of it you must make public; the rest you must give to wise men to keep secret. Tomorrow at this time you shall begin to write.'  
 27 I went as I was ordered and summoned all the people, and said: 'Israel, listen to what I say. Our ancestors lived originally in Egypt as foreigners. They were rescued from that land, and were given the law which offers life. But they disobeyed it, and you have followed their example. Then you were

given a land of your own, the land of Zion; but you, like your ancestors, sinned and abandoned the way laid down for you by the Most High. Because he is a just judge he took away<sup>32</sup> from you in due time what he had given. And so you are now here in<sup>33</sup> exile, and your fellow-countrymen are still farther away. If then you will<sup>34</sup> direct your understanding and instruct your minds, you shall be kept safe in life and meet with mercy after you die. For after death will come the judgement;<sup>35</sup> we shall be restored to life, and then the names of the just will be known and the deeds of the godless exposed. From this moment no one<sup>36</sup> must come to talk to me, nor look for me for the next forty days.'

I took with me the five men as I had<sup>37</sup> been told, and we went away to the field, and there we stayed. On the next<sup>38</sup> day I heard a voice calling me, which said: 'Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you.' So I opened my<sup>39</sup> mouth, and was handed a cup full of what seemed like water, except that its colour was the colour of fire. I took it<sup>40</sup> and drank, and as soon as I had done so my mind began to pour forth a flood of understanding, and wisdom grew greater and greater within me, for I retained my memory unimpaired. I<sup>41</sup> opened my mouth to speak, and I continued to speak unceasingly. The<sup>42</sup> Most High gave understanding to the five men, who took turns at writing down what was said, using characters<sup>f</sup> which they had not known before. They remained at work through the forty days, writing all day, and taking food only at night. But as for me, I<sup>43</sup> spoke all through the day; even at

<sup>e</sup> May I speak: so other Vss.; Lat. omits.

<sup>f</sup> Probable reading, based on other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.

the time when his book appeared, approximately 100 A.D. See Introduction. 18: Eagle: see ch.11, especially 11.1 n.

14.19-26: The inspiration to restore Scriptures is granted. 20: Without light: without God's law (Ps.19.8). 21: The fire: Jerusalem's destruction; see 2 Kgs.25.8-9. 23: Forty days: see v. 1 n. and v. 4 n. 26: Some . . . make public: publish the restored Heb. Scriptures (v. 45). The rest . . . keep secret: see v. 46. As Moses, according to tradition, handed down an oral law to the sages, so Ezra is to preserve a number of secret (apocryphal) books for the future. See 12.37-38 n.

14.27-36: Ezra's last admonition to the people. 33: Your fellow-countrymen: perhaps the ten tribes. See 13.40 n., 41. 36: See v. 23.

14.37-48: Ezra rewrites the holy books. 39: A cup of inspiration is given to Ezra enabling him to restore perfectly the Scriptures; compare Ezek.3.1-3; Rev.10.9-11. 42: Until the Exile, the Heb. language was written in the Phoenician script. Between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., the Aram. script was adopted and from it developed the square characters still used in

44 night I was not silent. In the forty days,  
 45 ninety-four<sup>g</sup> books were written. At  
 the end of the forty days the Most  
 High spoke to me. 'Make public the  
 books you wrote first,' he said, 'to be  
 46 read by good and bad alike. But the  
 last seventy books are to be kept back,  
 and given to none but the wise among  
 47 your people. They contain a stream of  
 understanding, a fountain of wisdom,  
 48 a flood of knowledge.' And I did so.

*Prophecies of doom*

15 PROCLAIM TO MY PEOPLE THE WORDS  
 of prophecy which I give you to  
 2 speak, says the Lord; and have them  
 written down, because they are trust-  
 3 worthy and true. Have no fear of  
 plots against you, and do not be  
 troubled by the unbelief of those who  
 4 oppose you. For everyone who does  
 not believe will die because of his  
 unbelief.<sup>h</sup>  
 5 Beware, says the Lord, I am letting  
 loose terrible evils on the world,  
 sword and famine, death and destruc-  
 6 tion, because wickedness has spread  
 over the whole earth and there is no  
 room for further deeds of violence.  
 7,8 Therefore the Lord says, I will not  
 keep silence about their godless sins; I  
 will not tolerate their wicked deeds.  
 See how the blood of innocent victims  
 cries to me for vengeance, and the  
 9 souls of the just never cease to plead  
 with me! I will most surely avenge  
 them, says the Lord, and will hear the  
 plea of all the innocent blood that has  
 10 been shed. My people are being led to  
 the slaughter like sheep. I will no

longer allow them to remain in Egypt,  
 but will use all my power to rescue 11  
 them; I will strike the Egyptians with  
 plagues, as I did before, and destroy  
 their whole land. How Egypt will 12  
 mourn, shaken to its very foundations,  
 when it is scourged and chastised by  
 the Lord! How the tillers of the soil 13  
 will mourn, when the seed fails to  
 grow, and when their trees are devas-  
 tated by blight and hail and terrible  
 storm!<sup>i</sup> Alas for the world and its 14  
 inhabitants! The sword that will destroy 15  
 them is not far away. Nation will draw  
 sword against nation and go to war.  
 Stable government will be at an end; 16  
 one faction will prevail over another,  
 caring nothing in their day of power  
 for king or leading man of rank. A 17  
 man may want to visit a city, but will  
 not be able to do so; for ambition and 18  
 rivalry will have reduced cities to  
 chaos, destroyed houses, and filled men  
 with panic. A man will violently assault 19  
 his neighbour's house and plunder  
 his goods; no pity will restrain him,  
 when he is in the grip of famine and  
 grinding misery.

See how I summon before me all the 20  
 kings of the earth, says God, from  
 sunrise and south wind, from east and  
 south,<sup>j</sup> to turn back and repay what  
 they have been given. I will do to them 21  
 as they are doing to my chosen people  
 even to this day; I will pay them back  
 in their own coin.

These are the words of the Lord 22  
 God: I will show sinners no pity; the  
 sword will not spare those murderers

<sup>g</sup> So other Vss.; Lat. corrupt.

<sup>h</sup> Or in his unbelief.

<sup>i</sup> Probable meaning; Lat. obscure.

<sup>j</sup> south: probable reading; Lat. Lebanon.

writing Heb. To give the new script a sacred quality it is presented as revealed by God. 44-45: The *ninety-four books* comprise the twenty-four books of the present Heb. canon, those written *first to be read by good and bad*. These twenty-four equal the thirty-nine of the Christian canon where the double books of Sam., Kgs., and Chr., as well as Ezra-Neh., are counted separately and the minor prophets are counted as twelve instead of as one book as in the Hebrew. 46: *The last seventy books* include apocryphal and apocalyptic works such as the present one, to which the writer here ascribes great value as well as the authority of Moses (see v. 6) and Ezra. They are for the *wise*, i.e. the initiated.

15.1-16.78: *Prophecies of doom*. This section is considered a Christian appendix.

15.1-27: *The coming vengeance*. 3: *Have no fear*: compare Jer.1.17; Ezek.2.6. Other expressions in vv. 1-4 also imitate the "calls" of OT prophets. 8-9: The Lord is considered the avenger of *blood* in the case of the *innocent*; compare Gen.4.10-11; Rev.6.9-10; 19.2. 10: See Ps.44.22. The chief wickedness to be avenged is the persecution of God's people. 11: *I will strike the Egyptians* may allude to the famine which almost decimated the population of Alexandria in Gallienus' reign (260-268 A.D.). *As I did before* alludes to the ten plagues (Exod.7.14-11.10; 12.28-36). 15: *Nation . . . against nation*: compare Mt.24.7; Mk.13.8.



who stain the ground with innocent  
 23 blood. The Lord's anger has over-  
 flowed in fire to scorch the earth to its  
 foundations and consume sinners like  
 24 burning straw! Alas for sinners who  
 flout my commands! says the Lord; I  
 25 will show them no mercy. Away from  
 me, you rebels! Do not bring your  
 26 pollution near my holiness. The Lord  
 well knows all who sin against him,  
 and has consigned them to death and  
 27 destruction. Already disaster has fallen  
 upon the world, and you will never  
 escape it; God will refuse to rescue  
 you, because you have sinned against  
 him.

How terrible the sight of what is  
 28 coming from the east! Hordes of  
 29 dragons from Arabia will sally forth  
 with countless chariots, and from the  
 first day of their advance their hissing  
 will spread across the land, to fill all  
 who hear them with fear and consterna-  
 30 tion. The Carmanians, mad with rage,  
 will rush like wild boars out of the  
 forest, advancing in full force to join  
 battle with them, and will devastate  
 whole tracts of Assyria with their  
 31 tusks. But then the dragons will  
 summon up their native fury, and will  
 prove the stronger. They will rally and  
 join forces, and fall on them with  
 32 overwhelming might until they are  
 routed, until their power is silenced,  
 and every one of them turns to flight.  
 33 Then their way will be blocked by a  
 lurking enemy from Assyria, who will  
 destroy one of them. Fear and panic  
 will spread in their army, and wavering  
 among their kings.

See the clouds stretching from east  
 34 and north to south! Their appearance  
 is hideous, full of fury and tempest.  
 35 They will clash together, they will pour  
 over the land a vast storm;<sup>k</sup> blood,  
 shed by the sword, will reach as high  
 36 as a horse's belly, a man's thigh, or a  
 37 camel's hock. Terror and trembling  
 will cover the earth; all who see the

raging fury will shudder and be  
 stricken with panic. Then vast storm-  
 38 clouds will approach from north and  
 south, and others from the west. But  
 39 the winds from the east will be stronger  
 still, and will hold in check the raging  
 cloud and its leader; and the storm<sup>k</sup>  
 which was bent on destruction will be  
 fiercely driven back to the south and  
 west by the winds from the east. Huge  
 40 mighty clouds, full of fury, will  
 mount up and ravage the whole land  
 and its inhabitants; a terrible storm<sup>k</sup>  
 will sweep over the great and the  
 powerful, with fire and hail and flying  
 41 swords; and a deluge of water will  
 flood all the fields and rivers. They  
 42 will flatten to the ground cities and  
 walls, mountains and hills, trees in the  
 woods and crops in the fields. They  
 43 will advance all the way to Babylon,  
 and blot it out. When they reach it,  
 44 they will surround it, and let loose a  
 storm<sup>k</sup> in all its fury. The dust and  
 smoke will reach the sky, and all her  
 neighbours will mourn for Babylon.  
 Any of her survivors will be enslaved  
 45 by her destroyers.

And you, Asia, who have shared the  
 46 beauty and the splendour of Babylon,  
 alas for you, poor wretch! Like her  
 47 you have dressed up your daughters  
 as whores, to attract and catch your  
 lovers who have always lusted for you.  
 You have copied all the schemes and  
 48 practices of that vile harlot. Therefore  
 God says, I will bring upon you  
 49 terrible evils: widowhood and poverty,  
 famine, sword, and plague, bringing  
 ruin to your homes, bringing violence  
 and death. Your strength and splen-  
 50 dour will wither like a flower, when  
 that scorching heat bears down upon  
 you. Then you will be a poor weak  
 51 woman, bruised, beaten, and wounded,  
 unable to receive your wealthy lovers  
 any more. Should I be so fierce with  
 52 you, says the Lord, if you had not  
 53

<sup>k</sup> storm: probable meaning: Lat. obscure.

15.28-63: Syria, Rome threatened. After a general announcement of doom, the text speaks of warfare against *Assyria*, i.e. the Roman province of Syria (v. 30). Again events of the third century A.D. seem reflected (see v. 11 n.), especially the attack of the Persian King Shapur I (241-273 A.D.) against Syria. 29: *Dragons from Arabia* are apparently the armies of the Arabs of Palmyra. 30: *The Carmanians* are the Sassanid Persians, Carmania (Kerman) being a Persian province. 43: *Babylon*: Rome, as in Rev.18.10. 46: *Asia*: perhaps the Roman province of Asia, namely, the western end of Asia Minor, now Turkey. 48: *That vile harlot*: see Rev.14.8; 17.4-5. 49: See Rev.18.7-8.

- killed my chosen ones continually, gloating over the blows you struck them, and hurling your drunken taunts at their corpses?
- 54 Paint your face; make yourself  
55 beautiful! The harlot's pay shall be  
yours; you will get what you have  
56 earned. What you do to my chosen  
people, God will do to you, says the  
Lord; he will consign you to a terrible  
57 fate. Your children will die of hunger;  
you will fall by the sword, your cities  
will be blotted out, and all your people  
58 will fall on the field of battle. Those  
who are up on the mountains will be  
dying of hunger, and their hunger and  
thirst will force them to gnaw their  
own flesh and drink their own blood.  
59 You will be foremost in misery, and  
60 still there will be more to come. As the  
victors go past on their way home  
from the sack of Babylon, they will  
smash your peaceful city, destroy a  
great part of your territory, and bring  
much of your splendour to an end.  
61 They will destroy you—you will be  
62 stubble, and they the fire. They will  
completely devour you and your cities,  
your land and your mountains, and  
will burn all your forests and your  
63 fruit-trees. They will make your children  
prisoners and plunder your  
property; and not a trace will be left  
of your splendid beauty.
- 16 Alas for you, Babylon and Asia!  
2 Alas for you, Egypt and Syria! Put on  
sackcloth and hair-shirt, and raise a  
howl of lamentation for your sons;  
3 your doom is close at hand. The  
sword is let loose against you, and who  
4 will turn it aside? Fire is let loose  
upon you, and who will put it out?  
5 Calamities have been let loose against  
you, and who is there to stop them?  
6 Can any man stop a hungry lion in a  
forest, or put out a fire among the  
stubble once it has begun to blaze?  
7 Can any man stop an arrow shot by a  
8 strong archer? When the Lord God  
sends calamities, who can stop them?
- When his anger overflows in fire, who 9  
can put it out? When the lightning 10  
flashes, who will not tremble? When  
it thunders, who will not shake with  
dread? When it is the Lord who utters 11  
his threats, is there any man who will  
not be crushed to the ground at his  
approach? The earth is shaken to its 12  
very foundations, and the sea is  
churned up from its depths; the  
waves and all the fish with them are  
in turmoil before the presence of the  
Lord and the majesty of his strength.  
For strong is his arm which bends the 13  
bow, and sharp the arrows which he  
shoots; once they are on their way,  
they will not stop before they reach  
the ends of the earth. Calamities are 14  
let loose, and will not turn back before  
they strike the earth. The fire is alight 15  
and will not be put out until it has  
burnt up earth's foundations. An 16  
arrow shot by a powerful archer does  
not turn back; no more will the  
calamities be recalled which are let  
loose against the earth.
- Alas, alas for me! Who will rescue 17  
me on that day? When troubles come, 18  
many will groan; when famine strikes,  
many will die; when wars break out,  
empires will tremble; when the calamities  
come, all will be filled with terror.  
What will men do then, in the face of  
calamity? Famine and plague, suffering 19  
and hardship, are scourges sent to  
teach men better ways. But even so they 20  
will not abandon their crimes, nor  
keep in mind their scourging. A time 21  
will come when food grows cheap, so  
cheap that they will imagine they have  
been sent peace and prosperity. But at  
that very moment the earth will become  
a hotbed of disasters—sword, famine,  
and anarchy. Most of its inhabitants 22  
will die in the famine; and those who  
survive the famine will be destroyed by  
the sword. The dead will be tossed out 23  
like dung, and there will be no one to  
offer any comfort. For the earth will be  
left empty, and its cities a ruin. None 24

16.1-34: Various powers denounced. Chs. 15 and 16 emulate the oracles against foreign nations by OT prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. 1: *Babylon*: Rome, as in 15.43. *Asia*: see 15.46 n. *Egypt*: see 15.11-19. 2: *Sackcloth* was a sign of mourning and wearing a *hairshirt* next to the body a way of doing penance. 5: A profusion of biblical phrases and stock apocalyptic ideas comprises the vague calamities here enumerated. 15: See 2 Pet.3.10 and Tfn. g there. 19: *Scourges sent to teach men*: compare Heb.12.5-11.

will be left to till the ground and sow  
 25 it. The trees will bear their fruits, but  
 26 who will pick them? The grapes will  
 ripen, but who will tread them? There  
 27 will be vast desolation everywhere. A  
 man will long to see a human face or  
 28 hear a human voice. For out of a  
 whole city, only ten will survive; in the  
 country-side, only two will be left,  
 hiding in the forest or in holes in the  
 29 rocks. Just as in an olive-grove three  
 or four olives might be left on each  
 30 tree, or as a few grapes in a vineyard  
 might be overlooked by the sharp-eyed  
 31 pickers, so also in those days three or  
 four will be overlooked by those who  
 32 search the houses to kill. The earth  
 will be left a desert, and the fields will  
 be overrun with briars; thorns will  
 grow over all the roads and paths,  
 because there will be no sheep to tread  
 33 them. Girls will live in mourning with  
 none to marry them, women will  
 mourn because they have no husbands,  
 their daughters will mourn because  
 34 they have no one to support them. The  
 young men who should have married  
 them will be killed in the war, and the  
 husbands wiped out by the famine.

35 **BUT LISTEN TO ME, YOU WHO ARE THE**  
 Lord's servants, and take my words to  
 36 heart. This is the word of the Lord.  
 Receive it, and do not disbelieve what  
 37 he says. Calamities are here, close at  
 38 hand, and will not delay. When a  
 pregnant woman is in the ninth month,  
 and the moment of her child's birth is  
 drawing near, there will be two or  
 three hours in which her womb will  
 suffer pangs of agony, and then the  
 child will come from the womb without  
 39 a moment's delay; in the same way  
 calamities will come on the earth  
 without delay, and the world will groan  
 under the pangs that grip it.

40 Listen to my words, my people;  
 get ready for battle, and when the  
 calamities surround you, be as though  
 41 you were strangers on earth. The

seller must expect to have to run for  
 his life, the buyer to lose what he buys;  
 the merchant must expect to make no  
 profit, the builder never to live in the  
 42 house he builds. The sower must not  
 expect to reap, nor the pruner to gather  
 43 his grapes. Those who marry must  
 expect no children; the unmarried must  
 think of themselves as widowed. For  
 45 all labour is labour in vain. Their  
 46 fruits will be gathered by foreigners,  
 who will plunder their goods, pull  
 down their houses, and take their  
 children captive. If they have children,  
 they will have been bred only for  
 captivity and famine; any who make  
 47 money do so only to have it plundered.  
 The more care they lavish on their  
 cities, houses, and property, and on  
 their own persons, the fiercer will be  
 48 my indignation against their sins, says  
 the Lord. Like the indignation of a  
 49 virtuous woman towards a prostitute,  
 so will be the indignation of justice  
 50 towards wickedness with all her finery;  
 she will accuse her to her face, when  
 the champion arrives to expose all sin  
 upon earth. Do not imitate wickedness,  
 51 therefore, and her actions. For in a very  
 52 short time she will be swept from the  
 earth, and the reign of justice over us  
 will begin.

The sinner must not deny that he has  
 sinned; he will only bring burning  
 coals on to his own head if he says, 'I  
 have committed no sin against the  
 majesty of God.' For the Lord knows all  
 that men do; he knows their plans, their  
 schemes, and their inmost thoughts.  
 He said, 'Let the earth be made', and  
 it was made; and 'Let the heavens be  
 made', and they were made. It was by  
 56 the Lord's word that the stars were  
 fixed in their places; the number of  
 the stars is known to him. He looks  
 57 into the depths with their treasures; he  
 has measured the sea and everything it  
 contains. By his word he confined the  
 sea within the bounds of the waters:  
 58 and above the water he suspended the

16.35-52: God's people warned of the coming disasters. 38: *A pregnant woman*: compare 4.40. *Pangs of agony*: calamities, as "birthpangs of the Messiah," presage the end of the present order; compare Jn.16.21. 40-45: In the *calamities* of the end, all stable economic and family life will cease so that *labour* to make it secure will be *in vain*; compare 1 Cor.7.29-31. 51-52: Do not *imitate wickedness*: compare 2 Pet.3.11-13.

16.53-67: Sin cannot be hidden from God. 55-60: See Gen.1.6-10.

59 land. He spread out the sky like a  
 vault, and made it secure upon the  
 60 waters. He provided springs in the  
 desert, and pools on the mountain-  
 tops as the source of rivers flowing  
 61 down to water the earth. He created  
 man, and placed a heart in the middle  
 of his body; he gave him spirit, life,  
 62 and understanding, the very breath of  
 Almighty God who created the whole  
 world and searches out secret things in  
 63 secret places. He knows well your plans  
 and all your inward thoughts. Alas for  
 64 sinners who try to hide their sins! The  
 Lord will scrutinize all their deeds; he  
 65 will call you all to account. You will  
 be covered with confusion, when your  
 sins are brought into the open, and  
 your wicked deeds stand up to accuse  
 66 you on that day. What can you do?  
 How can you hide your sins from God  
 67 and his angels? God is your judge:  
 fear him! Abandon your sins, and have  
 done with your wicked deeds for ever!  
 Then God will set you free from all  
 distress.

68 Fierce flames are being kindled to  
 burn you. A great horde will descend  
 on you; they will seize some of you  
 and make you eat pagan sacrifices.

Those who give in to them will be 69  
 derided, taunted, and trampled on. In 70  
 place after place<sup>1</sup> and in all the neigh-  
 bourhood there will be a violent attack  
 on those who fear the Lord. Their 71  
 enemies will be like madmen, plunder-  
 ing and destroying without mercy all  
 who still fear the Lord. They will 72  
 destroy and plunder their property,  
 and throw them out of their homes.  
 Then it will be seen that my chosen 73  
 people have stood the test like gold in  
 the assayer's fire.

Listen, you whom I have chosen, 74  
 says the Lord; the days of harsh  
 suffering are close at hand, but I will  
 rescue you from them. Away with your 75  
 fears and doubts! For God is your  
 leader. You who follow my command- 76  
 ments and instructions, says the Lord  
 God, must not let your sins weigh you  
 down, nor your wicked deeds get the 77  
 better of you. Alas for those who are  
 entangled in their sins, and overrun  
 with their wicked deeds! They are like  
 a field overrun by bushes, with  
 brambles across the path and no way 78  
 through, completely shut off and  
 doomed to destruction by fire.

<sup>1</sup> In place after place: possible meaning; Lat. obscure.

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**16.68–78: God's persecuted people will be delivered. 68: Fierce flames:** possibly the passage alludes to persecution of the Christians by the emperor Decius about 250 A.D.

# TOBIT

This is the story of a pious Jew in exile who, after many misfortunes and trying events, finally sees the victory of God's Providence in a happy family reunion and a peaceful end.

Apart from the fascination of the tale itself, the book reflects aspects of Jewish piety in the period of history just prior to the birth of Christianity. The account is presented as history and as having taken place in Nineveh in the eighth pre-Christian century. The many discrepancies with known facts of history suggest that the author uses Nineveh as a literary device, intending the blind Tobit to represent collective Israel who, in exile, is sorely tempted to lose faith in divine providence. The Israelites are admonished to remain faithful to the Torah so that they too may "see" at the end how God works out his designs in the ambiguities of history. The story belongs, therefore, to the category of Wisdom literature.

The author of Tobit is unknown. The story seems to be very old; differing versions have survived. This version was probably written about the second century B.C. in Hebrew or Aramaic.

## *The troubles of Tobit*

1 **T**HIS IS THE STORY OF TOBIT, SON OF  
Tobiel, son of Hananiel, son of  
Aduel, son of Gabael, son of  
Raphael, son of Raguel, of the family  
2 of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali. He  
was taken captive in the time of  
Shalmaneser<sup>a</sup> king of Assyria, from  
Thisbe which is south of Kedesh  
Naphtali in Upper Galilee above  
Hazor, behind the road to the west,  
north of Peor.

3 **I, TOBIT, MADE TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUS-**  
ness my lifelong guide; I did many acts  
of charity for my kinsmen, those of my  
nation who had gone into captivity  
4 with me at Nineveh in Assyria. When  
I was quite young in my own country,  
Israel, the whole tribe of Naphtali my  
ancestor broke away from the dynasty  
of David,<sup>b</sup> and from Jerusalem, the city  
chosen out of all the tribes of Israel as  
the one place of sacrifice. It was there  
that God's dwelling-place, the temple,  
had been consecrated, built to last for  
5 all generations. All my kinsmen, the  
whole house of Naphtali my ancestor,  
sacrificed on the mountains of Galilee  
to the calf which Jeroboam, king of  
6 Israel, had made in Dan; at the festivals

I was the only one to make the frequent  
journey to Jerusalem prescribed for all  
Israel as an eternal commandment. I  
used to hurry off to Jerusalem with the  
firstfruits of crops and herds, the tithes  
of the cattle, and the first shearings of  
the sheep; and I gave them to the priests  
of Aaron's line for the altar, and the  
7 tithe of wine, corn, olive oil, pome-  
granates and other fruits to the Levites  
ministering in Jerusalem. The second  
tithe for the six years I converted into  
money, and I went and distributed it  
8 in Jerusalem year by year among the  
orphans and widows, and the converts  
who had attached themselves to Israel.  
Every third year when I brought it and  
gave it to them, we held a feast accord-  
ing to the rule laid down in the law of  
Moses and the instructions given by  
Deborah the mother of Hananiel our  
grandfather; for my father had died  
leaving me an orphan.

When I came of age I took a wife 9  
from our kindred, and had a son by  
her whom I called Tobias. After the  
10 deportation to Assyria when I was  
taken captive and came to Nineveh,  
everyone of my kindred and nation ate  
gentile food; but I myself scrupulously  
11 avoided doing so. Since I was whole-  
12

<sup>a</sup> Gk. Enemessaros.

<sup>b</sup> Gk. adds my ancestor.

**1.1-3.17: Tobit's tale of his misfortunes.** His zealous efforts to live the Law earn him the persecution of the pagans and the jeers of the other Jews.

**1.1-2: Introduction. 1: Tobit:** perhaps an abbreviated form of the Heb. *Tobiah* (Gk. *Tobias*, v. 9), meaning "the LORD is good." **2:** The tribe of *Naphtali* was deported to *Assyria*, not by *Shalmaneser* but by his predecessor, *Tiglath-pileser III* (745-727 B.C.); see 2 Kgs.15.29. *Thisbe* is located west-southwest of Lake Huleh in northern Palestine.

**1.3-22: Tobit's virtuous life in exile. 3: Ninveh:** capital of *Assyria*. **4:** The secession of the northern tribes from the *dynasty of David* (1 Kgs. ch. 12) took place about 922 B.C., 150 years before Tobit was born **5: Mountains . . . calf:** see 1 Kgs.12.28-31. **6-8: Firstfruits . . . tithes:** an idealized picture of Jewish piety; see Num.18.12-13; Deut.18.3-4. **10: Gentile food:** for-

- 13 heartedly mindful of my God, the Most High endowed me with a presence which won me the favour of Shalmaneser, and I became his buyer of supplies. As long as he lived I used to travel to Media and buy for him there. I deposited bags of money to the value of ten talents of silver with my kinsman Gabael son of Gabri in Media. When Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, the roads to Media passed out of Assyrian control and I could no longer make the journey.
- 16 In the time of Shalmaneser, I did many acts of charity for my fellow-countrymen: I shared my food with the hungry and provided clothes for the naked. If I saw the dead body of any man of my race lying outside the wall of Nineveh, I buried it. I buried all those who fell victim to Sennacherib after his flight from Judaea, when the King of heaven executed judgement on him for all his blasphemies, and in his rage he killed many of the Israelites. I stole their bodies away and buried them, and Sennacherib looked for them but could not find them. One of the Ninevites informed the king that I was giving burial to his victims; so I went into hiding. When I learnt that the king knew about me and that I was wanted for execution, I took fright and ran away. All my property was seized and put into the royal treasury; I was left with nothing but Anna my wife and my son Tobias. However, less than forty days afterwards, the king was murdered by two of his sons. They took refuge in the mountains of Ararat, and his son Esarhaddon succeeded him. He appointed Ahikar son of my brother Anael to supervise all the finances of his kingdom; he had control of the entire administration. Then Ahikar interceded on my behalf and I came back to Nineveh. For he had been chief cupbearer, keeper of the privy seal, comptroller, and treasurer when Sennacherib was king of Assyria; and Esarhaddon renewed the appointments. Ahikar was my nephew and so one of my kinsmen.
- DURING THE REIGN OF ESARHADDON, I returned to my house, and my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me. At our festival of Pentecost, that is the Feast of Weeks, a good dinner was prepared for me and I sat down to eat. The table was laid and a lavish meal was put before me. I said to my son Tobias: 'Go, my boy, and if you can find any poor man of our captive people in Nineveh who is wholeheartedly mindful of God, bring him and he shall share my dinner. I will wait for you until you return.' Tobias went to look for a poor man of our people, but he came back and said, 'Father!' 'Yes, my son?' I replied. He answered, 'Father, one of our nation has been murdered and his body is lying in the market-place. He was strangled only a moment ago.' I jumped up and left my dinner untasted. I took the body from the square and put it in one of the out-buildings until sunset when I could bury it; then I went home, duly bathed myself, and ate my food in sorrow. I recalled the saying of the

bidden by the Law as unclean; see Deut.14.3–21. 13: *Shalmaneser V*: the successor of Tiglath-pileser III in 727 B.C. 14: *Ten talents of silver* would equal about \$16,000. 15: *Shalmaneser V* was followed by Sargon II (722–705 B.C.) and then only by *Sennacherib* (705–681 B.C.). Such historical inaccuracies suggest that the author intends, not history, but a story illustrative of Wisdom. 17: *A dead body* left unburied was considered a curse, a punishment for an evil life, that somehow affected the peace of the deceased. See 2 Kgs.9.10; Jer.8.2; Ecclus.44.14. 18: *God executed judgement* on Sennacherib at the siege of Jerusalem; a plague apparently struck his army, leaving many dead and forcing an unexpected retreat. See 2 Kgs.19.35–36; Isa.37.36–37. 21: *Two of his sons*: see 2 Kgs.19.37. *Ahikar*, the hero of a popular ancient legend, was a wise and wealthy chancellor under several Assyrian kings. He raised and educated a nephew, Nadab, who betrayed him. Eventually he was vindicated and the nephew was punished. Perhaps the author brings Ahikar into the story of Tobit because they were both tested by misfortune and finally restored to a happy state. See also 2.10; 11.18; and 14.10, where their tribulations are further recorded.

2.1–14: *Tobit's misfortunes. 1*: The Jewish feast of *Pentecost* (Gr. "fifty [days]") was observed seven weeks after Passover (Lev.23.15–21) at the time of the grain harvest. 5: *Tobit bathed* himself because contact with a corpse made him ritually unclean and unfit for public worship

prophet Amos in the passage about Bethel:

'Your feasts shall be turned into mourning,  
and all your songs<sup>c</sup> into lamentation',

7 and I wept. After sunset I went and  
8 dug a grave and buried the body. The  
neighbours jeered at me and said: 'Is  
he no longer afraid? He ran away last  
time, when they were hunting for him  
to put him to death for this very  
offence; and here he is burying the  
9 dead again!' That night I bathed  
myself and went into my courtyard.  
I lay down to sleep by the courtyard  
wall, leaving my face uncovered be-  
10 cause of the heat. I did not know that  
there were sparrows in the wall above  
me; and their droppings fell, still warm,  
right into my eyes and produced white  
patches. I went to the doctors to be  
cured, but the more they treated me  
with their ointments, the more my eyes  
were blinded by the white patches,  
until I lost my sight. For four years I  
was blind. All my kinsmen grieved for  
me, and Ahikar looked after me for two  
years until he moved to Elymais.

11 During that time my wife Anna  
used to earn money by women's work.  
12 When she took what she had done to  
her employers they would pay her  
wages. One day, the seventh of Dystrus,  
when she had cut off the piece she had  
woven and delivered it, the owners not  
only paid her in full, but also gave her  
a kid from their herd of goats to take  
13 home. When my wife came in to me the  
kid began to bleat. I called out to her:  
'Where does that kid come from? I  
hope it was not stolen? Give it back to  
its owners; we have no right to eat  
14 anything stolen.' She assured me: 'It  
was given me as a present, over and  
above my wages.' I did not believe her  
and insisted that she should give it  
back to its owners, and I blushed

with shame for what she had done.  
She retorted: 'So much for all your  
good works and acts of charity! Now  
we can see what you are!'

In deep distress I groaned and wept, 3  
and as I groaned I prayed: 'Thou art 2  
just, O Lord, and all thy acts are just;  
in all thy ways thou art merciful and  
true; thou art judge of the world.  
Remember me now, Lord, and look 3  
upon me. Do not punish me for the  
sins and errors which I and my fathers  
have committed. We have sinned 4  
against thee and disobeyed thy com-  
mandments, and thou hast given us  
up to plunder, captivity, and death,  
until we have become a byword, a  
proverb, and a taunt to all the nations  
among whom thou hast scattered us.  
I acknowledge the justice of thy many 5  
judgements, the due penalty for my  
sins, for we have not obeyed thy com-  
mandments and have not lived in loyal  
obedience before thee. And now deal 6  
with me at thy pleasure, and com-  
mand that my life be taken away, so  
that I may be removed from the face  
of the earth and turned to earth. I  
should be better dead than alive, for I  
have had to hear undeserved re-  
proaches and am in deep grief. Lord,  
command that I may be released from  
this misery; let me go to my long home;  
do not turn thy face from me, O Lord.  
It is better for me to die than to  
live in such misery and to hear such  
reproaches.'

On that same day it happened that 7  
Sarah, the daughter of Raguel who  
lived at Ecbatana in Media, also had  
to listen to reproaches from one of her  
father's maidservants, because she had 8  
been given in marriage to seven hus-  
bands, and before the marriage could  
be regularly consummated they had all  
been killed by the wicked demon  
Asmodaëus. The maidservant said to  
her: 'It is you who kill your husbands!'

<sup>c</sup> So one Vs. (compare Amos 8. 10); Gk. ways.

(Num.19.11-13). 10: *Elymais* is Elam, a region north of the Tigris on the Persian Gulf. 12: *Dystrus*: the fifth month of the Macedonian (and Hellenistic) calendar (about February). 14: *She retorted*, much as Job's wife did (Job 2.9), that Tobit suffered either because he was punished for secret sins or because virtue did not pay.

3.1-6: *Tobit's prayer*. 6: *Long home*: eternal abode. *Do not turn thy face*: do not remove your favor.

3.7-10: *Sarah's plight*. 7: *Ecbatana*: the capital of *Media*, present-day Iran. 8: *Asmodaëus*

You have already been given in marriage to seven, and you have not borne the name of any one of them.

9 Why punish us because they are dead? Go and join your husbands! I hope we never see son or daughter of yours!

10 She was sad at heart that day, and went in tears up to the attic in her father's house meaning to hang herself. But she had second thoughts and said to herself: 'Perhaps they will reproach my father and say to him, "You had one dear daughter and she hanged herself because of her troubles", and so I shall bring my aged father in sorrow to the grave. No, I will not hang myself; it would be better to beg the Lord to let me die and not live on to hear such reproaches.' Then at once she spread out her hands towards the window in prayer and said: 'Praise to thee, merciful God, praise to thy name for ever; let all thy works praise thee for evermore. Now I lift up my eyes and look to thee. Command me to be removed from this earth so that I may no longer hear such reproaches. Thou knowest, Lord, that I am a virgin, guiltless of intercourse with any man; I have not disgraced my name nor my father's name in the land of my exile. I am my father's only child; he has no other to be his heir, nor has he any near kinsman or relative who might marry me, and for whom I should stay alive. Already seven husbands of mine have died. What have I to live for any longer? If it is not thy will, O Lord, to let me die, listen now to my complaint.'

16 At that very time the prayers of both of them were heard in the glorious

presence of God. His angel Raphael 17 was sent to cure them both of their troubles: Tobit, by removing the white patches from his eyes so that he might see God's light again, and Sarah daughter of Raguel by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit and by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodeus; for it was the destiny of Tobias and not of any other suitor to possess her. At the moment when Tobit went back from the courtyard into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel came down from the attic.

### The adventures of Tobias

THAT SAME DAY TOBIT REMEMBERED THE 4 silver that he had deposited with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself, 'I have asked for death; before I die ought I not to send for my son Tobias and explain to him about this money?' So he sent for Tobias, and 3 when he came he said to him: 'Give me decent burial. Show proper respect to your mother, and do not leave her in the lurch as long as she lives; do what will please her, and never grieve her heart in any way. Remember, my son, 4 all the dangers she faced for your sake while you were in her womb. When she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave. And remember the Lord every 5 day of your life. Never deliberately do what is wrong or break his commandments. As long as you live do what is right. Do not fall into evil ways; for an 6 honest life leads to prosperity. To all who keep the law, the Lord gives good 19

means "destroyer" and the name occurs only here in the Bible. 10: Sarah's concern lest she bring her *aged father in sorrow to the grave* reflects a theme repeatedly expressed in the Joseph novelette about the aged Jacob, e.g. in Gen.37.35; 42.38; 44.29. Premature death was deemed a curse.

3.11-15: *Sarah's prayer*. 15: This concern about a *near kinsman* reflects the clan law about marriage within the tribal group, a law with special significance in exile, where the maintenance of group identity was of great concern, lest the people disappear. Sarah here seems to be unaware of the existence of Tobias.

3.16-17: *God hears the prayers of Tobit and Sarah*. 16: A phrase like *at that very time* suggests that the author is more interested in dramatic coincidence than historical probability. 17: *Raphael* is a Heb. name meaning "God heals." An old tradition held that an angel was usually limited to a single errand. Here Raphael cures both at once.

4.1-9.6: *Tobit sends for his son*. Under the inspiration of the angel Raphael, Tobias himself is saved from danger and brings healing to others. His sage advice (4.3-20) reflects the morals of Judaism of the intertestamental age.

4.1-5.3: *Tobias is sent to retrieve Tobit's money*. 1: *Rages* was a city in *Media* situated near modern Teheran. 3: *Decent burial*: see 1.17 n. 5-19: Wise counseling as in Prov. and Ecclus.



guidance, and as he chooses he humbles men to the grave below.<sup>d</sup> Now, my son, remember these commands; let them never be effaced from your mind.

20 'Well now, my boy, let me tell you that I have ten talents of silver on deposit with Gabael son of Gabri, at  
21 Rages in Media. Do not be anxious because we have become poor; there is great wealth waiting for you, if only you fear God and avoid all wickedness and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God.'

5 Then Tobias said: 'I will do all that  
2 you have told me, father. But how shall I be able to get this money from him, since he does not know me and I do not know him? What proof of identity shall I give him to make him believe me and give me this money? Also I do not know the roads to Media or how to get there.'

3 To this Tobit replied: 'He gave me his note of hand, and I gave him mine, which I divided in two. We took one part each, and I put mine with the money. It is twenty years since I made this deposit. And now, my boy, find someone reliable to go with you, and we will pay him up to the time of your return; then go and recover the money from Gabael.'

4 Tobias went out to find a man who knew the way and would accompany him to Media, and found himself face  
5 to face with the angel Raphael. Not knowing he was an angel of God, he questioned him: 'Where do you come from, young man?' 'I am an Israelite,' he replied, 'one of your fellow-countrymen, and I have come here to find work.' Tobias asked, 'Do you know  
6 the road to Media?' 'Yes,' he said, 'I have often been there; I am familiar with all the routes and know them well. I have often travelled into Media and used to lodge with Gabael our fellow-countryman who lives there in Rages.<sup>e</sup> It is two full days' journey from Ec-

batana to Rages; for Rages is in the hills, and Ecbatana is in the middle of the plain.' Tobias said: 'Wait for me, 7 young man, while I go in and tell my father. I need you to go with me and will pay you your wages.' 'All right, I will 8 wait,' he said; 'only do not be too long.'

Tobias went in and told his father. 'I have found a fellow-Israelite to accompany me', he said. His father replied, 'Call the man in, my son. I want to find out his family and tribe and make sure that he will be a trustworthy companion for you.'

Tobias went out and called him: 9 'Young man, my father is asking for you.' He went in, and Tobit greeted him first. To Raphael's reply, 'May all

*d* To all . . . below: in place of these words some witnesses have To all who keep the law (7) give alms from what you possess and never give with a grudging eye. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and God will not turn away his face from you. (8) Let your almsgiving match your means. If you have little, do not be ashamed to give the little you can afford; (9) you will be laying up a sound insurance against the day of adversity. (10) Almsgiving saves the giver from death and keeps him from going down into darkness. (11) All who give alms are making an offering acceptable to the Most High.

(12) 'Beware, my son, of fornication; above all choose your wife from the race of your ancestors. Do not take a foreign wife who is not of your father's tribe, because we are descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors, back to the earliest days, all chose wives from their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their descendants shall possess the earth. (13) And you like them, my son, must love your kindred. Do not be too proud to take a wife from among the women of your own nation. Pride breeds ruin and anarchy, and the waster declines into poverty; waste is the mother of starvation.

(14) 'Pay your workmen their wages the same day; do not make any man wait for his money. If you serve God you will be repaid. Be circumspect, my son, in all that you do, and show yourself well-bred in all your behaviour. (15) Do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate. Do not drink to excess and so let drunkenness become a habit. (16) Give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. Whatever you have beyond your own needs, give away to the poor, and do not give grudgingly. (17) Pour out your wine and offer your bread on the tombs of the righteous; but give nothing to sinners. (18) Ask any sensible man for his advice; do not despise any advice that may help you. (19) Praise the Lord God at all times and ask him to guide your course. Then all you do and all you plan will turn out well. The heathen all lack such guidance; it is the Lord himself who gives all good things, or humbles men at will, as he chooses.

*e* Probable reading (compare 4. 1); Gk. Ecbatana.

19: When Tobit urges his son to *remember these commands* he is voicing a constant theme of Jewish piety which viewed loyalty to God as an active remembrance of his favors. 20: *Ten talents*: see 1.14 n.

5.4-22: Azarias (Raphael) is hired as Tobias' guide. 6: The journey from Ecbatana to Rages cannot be made in *two full days* since it involves a distance of some 450 miles. Moreover, it is Ecbatana, not Rages, that is situated in mountainous terrain. Raphael's familiarity with all the routes seems to refer to the journey of his life rather than to the geography of Persia. 9: *I am a blind man*: Tobit speaks for Israel, symbolically blind to the ways of God's Providence. The

be well with you!', Tobit retorted: 'How can anything be well with me now? I am a blind man; I cannot see the light of heaven, but lie in darkness like the dead who cannot see the light. Though still alive, I am as good as dead. I hear men's voices, but the men I do not see.' Raphael answered: 'Take heart; in God's design your cure is at hand. Take heart.' Tobit went on: 'My son Tobias wishes to travel to Media. Can you go with him as his guide? I will pay you, my friend.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I can go with him; I know all the roads. I have often been to Media; I have travelled over all the plains and mountains there, and am familiar with all its roads.' Tobit said to him, 'Tell me, my friend, what family and tribe you belong to.' He asked, 'Why need you know my tribe?' Tobit said, 'I do indeed wish to know whose son you are, my friend, and what your name is.' 'I am Azarias,' he replied, 'son of the older Ananias, one of your kinsmen.'

13 Tobit said to him: 'Good luck and a safe journey to you! Do not be angry with me, my friend, because I wished to know the facts of your descent. It turns out that you are a kinsman, and a man of good family. I knew Ananias and Nathan the two sons of the older Semelias. They used to go with me to Jerusalem and worship with me there; they never went astray. Your kinsmen are worthy men; you come of a sound stock. Good luck go with you.'

14 Tobit added: 'I will pay you a drachma a day and allow you the same expenses as my son. Keep him company on his travels, and I will add something to your wages.'

15 Raphael answered: 'I will go with him. Never fear; we shall travel there and back without mishap, because the road is safe.' Tobit replied, 'God bless you, my friend.' He called his son and said to him: 'My boy, get ready what you need for the journey, and set off with your kinsman. May God in heaven

keep both of you safe on your journey there and restore you to me unharmed. May his angel safely escort you both.' Before setting out Tobias kissed his father and mother, and Tobit said to him, 'Goodbye, and a safe journey!'

Then his mother burst into tears. 17 'Why have you sent my boy away?' she said to Tobit. 'Is he not our prop and stay? Has he not always been at home with us? Why send money after money? Write it off for the sake of our boy! Let us be content to live the life 18 the Lord has appointed for us.' Tobit 20 said to her: 'Do not worry; our son will go safely and come back safely, and you will see him with your own eyes on the day of his safe return. Do not worry or be anxious about them, my dear. A good angel will go with him, 21 and his journey will prosper, and he will come back safe and sound.' At that she 22 stopped crying.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL LEFT THE 6 house together, and the dog came out with him and accompanied them. They travelled until night overtook them, and then camped by the river Tigris. Tobias went down to bathe his feet in 2 the river, and a huge fish leapt out of the water and tried to swallow the boy's foot. He cried out, and the angel said 3 to him, 'Seize the fish and hold it fast.' So Tobias seized it and hauled it on to the bank. The angel said to him: 'Split 4 the fish open and take out its gall, heart, and liver; keep them by you, but throw the guts away; the gall, heart, and liver can be used as medicine.' Tobias split 5 the fish open, and put together its gall, heart, and liver. He cooked and ate part of the fish; the rest he salted and kept.

They continued the journey together until they came near Media. Then the 6 boy asked the angel: 'Azarias, my friend, what medicine is there in the fish's heart, liver, and gall?' He said: 7

theme of the book is summed up in the appeal, *take heart*, directed to Israel. 12: *Azarias* is the Gk. form of a Heb. name (*Azariah*) meaning "the Lord helps." 14: A *drachma* was a normal day's wages, about sixteen cents.

6.1-17: **Raphael guides Tobias to Ecbatana and they prepare to meet Sarah.** 1: The *dog*, rarely noted in the Bible and even more rarely presented favorably, is introduced here to reinforce family atmosphere. See also 11.4 n. The *Tigris* river does not in fact cross the path of a journey from Nineveh to Ecbatana. 4: Special medicinal qualities were often attributed to the internal

'You can use the heart and liver as a fumigation for any man or woman attacked by a demon or evil spirit; the attack will cease, and it will give no further trouble. The gall is for anointing a man's eyes when white patches have spread over them, or for blowing on the white patches in the eyes; the eyes will then recover.'

9 When he had entered Media and was now approaching Ecbatana, Raphael said to the boy, 'Tobias, my friend.' 'Yes?' he replied. Raphael said: 'We must stay the night with Raguel. He is your kinsman and he has a daughter named Sarah. Apart from Sarah he has neither son nor daughter. You are her next of kin and have the right to marry her and inherit her father's property. The girl is sensible, brave, and very beautiful, and her father is an honourable man.' He went on: 'It is right that you should marry her. Be guided by me, my friend; I will speak to her father about the girl this very night and ask for her hand as your bride, and on our return from Rages we will celebrate her marriage. I know that Raguel cannot withhold her from you or betroth her to another man without incurring the death penalty according to the ordinance in the book of Moses; and he is aware that his daughter belongs by right to you rather than to any other man. Now be guided by me, my friend; we will talk about the girl tonight and will betroth her to you, and when we return from Rages we shall take her back with us to your home.'

13 Then Tobias answered Raphael: 'Azarias, my friend, I have heard that she has already been given to seven husbands and they died the very night they went into the bridal chamber to her. I have been told that it is a demon who kills them. And now it is my turn to be afraid; he does her no harm, but kills any man who tries to come near her. I am my father's only child; I am

afraid that if I die I shall bring my father and mother to the grave with grief for me. They have no other son to bury them.' Raphael said to him: 'Have you forgotten the orders your father gave you? He told you to take a wife from your father's kindred. Now be guided by me, my friend: do not worry about the demon, but marry her. I am sure that this night she shall be given you as your wife. When you enter the bridal chamber, take some of the fish's liver and its heart, and put them on the smoking incense. The smell will spread, and when the demon smells it he will make off and never be seen near her any more. When you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, beseeching the Lord of heaven to grant you mercy and deliverance. Have no fear; she was destined for you before the world was made. You shall rescue her and she shall go with you. No doubt you will have children by her and they will be very dear to you.' So do not worry!' When Tobias heard what Raphael said, and learnt that she was his kinswoman and of his father's house, he was filled with love for her and set his heart on her.

WHEN THEY REACHED ECBATANA, Tobias said, 'Azarias, my friend, take me straight to our kinsman Raguel.' So Azarias brought him to Raguel's house, and they found him sitting by the courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he replied, 'A hearty welcome to you, friends. I am glad to see you well after your journey.' He took them into his house and said to Edna his wife, 'Is not this young man like my kinsman Tobit?' Edna asked them, 'Where do you come from, friends?' 'We belong to the tribe of Naphtali,' they answered, 'now in captivity at Nineveh.' 'Do you know our kinsman Tobit?' she asked,

*f* Literally be like brothers to you.

organs of animals. 11: Mosaic Law required a daughter who is heir to property to marry within her tribe (Num.36.8), so as to prevent the gradual loss of a tribe's property and support. 12: There is no mention of the *death penalty* in Num.36.8. 14: *To bury them*: the exiled Jew was continually preoccupied with the thought of burial because abandonment in death definitively confirmed God's abandonment of Israel in the Exile. 17: *Stand up and pray*: the demon will be rendered powerless if passion is tempered by prayer.

7.1-15: Tobias and Sarah are married. Similar marriage arrangements are related in Gen.24.15; 29.9-12; Exod.2.16-21.

and they replied, 'Yes, we do.' 'Is he well?' she said. 'He is alive and well', they answered, and Tobias added, 'He is my father.' Raguel jumped up and, with tears in his eyes, he kissed him and said, 'God bless you, my boy, son of a good and noble father. But what grievous news that so good and charitable a man has gone blind!' He embraced Tobias his kinsman and wept; and Edna his wife and their daughter Sarah also wept for Tobit. Then Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and made them warmly welcome.

After they had taken a bath and washed their hands, and had sat down to dinner, Tobias said to Raphael, 'Azarias, my friend, ask Raguel to give me Sarah my kinswoman.' Raguel overheard and said to the young man: 'Eat, drink, and be happy tonight. There is no one but yourself who should have my daughter Sarah; indeed I have no right to give her to anyone else, since you are my nearest kinsman. But I must tell you the truth, my son: I have given her in marriage to seven of our kinsmen, and they all died on their wedding night. My son, eat now and drink, and may the Lord deal kindly with you both.' Tobias answered, 'I will not eat or drink anything here until you have disposed of this business of mine.' Raguel said to him, 'I will do so: I give her to you as the ordinance in the book of Moses prescribes. Heaven has ordained that she shall be yours. Take your kinswoman. From now on, you belong to her and she to you; she is yours for ever from this day. The Lord of heaven prosper you both this night, my son, and grant you mercy and peace.'

Raguel sent for his daughter Sarah, and when she came he took her hand and gave her to Tobias, saying: 'Take her to be your wedded wife in accordance with the law and the ordinance

written in the book of Moses. Keep her and take her home to your father; and may the God of heaven keep you safe and give you peace and prosperity.' Then he sent for her mother and told her to bring paper, and he wrote out a marriage contract granting Sarah to Tobias as his wife, as the law of Moses ordains. After that they began to eat and drink.

Raguel called his wife and said, 'My dear, get the spare room ready and take her in there.' Edna went and prepared the room as he had told her, and took Sarah into it. Edna cried over her, then dried her tears and said: 'Courage, dear daughter; the Lord of heaven give you joy instead of sorrow. Courage, daughter!' Then she went out.

When they had finished eating and drinking and were ready for bed, they escorted the young man to the bridal chamber. Tobias recalled what Raphael had told him; he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag in which he kept them, and put them on the smoking incense. The smell from the fish held the demon off, and he took flight into Upper Egypt; and Raphael instantly followed him there and bound him hand and foot.

When they were left alone and the door was shut, Tobias rose from the bed and said to Sarah, 'Get up, my love; let us pray and beseech our Lord to show us mercy and keep us safe.' She got up and they began to pray that they might be kept safe. Tobias said: 'We praise thee, O God of our fathers, we praise thy name for ever and ever. Let the heavens and all thy creation praise thee for ever. Thou madest Adam, and Eve his wife to be his helper and support; and those two were the parents of the human race. This was thy word: "It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like him." I now take this my beloved to wife, not

12: *The ordinance* . . . : Num.36.8. *Heaven has ordained*: the author strongly favors arranged marriages (see also 6.17), probably because in a foreign society romantic marriages were likely to involve non-Israelites or members of other tribes, thus weakening religious unity or tribal integrity.

7.16-8.21: *The demon is cast out and the marriage is celebrated*. 18: *Courage, daughter!* is an exhortation that is also directed toward exiled Israel. 8.3: *Upper Egypt* is a wilderness, the traditional habitation of demons; see Lev.16.8-10 for the ritual of driving the goat bearing sins into the wilderness. The demons are understood to be invaders of Israel from foreign parts. *Raphael* and the demon represent respectively the forces of order and chaos which are at war since the creation. 4: *Let us pray*: see 6.17 n. 6: *His helper*: see Gen.2.18; compare 1 Cor.11.8-9.

out of lust but in true marriage. Grant  
that she and I may find mercy and grow  
old together.' They both said 'Amen',  
and slept through the night.

Raguel got up and summoned his  
servants, and they went out and dug a  
grave. For he said, 'He may have been  
killed, and then we shall have to face  
scorn and disgrace.' When they had  
finished digging the grave, Raguel went  
into the house and called his wife:  
'Send one of the maidservants', he said,  
'to go in and see if he is alive. If he is  
dead, let us bury him so that no one  
may know.' They lit a lamp, opened the  
door, and sent a maidservant in; and  
she found them sound asleep together.  
She came out and told them: 'He is  
alive and has come to no harm.'

Then they praised the God of heaven:  
'We praise thee, O God, we praise thee  
with all our heart. Let men praise thee  
throughout all ages. Praise to thee for  
the joy thou hast given me; the thing I  
feared has not happened, but thou hast  
shown us thy great mercy. Praise to thee  
for the mercy thou hast shown to these  
two, these only children. Lord, show  
them mercy, keep them safe, and grant  
them a long life of happiness and affec-  
tion.' Then he ordered his servants to  
fill in the grave before dawn came.

He told his wife to bake a great batch  
of bread; he went to the herd and  
brought two oxen and four rams and  
told his servants to get them ready; so  
they set about the preparations. He then  
called Tobias and said: 'You shall not  
stir from here for two weeks. Stay with  
us; let us eat and drink together and  
cheer my daughter's heart after all her  
suffering. Here and now take half of all  
I have, and go home to your father safe  
and sound; and the other half will come  
to you both when my wife and I die. Be  
reassured, my son, I am your father and  
Edna is your mother; we are as close  
to you as to your wife, now and always.  
You have nothing to fear, my son.'

Tobias called Raphael and said to  
him: 'Azarias, my friend, take four  
servants with you, and two camels, and  
make your way to Rages. Go to  
Gabael's house, give him the bond and  
collect the money, and bring him with  
you to the wedding-feast. You know  
that my father will be counting the  
days and, if I am even one day late, it  
will distress him. You see what Raguel  
has sworn, and I cannot go against his  
oath.' Raphael went with the four  
servants and the two camels to Rages  
in Media and lodged there with Gabael.  
He gave him his bond and informed  
him that Tobit's son Tobias had taken  
a wife and was inviting him to the  
wedding-feast. At once Gabael counted  
out the bags to him with their seals  
intact, and they put them together. They  
all made an early start and came to the  
wedding. When they entered Raguel's  
house and found Tobias at the feast, he  
jumped up and greeted Gabael. With  
tears in his eyes Gabael blessed him and  
said: 'Good sir, worthy son of a  
worthy father, that upright and charit-  
able man, may the Lord give Heaven's  
blessing to you and your wife, your  
father and your mother-in-law. Praise  
be to God that I have seen my cousin  
Tobias, so like his father.'

### Tobias's homecoming

NOW DAY BY DAY TOBIT WAS KEEPING  
count of the time Tobias would take for  
his journey there and back. When the  
days had passed and his son had not  
returned, Tobit said: 'Perhaps he has  
been detained there. Or perhaps Gabael  
is dead and there is no one to give him  
the money.' And he grew anxious. Anna  
his wife said: 'My child has perished.  
He is no longer in the land of the living.'  
She began to weep and lament for her  
son: 'O my child, the light of my eyes,  
why did I let you go?' Tobit said to her:

21: Tobias is asked to *take half* of Raguel's property now as a dowry; and the *other half* is to come to him as an inheritance.

9.1-6: Tobit's money is retrieved from Gabael. 5: The journey from Ecbatana to Rages would require about two weeks.

10.1-14.15: Tobias's homecoming. Sent to collect a debt of money for his father, the young Tobias brings him also a daughter (11.17) and healing for his eyes (11.14).

10.1-11.1: Tobias and Sarah leave Ecbatana. 5: When Sarah calls Tobias the *light of my eyes* she is expressing the symbolic sight-blindness motif: Israel is blind to the meaning of history

'Hush, do not worry, my dear; he is all right. Something has happened there to distract them. The man who went with him is one of our kinsmen and can be trusted. Do not grieve for him, my dear; he will soon be back.' But she answered: 'Be quiet! Leave me alone! Do not try to deceive me. My boy is dead.' Each day she would rush out and look down the road her son had taken, and would listen to no one; and when she came indoors at sunset she could never sleep, but wept and lamented the whole night long.

The two weeks of wedding celebrations which Raguel had sworn to hold for his daughter came to an end, and Tobias went up to him and said: 'Let me be off on my journey; for I am sure that my parents are thinking they will never see me again. I beg you, father, let me go home now to my father Tobit. I have already told you how I left him.' Raguel said to Tobias: 'Stay, my son. Stay with me, and I will send news of you to your father.' But Tobias answered: 'No; please let me go home to my father.' Then without further delay Raguel handed over to Tobias Sarah his bride and half of all that he possessed, male and female slaves, sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, clothes, money, and furniture. He saw them safely off and embraced Tobias, saying: 'Goodbye, my son; a safe journey to you! May the Lord of heaven give prosperity to you and Sarah your wife; and may I live to see your children.' To his daughter Sarah he said: 'Go to your father-in-law's house; they are now your parents as much as if you were their own daughter. Go in peace, my child; I hope to hear good news of you as long as I live.' He bade them both goodbye and sent them on their way. Edna said to Tobias: 'Child and beloved cousin, may the Lord bring you safely home, you and my daughter Sarah, and may I live long enough to see your children. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you; do

nothing to hurt her as long as you live. Go in peace, my son. From now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we all be blessed with prosperity to the end of our days!' She kissed them both and saw them safely off. Tobias parted from Raguel in good health and spirits, thankful to the Lord of heaven and earth, the king of all, for the success of his journey. Raguel's last words to him were: 'May the Lord give you the means to honour your parents all their lives.'

When they reached Caserin close to Nineveh, Raphael said: 'You know how your father was when we left him; let us hurry on ahead of your wife and see that the house is ready before the others arrive.' As the two of them went on together Raphael said: 'Take the fish-gall in your hand.' The dog went with the angel and Tobias, following at their heels.

Anna sat watching the road by which her son would return. She saw him coming and exclaimed to his father, 'Here he comes, your son and the man who went with him!' Before Tobias reached his father's house Raphael said: 'I know for certain that his eyes will be opened. Spread the fish-gall on his eyes, and the medicine will make the white patches shrink and peel off. Your father will get his sight back and see the light of day.' Anna ran forward and flung her arms round her son. 'Here you are, my boy; now I can die happy!' she cried out with tears in her eyes.

Tobit rose to his feet and came stumbling out through the courtyard door. Tobias went up to him with the fish-gall in his hand and blew it into his father's eyes, and took him by the arm and said: 'It will be all right, father.' Then when he had put the medicine on and applied it, using both hands he peeled off the patches from the corners of Tobit's eyes. Tobit flung his arms round him and burst into tears. 'I can see you, my son, the light of my eyes!' he cried. 'Praise be to God,

but light will come at the end. See 11.14. 9: Tobias's plea to be allowed to *go home* is meant to be a model for all exiled Israelites who should yearn constantly for home.

11.2-18: Tobias arrives at home and cures Tobit's blindness. 2: Caserin: unknown. 4: Dog: see 6.1 n. Only those who had seen Tobit's blindness go ahead and are present at the cure; this would include the dog! 14: See 10.5 n. 15: God's *scourge* on Israel was the Exile, but salva-

and praise to his great name, and to all his holy angels. May his great name rest upon us. Praise be all the angels for ever. He laid his scourge on me, and now, look, I see my son Tobias!

Tobias went in, rejoicing and praising God with all his strength. He told his father about the success of his journey, how he had brought the money with him and had married Sarah daughter of Raguel. 'She is on her way,' he said, 'quite close to the city gate.'

Tobit went out joyfully to meet his daughter-in-law at the gate, praising God as he went. At the sight of him passing through the city in full vigour and walking without a guide, the people of Nineveh were astonished; and Tobit gave thanks to God before them all for his mercy in opening his eyes. When he met Sarah, the wife of his son Tobias, he blessed her and said to her: 'Come in, my daughter, and welcome. Praise be to your God who has brought you to us, my daughter. Blessings on your father, and on my son Tobias, and blessings on you, my daughter. Come into your home and may health, blessings, and joy be yours; come in, my daughter.' It was a day of joy for all the Jews in Nineveh; and Ahikar and Nadab, Tobit's cousins, came to share his happiness.

When the marriage-feast was over, Tobit called Tobias and said, 'My son, see that you pay the man who went with you, and give him something extra, over and above his wages.' Tobias said: 'Father, how much shall I pay him? It would not hurt me to give him half the money he and I brought back. He has kept me safe, cured my wife, helped me bring the money, and healed you. How much extra shall I pay him?' Tobit replied, 'It is right, my son, for him to be given half of all that he has brought with him.' So Tobias sent for him and said, 'Half of all that you have brought

with you is yours for your wages; take it, and fare you well.'

Then Raphael called them both aside and said to them: 'Praise God and thank him before all men living for the good he has done you, so that they may sing hymns of praise to his name. Proclaim to all the world what God has done, and pay him honour; do not be slow to give him thanks. A king's secret ought to be kept, but the works of God should be acknowledged publicly. Acknowledge them, therefore, and pay him honour. Do good, and evil shall not touch you. Better prayer with sincerity, and almsgiving with righteousness, than wealth with wickedness. Better give alms than hoard up gold. Almsgiving preserves a man from death and wipes out all sin. Givers of alms will enjoy long life; but sinners and wrong-doers are their own worst enemies.'

'I will tell you the whole truth; I will hide nothing from you. Indeed I told you just now when I said, "A king's secret ought to be kept, but the works of God should be publicly honoured." When you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought your prayers into the glorious presence of the Lord; and so too whenever you buried the dead. That day when you got up from your dinner without hesitation to go and bury the corpse, I was sent to test you; and again God sent me to cure both you and Sarah your daughter-in-law at the same time. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand in attendance on the Lord and enter his glorious presence.'

The two men were shaken, and prostrated themselves in awe. But he said to them: 'Do not be afraid, all is well; praise God for ever. It is no thanks to me that I have been with you; it was the will of God. Worship him all your life long, sing his praise. Take note

tion is promised. 16: Israel's vindication at the end will astonish the nations, here represented by the people of Nineveh. 18: *Ahikar* and *Nadab*: see 1.21 n.

12.1-22: *Raphael is thanked and identifies himself*. 2: *Half the money* apparently refers to half the sum retrieved from Gabael, i.e. five talents of silver. 6-10: Raphael's exhortation is typical of Wisdom literature. 11-14: *The whole truth* is that God's Providence works through human misfortune to *test* man, a theme that pervades Wisdom literature; see Wis.3.6; Prov.17.3. 15: *Seven angels*: nowhere do we find a complete list of these "chief" angels. Perhaps seven is a symbolic number, the full array of divine messengers.

- that I ate no food; what appeared to  
 20 you was a vision. And now praise the  
 Lord, give thanks to God here on earth;  
 I am ascending to him who sent me.  
 Write down all these things that have  
 21 happened to you.' He then ascended,  
 and when they rose to their feet, he  
 22 was no longer to be seen. They sang  
 hymns of praise to God, giving him  
 thanks for these great deeds he had done  
 when his angel appeared to them.
- 13 TOBIT SAID:**
- 'Praise to the ever-living God and to  
 his kingdom.  
 2 He punishes and he shows mercy;  
 he brings men down to the grave  
 below,  
 and up from the great destruction.  
 Nothing can escape his power.  
 3 Give him thanks, men of Israel, in  
 the presence of the nations,  
 for he has scattered you among them;  
 4 there he has shown you his greatness.  
 Exalt him in the sight of every living  
 creature,  
 for he is our Lord and God;  
 he is our Father and our God for  
 ever.  
 5 He will punish you for your  
 wickedness,  
 and he will show mercy to you all,  
 gathering you from among all the  
 nations  
 wherever you have been scattered.  
 6 When you turn to him with all your  
 heart and soul  
 and act in loyal obedience to him,  
 then he will turn to you  
 and hide his face from you no longer.  
 Consider now the deeds he has done  
 for you,  
 and give him thanks with full voice;  
 praise the righteous Lord  
 and exalt the King of ages.<sup>g</sup>
- 10 'Your sanctuary<sup>h</sup> shall be rebuilt for  
 you with rejoicing.  
 May he give happiness to all your  
 exiles
- and cherish all who mourn and your  
 descendants for ever.  
 Your light shall shine brightly to all 11  
 the ends of the earth.  
 Many nations shall come to you from  
 afar,  
 from all the corners of the earth to  
 your holy name;  
 they shall bring gifts in their hands  
 for the King of heaven.  
 In you endless generations shall utter  
 their joy;  
 the name of the chosen city shall  
 endure for ever and ever.  
 There shall be a curse upon all who 12  
 speak harshly to you,  
 upon all who destroy you and pull  
 down your walls,  
 upon all who demolish your towers  
 and burn your houses;  
 but blessings shall be for evermore  
 upon those who hold you in  
 reverence.  
 Come then, be joyful for the 13  
 righteous,  
 for they shall all be gathered  
 together  
 and shall praise the eternal Lord.  
 How happy shall they be who love 14  
 you and rejoice in your  
 prosperity,  
 happy all who grieve for you in your  
 afflictions;  
 they shall rejoice over you and for  
 ever be witness of your joy.  
 My soul, praise the Lord, the great 15  
 king,  
 for Jerusalem shall be built as a city 16  
 for him to dwell in for ever.  
 How happy I shall be when the  
 remnant of my descendants  
 shall see your splendour

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses add

In the land of my exile I give thanks to him  
 and declare his might and greatness to a sinful  
 nation.

Turn, you sinners, and do what is right in his eyes;  
 who knows whether he may not welcome you and  
 show you mercy?

I will exalt my God

and rejoice in the King of heaven.

Let all men tell of his majesty

and give him thanks in Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, the holy city,

he will punish you for what your sons have done,

but he will again show mercy on the righteous.

Thank the good Lord and praise the King of ages.

<sup>h</sup> Or home.

**13.1-18: Tobit praises God. 1-6:** This is a prayer of thanksgiving in the hymnic style of many psalms. The topic is God's kingdom which will ultimately be established in human history through the homecoming of God's *scattered* people. **10:** The *sanctuary* is the Temple in Jerusalem. **16-17:** See Rev.21.18-21.



and give thanks to the King of heaven.

The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire and emerald, and all your walls of precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem shall be built of gold,

their battlements of the finest gold.

17 The streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with garnets and jewels of Ophir.

18 The gates of Jerusalem shall sing hymns of joy and all her houses shall say Alleluia, praise to the God of Israel! Blessed by him, they shall bless his holy name for ever and ever.'

14 SO ENDED TOBIT'S THANKSGIVING. HE died peacefully at the age of a hundred and twelve, and was given honourable

2 burial in Nineveh. He was sixty-two years old when his eyes were injured, and after he recovered his sight he lived in prosperity, doing his acts of charity and never ceasing to praise God and proclaim his majesty.

3 When he was dying he sent for his son Tobias, and gave him these instructions: 'My son, you must take your

4 children and make your escape to Media, for I believe God's word against Nineveh spoken by Nahum. It will all come true; everything will happen to Asshur and Nineveh that was spoken by the prophets of Israel whom God sent. Not a word of it will fall short; everything will be fulfilled when the time comes. It will be safer in Media than in Assyria and Babylon; I know, I am convinced, that all God's words will be fulfilled. It will be so; not one of them will fail. Our countrymen who live in Israel will all be scattered and carried off into captivity out of that good land, and the whole territory of Israel laid waste. Samaria and Jerusalem will lie waste, and for a time the house of God will be in mourning; it will be burnt to the ground.

5 'Then God will have mercy on them again and will bring them back to the

land of Israel. They will rebuild the house of God, but not as it was before, not until the time of fulfilment comes. Then they will all return from their captivity and rebuild Jerusalem gloriously; then indeed the house will be built in her as the prophets of Israel foretold. All the nations of the world

6 will be converted to the true worship of God; they will abandon their idols which led them astray into falsehood, and praise the eternal God according

7 to his law. All the Israelites who survive at that time and are firm in their loyalty to God will be brought together; they will come to Jerusalem to take possession of the land of Abraham, and live there for ever in safety. Those who love God in truth will rejoice; and sinners and wrong-doers will disappear from the earth. Now, my children, I give you

8 this command: serve God in truth and do what pleases him. Train your chil-

9 dren to do what is right and give alms, to keep God in mind at all times and praise his name in sincerity with all their strength.

'And now, my son, you must leave

10 Nineveh. Do not stay here; once you have laid your mother in the grave with me, do not spend another night within the city boundaries. For I see that the place is full of wickedness and shameless dishonesty. My son, think what Nadab did to Ahikar who brought him up: he forced him to hide in a living grave. Ahikar survived to see God requite the dishonour done to him; he came out into the light of day, but Nadab passed into eternal darkness for his attempt to kill Ahikar. Because I gave alms, Ahikar escaped from the fatal trap Nadab set for him, and Nadab

11 fell into the trap himself and was destroyed. So, my children, see what comes of almsgiving, and see what comes of wickedness—death. But now my strength is failing.'

Then they laid him on his bed, and he died; and they gave him honourable

12 burial. When his mother died, Tobias buried her beside his father. He and his

14.1-15: Tobit's final instructions to Tobias. 1: Tobit's peaceful death at an advanced age associates him with the patriarchs who, like him, kept the faith in a foreign environment. 4: The book of *Nahum* describes the destruction of *Nineveh*, the capital of *Asshur*, Assyria. 5: A second, and inferior, Temple was built about 515 B.C.; see Hag. 1.1-15. 10: *Ahikar* . . .

- wife went away to Media and settled at Ecbatana with his father-in-law Raguel.
- 13 He honoured and cared for his wife's parents in their old age. He buried them at Ecbatana in Media, and he inherited the estate of Raguel as well as that of
- 14 his father Tobit. He died greatly respected at the age of one hundred and
- 15 seventeen. He lived long enough to hear of the destruction of Nineveh by
- Ahasuerus king of Media and to see his prisoners of war brought from there into Media. So he praised God for all that he had done to the people of Nineveh and Asshur; and before he died he rejoiced over the fate of Nineveh and praised the Lord God who lives for ever and ever.
- Amen.

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*Nadab*: see 1.21 n. 15: *Ahasuerus*: Xerxes I. *Nineveh* fell in 612 B.C. to an allied force of Medes under Cyaxares and of Babylonians, under Nabopolassar. The fall of Nineveh completes the vindication of Tobit's faith.

# JUDITH

Judith is a good example of the Hebrew narrative art: vivid imagery; a paced combination of description and action; and resolute realism. The name Judith means "Jewess"; the heroine represents Israel's faith and spirit, strong and resourceful despite a weak and delicate appearance, which emerges triumphant from the drama of a confrontation between Israel, small and isolated, and all the great powers of the Near East.

There are historical contradictions in the story interpreted by some scholars as intended by the author to indicate unmistakably the fictional nature of the work, and thereby to point up the timeless quality of its contents.

Though set in earlier times, the narrative reflects conditions prevalent during the turmoil of the Hellenistic period described in 1 and 2 Maccabees: divine honors paid to kings (3.8); Jerusalem ruled by a high priest and a form of Sanhedrin (4.8; 15.8); and the like. This evidence of Hellenistic influence indicates a date of composition in the second century B.C. The original language was probably Hebrew, even though most ancient surviving texts are Greek. The author and place of composition are unknown.

The intention of the author seems to be to reassert, at a moment of historical disarray, the Jewish conviction of God's commitment to his people's survival and victory in the odyssey of human existence. Judith exercises the same power that worked through Moses to free Israel from Egyptian bondage. Conversely, the author affirms that the proper response to God's action is an avoidance of political and religious involvement with pagan nations, and an uncompromising observance of the Torah in true Jewish fidelity and piety.

## *The Assyrian invasion*

1 **I**N THE TWELFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN  
of Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned  
over the Assyrians from his capital,  
Nineveh, Arphaxad was ruling the  
2 Medes from Ecbatana. He it was who  
encircled Ecbatana with a wall built of  
hewn stones which were four and a half  
feet thick and nine feet long.<sup>a</sup> He made  
the wall a hundred and five feet high  
3 and seventy-five feet thick, and at the  
city gates he set up towers a hundred and  
fifty feet high with foundations ninety  
4 feet thick; and he made the gates a  
hundred and five feet high and sixty  
feet wide to allow his army to march out  
in full force with his infantry in forma-  
5 tion. It was in those days, then, that  
King Nebuchadnezzar waged war  
against King Arphaxad in the great  
6 plain on the borders of Ragau. Nebuchadnezzar was opposed by all the

inhabitants of the hill-country, by all those who lived along the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes; and, on the plain, by Arioch king of Elam; and many tribes of the Chelodites joined forces with them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar king of As- 7  
syria sent a summons to all the inhabitants of Persia, and to all who lived in the west: the inhabitants of Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, all who lived near the coast, the peoples in Carmel and Gilead, 8  
Upper Galilee, and the great plain of Esdraelon, all who were in Samaria 9  
and its towns, and on the west of Jordan as far as Jerusalem, Betane, Chelus, Cadesh, and the frontier<sup>b</sup> of Egypt, those who lived in Tahpanhes, Rameses, and the whole land of Goshen as far as Tanis and Memphis, and all 10

<sup>a</sup> In verses 2-4 the measurements are given in cubits in the Greek.  
<sup>b</sup> Literally river.

1.1-7.32: **The Assyrian invasion.** The other nations capitulate and Jewish resistance is gradually broken.

1.1-6: **Nebuchadnezzar wages war on Arphaxad.** 1: *Nebuchadnezzar*: king of the Babylonians from 605-561 B.C. He directed the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.; see 2 Kgs.25.1-9. His father had conquered the *Assyrians* and destroyed *Nineveh* in 612 B.C. The historically impossible combination here of Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrians suggests that the author wished to combine Israel's traditional enemies to create a literary confrontation between faith and secular power. *Arphaxad* is unknown. 2-3: *Ecbatana* was situated near present-day Hamadan in Iran. Its dimensions are exceedingly exaggerated, showing a high degree of fiction. 5: *Ragau* is modern Rai, located near Teheran. 6: The *Hydaspes* is a river near the eastern border of Persia. *Arioch* is unknown. The *Chelodites* are unknown.

1.7-12: **Persia and the western nations arouse Nebuchadnezzar's anger.** 7-10: The nations and towns listed represent the western portion of the Fertile Crescent—modern Syria, Lebanon,

the inhabitants of Egypt as far as the  
 11 borders of Ethiopia. But the entire  
 region disregarded the summons of  
 Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria and  
 did not join him in the war. They were  
 not afraid of him, for he seemed to them  
 to stand alone<sup>c</sup> and unsupported; and  
 they treated his envoys with contempt  
 and sent them back empty-handed.

12 This roused Nebuchadnezzar to fury  
 against the whole region, and he swore  
 by his throne and his kingdom that he  
 would have his revenge on all the  
 territories of Cilicia, Damascus, and  
 Syria, and put their inhabitants to the  
 sword, along with the Moabites, the  
 Ammonites, and the people in all  
 Judaea and in Egypt as far as the  
 shores of the two seas.

13 In the seventeenth year of his reign  
 he marshalled his forces against King  
 Arphaxad and defeated him in battle,  
 routing his entire army, cavalry,  
 14 chariots, and all. He occupied his  
 towns; and when he reached Ecbatana  
 he captured its towers, looted its  
 bazaars, and turned its splendour to  
 15 abject ruin. He caught Arphaxad in the  
 mountains of Ragau, speared him  
 through, and so made an end of him.  
 16 Then he returned with his spoils to  
 Nineveh, he and his combined forces,  
 an immense host of warriors. There he  
 rested and feasted with his army for  
 four months.

2 In the eighteenth year, on the twenty-  
 second day of the first month, a proposal  
 was made in the palace of Nebuchad-  
 nezzar king of Assyria to carry out his  
 threat of vengeance on the whole  
 2 region. Assembling all his officers and  
 nobles, the king laid before them his  
 personal decision about the region and  
 declared his intention of putting an  
 3 end to its disaffection. They resolved  
 that everyone who had not obeyed his  
 summons should be put to death.

When his plans were completed,<sup>d</sup> 4  
 Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria sum-  
 moned Holophernes, his commander-  
 in-chief, who was second only to himself,  
 and said to him, 'This is the decree 5  
 of the Great King, lord of all the earth:  
 Directly you leave my presence, you are  
 to take under your command an army  
 of seasoned troops, a hundred and  
 twenty thousand infantry with a force  
 of twelve thousand cavalry, and march 6  
 out against all the peoples of the west  
 who have dared to disobey my com-  
 mand. Tell them to have ready their 7  
 offering of earth and water, for I am  
 coming to vent my wrath on them.  
 Their whole land will be smothered by  
 my army, and I will give them up to be  
 8 plundered by my troops. Their dead  
 will fill the valleys, and every stream  
 and river will be choked with corpses;  
 and I will send them into captivity to 9  
 the ends of the whole earth. Now go  
 10 and occupy all their territory for me.  
 If they surrender to you, hold them for  
 me until the time comes to punish them.  
 But show no mercy to those who resist; 11  
 let them be slaughtered and plundered  
 throughout the whole region. By my life  
 and my royal power I swear: I have 12  
 spoken and I will be as good as my  
 word. As for you, do not disobey 13  
 a single one of my orders, but see that  
 you carry them out exactly as I your  
 sovereign have commanded you. Do  
 this without delay.'

After leaving his sovereign's presence, 14  
 Holophernes assembled all the mar-  
 shals, generals, and officers of the As-  
 syrian army, and mustered picked men, 15  
 as the king had commanded, a hundred  
 and twenty thousand infantry and  
 twelve thousand mounted archers,  
 drawing them up in battle order. He 16,17  
 took an immense number of camels,

<sup>c</sup> One witness reads to be no more than their equal . . .  
<sup>d</sup> Or When he had finished stating his purpose . . .

Palestine, and Egypt. *Betane* and *Chelus* are unknown. *Cadesh* may be in southern Palestine.  
 1.13-2.13: Nebuchadnezzar defeats Arphaxad and declares war on the western nations. 14: The Nebuchadnezzar of history did not capture *Ecbatana*. 2.1: The eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is 587 B.C., the date when he ordered the destruction of Jerusalem. 4: *Holophernes* is unknown as a famous Babylonian general; the name, indeed, is Persian and his presence adds the Persians to the artificial composite of Israel's enemies; see 1.1 n. 5: Nebuchadnezzar's designation of himself as *lord* . . ., without reference to the rights of God, makes this a battle between the ungodly and the God-fearing. 7: The offering of earth and water was a Persian expression for the provisioning of an invading and conquering army from the occupied country.

asses, and mules for their baggage, innumerable sheep, oxen, and goats for provisions, and ample rations for every man, as well as a great quantity of gold and silver from the royal palace. Then he set out with all his army to go ahead of King Nebuchadnezzar and to overrun the entire region to the west with chariots, cavalry, and picked infantry. Along with them went a motley host like a swarm of locusts, countless as the dust of the earth.

From Nineveh they marched for three days towards the plain of Bectileth, and encamped beside Bectileth near the mountain north of Upper Cilicia. From there, Holophernes advanced into the hill-country with his whole army, infantry, cavalry, and chariots. He devastated Put and Lud, and plundered all the people of Rassis, and the Ishmaelites on the edge of the desert south of the land of the Cheleans. Then he followed<sup>e</sup> the Euphrates and traversed Mesopotamia, destroying all the fortified towns along the river Abron as far as the sea. He occupied the territory of Cilicia and cut down all who resisted him. Then he came south to the borders of Japheth fronting Arabia. He surrounded the Midianites, burnt their encampments, and plundered their sheepfolds. At the time of wheat harvest he went down to the plain of Damascus, burnt their crops, exterminated their flocks and herds, sacked their towns, laid waste their fields, and put all their young men to the sword. Fear and dread of him fell on all the inhabitants of the coast at Tyre and Sidon, of Sur and Okina, and of Jemnaan; the people of Azotus and Ascalon were terrified of him.

3 They sent envoys to sue for peace,

who said: 'We are servants of the Great King Nebuchadnezzar, we lie prostrate before you; do with us as you please. Our buildings, our territory, our wheat fields, our flocks and herds and every sheepfold in our encampments, all are yours to do with as you wish. Our towns and their inhabitants are subject to you; come and deal with them as you think fit.'

When the envoys came to Holophernes with this message, he went down to the coast with his army and garrisoned all the fortified towns, taking from them picked men as auxiliaries. Both there and in all the surrounding country he was welcomed with garlands, dancing, and tambourines. He demolished all their sanctuaries<sup>f</sup> and cut down their sacred groves, for he had been commissioned to destroy all the gods of the land, so that Nebuchadnezzar alone should be worshipped by every nation and invoked as a god by men of every tribe and tongue.

Holophernes then advanced towards Esdraelon, near Dothan, which faces the great ridge of Judaea, and encamped between Geba and Scythopolis, where he remained for a whole month to collect supplies for his army.

WHEN THE ISRAELITES WHO LIVED IN Judaea heard of all that had been done to the nations by Holophernes, the commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria, and how he had plundered and totally destroyed all their temples, they were terrified at his approach. They were in great alarm for Jerusalem and for the temple of the Lord their God. For they had just

<sup>e</sup> Or crossed. <sup>f</sup> So one Vs.; Gk. borders.

2.14-3.10: Holophernes ravages the west as far as Palestine. 21: Three days to march from Nineveh to Bectileth (unknown city) in Upper Cilicia (southeastern Asia Minor) is impossible since the distance is about three hundred miles. 23: Put and Lud are perhaps in Asia Minor. Rassis is unknown. Ishmaelites usually means Arabs. The Cheleans are unknown. 24-28: The route of invasion is very erratic and most unlikely. Such an imposing list of victims is given for psychological and theological rather than historical purposes. 24: The Abron is unknown. 25: Japheth is unknown as a place name. 28: Sur and Okina are perhaps Dor and Acco in western Galilee. Jemnaan may be Jamnia, this one on the Lake of Galilee; Azotus (Ashdod) and Ascalon (Ashkelon) are Philistine cities. 3.8: The Babylonian rulers never claimed divine rights, but the Seleucid kings did (Dan.3.1-7). The persecution of the Jews by the Seleucids seems to be alluded to here. See 1.1 n.; 2.4 n.; 2 Macc.9.1-12. 9: Esdraelon: the great plain that lies between Galilee and Samaria. 10: Geba: a town in central Palestine. Scythopolis: Beth-shan, south of the Lake of Galilee.

4.1-15: The Israelites prepare to defend their land and Temple. 3: The Israelites could not

returned from captivity, and it was only recently that the people had been re-united in Judaea, and the sacred vessels, the temple, and the altar sanctified after their profanation. So they sent out a warning to the whole of Samaria, Cona, Beth-horon, Belmain and Jericho, Choba and Aesora and the valley of Salem, and occupied the tops of all the high hills. They fortified the villages on them and laid up stores of food in preparation for war; for their fields had just been harvested. Joakim, who was high priest in Jerusalem at the time, wrote to the people of Bethulia and Bethomesthaim, which is opposite Esdraelon facing the plain near Dothan. He ordered them to occupy the passes into the hill-country, because they controlled access to Judaea, and it was easy to hold up an advancing army, for the approach was only wide enough for two men. The Israelites obeyed the orders of the high priest Joakim and the senate of all Israel in Jerusalem. Fervently they sent up a cry to God, every man of Israel, and fervently they humbled themselves before him. They put on sackcloth—they themselves, their wives, their children, their livestock, and every resident foreigner, hired labourer, and slave—and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, men, women, and children, prostrated themselves in front of the sanctuary, and, with ashes on their heads, spread out their sackcloth before the Lord. They draped the altar in sackcloth, and with one voice they earnestly implored the God of Israel not to allow their children to be captured, their wives carried off, their ancestral cities destroyed, and the

temple profaned and dishonoured, to the delight of the heathen. The Lord heard their prayer and pitied their distress.

For many days the whole population of Judaea and Jerusalem fasted before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. Joakim the high priest and the priests who stood in the presence of the Lord, and all who served in the temple, wore sackcloth when they offered the regular burnt-offering and the votive and free-will offerings of the people; and with ashes on their turbans they cried aloud to the Lord to look favourably on the whole house of Israel.

When it was reported to Holo- phernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief, that the Israelites had prepared for war, and that they had closed the passes in the hill-country, fortified all the heights, and dug pitfalls in the plains, he was furious. He summoned all the rulers of Moab, the Ammonite commanders, and all the governors of the coastal region, and said to them, 'Tell me, you Canaanites, what nation is this that lives in the hill-country? What towns do they inhabit? How big is their army? What gives them their power and strength? Who is the king that commands their forces? Why are they the only people of the west who have refused to come and meet me?'

Then Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to him, 'My lord, if you will allow your servant to speak, I will tell you the truth about this nation that lives in the hill-country near here; and no lie shall pass my lips. They are descended from the Chaldaeans; and at one time they settled in Meso-

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have just returned from captivity because the return took place under the Persians, many years after Nebuchadnezzar; compare Ezra 1.1–11. The sanctification of the temple and altar may refer to the rededication of the Temple under Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C.; see 1 Macc.4.52–55. Israel's history is here telescoped. 4: *Cona, Belmain, Choba, and Aesora* are unknown; the *valley of Salem* is an archaic name for Jerusalem (Gen.14.18). 6: *Joakim* may refer to a high priest (named Joiakim) mentioned in Neh.12.10–12,26 but the circumstances there are quite different. *Bethulia*, mentioned frequently in Jdt., is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible; this would be unthinkable if the story were historical. *Bethomesthaim* is unknown. 8: There is no evidence of a high priest and a senate ruling in Jerusalem prior to Maccabean times (1 Macc.12.6; 2 Macc.11.27).

5.1–24: Achior, the Ammonite, briefs Holofernes on the history and religion of Israel. 3: Israel had generally controlled the hill-country where guerrilla tactics were effective; see Judg.1.19. 5: Achior plays the role of the "objective witness" who allows the author to recall the historical basis for Israel's uniqueness. 6: *Chaldaeans*: a reference to Abraham's origin (Gen.11.27–31). 7: *Mesopotamia* here refers to the region around Harran where Abraham stopped on his way to Palestine (Gen.11.31). The Bible makes no mention of any religious

potamia, because they refused to worship the gods their fathers had worshipped in Chaldaea. They abandoned the ways of their ancestors and worshipped the God of Heaven, the god whom they now acknowledged. When the Chaldaeans drove them out from the presence of their gods they fled to Mesopotamia, where they lived for a long time. Then their god told them to leave their new home and go on to Canaan. They settled there and acquired great wealth in gold, silver, and livestock.

‘Because of a famine which spread over the whole of Canaan, they went down to Egypt and lived there as long as they were supplied with food. While in Egypt, they multiplied so greatly that their numbers could not be reckoned, and the king of Egypt turned against them. He exploited them by setting them to hard labour making bricks, and he reduced them to abject slavery. They cried out to their god, and he inflicted incurable plagues on the whole of Egypt. So the Egyptians turned them out; and their god dried up the Red Sea for them and led them on to Sinai and Cadesh-barnea. Then they drove out all the inhabitants of the wilderness and settled in the land of the Amorites, and they destroyed all the peoples of Heshbon by force of arms. After that they crossed the Jordan and occupied all the hill-country, driving out the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites, and all the Girgashites. There they settled for a long time.

‘As long as they did not sin against their god, they prospered; for theirs is a god who hates wickedness. But when they left the path he had laid down for them, they suffered heavy losses in many wars and were carried captive to a foreign country; the temple of their god was razed to the ground, and their towns were occupied by their enemies. But now that they have returned to their god, they have come back from the places where they had been

dispersed, and have taken possession of Jerusalem, where their sanctuary is, and have settled in the hill-country, because it was uninhabited.

‘Now, my lord and master, if these people are guilty of an error and are sinning against their god, and if we find out that they have committed this offence, then we may go and make war on them. But if these people have committed no wickedness, leave them alone, my lord, for fear the god they serve should protect them and we become the laughing-stock of the world.’ When Achior stopped speaking there were protests from all those who stood round the tent. Holophernes’ officers and all the people from the coastal region and from Moab demanded that Achior should be cut to pieces. ‘We are not going to be afraid of the Israelites,’ they said, ‘a people quite incapable of putting an effective army in the field. Let us go ahead, Lord Holophernes; your great army will swallow them whole.’

When the hubbub among the men around the council had subsided, Holophernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief, said to Achior and all the Ammonites, in the presence of the assembled foreigners: ‘And who are you, Achior, you and your Ammonite mercenaries, to play the prophet among us as you have done today, telling us not to make war against the people of Israel because their god will protect them? What god is there but Nebuchadnezzar? He will exert his power and wipe them off the face of the earth; and their god will not rescue them. We who serve Nebuchadnezzar will strike them all down as if they were only one man. They will not be able to stand up to the weight of our cavalry; we shall overwhelm them. Their mountains will be drenched with blood, and their plains filled with their dead. They cannot stand their ground against us; they will be completely wiped out. This is the decree of King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of the whole earth. He has spoken; and what he has said will

problems in this context, but later Jewish tradition does. 14: *Cadesh-barnea*: Num.20.1. 15: *Heshbon*: Num.21.25-26.

6.1-21: **Holophernes condemns Achior.** 2: It is important for the author that the issue be

5 be made good. As for you, Achior, you Ammonite mercenary, the words you have spoken today are treason, so from today you shall not see my face again until I have taken vengeance on this brood of runaways from Egypt. But when I come back, the warriors of my bodyguard will run you through and add you to their victims. My men are going to take you away now to the hill-country and leave you in one of the towns in the passes. You will not die until you share their fate. If you are so confident that they will not fall into our hands, you need not look downcast. I have spoken; and nothing that I have said will fail to come true.'

10 Then Holophernes ordered his men, who were standing by in his tent, to seize Achior, take him off to Bethulia, and hand him over to the Israelites. So they seized him and took him outside the camp to the plain, and from there into the hill-country, until they arrived at the springs below Bethulia. When the men of the town saw them, they picked up their weapons and came out of the town to the top of the hill; then all the slingers pelted the enemy with stones to prevent them from coming up. But they slipped through under cover of the hill, tied Achior up and left him lying at the foot of it, and went back to their master. When the Israelites came down from the town and found him there, they untied him and took him into Bethulia, where they brought him before the town magistrates then in office, Ozias son of Mica, of the tribe of Simeon, and Chabris son of Gothoniel, and Charmis son of Melchiel. The magistrates summoned all the elders of the town; and all the young men and women came running to the assembly. When Achior had been brought before the people, Ozias asked him what had happened. He answered by telling them all that had taken place in Holophernes' council,

what he himself had said in the presence of the Assyrian commanders, and how Holophernes had boasted of what he would do to Israel. Then the people prostrated themselves in worship and cried out to God: 'O Lord, God of heaven, mark their arrogance; pity our people in their humiliation; show favour this day to those who are thy own.' Then they reassured Achior and commended him warmly. Ozias took him from the assembly to his own house, and gave a feast for the elders; and all that night they invoked the help of the God of Israel.

THE NEXT DAY HOLOPHERNES ORDERED 7 his whole army and all his allies to strike camp and march on Bethulia, seize the passes into the hill-country, and make war on the Israelites. 2 So the whole force set out that day, an army of a hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, not counting the baggage train of the infantry, an immense host. They encamped in the valley near Bethulia, beside the spring; and their camp extended in breadth towards Dothan as far as Belbaim, and in length from Bethulia to Cyamon which faces Esdraelon. When the Israelites saw their numbers they said to each other in great alarm, 'These men will strip the whole country bare; the high mountains, the valleys, and the hills will never be able to bear the burden of them.' Then each man stood to arms; and they lit the beacons on the towers and remained on guard all that night.

On the following day Holophernes led out all his cavalry in full view of the Israelites in Bethulia, and reconnoitred the approaches to their town. He inspected the springs and seized them; and when he had stationed detachments of soldiers there, he returned to his army. Then all the rulers of the Edomites and all the leaders of Moab and

strictly religious, i.e. *what god is there?* 5: *Egypt*: a derisive reference to the Exodus. 11: *The springs below Bethulia*: this is of little help for identification, because most towns in Palestine were built on a hill for defense and near a water supply. 19: The enemy represents the *arrogance* of any human attempt to displace God in history.

7.1-18: *Holophernes lays siege to Bethulia*. 3: *Dothan*: a town in the plain of *Esdraelon*; see 3.9 n. *Belbaim* . . . *Cyamon*: unknown. 7: Seizure of the *springs* was the first move in a siege, since the only other source of water was that collected in cisterns during the short rainy season; see v. 21. 8: *Edomites*: descendants of Esau, traditional enemies of Israel, are also added



the commanders from the coastal region  
 9 came to him and said, 'Listen to our  
 advice, Lord Holofernes, and save  
 your army from a crushing defeat.  
 10 These Israelites do not trust in their  
 spears but in the height of the moun-  
 tains where they live; for it is no easy  
 11 task to get up to the tops of these moun-  
 tains of theirs. Now, Lord Holofernes,  
 avoid fighting a pitched battle with  
 them, and you will not lose a single  
 12 man. Remain in your camp and keep  
 your men in their quarters; but let your  
 servants take possession of the spring  
 13 at the foot of the hill, for that is where  
 all the townspeople of Bethulia get their  
 water. When they are dying of thirst  
 they will surrender the town. Mean-  
 while, we and all our people will go up  
 to the tops of the neighbouring hills  
 and camp there to see that not a man  
 14 gets away from the town. They and their  
 wives and children will waste away with  
 famine; and before the sword reaches  
 them, their streets will be strewn with  
 15 their corpses. So you will make them  
 pay heavily for rebelling against you,  
 instead of receiving you peaceably.'  
 16 Holofernes and all his staff approved  
 this plan; and he gave orders that it  
 17 should be carried out. The Moabite  
 force moved forward in company with  
 five thousand Assyrians and en-  
 camped in the valley, where they seized  
 the springs which were the Israelites'  
 18 water-supply. Then the Edomites and  
 Ammonites went up and encamped in  
 the hill-country opposite Dothan, and  
 sent some of their number south-east<sup>g</sup>  
 in the direction of Egrebel, which is  
 near Chus on the Mochmur ravine.  
 The rest of the Assyrian army en-  
 camped on the plain. They filled the  
 entire country-side, their tents and bag-  
 gage train forming an immense encamp-  
 ment, for they were a vast host.  
 19 Then the Israelites cried out to the  
 Lord their God. Their courage failed,  
 because all their enemies had sur-  
 rounded them and there was no way of  
 20 escape. The whole Assyrian army, in-

fantry, cavalry, and chariots, kept them  
 blockaded for thirty-four days. The  
 citizens of Bethulia came to the end of  
 their household supplies of water. The  
 21 cisterns too were running dry; drinking-  
 water was so strictly rationed that there  
 was never a day when their needs were  
 satisfied. The children were lifeless, the  
 22 women and young men faint with thirst.  
 They collapsed in the streets and gate-  
 ways from sheer exhaustion.

Then all the people, young men, 23  
 women, and children, gathered round  
 Ozias and the magistrates of the town,  
 shouting loudly. In the presence of the  
 elders they said: 'May God judge be- 24  
 tween us, for you have done us a great  
 wrong in not coming to terms with the  
 Assyrians. Now we have no one to help 25  
 us. God has sold us into their power;  
 they will find us dead of thirst, and the  
 ground strewn with our corpses. Sur- 26  
 render to them; let Holofernes' people  
 and his army sack the town. It is better 27  
 for us to be taken prisoner; for even as  
 slaves we shall still be alive, and shall  
 not have to watch our babies dying  
 before our eyes, and our wives and  
 children at their last gasp. We call 28  
 heaven and earth to witness, we call  
 our God, the Lord of our fathers, to  
 witness against you—the God who is  
 punishing us for our sins and for the  
 sins of our fathers. We pray that he may  
 not let our forebodings come true this  
 day.' Then the whole assembly broke 29  
 into loud lamentation and cried to the  
 Lord God. Ozias said to them, 30  
 'Courage, my friends! Let us hold out  
 for five more days; by that time the  
 Lord our God may show us his mercy  
 again. Surely he will not finally desert  
 us. But if by the end of that time no  
 help has reached us, then I will do what  
 you ask.' Then he dismissed the men 32  
 to their various posts; and they went  
 off to the walls and towers of the town.  
 The women and children he sent in-  
 doors. Throughout the town there was  
 deep dejection.

<sup>g</sup> Or south and east.

to the picture here; see 1.1 n. 18: *Egrebel*, *Chus*, and *Mochmur* are located in the area southeast of Shechem.

7.19–32: The inhabitants of Bethulia contemplate surrender. 23–28: The complaints against Ozias are reminiscent of the bitter murmuring of the Israelites against Moses in the desert; see Num.14.2–3.

## Judith kills Holofernes

8 NEWS OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING reached Judith, daughter of Merari, son of Ox, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of Helkias, son of Elias, son of Chelkias, son of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of Salamiel, son of Sarasadae, 2 son of Israel. Her husband Manasses, who belonged to her own tribe and clan, had died at the time of barley 3 harvest. While he was out in the fields supervising the binding of the sheaves, he got sunstroke, took to his bed, and died in Bethulia his native town; and they buried him beside his ancestors in the field between Dothan and Balamon. 4 For three years and four months Judith 5 had lived at home as a widow; she had a shelter erected on the roof of her house; she put on sackcloth and always 6 wore mourning. After she became a widow she fasted every day except sabbath eve, the sabbath itself, the eve of the new moon, the new moon, and the Israelite feasts and days of public re- 7 joicing. She was a very beautiful and attractive woman. Her husband Manasses had left her gold and silver, male and female slaves, livestock and land, and 8 she lived on her estate. No one spoke ill of her, for she was a very devout woman. 9 When Judith heard of the shameful attack which the people had made upon Ozias the magistrate, because they were demoralized by the shortage of water, and how he had sworn to surrender the town to the Assyrians after five days, 10 she sent her maid who had charge of all her property to ask Ozias, Chabris, and Charmis, the elders of the town, to come and see her. When they arrived she said to them: 'Listen to me, magistrates of Bethulia. You had no right to speak as you did to the people today,

and to bind yourselves by oath before God to surrender the town to our enemies if the Lord sends no relief within so many days. Who are you to test God 12 at a time like this, and openly set yourselves above him? You are putting the 13 Lord Almighty to the proof. You will never understand! You cannot plumb 14 the depths of the human heart or understand the way a man's mind works; how then can you fathom man's Maker? How can you know God's mind, and grasp his thought? No, my friends, do not rouse the anger of the Lord our God. For even if he does not 15 choose to help us within the five days, he is free to come to our rescue at any time he pleases, or equally to let us be 16 destroyed by our enemies. It is not for you to impose conditions on the Lord our God; God will not yield to threats or be bargained with like a mere man. So we must wait for him to deliver us, 17 and in the mean time appeal to him for help. If he sees fit he will hear us.

'There is not one of our tribes or 18 clans, districts or towns, that worships man-made gods today, or has done so within living memory. This did happen 19 in days gone by, and that was why our ancestors were abandoned to their enemies to be slaughtered and pillaged, and great was their downfall. But we ac- 20 knowledge no god but the Lord, and so we are confident that he will not spurn us or any of our race. For our capture will mean the loss of all Judaea, and our temple will be looted; and God will hold us responsible for its desecration. The slaughter and deportation of our 21 fellow-countrymen, and the laying waste of the land we inherited, will bring his judgement upon us wherever we become slaves among the Gentiles. Our masters will regard us with disgust and contempt. There will be no happy 23

8.1-13.20: **Judith and Holofernes.** Risking honor and life, she combines great faith, grim courage, and scrupulous observance of the Law in liberating Israel.

8.1-8: **Judith is introduced.** 1: *Judith* is the feminine form of Judah. Perhaps the name, which occurs passingly in Gen.26.34, symbolizes the Jewish people. Judith's ancestors, aside from Israel (Jacob), cannot be identified. 3: *Dothan*: 7.3 n. *Balamon*: unknown. 6: The OT requires fasting only on the Day of Atonement. Rabbinic Judaism increased the number of fast days. Judith's fasting beyond the requirement implies an extraordinary piety.

8.9-36: **Judith upbraids the magistrates and promises that God will deliver the city by her hand.** 11-27: Judith's eloquent exhortation is an expression of what faith requires of Israel in the postexilic period of apparent abandonment by God. 12: *To test God*: to lay down *conditions* (v. 16) for God's action, e.g. to hold out for five days more (7.30). 18: This favorable judgment

ending to our servitude, no return to favour; the Lord our God will use it to dishonour us.

- 24 'So then, my friends, let us set an example to our fellow-countrymen; for their lives depend on us, and the fate of the sanctuary, the temple, and the altar rests with us. We have every reason to give thanks to the Lord our God; he is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. Remember how he dealt with Abraham and how he tested Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopotamia when he was working as a shepherd for his uncle Laban. He is not subjecting us to the fiery ordeal by which he tested their loyalty, or taking vengeance on us: it is for discipline that the Lord scourges his worshippers.'
- 28 Ozias replied, 'You are quite right; everything you say is true, and no one can deny it. This is not the first time that you have given proof of your wisdom. Throughout your life we have all recognized your good sense and the soundness of your judgement. But the people were desperate with thirst and compelled us to make this promise and to pledge ourselves by an oath we may not break. Now, you are a devout woman; pray for us and ask the Lord to send rain to fill our cisterns, and then we shall no longer faint for lack of water.'
- 32 'Hear what I have to say', replied Judith. 'I am going to do a deed which will be remembered among our people for all generations. Be at the gate tonight yourselves, and I will go out with my maid. Before the day on which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand. But do not try to find out my plan; I will not tell you until I have accomplished what I mean to do.' Ozias and the magistrates said to

her, 'Go with our blessing, and may God be with you to take vengeance on our enemies.' So they left the roof-shelter and returned to their posts.

Then Judith prostrated herself, put ashes on her head, and uncovered the sackcloth she was wearing; and at the time when the evening incense was being offered in the temple in Jerusalem, she cried to the Lord: 'O Lord, the God of my forefather Simeon! Thou didst put in his hand a sword to take vengeance on those foreigners who had stripped off a virgin's veil to defile her, uncovered her thighs to shame her, and polluted her womb to dishonour her. Thou didst say, "It shall not be done"; yet they did it. So thou didst give up their rulers to be slain, and their bed, which blushed for their treachery, to be stained with blood; beneath thy stroke slaves fell dead upon the bodies of princes, and princes upon their thrones. Thou didst give up their wives as booty, and their daughters as captives, and all their spoils to be divided among thy beloved sons, who, aflame with zeal for thy cause and aghast at the pollution of their blood, called on thee to help them. O God, thou art my God, hear now a widow's prayer. All that happened then, and all that happened before and after, thou didst accomplish. The things that are now, and are yet to be, thou hast designed; and what thou didst design has come to pass. The things thou hast foreordained present themselves and say, "We are here." Thy ways are prepared beforehand: foreknowledge determines thy judgement.

'Thou seest the Assyrians assembled in their strength, proud of their horses and riders, boasting of the power of their infantry, and putting their faith in shield and javelin, bow and sling. They do not know that thou art the Lord

was generally accurate in the period after the Exile. 25: God puts Israel to the *test* by awaiting a response of fidelity to himself in her difficulties. The argument is built on an antithesis: it is not that man tests God (v. 12) but, rather, God tests man. 27: That suffering be viewed as *discipline* is a faith interpretation of history. 33: The context and language are reminiscent of God's intervention to lead his people from Egypt by the *hand* of Moses (Exod. ch. 9). See also 13.14; 15.10.

9.1-14: *Judith's prayer*. 1: The time of the *evening* offering was considered a most propitious moment for prayer. See Exod.30.8; 1 Kgs.18.36. 2: *Simeon* and Levi slaughtered the Shechemites for having violated their sister Dinah (Gen. ch. 34). But see also Gen.49.5-7 where their violence is condemned. 4: The *widow's prayer* is the object of special divine attention and care in the OT. See Deut.10.18; Ecclus.35.14-15. 7: A strong pacifist current developed in Israel beginning

who stamps out wars; the Lord is thy  
 8 name. Shatter their strength by thy  
 power and crush their might in thy  
 anger. For they have planned to desecrate  
 thy sanctuary, to pollute the  
 dwelling-place of thy glorious name,  
 and to strike down the horns of thy  
 9 altar with the sword. Mark their arro-  
 gance, pour thy wrath on their heads,  
 and give to me, widow as I am, the  
 10 strength to achieve my end. Use the  
 deceit upon my lips to strike them  
 dead, the slave with the ruler, the ruler  
 with the servant; shatter their pride  
 11 by a woman's hand. For thy might lies  
 not in numbers nor thy sovereign power  
 in strong men; but thou art the God of  
 the humble, the help of the poor, the  
 support of the weak, the protector of  
 the desperate, the deliverer of the hope-  
 12 less. Hear, O hear, thou God of my  
 forefather, God of Israel's heritage,  
 ruler of heaven and earth, creator of the  
 waters, king of all thy creation, hear  
 13 thou my prayer. Grant that my deceitful  
 words may wound and bruise them;  
 for they have cruel designs against thy  
 covenant, thy sacred house, the summit  
 of Zion, and thy children's home, their  
 14 own possession. Give thy whole nation  
 and every tribe the knowledge that thou  
 alone art God, God of all power and  
 might, and that thou and thou alone art  
 Israel's shield.'

101-2 When Judith had ended her prayer,  
 prostrate before the God of Israel, she  
 rose, called her maid, and went down  
 into the house, where she was accus-  
 tomed to spend her sabbaths and festi-  
 3 vals. She removed the sackcloth she  
 was wearing and took off her widow's  
 weeds; then she washed, and anointed  
 herself with rich perfume. She did her  
 hair, put on a headband, and dressed  
 in her gayest clothes, which she used to  
 wear when her husband Manasses was  
 4 alive. She put on sandals and anklets,  
 bracelets and rings, her ear-rings and all  
 her ornaments, and made herself very

attractive, so as to catch the eye of any  
 man who might see her. She gave her  
 5 maid a skin of wine and a flask of oil;  
 then she filled a bag with roasted grain,  
 cakes of dried figs, and the finest bread,  
 packed everything up, and gave it all to  
 her maid to carry.

They went out towards the gate of  
 6 Bethulia and found Ozias standing  
 there, with Chabris and Charmis the  
 elders of the town. When they saw  
 7 Judith transformed in appearance and  
 quite differently dressed, they were  
 filled with admiration of her beauty,  
 and said to her, 'The God of our fathers  
 8 grant you favour and fulfil your plans  
 so that Israel may triumph and Jeru-  
 salem may be exalted!' Judith bowed  
 to God in worship. Then she said to  
 9 them, 'Order the gate to be opened for  
 me, and I will go out to accomplish all  
 that you say.' They ordered the young  
 men to open the gate as she had asked.  
 When they had done so, Judith went  
 10 out, accompanied by her maid; and the  
 men of the town watched her until she  
 had gone down the hill-side and crossed  
 the valley, and then they lost sight of her.

The women went straight across the  
 11 valley and were met by an Assyrian  
 outpost; they seized Judith and ques-  
 12 tioned her: 'What is your nationality?  
 Where have you come from? Where  
 are you going?' 'I am a Hebrew,' she  
 replied; 'but I am running away from  
 my people, because they are going to  
 fall into your hands and be devoured.  
 I am on my way to Holophernes, your  
 13 commander-in-chief, with reliable in-  
 formation. I will show him a route by  
 which he can gain command of the  
 entire hill-country without losing a  
 single man.'

As the men listened to her story they  
 14 looked at her face and were amazed at  
 her beauty. 'You have saved your life',  
 15 they said, 'by coming down at once to  
 see our master. Go to his tent straight  
 away. Some of us will escort you and

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with Isa.2.4. See also 16.3. 10: The pious Judith prays for the success of her *deceit* because trickery was considered a very honorable weapon in war; see Josh.9.3-27.

10.1-17: Judith goes to Holophernes. 1-2: *Went down into the house*: from the tent on the roof where she spent most of her time. See 8.5. 5: Judith *packed . . . up* her own food so that she would not be defiled by eating unclean food of the Gentiles; see 12.1-4. 12: *Running away* from a city was not uncommon when a siege reached the decisive stage; see Jer.38.19; 39.9; 2 Chr.30.10.

16 hand you over to him. When you are in his presence, do not be afraid; just tell him what you have told us, and he will treat you kindly.' They detailed a hundred of their number to accompany her and her maid, and they brought the two women to Holophernes' tent.

18 AS THE NEWS OF HER ARRIVAL SPREAD from tent to tent, men came running from all parts of the camp. They gathered round her as she stood outside Holophernes' tent waiting until he had been told about her. Her wonderful beauty made them think that the Israelites must be a wonderful people. They said to each other, 'Who can despise a nation which has such women as this? We had better not leave a man of them alive, for if they get away they will be able to outwit the whole world.'

20 Then Holophernes' bodyguard and all his attendants came out and took her into the tent. He was resting on his bed under a mosquito-net of purple interwoven with gold, emeralds, and precious stones. When Judith was announced he came out into the front part of the tent, with silver lamps carried before him. He and his attendants were all amazed at the beauty of her face as she stood before them. She prostrated herself and did obeisance to him; but his slaves raised her up.

11 'Take heart, madam,' said Holophernes; 'do not be afraid. I have never harmed anyone who chose to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth. I should never have raised my spear against your people in the hill-country if they had not insulted me; they brought it on themselves. Now tell me why you have run away from them and joined us. By coming here you have saved your life. Take heart! You are in no danger tonight or in the future; no one will harm you. You will enjoy the good

treatment which is given to the subjects of my master King Nebuchadnezzar.'

Judith replied, 'My lord, grant your slave a hearing and listen to what I have to say to you. The information I am giving you tonight is the truth. If you follow my advice, God will do some great thing through you, and my lord will not fail to attain his ends. By the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth, and by the living might of him who sent you to bring order to all creatures, I swear: not only do men serve him, thanks to you, but wild animals also, cattle and birds, will owe their lives to your power as long as Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty reign.<sup>h</sup> We have heard how wise and clever you are. You are known throughout the world as the man of ability unrivalled in the whole empire, of powerful intelligence and amazing skill in the art of war. We know about the speech that Achior made in your council, because the men of Bethulia rescued him, and he told them what he had said to you. Do not disregard what he said, my lord and master, but give full weight to his words. They are true. No punishment ever falls on our race and the sword does not subdue them, except when they sin against their God. But now, my lord, you are not to be thwarted and cheated of success, for they are doomed to die. Sin has them in its power, and when they do wrong they will arouse their God's anger. Because they have run out of food and their water-supply is low, they have decided to lay hands on their cattle; they mean to consume everything that God by his laws has prohibited as food; and they have resolved to use up the

<sup>h</sup> not only . . . reign: or thanks to you and to your power, not only do men serve him, but wild animals also, cattle, and birds, will live at the disposal of Nebuchadnezzar and his household; the text and meaning are uncertain.

10.18-11.23: Judith is welcomed by Holophernes and explains her errand. 19: *Outwit the whole world*: superb irony. The Assyrians note that the trap into which they are falling would make a very good trap! 11.3-4: Holophernes guarantees freedom from *danger* to his prospective executioner! The Bible delights in showing how God uses evil men to carry out his benevolent designs. 6: *God will do some great thing through you* has an altogether different meaning for Judith than for Holophernes. Judith's conversation is full of such delightful ambiguities. 13: *Firstfruits . . . tithes* were reserved for priests by Mosaic Law. See Exod.23.19; Lev.23.15-21; 27.30. The requirements of the Law (see Deut.26.1-15) seem to be extended here, possibly reflecting early quasi-Pharisaic interpretation and extension. Judith uses the same argument as Achior had done (5.17-21) but affirms Israel's guilt. It was commonly believed by the ancients

firstfruits of the grain and the tithes of wine and oil, although these are dedicated and reserved for the priests who stand in attendance before our God in Jerusalem, and no layman may  
14 so much as handle them. They have sent men to Jerusalem to get permission from the senate, because even the  
15 people there have done this. As soon as ever word reaches them and they act on it, on that very day they will be given up to you to be destroyed.

16 'So, my lord, when I learnt all this, I ran away from them; and God has sent me to do with you things that will be the wonder of the world, wherever  
17 men hear about them. For I, your servant, am a religious woman: day and night I worship the God of heaven. I will stay with you now, my lord; and each night I shall go out into the valley and pray to God, and he will tell me when they have committed their  
18 sins. Then, when I return and bring you word, you may lead out your whole army, and you will meet with no resistance from any of them. I will guide  
19 you across Judaea until you reach Jerusalem, and I will set up your throne in the heart of the city. They will follow you like sheep that have lost their shepherd, and not a dog will so much as growl at you. I have been given foreknowledge of this. It has been revealed to me, and I have been sent to announce it to you.'

20 Judith's words delighted Holophernes and all his attendants, and they were amazed at her wisdom. 'In the whole wide world', they said, 'there is not a woman to compare with her for beauty of face or shrewdness of  
22 speech.' Holophernes said to her, 'Thank God for sending you out from your people, to bring strength to us and destruction to those who have insulted  
23 my lord! You are a beautiful woman and your words are good. If you do as

you have promised, your God shall be my God, and you shall live in King Nebuchadnezzar's palace and be renowned throughout the world.'

Holophernes then commanded them  
12 to bring her in where his silver was set out, and he ordered a meal to be served for her from his own food and wine. But Judith said, 'I will not eat any of it, in case I should be breaking our law.  
2 What I have brought with me will meet my needs.' Holophernes said to her,  
3 'But if you use up all you have with you, where can we get you a fresh supply of the same kind? There is no one of your race here among us.' Judith replied,  
4 'As sure as you live, my lord, I shall not finish what I have brought with me before the Lord accomplishes through me what he has planned.'

Holophernes' attendants brought her  
5 into the tent; and she slept until midnight. Shortly before the morning watch she got up and sent this message  
6 to Holophernes: 'My lord, will you give orders for me to be allowed to go out and pray?' Holophernes ordered his  
7 bodyguard to let her pass. She remained in the camp for three days, going out each night into the valley of Bethulia and bathing in the spring. When she  
8 came up from the spring, she prayed the Lord, the God of Israel, to prosper her undertaking to restore her people. Then she returned to the camp purified,  
9 and remained in the tent until she took her meal towards evening.

ON THE FOURTH DAY HOLOPHERNES  
10 gave a banquet for his personal servants only, and did not invite any of the army officers. He said to Bagoas, the  
11 eunuch in charge of all his affairs: 'Go to the Hebrew woman who is in your care, and persuade her to join us and to eat and drink with us. It would be a  
12 disgrace if we let such a woman go without enjoying her company. If

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that ritual transgression was followed by punishment. 17: By going out *each night*, Judith is establishing a pattern of conduct that will permit her later escape (13.10).

12.1-9: **Judith prepares for the opportune moment.** 2: Judith's scrupulous observance of the dietary laws reflects a norm of postexilic Jewish piety. 5-9: That Holophernes is so easily manipulated is patently a literary device.

12.10-20: **Holophernes invites Judith to a banquet.** 11: *Bagoas* is a common Persian name (see 1.1 n.). A *eunuch* was usually in charge of the king's harem but in some cases he was also an important and influential person at court (Gen.37.36 n.; Dan.1.3).

we do not win her favours she will  
 13 laugh at us.' Bagoas left Holophernes' presence, and went to Judith and said, 'Now, my beauty, do not be bashful; come along to my master and give yourself the honour of his company. Drink with us and enjoy yourself, and behave today like one of the Assyrian women in attendance at Nebuchadnezzar's  
 14 palace.' 'Who am I to refuse my master?' said Judith. 'I am eager to do whatever pleases him; and it will be something to boast of till my dying  
 15 day.' She proceeded to dress herself up and put on all her feminine finery. Her maid went ahead of her, and spread on the ground in front of Holophernes the fleeces which she had received from Bagoas for her daily use, so that she might recline on them when  
 16 she ate. When Judith came in and took her place, Holophernes was beside himself with desire for her. He shook with passion and was filled with an ardent longing to possess her; indeed he had been looking for an opportunity to seduce her ever since he first set eyes  
 17 on her. So he said to her, 'Drink and enjoy yourself with us.' 'Indeed I will, my lord,' said Judith; 'today is the  
 19 greatest day of my whole life.' Then she took what her servant had prepared, and ate and drank in his presence.  
 20 Holophernes was delighted with her, and drank a great deal of wine, more, indeed, than he had ever drunk on any single day since he was born.  
 13 When it grew late, Holophernes' servants quickly withdrew. Bagoas closed the tent from outside, shutting out all the attendants from his master's presence, and they went to bed; the banquet had lasted so long that they  
 2 were all worn out. Judith was left alone in the tent, with Holophernes lying sprawled on his bed, dead drunk,  
 3 Judith had told her maid to stand outside the sleeping-apartment and wait for her mistress to go out, as she did every day; she had said that she would be going out to pray, and had  
 4 explained this to Bagoas also. When

they had all gone and not a soul was left, Judith stood beside Holophernes' bed and prayed silently: 'O Lord, God of all power, look favourably now on what I am about to do to bring glory  
 5 to Jerusalem, for now is the time to help thy heritage and to give success to my plan for crushing the enemies who have risen up against us.' She went  
 6 to the bed-rail beside Holophernes' head and took down his sword, and stepping  
 7 close to the bed she grasped his hair. 'Now give me strength, O Lord, God of Israel', she said; then she struck at  
 8 his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head. She rolled the body  
 9 off the bed and took the mosquito-net from its posts; a moment later she went out and gave Holophernes' head to the  
 10 maid, who put it in her food-bag. The two of them went out together, as they had usually done for prayer. Through the camp they went, and round that valley, and up the hill to Bethulia till they reached the gates.

From a distance Judith called to the  
 11 sentries at the gates: 'Open! Open the gate! God, our God is with us, still showing his strength in Israel and his  
 12 might against our enemies. He has shown it today!' When the citizens heard her voice, they hurried down to the gate and summoned the elders of  
 13 the town. Everyone high and low came running, hardly able to believe that Judith had returned. They opened the gate and let the two women in; they lit  
 14 a fire to see by, and gathered round them. Then Judith raised her voice and cried, 'Praise God! O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has  
 15 crushed our enemies by my hand this very night!' Then she took the head from the bag and showed it to them. 'Look!' she said. 'The head of Holophernes, the Assyrian commander-in-chief! And here is the net under which he lay  
 16 drunk! The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman! And I swear by the Lord who has brought me safely along the way I have travelled that,

13.1–20: Judith returns to Bethulia with the head of Holophernes. 6: *His sword*: a scimitar or dagger. 9: Judith took the mosquito-net as proof that she had been with Holophernes, since the men of Bethulia could scarcely have recognized him (v. 15). 14: *By my hand*: 8.33 n. 15: To be struck down by the hand of a woman was the ultimate disgrace for a warrior; see Judg.9.54.

though my face lured him to destruction, he committed no sin with me, and my honour is unblemished.'

- 17 The people were all astounded; and bowing down in worship to God, they said with one voice, 'Praise be to thee, O Lord our God, who hast humiliated the enemies of thy people this day.'
- 18 And Ozias said to Judith, 'My daughter, the blessing of God Most High is upon you, you more than all other women on earth; praise be to the Lord, the God who created heaven and earth, and guided you when you struck off the
- 19 head of the enemy commander. The sure hope which inspired you<sup>i</sup> will never fade from men's minds while they commemorate the power of God. May God
- 20 make your deed redound to your honour for ever, and shower blessings upon you! You risked your life for our country when it was faced with humiliation. You went boldly to meet the disaster that threatened us, and held firmly to God's straight road.' All the people responded: 'Amen! Amen!'

*The triumph of Israel*

- 14 THEN JUDITH SAID TO THEM, 'LISTEN TO me, my friends; take this head and hang it out on the battlements of your wall.
- 2 As soon as dawn breaks and the sun rises, take up your weapons, every able-bodied man of you, and march out of the town. You must set a commander at your head, as if you were going down to the plain to attack the Assyrian out-
- 3 post; but do not go down. The Assyrians will take up their weapons and make for their camp, and rouse the commanders, who will run to Holofernes' tent but will not find him. They will all be seized with panic and
- 4 will flee from you; then pursue them, you and all who live within Israel's borders, and cut them down in their
- 5 tracks. But first of all summon Achior the Ammonite to me, so that he may

see and recognize the man who treated Israel with contempt and sent him to us as if to his death.'

They summoned Achior from Ozias's 6 house. When he came and saw Holofernes' head held by one of the men in the assembly of the people, he fainted and fell down. They lifted him up, and 7 he threw himself at Judith's feet and did obeisance to her, and said, 'Your praises will be sung in every camp in Judah and among all nations. They will tremble when they hear your name. Tell me now the whole story of what 8 you have done during these days.' Then Judith, in the hearing of the people, told him everything from the day she left until that very moment. As she 9 ended her story, the people raised a great shout and made the town ring with their cheers. And when Achior 10 realized all that the God of Israel had done, he came to full belief in God, and was circumcised, and admitted as a member of the community of Israel, as his descendants still are.

When dawn came they hung Holofernes' head on the wall; then they all 11 took their weapons and went out in companies into the approaches to the town. When the Assyrians saw them, 12 they sent word to their leaders, who then went to the generals, captains, and all the other officers. They came to 13 Holofernes' tent and said to his steward: 'Wake our master. These slaves have had the audacity to offer us battle; they are asking to be utterly 14 wiped out.' Bagoas went in and knocked at the screen of the inner tent, supposing that Holofernes was sleeping 15 with Judith. When there was no reply, he drew aside the screen, went into the sleeping-apartment, and found the dead 16 body sprawling over a footstool, and the head gone. He gave a great cry, wailing and groaning aloud, and tore 17 his clothes. Then he went into the tent which Judith had occupied; and not

*i* Or which you inspire.

18-20: Judith's victory is proof that power and violence can be conquered by faith and wisdom. The weak, oppressed, and demoralized postexilic Israel needs this reminder.

14.1-15.7: Judith directs the men of Bethulia in victory. 5: There is a double purpose in calling Achior: to recognize, i.e. identify the head of Holofernes and to see the defeat of the man who treated Israel with contempt, and thereby to have his witness to the vindication of Israel's God. 10: Achior's conversion to Judaism represents a more lenient view than that in Deut.23.3. 13: These slaves: this is a contemptuous reference to Israel's condition in Egypt.



finding her he rushed out to the people  
 18 shouting, 'The slaves have played us  
 false. One Hebrew woman has brought  
 shame on Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.  
 Look! Holofernes is lying on the  
 19 ground, and his head is gone!' His  
 words filled the officers of the Assyrian  
 army with dismay; they tore their  
 clothes, and the camp rang with their  
 shouts and cries.

15 When the news spread to the men in  
 the camp, they were thrown into con-  
 2 sternation at what had happened. In  
 terror and panic they all scattered at  
 once, with no attempt to keep together,  
 and fled by every path across the plain  
 3 and the hill-country. Those who were  
 encamped in the hills round Bethulia  
 also took to flight. Then all the Israel-  
 ites of military age sallied out after  
 4 them. Ozias sent men to Bethomes-  
 thaim, Choba, and Chola, and the  
 whole territory of Israel, to give news  
 of what had happened and to tell them  
 to sally out against the enemy and  
 5 destroy them. When the news reached  
 them, every man in Israel joined the  
 attack and cut them down, going as far  
 as Choba. The men from Jerusalem  
 and all the hill-country also joined in,  
 for they had been told what had hap-  
 pened in the enemy camp. The men of  
 Gilead and Galilee outflanked the As-  
 syrians and inflicted heavy losses on  
 them, continuing beyond Damascus  
 6 and the district round it. The rest of the  
 inhabitants of Bethulia fell upon the  
 camp and made themselves rich with  
 7 the spoils. When the Israelites returned  
 from the slaughter, they took possession  
 of what remained. The villages and  
 hamlets in the hill-country and in the  
 plain got masses of booty, for there was  
 a huge quantity of it.

8 Joakim the high priest and the senate  
 of Israel came from Jerusalem to see  
 for themselves the great things the Lord  
 had done for his people, and to meet  
 9 Judith and wish her well. When they  
 arrived they praised her with one voice

and said, 'You are the glory of Jeru-  
 salem, the heroine of Israel, the proud  
 boast of our people! With your own  
 10 hand you have done all this, you have  
 restored the fortunes of Israel, and God  
 has shown his approval. Blessings on  
 you from the Lord Almighty, for all  
 time to come!' And all the people re-  
 sponded, 'Amen!'

The looting of the camp went on for  
 11 thirty days. They gave Judith Holo-  
 phernes' tent, with all his silver, and his  
 couches, bowls, and furniture. She took  
 them and loaded her mule, then got her  
 wagons ready and piled the goods on  
 them. All the Israelite women came 12  
 running to see her; they sang her  
 praises, and some of them performed  
 a dance in her honour. She took gar-  
 landed wands in her hands and gave  
 some also to the women who accom-  
 panied her; and she and those who were 13  
 with her crowned themselves with olive  
 leaves. Then, at the head of all the  
 people, she led the women in the dance;  
 and the men of Israel, in full armour  
 and with garlands on their heads, fol-  
 lowed them singing hymns.

IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL ISRAEL, JUDITH 16  
 struck up this hymn of praise and  
 thanksgiving, in which all the people  
 joined lustily:

'Strike up a song to my God with 2  
 tambourines;  
 sing to the Lord with cymbals;  
 raise a psalm of praise<sup>f</sup> to him;  
 honour him and invoke his name.  
 The Lord is a God who stamps out 3  
 wars;  
 he has brought me safe from my  
 pursuers  
 into his camp among his people.  
 The Assyrian came from the 4  
 mountains of the north;  
 his armies came in such myriads  
 that his troops choked the valleys,  
 his cavalry covered the hills.

*j* Some witnesses read a new psalm.

15.4: *Ozias*: a variant spelling of *Uzziah*. *Bethomesthaim*, *Choba*, and *Chola* have not been identified.

15.8-13: The heroism of Judith is extolled. 10: *Your own hand*: see 8.33 n. 12-13: The festive expressions described here are in keeping with Greek, not Jewish, custom. 13: *She led the women in the dance*, much as Miriam led the dance after Israel's victory over Egypt (Exod.15.20). Many of the features of this triumph are borrowed from Israel's prototypical Exodus victory.

16.1-17: Judith's hymn of thanksgiving. 3: *Stamps out wars*: see 9.7 n. 4: Assyria lies mostly

- 5 He threatened to set fire to my land,  
put my young men to the sword,  
dash my infants to the ground,  
take my children as booty,  
and my maidens as spoil.
- 6 The Lord Almighty has thwarted  
them by a woman's hand.
- 7 It was no young man that brought  
their champion low;  
no Titan struck him down,  
no tall giant set upon him;  
but Judith daughter of Merari  
disarmed him by the beauty  
of her face.
- 8 She put off her widow's weeds  
to raise up the afflicted in Israel;  
she anointed her face with perfume,  
and bound her hair with a  
headband,  
and put on a linen gown to beguile  
him.
- 9 Her sandal entranced his eye,  
her beauty took his heart captive;  
and the sword cut through his neck.
- 10 The Persians shuddered at her  
daring,  
the Medes were daunted by her  
boldness.
- 11 Then my oppressed people shouted  
in triumph, and the enemy were  
afraid;  
my weak ones shouted, and the  
enemy cowered in fear;  
they raised their voices, and the  
enemy took to flight.
- 12 The sons of servant girls ran them  
through,  
wounding them like runaway slaves;  
they were destroyed by the army of  
my Lord.
- 13 'I will sing a new hymn to my God.  
O Lord, thou art great and glorious,  
thou art marvellous in thy strength,  
invincible.
- 14 Let thy whole creation serve thee;  
for thou didst speak and all things  
came to be;
- thou didst send out thy spirit and it  
formed them.  
No one can resist thy voice;  
mountains and seas are stirred to  
their depths,  
rocks melt like wax at thy presence;  
but to those who revere thee  
thou dost still show mercy.  
For no sacrifice is sufficient to please  
thee with its fragrance,  
and all the fat in the world is not  
enough for a burnt-offering,  
but he who fears the Lord is always  
great.
- Woe to the nations which rise up  
against my people!  
The Lord Almighty will punish them  
on the day of judgement;  
he will consign their bodies to fire  
and worms;  
they will weep in pain for ever.'
- When they arrived at Jerusalem they  
worshipped God. As soon as the people  
were purified, they offered their burnt-  
offerings, freewill offerings, and gifts.  
Judith dedicated to God all Holo-  
phernes' possessions, which the people  
had given to her; and the net, which  
she had taken for herself from the  
sleeping-apartment, she presented as a  
votive offering. For three months the  
people continued their celebrations in  
Jerusalem in front of the sanctuary; and  
Judith remained with them.
- At the end of that time they all re-  
turned to their own homes. Judith went  
back to Bethulia and lived on her  
estate. In her time she was famous  
throughout the whole country. She had  
many suitors; but she remained un-  
married all her life after her husband  
Manasses died and was gathered to his  
fathers. Her fame continued to increase;  
and she lived on in her husband's house  
until she was a hundred and five years  
old. She gave her maid her liberty.  
She died in Bethulia and was buried

east of Palestine but the route of invasion was from the north. 7: Titan: Greek influence. 10: Persians . . . Medes: see 1.1 n. 14: Ps.33.6. 17: The entire book is devoted to the theme of the inviolability of God's people in a world of hostility on the part of the goddess nations. See 1.1 n.

16.18-25: After a feast in Jerusalem, Judith returns to Bethulia. 19: All Holofernes' possessions: an example of detachment from worldly goods, perhaps to console the poverty-stricken postexilic Jews. 23-24: A long life, praise from one's people, and generosity toward associates are all signs of a true Israelite.

in the same tomb as her husband  
24 Manasses, and Israel observed mourning for her for seven days. Before her death she divided her property among all those who were most closely related to her husband Manasses, and among her own nearest relations.  
No one dared to threaten the Israel- 25  
ites again in Judith's lifetime, or for a long time after her death.

# THE REST OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER

WHICH ARE FOUND NEITHER IN THE HEBREW  
NOR IN THE SYRIAC

NOTE. *The portions of the Book of Esther commonly included in the Apocrypha are extracts from the Greek version of the book, which differs substantially from the Hebrew text (translated in The New English Bible: Old Testament). In order that they may be read in their original sequence, the whole of the Greek version is here translated, those portions which are not normally printed in the Apocrypha being enclosed in square brackets, with the chapter and verse numbers in italic figures. The order followed is that of the Greek text, but the chapter and verse numbers are made to conform to those of the Authorized Version. Proper names are given in the form in which they occur in the Greek version.*

To the book of Esther, as found in the Hebrew, six sections were added either by the Greek translator himself, or only a short time later by someone else. These additions may be dated as coming from about 114 B.C.

When Jerome prepared his Latin Vulgate translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew, he also translated these Greek additions to Esther, but grouped them together at the end of the Hebrew story. In the text here (see "Note"), the whole Greek version is reconstructed, with the additions inserted into their proper place in the story. (Compare the Book of Esther in the Old Testament.) It should be noted that the chapter and verse numbers here conform to Stephen Langton's arrangement of 1214 A.D., which followed Jerome's order of the text.

The account in the Greek version is substantially identical with the Hebrew. However, the Greek additions are significant because they supply an explicit religious element strangely lacking in the original, e.g. God is never mentioned in the Hebrew. The Greek version also inserts, through Mardocheaus' dream (10.4-9), an apocalyptic and cosmic element into the story; thereby the episode of a Jewish deliverance from a Persian pogrom becomes a sign of God's dramatic eleventh-hour victory over all secular powers at the end of history. Thus, the Feast of Purim, to which the story of Esther purportedly gave rise, is made an occasion for expressing the Jewish hope of eventual deliverance from historical adversities.

- 112 **I**N THE SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF Artaxerxes the Great King, on the first day of Nisan, Mardocheaus son of Jairus, son of Semeius, son of Kisaesus, of the tribe of Benjamin, had  
3 a dream. Mardocheaus was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a man of high standing, who was in the royal  
4 service; he came of those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem with Jechonias king of Judah. This was his dream: din and tumult, peals of  
5 thunder and an earthquake, confusion upon the earth. Then appeared two  
6 great dragons, ready to grapple with each other, and the noise they made was terrible. Every nation was roused  
7 by it to prepare for war, to fight against the righteous nation. It was a day of  
8

11.2-12: **Mardocheaus' dream.** 2: *Artaxerxes* (Heb., Ahasuerus) is Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.). The *second year* of his reign is 484 B.C. The *first day of Nisan* is about March 15. *Mardocheaus* (Heb., Mordecai) is obviously a Jew but his name is probably Babylonian. 3: *Susa*: a city in Mesopotamia. 4: This deportation took place about 597 B.C., which would make Mardocheaus at least 113 years old at the time of his dream (v.2)! *Jechonias* is Jehoiachin (2 Kgs.24.12-13). 5-11: The imagery of the dream is apocalyptic; the *dragons* (antagonists) are Mardocheaus and Haman, while the divinely decreed victory is effected through Esther (the *little spring*). See 10.6-9. 7: *Righteous nation*: the Jews.

darkness and gloom, with distress and anguish, oppression and great confusion upon the earth. And the whole righteous nation was troubled, dreading the evils in store for them, and they prepared for death. They cried aloud to God; and in answer to their cry there came as though from a little spring a great river brimming with water. It grew light, and the sun rose; the humble were exalted and they devoured the great. After he had had this dream and had seen what God had resolved to do, Mardocheaus woke; he kept it before his mind, seeking in every way to understand it, until nightfall.

12 Now when Mardocheaus was resting in the royal courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs who guarded the courtyard, he heard them deep in discussion. He listened carefully to discover what was on their minds, and found that they were plotting violence against King Artaxerxes. He denounced them to the king, who had the two eunuchs interrogated. They confessed and were led away to execution. Then the king wrote an account of the affair, to have it on record; Mardocheaus also wrote an account of it. The king gave Mardocheaus an appointment at court, and rewarded him for his services. But Haman, the son of Hamadathus, a Bugaeon, who enjoyed the king's favour, sought to injure Mardocheaus and his people because of the two eunuchs.

*A Jewess becomes queen in Persia*

I [THOSE EVENTS HAPPENED IN THE DAYS of Artaxerxes, the Artaxerxes who ruled

from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. At this time he sat on his royal throne in the city of Susa. Then in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for the King's Friends and persons of various races, the Persian and Median nobles and the leading provincial governors. And afterwards, after displaying to them the wealth of his empire and the splendour of his rich festivities for a hundred and eighty days, when these days of feasting were over, the king gave a banquet for all the people of various races present in the city of Susa; it was held in the court of the king's palace and lasted six days. The court was decorated with white curtains of linen and cotton stretched on cords of purple, and these were attached to blocks of gold and silver resting on stone and marble columns. There were couches of gold and silver set on a pavement of malachite, marble, and mother-of-pearl. There were mats of transparent weave elaborately embroidered with roses arranged in a circle. The cups were of gold and silver, and there was displayed a miniature cup made of carbuncle worth thirty thousand talents. The wine was abundant and sweet, from the king's own cellar. The drinking was not according to a fixed rule, but the king had laid it down that all the stewards of his palace should respect his will and that of the guests. In addition, Queen Astin gave a banquet for the women in the same palace where King Artaxerxes was.

On the seventh day, when he was in high good humour, the king ordered Haman, Mazan, Tharra, Borazes, Zatholtha, Abataza, and Tharaba, the seven eunuchs who were in attendance on the king's person, to bring the queen

12.1-6: Mardocheaus discovers a plot against the king and is rewarded. 5: The Hebrew story (6.3) knows nothing of this reward. 6: *Haman* has the villain's role. He is here identified as a *Bugaeon* but in Esther 3.1 he is an Agagite. In 16.10 he is identified as a Macedonian although his father's name is Persian. It may be significant that Mardocheaus, like Saul, was a Benjamite (11.2) while Haman was apparently an Amalekite (1 Sam.15.8). Thus, there was a long previous historical basis for a blood feud between them.

1.1-9: Artaxerxes gives a lavish feast. 2: *Susa* was the winter residence of Persian kings; the official capital was Persepolis. 3: *King's Friends*: see 1 Macc.2.18 n. 7: *Thirty thousand talents*: the sum is astronomical. See Appendix, "Weights and Coins," p. 1035. The entire description seems to be greatly exaggerated. 9: *Queen Astin* in the Hebrew account is called *Vashti*. She must have been a current favorite since Xerxes' official wife was Amestris.

1.10-22: *Queen Astin* disobeys Artaxerxes and is dethroned. 10: The Hebrew version attributes the king's *good humour* to drinking. *Eunuchs* were originally in charge of the king's harem but

before him, so that he might place the royal diadem on her head and let her display her beauty to the officers and people of various races; for she was indeed a beautiful woman. But Queen Astin refused to obey him and come with the eunuchs. This offended the king and made him angry.

13 Then the king said to his courtiers, 'You hear what Astin said. Give your ruling and judgement in the matter.'

14 Then the nobles of Persia and Media who were closest to the king—Harke-saeus, Sarsathaeus, and Malesear, who sat next him in the chief seats—approached him and declared what should be done according to the law to Queen Astin for disobeying the order which the king sent her by the eunuchs.

16 Then Muchaeus said to the king and the nobles: 'Queen Astin has done wrong, and not to the king alone, but to all his nobles and officers as well.' (For he had repeated to them what the queen had said and how she had defied the king.)

18 'And just as she defied King Artaxerxes, so now the nobles of Persia and Media will find that all their ladies are bold enough to treat their husbands with contempt, when they hear what she said to the king. If it please your majesty, let a royal decree go out from you, and let it be inscribed among the laws of the Medes and Persians, that Astin shall not again appear before the king; this is the only course. And let the king give her place as queen to another woman who is more worthy of it than she. Let whatever law the king makes be proclaimed throughout his empire, and then all women will give due honour to their husbands, rich and poor alike.' The advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as

22 Muchaeus had proposed. Letters were sent to all the provinces of the empire, to each province in its own language,

in order that every man might be respected in his own house.

Later, when the anger of King 2 Artaxerxes had died down, he remembered Astin and what she had done, and how he had given judgement against her. So the king's attendants said: 'Let 2 beautiful girls of unblemished virtue be sought out for your majesty. Let your 3 majesty appoint commissioners in all the provinces of the empire to select these beautiful virgins and bring them to the city of Susa, into the women's quarters. There let them be committed to the care of the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and let them be provided with cosmetics and everything else they need. Then the one who is 4 most acceptable to the king shall become queen in place of Astin.' The advice pleased the king, and he acted on it.

Now there was a Jew in the city of 5 Susa named Mardocheaus, son of Jairus, son of Semeius, son of Kisaueus, of the tribe of Benjamin; he had been 6 carried into exile from Jerusalem when it was taken by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He had a foster-child 7 named Esther, the daughter of his father's brother Aminadab. She had lost her parents, and he had brought her up to womanhood. She was a very beautiful girl. When the king's edict 8 was proclaimed, many girls were brought to Susa to be entrusted to Gai, who had charge of the women, and among them was Esther. She attracted 9 his notice and received his special favour: he readily provided her with her cosmetics and allowance of food, and also with seven maids assigned to her from the king's palace. He gave her and her maids honourable treatment in the women's quarters.

Esther had not disclosed her race or 10 country, because Mardocheaus had

later they acquired positions of great influence (Gen.37.36 n.; Dan.1.3). 12: Perhaps *Astin refused* because the circumstances would have made her appearance degrading. 20: Such naivete may be due to the heavy drinking of these counselors!

2.1-14: *Esther enters the competition to replace Queen Astin.* 1-4: A beauty contest always makes for good storytelling. The scope of this contest serves to highlight the exceptional beauty of Esther. 3: *Women's quarters*: the harem. 5: Following the Hebrew version, the Greek text introduces *Mardocheaus* a second time; see 11.2-3. 7: *Esther* is derived from the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, who was related to the god Marduk, from whom Mardocheaus derived his name. 10: Concealment of Esther's background is important for the development of the story line; see 7.4.

11 forbidden her to do so. Every day Mardocheus passed along by the forecourt of the women's quarters to keep an eye on Esther and see what would happen to her.

12 The period after which a girl was to go to the king was twelve months. This was for the completion of the required treatment—six months with oil and myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics. Then the girl went to the king. She was handed to the person appointed, and accompanied him from the women's quarters to the king's palace. She entered the palace in the evening and returned in the morning to Gai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, in another part of the women's quarters. She did not go to the king again unless summoned by name.

15 When the time came for Esther, daughter of Aminadab the uncle of Mardocheus, to go to the king, she neglected none of the instructions of Gai the king's eunuch in charge of the women; for Esther charmed all who saw her. She was taken to King Artaxerxes in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, in the seventh year of his reign. The king fell in love with her, finding her more acceptable than any of the other girls, and crowned her with the queen's diadem. Then the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the King's Friends and the officers, to celebrate Esther's marriage. He also granted a remission of taxation to all subjects of his empire.

19 Mardocheus was in attendance in the courtyard. But Esther had not disclosed her country—such were the instructions of Mardocheus; but she

was to fear God and keep his commandments just as she had done when she was with him. So Esther made no change in her way of life.

Two of the king's eunuchs, officers 21 of the bodyguard, were offended at the advancement of Mardocheus and plotted to kill King Artaxerxes. This 22 became known to Mardocheus, who told Esther, and she revealed the plot to the king. The king interrogated the 23 two eunuchs and had them hanged, and he ordered that the service Mardocheus had rendered should be recorded in the royal archives to his honour.

### A plot against the Jews

AFTER THIS KING ARTAXERXES PROMOTED 3 Haman son of Hamadathus the Bugaeon, advancing him and giving him precedence above all the King's Friends. So all who were at court did 2 obeisance to Haman, for so the king had commanded; but Mardocheus did not do obeisance. Then the king's 3 courtiers said to him, 'Mardocheus, why do you flout the king's command?' Day by day they challenged him, but he 4 refused to listen to them. Then they informed Haman that Mardocheus was resisting the king's command. Mardocheus had told them that he was a Jew. So when Haman learnt that 5 Mardocheus was not doing obeisance to him, he was infuriated and plotted 6 to exterminate all the Jews under Artaxerxes' rule.

In the twelfth year of King Artaxerxes he arrived at a decision by casting lots, taking the days and the months

2.15-20: Esther wins the king's favor and is made queen. 16: *Adar*: February-March. *The seventh year*: four years after Queen Astin's dismissal; see 1.3. 18: *King's Friends*: see 1 Macc. 2.18 n. 20: *Esther made no change in her way of life*: she maintained dietary laws and other such Jewish observances.

2.21-23: *Mardocheus saves the king's life*. According to the Greek version (12.1-5), Mardocheus was advanced only after he revealed the plot. The Heb. version (Esther 6.2-3), which is itself uncertain, makes a point of the fact that Mardocheus was not rewarded for this service.

3.1-5.14: *A plot against the Jews*. Esther and Haman are pitted against each other as forces of good and evil.

3.1-6: *Mardocheus refuses homage to Haman*. 2: *The obeisance* prescribed was certainly the normal deference required for the office of grand vizier or prime minister. But Mardocheus, a Benjamite, considers it irreligious to bow before an Agagite (see 12.6 n. above). Such defiance is presented as an ideal of Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles.

3.7-13: *Haman secures a royal edict to exterminate the Jews*. 7: *Twelfth year*: about 474 B.C. In common practice important decisions were made by the impartial method of *casting lots*.

one by one, to decide on one day for the destruction of the whole race of Mardocheaus. The lot fell on the thirteenth<sup>a</sup> day of the month Adar.

- 8 Then Haman said to King Artaxerxes: "There is a certain nation dispersed among the other nations of your empire. Their laws are different from those of every other nation; they do not keep your majesty's laws. It is not to your majesty's advantage to tolerate  
9 them. If it please your majesty, let an order be made for their destruction; and I will contribute ten thousand talents of silver to the royal treasury."  
10 So the king took off his signet-ring and gave it to Haman to seal the decree against the Jews. "Keep the money, and deal with these people as you will", he said.  
12 On the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were summoned, and in accordance with Haman's instructions, they wrote in the name of King Artaxerxes to his army commanders and governors in every province from India to Ethiopia. There were a hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, and each was addressed  
13 in its own language. Instructions were dispatched by courier to all the empire of Artaxerxes to exterminate the Jewish race, on a given day of the twelfth month, Adar, and to plunder their possessions.]

13 THIS IS A COPY OF THE LETTER:

Artaxerxes the Great King to the governors of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, and to the subordinate officials.

- 2 Ruler as I am over many nations and master of all the world, it is my will—not in the arrogance of power,

but because my rule is mild and equitable—to ensure to my subjects a life permanently free from disturbance, to pacify my empire and make it safe for travel to its farthest limits, and to restore the peace that all men long for. I asked my counsellors how  
3 this object might be achieved and received a reply from Haman. Haman is eminent among us for sound judgement, one whose worth is proved by his constant goodwill and steadfast loyalty, and who has gained the honour of the second  
4 place at our court. He represented to us that scattered among all the races of the empire is a disaffected people, opposed in its laws to every nation, and continually ignoring the royal ordinances, so that our irreproachable plans for the unified administration of the empire cannot be made effective. We understand  
5 that this nation stands alone in its continual opposition to all men, that it evades the laws by its strange manner of life, and in disloyalty to our government commits grievous offences, thus undermining the security of our empire. We therefore  
6 order that those who are designated to you in the indictments drawn up by Haman, our vicegerent and second father, shall all, together with their wives and children, be utterly destroyed by the sword of their enemies, without mercy or pity, on the thirteenth<sup>b</sup> day of Adar, the twelfth month, of the present year. Those persons who have long been  
7 disaffected shall meet a violent death in one day so that our government may henceforth be stable and untroubled.

<sup>a</sup> So some witnesses, and compare 8. 12 (page 93); other witnesses read fourteenth.

<sup>b</sup> Gk. fourteenth; see note on 3. 7 (pages 87-88).

The Akkadian word for "lot" is *pur* and this provides the name for the Feast of Purim to which this story was later attached; see 9.25-26. *Thirteenth day*: about March 1; see 2.16 n. 8: The standard complaint against the pious Jews was that they were *different*; see Wis.2.15; 1 Macc. ch. 2. 9: *Ten thousand talents*: an astronomical sum; see Appendix for "Weights and Coins," p. 1035. 12: *First month*: Nisan (March-April). The Persian empire was divided into thirteen administrative districts called satrapies. These *provinces* may have been subdivisions. 13: *Adar*: see 2.16 n.

13.1-7; 3.14-15: *Artaxerxes' edict to destroy the Jews*. 4: *Disaffected people*: there is little doubt that the Jews, because of their adherence to distinctive customs ("strange manner of life"; v. 5), were viewed with a suspicion which lent credence to exaggerated and sometimes fantastic accusations. 6: *Vicegerent*: an administrator in charge of royal affairs. *Adar*: see 2.16 n.



314 [Copies of the document were posted up in every province, and all nations of the empire were ordered to be ready  
15 by that day. The matter was expedited also in Susa. While the king and Haman caroused together, the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

4 WHEN MARDOCHAEUS LEARNT ALL THAT was being done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and sprinkled himself with ashes; and he rushed through the city, crying loudly: 'An innocent nation  
2 is being destroyed.' He went as far as the king's gate, and there he halted, because no one was allowed to enter the courtyard clothed with sackcloth and  
3 ashes. In every province where the king's decree was posted up, there was a great cry of mourning and lamentation among the Jews, and they put on  
4 sackcloth and ashes. When the queen's maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was distraught at the news, and sent clothes for Mardochoaeus, urging him to take off his sackcloth; but he would  
5 not consent. Then Esther summoned Hachrathaeus, the eunuch who waited upon her, and ordered him to obtain accurate information for her from  
7 Mardochoaeus.<sup>c</sup> So Mardochoaeus told him all that had happened, and how Haman had promised to pay ten thousand talents into the royal treasury to bring about the destruction of the  
8 Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction which had been posted up in Susa, to show to Esther; and he gave him a message for her, that she should go to the king and plead for his favour and entreat him for her people. 'Remember', he said, 'those days when you were brought up in my humble home; for Haman, who stands next to the king, has spoken against us and demanded our death. Call upon the Lord, and

then speak for us to the king and save our lives.' Hachrathaeus returned and told her what Mardochoaeus had said.  
9 She sent him back with this message: 10 'All nations of the empire know that if  
11 any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court unbidden, there is no escape for him. Only one to whom the king stretches out the golden sceptre is safe; and it is now thirty days since I myself was called to go to the king.'

When Hachrathaeus delivered her  
12 message, Mardochoaeus told him to go  
13 back and say: 'Do not imagine, Esther, that you alone of all the Jews in the empire will escape alive. For if you remain silent at such a time as this, the  
14 Jews will somewhere find relief and deliverance, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows whether it is not for such a time as this that you have been made a queen?' Esther gave  
15 the messenger this answer to take back to Mardochoaeus: 'Go and assemble all  
16 the Jews who are in Susa and fast for me; for three days take neither food nor drink, night or day, and I and my maids will also go without food. Then in defiance of the law I will enter the king's presence, even if it costs me my life.' So Mardochoaeus went away and did as  
17 Esther had bidden him.]

AND MARDOCHAEUS PRAYED TO THE  
13 Lord, calling to mind all the works of the Lord. He said, 'O Lord, Lord and  
9 King who rulest over all, because the whole world is under thy authority, and when it is thy will to save Israel there is no one who can stand against thee: thou didst make heaven and earth  
10 and every wonderful thing under heaven; thou art Lord of all, and there  
11

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses add (6) So he went out to Mardochoaeus in the street opposite the city gate.

3.15: *The King and Haman caroused together.* This was surely the height of Haman's triumph.

4.1-17: Esther is asked to plead for her kinsfolk. 1: *Tore his clothes*: sign of consternation; see 2 Kgs. 5.7; Mt. 26.65. *Sackcloth and . . . ashes*: signs of grief. 4: Not knowing the reason for his grief, Esther sent clothes for Mardochoaeus. 11: Entrance without being summoned was considered a hostile action; also compare 2.14. 14: The author is certain that Esther's good fortune is for providential reasons. Mardochoaeus' exhortation is directed to all the more fortunate Jews in exile who might forget their responsibility for less fortunate compatriots.

13.8-18: *Mardochoaeus' prayer.* The Hebrew account never mentions the name of God. The Greek additions furnish a religious dimension. 9: The universal authority of God was a primary tenet of Israelite faith in the postexilic period when history seemed beyond divine plan and

is no one who can resist thee, the Lord.  
 12 Thou knowest all things; thou knowest, Lord, that it was not from insolence or arrogance or vainglory that I refused to bow before proud Haman, for I could gladly have kissed the soles of his feet  
 13 to save Israel; no, I did it so that I might not hold a man in greater honour than God; I will not bow before any but thee, my Lord, and it is not from arrogance that I refuse this homage.  
 14 And now Lord, God and King, God of Abraham, spare thy people; for our enemies are watching us to bring us to ruin, and they have set their hearts upon the destruction of thy chosen people,  
 15 thine from the beginning. Do not disdain thy own possession which thou didst ransom for thyself out of Egypt.  
 16 Hear my prayer, and have mercy on thy heritage, and turn our mourning into feasting, that we may live and sing of thy name, Lord; do not put to silence  
 17 the lips that give thee praise.’ And all Israel cried aloud with all their might, for death stared them in the face.

14 Then Queen Esther, caught up in this deadly conflict,<sup>d</sup> took refuge in the  
 2 Lord. She stripped off her splendid attire and put on the garb of mourning and distress. Instead of proud perfumes she strewed ashes and dung over her head. She abased her body, and every part that she had delightfully adorned she covered with her dishevelled hair.  
 3 And so she prayed to the Lord God of Israel:

‘O my Lord, thou alone art our king; help me who am alone, with no helper  
 4 but thee; for I am taking my life in my hands. Ever since I was born I have been taught by my father’s family and tribe that thou, O Lord, didst choose Israel out of all the nations, and out of all the founders of our race didst choose our fathers for an everlasting possession, and that what thou didst promise  
 5 them, thou didst perform. But now we have sinned against thee, and thou hast

handed us over to our enemies because 7 we honoured their gods; thou art just, O Lord. But they are not content with 8 our bitter servitude; they have now pledged themselves to their idols to 9 annul thy decree and to destroy thy possession, silencing those who praise thee, extinguishing the glory of thy house, and casting down thy altar. They 10 would give the heathen cause to sing the praises of their worthless gods, and would have a mortal king held in everlasting honour.

‘Yield not thy sceptre, O Lord, to 11 gods that are nothing; let not our enemies mock at our ruin, but turn their plot against themselves, and make an example of the man who planned it. Remember us, O Lord, make thy power 12 known in the time of our distress, and give me courage, O King of gods, almighty Lord. Give me the apt word to 13 say when I enter the lion’s den. Divert his hatred to our enemy, so that there may be an end of him and his confederates.

‘Save us by thy power, and help me 14 who am alone and have no helper but thee, Lord. Thou knowest all; thou 15 knowest that I hate the splendour of the heathen, I abhor the bed of the uncircumcised or of any Gentile. Thou 16 knowest in what straits I am: I loathe that symbol of pride, the headdress that I wear when I show myself abroad, I loathe it as one loathes a filthy rag; in private I refuse to wear it. I, thy servant, 17 have not eaten at Haman’s table; I have not graced a banquet of the king or touched the wine of his drink-offerings; I have not known festive joy from the 18 time that I was brought here until now except in thee, Lord God of Abraham. O God who dost prevail against all, 19 give heed to the cry of the despairing: rescue us from the power of wicked men, and rescue me from what I dread.’

*d* caught . . . conflict: or seized by mortal anxiety.

control. 12–14: The story does not support such pure motivation on the part of Mardocheaus (see 3.2 n.). 16: The ultimate basis for Israel’s confidence is God’s free choice of her, as expressed in the liberation from Egyptian bondage.

14.1–19: *Esther’s prayer*. 5: *Our fathers*: the sons of Jacob who established the twelve tribes of Israel. 9: Even if Israel deserves to be punished (v. 6), God cannot permit the foreign *idols* to claim victory (see v. 11). 13: *Lion’s den*: the king’s presence. 15–18: *Hate the splendour*: an exaggeration to underline her identification with the plight of Israel.

- 15 ON THE THIRD DAY ESTHER BROUGHT her prayers to an end. She took off the clothes she had worn while she worshipped and put on all her splendour.
- 2 When she was in her royal robes and had invoked the all-seeing God, her preserver, she took two maids with her; 3 on one she leaned for support, as befitted a fine lady, while the other 4 followed, bearing her train. She was blushing and in the height of her beauty; her face was as cheerful as it was lovely, but her heart was in the grip of fear. She passed through all the doors and reached the royal presence. The king was seated on his throne, in the full array of his majesty. He was all gold and precious stones, an awe-inspiring figure. He looked up, his face glowing with regal dignity, and glanced at her in towering anger. The queen fell, changing colour in a faint, and swooning on the shoulder of the maid who went before her.
- 8 Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in deep concern he leapt from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He soothed her with reassuring words: 9 'Esther, what is it? Have no fear of me, 10 your loving husband; you shall not die, for our order is only for our subjects. 11 Come to me.' And the king lifted his golden sceptre and laid it upon her neck; then he kissed her and said, 'You may speak to me.' She answered, 'I saw you, my lord, looking like an angel of God, and I was awestruck at your glorious appearance; your countenance is so full of grace, my lord, that I look 15 on you in wonder.' But while she was speaking she fell down in a faint; the king was distressed, and all his attendants comforted her.
- 5.3 [Then the king said, 'What is your

wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? Up to half my empire, it shall be given you.' 'Today is a special day for me', said Esther. 'If it please your majesty, will you come, and Haman with you, to a banquet which I shall give today?' The king ordered Haman to be sent for in haste, so that Esther's wish might be fulfilled; and they both went to the banquet to which Esther had invited them. Over the wine the king said to her, 'What is it, Queen Esther? Whatever you ask for shall be yours.' Esther said, 'This is my humble request: if I have won your majesty's favour, will your majesty and Haman come again tomorrow to the banquet which I shall give for you both, and tomorrow I will do as I have done today.'

So Haman went out from the royal presence in good spirits and well pleased with himself. But when he saw Mardocheaus the Jew in the king's courtyard, he was filled with rage. He went home, and called for his friends and his wife Zosara, and held forth to them about his wealth and the honours with which the king had invested him, how he had made him first man in the empire. 'Queen Esther', he said, 'invited no one but myself to accompany the king to her banquet; and I am invited again for tomorrow. Yet all this is no pleasure to me so long as I see that Jew Mardocheaus in the courtyard.' Then his wife Zosara and his friends said to him: 'Have a gallows put up, seventy-five feet<sup>e</sup> high, and in the morning speak to the king and have Mardocheaus hanged upon it. Then you can go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself.' Haman thought this an excellent plan, and the gallows was made ready.

<sup>e</sup> *Gk.* fifty cubits.

15.1-7: Esther dares to go to the king without being summoned. 3: Esther, knowing that her only chance before the powerful king was in a display of fear and weakness, *leaned for support*. 7: *Towering anger*: this is explained in 4.11; it serves to heighten Esther's noble but risky intervention.

15.8-16: The king receives Esther graciously. 11: *Laid it upon her neck*: a sign of royal protection or forgiveness.

5.3-8: Esther's first banquet for the king and Haman. 4: A *banquet* is the special staging for Esther's request, serving the literary purpose of suspense. See v. 8.

5.9-14: Haman prepares a gallows for Mardocheaus. 9: *Haman* (like the Gentiles generally) was disturbed when he saw the "otherness" of *Mardocheaus* (the Jews). 14: The completely unnecessary height of the *gallows* (*seventy-five feet*) is for literary effect and not meant to be taken literally.

## The triumph of the Jews

6 THAT NIGHT THE LORD KEPT SLEEP from the king, so he ordered his private secretary to bring the court chronicle  
2 and read it to him. He found written there the record about Mardocheaus, how he had given information about the two royal eunuchs who, while they were on guard, had plotted violence  
3 against King Artaxerxes. Whereupon the king said, 'What honour or favour did we confer on Mardocheaus for this?' The king's courtiers who were in attendance replied, 'You have done  
4 nothing for him.' While the king was inquiring about the service that Mardocheaus had rendered, Haman appeared in the courtyard. 'Who is that in the court?' asked the king. Now Haman had just come in to recommend to the king that Mardocheaus should be hanged on the gallows which he had  
5 prepared; so the king's servants said, 'It is Haman standing in the court.'  
6 'Call him', said the king. Then the king said to Haman, 'What shall I do for the man I wish to honour?' Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king wish  
7 to honour but me?' So he said to the king, 'For the man whom the king  
8 wishes to honour, let the king's attendants bring a robe of fine linen from the king's own wardrobe and a horse  
9 from the king's own stable. Let both be delivered to one of the king's most honourable Friends, and let him robe the man whom the king loves and mount him on the horse, and let him proclaim through the city: "This shall be the lot of any man whom the king honours."  
10 Then the king said to Haman, 'An excellent suggestion! Do all this for Mardocheaus the Jew who serves in the courtyard. Let nothing  
11 that you have said be omitted.' So Haman took the robe and put it on Mardocheaus, and mounted him on the horse; then he went through the city, proclaiming: 'This shall be the lot

of any man whom the king wishes to honour.'

Then Mardocheaus returned to the  
12 courtyard, and Haman hurried off home with head veiled in mourning. He told his wife Zosara and his friends  
13 what had happened to him. They replied, 'If Mardocheaus is a Jew, and you have been humiliated before him, you are a lost man. You cannot get the better of him, because the living God is on his side.'

While they were still talking with  
14 Haman, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried him away to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman went to the  
7 queen's banquet. Again on that second  
2 day, over the wine, the king said, 'What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? What is your petition? You shall have it, up to half my  
3 empire.' Queen Esther answered: 'If I  
5 have won your majesty's favour, my request is for my life, my petition is for my people. For it has come to my ears  
4 that we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, plundered, and enslaved, we and our children, male and female. Our adversary is a disgrace to the king's court.' The king said,  
5 'Who is it that has dared to do such a thing?' 'Our enemy', said Esther, 'is this  
6 wicked Haman.' Haman stood dumbfounded before the king and the queen. The king rose from the banquet and  
7 went into the garden, and Haman began to plead with the queen, for he saw that things were going badly for him. When the king returned to the  
8 banqueting hall from the garden, Haman in his entreaties had flung himself across the queen's couch. The king exclaimed, 'What! You assault the queen in my own house?' At those words Haman turned away in despair. Then Bugathan, one of the eunuchs,  
9 said to the king, 'Look! Haman has even prepared a gallows for Mardocheaus, the man who reported the plot

6.1-11.1: The intended fate of the Jews falls on their persecutors.

6.1-14: Mardocheaus is exalted and Haman is humiliated. 3: *Nothing for him*: but see 12.5. 4: *Haman had just come in*: a coincidence dear to folklore. 13: *God . . . on his side*: recognition by Haman's friends that Providence has taken over.

7.1-10: The second banquet results in Haman's death. 6: Haman is *dumbfounded*, not knowing that Esther is a Jewess.

against the king, and there it stands, seventy-five feet<sup>f</sup> high, in Haman's compound.' 'Have Haman hanged on it', said the king. So Haman was hanged on the gallows that he himself had prepared for Mardocheaus. After that the king's rage died down.

8 That day King Artaxerxes gave Esther all that had belonged to Haman the persecutor; and Mardocheaus was called into the king's presence, for Esther had told him how he was related

2 to her. Then the king took off his signet-ring, which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mardocheaus. And Esther put Mardocheaus in charge of Haman's estate.

3 Once again Esther spoke before the king, falling at his feet and pleading with him to avert the calamity planned by Haman and to frustrate his plot

4 against the Jews. The king stretched out the golden sceptre to Esther, and she rose and stood before the king.

5 'May it please your majesty,' she said; 'if I have won your favour, let an order be issued recalling the letters which Haman sent in pursuance of his plan to destroy the Jews in your empire.

6 How can I bear to see the downfall of my people? How escape myself when

7 my country is destroyed?' Then the king said to Esther: 'I have given Haman's property to you, and hanged him on the gallows because he threatened the lives of the Jews. If you want anything further, you may draw up an order in my name, in whatever terms you think fit, and seal it with my signet. An order written at the king's direction and sealed with the royal signet cannot be contravened.'

9 And so, on the twenty-third day of the first month, Nisan, in the same year, the king's secretaries were summoned; and the Jews were informed in writing of the instructions given to the administrators and chief governors in the provinces, from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own language.

10 The orders were written as from the

king and sealed with his signet, and dispatched by courier. By these documents the king granted permission to the Jews in every city to observe their own laws and to defend themselves, and to deal as they would with their opponents and enemies, throughout the empire of Artaxerxes, on a given day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, Adar.]

THE FOLLOWING IS A COPY OF THIS 16 letter:

Artaxerxes the Great King to the governors of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia, and to those who are of our allegiance, greeting.

Many who have been honoured only too often by the lavish generosity of their benefactors have grown arrogant and not only attempt to ill-treat our subjects but, unable to carry the favours heaped upon themselves, even plot mischief against those who grant them. Not content with destroying gratitude in men, they are carried away by the insolence of those who are strangers to good breeding; they even suppose that they will escape the justice of all-seeing God, who is no friend to evil-doers. And often, when the king's business has been entrusted to those he counts his friends, they have, by their plausibility, made those in supreme authority partners in shedding innocent blood and involved them in irreparable misfortunes, for their malevolence with its misleading sophistries has imposed upon the sincere goodwill of their rulers. The evil brought about by those who wield power unworthily you can observe, not only in records of tradition and history but also in your familiar experience, and apply the lesson to the future. Thus we shall peacefully free this realm

<sup>f</sup> Gk. fifty cubits.

8.1-12: Esther persuades the king to nullify his edict against the Jews. 2: With the signet-ring Mardocheaus receives the office of prime minister vacated by Haman's death. 12: The thirteenth of . . . Adar: the date when the extermination of the Jews was to have taken place (3.7, 13).

16.1-24; 8.13-17: The king's letter brings joy to the Jews. 5-6: The king attributes his mistake

9 from disturbance for the benefit of  
 all, making no changes but always  
 deciding matters which come under  
 our notice with firmness and equity.  
 10 Now Haman son of Hamadathus, a  
 Macedonian, an alien in fact with  
 no Persian blood, a man with nothing  
 of our kindly nature,<sup>g</sup> was accepted  
 11 by us and enjoyed<sup>h</sup> so fully the  
 benevolence with which we treat  
 every nation that he was proclaimed  
 our Father, and all along received  
 12 obeisance from everyone as second  
 only to our royal throne. But this  
 man in his unbridled arrogance  
 planned to deprive us of our empire  
 13 and our life by using fraud and  
 tortuous cunning to bring about the  
 destruction of Mardocheaus, our  
 constant benefactor who had saved  
 our life, and of Esther, our blameless  
 consort, together with their whole  
 14 nation. For he thought that by these  
 methods he would catch us defence-  
 less and would transfer to the Mace-  
 donians the sovereignty now held by  
 15 the Persians. But we find that the  
 Jews, whom this triple-dyed villain  
 had consigned to extinction, are no  
 evil-doers; they order their lives by  
 16 the most just of laws, and are children  
 of the living God, most high, most  
 mighty, who maintains the empire  
 in most wonderful order, for us as  
 for our ancestors.

17 You will therefore disregard the  
 letters sent by Haman son of Hama-  
 18 dathus, because he, the contriver of  
 all this, has been hanged aloft at the  
 gate of Susa with his whole house-  
 hold, God who is Lord of all having  
 speedily brought upon him the  
 19 punishment that he deserved. Copies  
 of this letter are to be posted up in  
 all public places. Permit the Jews to  
 20 live under their own laws, and give  
 them every assistance so that on the  
 thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth  
 month, on that very day, they may  
 21 avenge themselves on those who  
 were ranged against them<sup>i</sup> in the  
 time of their oppression. For God,

who has all things in his power, has  
 made this a day not of ruin, but of  
 joy, for his chosen people. Therefore  
 22 you also must keep it with all good  
 cheer, as a notable day among your  
 feasts of commemoration, so that  
 23 henceforth it may be a standing  
 symbol of deliverance to us and our  
 loyal Persians, but a reminder of  
 destruction to those who plot against  
 us. Any city or country whatsoever  
 24 which does not act upon these orders  
 shall incur our wrath and be wiped  
 out with fire and sword. No man shall  
 set foot in it and even the beasts and  
 birds shall shun it for all time.

[Let copies be posted up con- 8 13  
 spicuously throughout the empire,  
 so that the Jews may be prepared by  
 that day to fight against their enemies.]

Mounted messengers set out with all 14  
 speed to do what the king commanded;  
 and the decree was posted up also in  
 Susa.

Mardocheaus left the king's presence 15  
 in royal robes, wearing a golden crown  
 and a turban of fine linen dyed purple,  
 and all in Susa rejoiced to see him. For 16  
 the Jews there was light and gladness in 17  
 every province and every city. Wherever  
 the decree was posted up there was joy  
 and gladness for the Jews, feasting and  
 merriment. And many of the Gentiles  
 were circumcised and professed Juda-  
 18 ism, because they were afraid of the  
 Jews.

ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF THE 9  
 twelfth month, Adar, the decree drawn  
 up by the king arrived. On that very  
 day the enemies of the Jews perished.  
 No one offered resistance, because they 2  
 were afraid of them. The leading 3  
 provincial governors, the princes, and the  
 royal secretaries paid all respect to  
 the Jews, because fear of Mardocheaus  
 weighed upon them. For they had 4  
 received the king's decree that his name  
 should be honoured throughout the

<sup>g</sup> Or a man fallen away greatly from our favour.

<sup>h</sup> Or won.

<sup>i</sup> Or may defend themselves against their assailants.

to misleading advice from friends. 10: Macedonian: see 12.6 n. Haman is called a Macedonian, a word synonymous with "enemy of the state." 12: Our empire: an excessive charge not supported by the facts. 21: The reversal of ruin into joy is an apocalyptic theme in late OT writings.

9.1-19: The Jews take vengeance on their enemies and establish a holiday. 1: Thirteenth day:

6 empire.<sup>jk</sup> In the city itself the Jews  
 7 slaughtered five hundred men, including  
 8 Pharsanestan, Delphon, Phasga, Phara-  
 9 datha, Barsa, Sarbacha, Marmasima,  
 10 Ruphaeus, Arsaeus, and Zabuthaeus,  
 the ten sons of Haman son of Hama-  
 dathus, the Bugaeus, the Jews' great  
 enemy; and that day they took plunder.  
 11 When the number of those killed in  
 12 Susa was reported to the king, he said  
 to Esther, 'In the city of Susa the Jews  
 have killed five hundred men. What do  
 you suppose they have done in the  
 surrounding country? Whatever further  
 request you have will be granted.'  
 13 Esther answered him, 'Let the Jews be  
 allowed to do the same tomorrow, and  
 hang up the bodies of Haman's ten  
 14 sons.' The king consented; he handed  
 over the bodies of Haman's sons to the  
 15 Jews of the city to be hung up. The  
 Jews in Susa assembled on the four-  
 teenth day of Adar also, and killed  
 three hundred, but they took no  
 plunder.  
 16-17 The rest of the Jews in the empire  
 rallied together in self-defence, and so  
 were quit of their enemies; for they  
 slaughtered fifteen thousand of them  
 on the thirteenth of Adar; but they  
 took no plunder. On the fourteenth  
 they rested, and made that day a day  
 of rest, with rejoicing and merriment.  
 18 The Jews in the city of Susa had as-  
 sembled also on the fourteenth day of  
 the month; they did not rest on that  
 day, but they kept the fifteenth day with  
 19 rejoicing and merriment. That is why  
 Jews who are dispersed over the re-  
 moter parts keep the fourteenth day of  
 Adar as a holiday with rejoicing and  
 merriment, sending presents of food to  
 one another; but those who live in the  
 principal cities keep the fifteenth of  
 Adar as a holiday, sending presents  
 of food to one another.  
 20 Then Mardocheus wrote down the  
 whole story in a book and sent it to all  
 the Jews in the empire of Artaxerxes,  
 21 far and near, ordering them to establish

these holidays, and to keep the four-  
 teenth and fifteenth of Adar, because  
 22 these were the days on which the Jews  
 were quit of their enemies, and to  
 keep the whole month of Adar, in  
 which came the great change from  
 sorrow to joy and from mourning to  
 holiday, as a time for feasting and  
 merriment, days for sending presents of  
 food to friends and to the poor.

So the Jews formally accepted the  
 23 account which Mardocheus wrote:  
 how Haman son of Hamadathus, the  
 24 Bugaeus,<sup>l</sup> fought against them; how he  
 cast lots to decide the date of their  
 destruction; how he came before the  
 25 king with a proposal to hang Mardo-  
 chaeus; and how all the evils which he  
 had plotted against the Jews recoiled  
 on his own head, and he and his sons  
 were hanged. This is why these days  
 26 were named 'Purim', which in the  
 Jews' language means 'lots'. Because  
 of all that was recorded in this letter—  
 all that they had experienced, all that  
 had happened—Mardocheus directed  
 that this festival should be observed,  
 and the Jews undertook, on behalf of  
 27 themselves, their descendants, and all  
 who should join them, to do so without  
 fail. These were to be days of com-  
 28 memoration, duly celebrated age after  
 age in every town, family, and province.  
 These days of Purim were to be kept  
 for all time, and the commemoration  
 was never to cease throughout all ages.

Queen Esther daughter of Amina-  
 29 dab, and Mardocheus the Jew, re-  
 corded in writing all that they had done,  
 and confirmed the regulations for  
 Purim. They made themselves respon-  
 30-31 sible for this decision and staked their  
 life upon the plan.<sup>m</sup> Esther established  
 32 it for all time by her decree, and it was  
 put on record.

*j* For they . . . empire: *probable reading*; *Gk. obscure.*  
*k* Some witnesses add from the Heb. (5) So the Jews  
 put their enemies to the sword with great slaughter  
 and destruction; they worked their will on those who  
 hated them.

*l* Some witnesses read the Macedonian.  
*m* They made . . . plan: *possible meaning*; *Gk. obscure.*

see 8.12 n. 11-15: This is to explain why the urban Jews observed Purim for two days instead of the usual one; see v. 19.

9.20-10.3: Mardocheus records the event; the Feast of Purim. 22: This feast celebrates the Israelite conviction that the sorrow of oppression in all ages will be turned into joy through God's fidelity to his promises. 26: *Purim*: see 3.7 n. 32: This insistence on authoritative establishment of the feast by Esther's decree suggests that its propriety was being questioned.

10 The king made decrees for the  
 2 empire by land and sea. His strength  
 and courage, his wealth and the  
 splendour of his empire, are recorded  
 in the annals of the kings of the Persians  
 3 and Medes. Mardocheus acted for  
 King Artaxerxes; he was a great man  
 in the empire and honoured by the  
 Jews. His way of life won him the  
 affection of his whole nation.]

4 MARDOCHEUS SAID, 'ALL THIS IS  
 5 God's doing. For I have been reminded  
 of the dream I had about these things;  
 not one of the visions I saw proved  
 6 meaningless. There was the little spring  
 which became a river, and there was  
 light and sun and water in abundance.  
 The river is Esther, whom the king  
 7 married and made queen; the two  
 dragons are Haman and myself; the  
 8 nations are those who gathered to wipe  
 out the Jews; my nation is Israel,  
 9 which cried aloud to God and was de-  
 livered. The Lord has delivered his  
 people, he has rescued us from all these

evils. God performed great miracles  
 and signs such as have not occurred  
 among the nations. He made ready  
 10 two lots, one for the people of God and  
 one for all the nations; then came the  
 11 hour and the time for these two lots to  
 be cast, the day of decision by God  
 before<sup>n</sup> all the nations; he remembered  
 12 his people and gave the verdict for his  
 heritage.

'So they shall keep these days in the  
 13 month of Adar, the fourteenth and  
 fifteenth of that month, by gathering  
 with joy and gladness before God from  
 one generation of his people to another,  
 for ever.'

IN THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF 11.1  
 Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus,  
 who said that he was a levitical priest,  
 and Ptolemaeus his son, brought the  
 foregoing letter about Purim, which  
 they said was authentic and had been  
 translated by Lysimachus son of  
 Ptolemaeus, a resident in Jerusalem.

*n* Or the day of judgement by God upon . . .

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10.4-13: Mardocheus interprets his dream. 6-7: see 11.5-11 n. 10-12: Another interpretation of Purim is that men seem to control history, but God casts the decisive *lots*.

11.1: The translation of the Book of Esther. 1: *Fourth year*: probably 114 B.C. *Letter*: the Book of Esther as a whole.



# THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

The author of *Wisdom* purports to be King Solomon (9.8), but this ascription was regarded as a literary fiction by both Origen (182–251 A.D.) and Jerome (about 340–420). Rather, the author was an Alexandrian Jew, well read in his own tradition and in Greek thought, who wrote in Greek. He used the Septuagint translation of the Bible, completed in the second century B.C., but he was unacquainted with the ideas of Philo (20 B.C.–40 A.D.), possibly indicating that he wrote in the first century B.C. His hatred of the Egyptians suggests that he lived soon after the persecution of Egyptian Jewry by Ptolemy VII Physcon, about 100 B.C.

Biblical *Wisdom* literature is the source of many ideas in the book, and biblical poetry, with its parallel clauses, the model of its style (at least in the first sections). The review of Israel's history is embellished by expansions, many of which are found in late Jewish literature.

Under the impact of the cosmopolitan culture and a variety of philosophies and mystery religions of the Hellenistic world, the faith of many Jews was shaken. Moreover, as a result of the persecution, the perennial problem of the wicked prospering and the good suffering rose to a crisis level.

The author, denouncing the Jewish skeptics of his day who have forsaken inherited beliefs and practices, seeks to safeguard the faith of the rest of his coreligionists. He does so by proposing a religious philosophy of history (chs. 10–12; 16–19), by a clear affirmation of reward and punishment after death (chs. 1–5), and by identifying *Wisdom* with the traditional spirit of the Lord (1.4–7; 7.22–25); he is aided by the Platonic distinction of body from soul and the Greek ideas of providence (6.7; 14.3), conscience (17.11), and the cardinal virtues (8.7). He uses his synthesis to appeal also to the pagans to examine Judaism as a valid *Wisdom* and a way of life (1.1–2; 10.15–11.14).

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## *The promise of immortality*

1 **L**OVE JUSTICE, YOU RULERS OF THE  
2 earth; set your mind upon the  
3 Lord, as is your duty, and seek  
4 him in simplicity of heart; for he is  
5 found by those who trust him without  
6 question, and makes himself known to  
7 those who never doubt him. Dishonest  
8 thinking cuts men off from God, and if  
9 fools will take liberties with his power,  
10 he shows them up for what they are.  
11 *Wisdom* will not enter a shifty soul,  
12 nor make her home in a body that is  
13 mortgaged to sin. This holy spirit of  
14 discipline will have nothing to do with  
15 falsehood; she cannot stay in the pres-  
16 ence of unreason, and will throw up  
17 her case at the approach of injustice.

*Wisdom* is a spirit devoted to man's 6  
good, and she will not hold a blas-  
phemer blameless for his words, be-  
cause God is a witness of his inmost 7  
being, who sees clear into his heart and  
hears every word he says. For the spirit 7  
of the Lord fills the whole earth, and  
that which holds all things together is 8  
well aware of what men say. Hence no 8  
man can utter injustice and not be  
found out, nor will justice overlook him 9  
when she passes sentence. The devices 9  
of a godless man will be brought to  
account, and a report of his words will  
come before the Lord as proof of his 10  
iniquity; no muttered syllable escapes 10  
that vigilant ear. Beware, then, of futile 11  
grumbling, and avoid all bitter words;  
for even a secret whisper will not go

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1.1–5.23: God rewards the righteous and punishes the ungodly.

1.1–11: *Wisdom*, the key to immortality, is incompatible with deceit. 1: *Rulers of the earth*: lit. rulers in general; compare 6.1. But the real addressees were Alexandrian Jews. 4: Here and in subsequent passages (7.25–26), *Wisdom* attains the highest personification in the Bible. 5: *Discipline* in *Wisdom* Literature means religious instruction and correction. 6. *Inmost being*: lit. "kidneys," considered as the center of emotion and instinct. *Heart*: the center of intellect and will. Together they signify all man's inner forces. 7: The fact that God's spirit fills the earth guarantees the assertion in v. 6 that God knows and will punish all transgressions. Spirit is identified with *Wisdom*; compare Col.1.17; Heb.1.3.

unheeded, and a lying tongue is a man's  
 12 destruction. Do not stray from the  
 path of life and so court death; do not  
 draw disaster on yourselves by your  
 13 own actions. For God did not make  
 death, and takes no pleasure in the  
 14 destruction of any living thing; he  
 created all things that they might have  
 being. The creative forces of the world  
 make for life; there is no deadly poison  
 in them. Death is not king on earth.  
 15,16 for justice is immortal; but godless  
 men by their words and deeds have  
 asked death for his company. Thinking  
 him their friend, they have made a  
 pact with him because they are fit  
 members of his party; and so they have  
 wasted away.

2 They said to themselves in their  
 deluded way: 'Our life is short and full  
 of trouble, and when a man comes to  
 his end there is no remedy; no man was  
 ever known to return from the grave.  
 2 By mere chance were we born, and  
 afterwards we shall be as though we  
 had never been, for the breath in our  
 nostrils is but a wisp of smoke; our  
 reason is a mere spark kept alive by the  
 3 beating of our hearts, and when that  
 goes out, our body will turn to ashes  
 and the breath of our life disperse like  
 4 empty air. Our names will be forgotten  
 with the passing of time, and no one  
 will remember anything we did. Our  
 life will blow over like the last vestige  
 of a cloud; and as a mist is chased away  
 by the sun's rays and overborne by its  
 5 heat, so will it too be dispersed. A  
 passing shadow—such is our life, and  
 there is no postponement of our end;  
 man's fate is sealed, and none returns.  
 6 Come then, let us enjoy the good  
 things while we can, and make full use  
 of the creation, with all the eagerness of  
 7 youth. Let us have costly wines and  
 perfumes to our heart's content, and  
 8 let no flower of spring escape us. Let us

crown ourselves with rosebuds before  
 they can wither. Let none of us miss  
 9 his share of the good things that are  
 ours; who cares what traces our revelry  
 leaves behind? This is the life for us;  
 it is our birthright.

'Down with the poor and honest  
 10 man! Let us tread him under foot; let  
 us show no mercy to the widow and  
 no reverence to the grey hairs of old  
 age. For us let might be right! Weak-  
 11 ness is proved to be good for nothing.  
 Let us lay a trap for the just man; he  
 12 stands in our way, a check to us at  
 every turn; he girds at us as law-  
 breakers, and calls us traitors to our  
 upbringing. He knows God, so he  
 13 says; he styles himself "the servant<sup>a</sup>  
 of the Lord". He is a living condemna-  
 14 tion of all our ideas. The very sight of  
 15 him is an affliction to us, because his  
 life is not like other people's, and his  
 ways are different. He rejects us like  
 16 base coin, and avoids us and our ways  
 as if we were filth; he says that the just  
 die happy, and boasts that God is his  
 father. Let us test the truth of his  
 17 words, let us see what will happen to  
 him in the end; for if the just man is  
 18 God's son, God will stretch out a hand  
 to him and save him from the clutches  
 of his enemies. Outrage and torment  
 19 are the means to try him with, to  
 measure his forbearance and learn  
 how long his patience lasts. Let us  
 20 condemn him to a shameful death, for  
 on his own showing he will have a  
 protector.'

So they argued, and very wrong they  
 21 were; blinded by their own malevo-  
 lence, they did not understand God's  
 22 hidden plan; they never expected that  
 holiness of life would have its recom-  
 pense; they thought that innocence  
 had no reward. But God created man  
 23 for immortality, and made him the

<sup>a</sup> Or child.

1.12–16: God made man immortal. 13: See 2.23–24 and Ezek.33.11. 16: *Godless men* are renegade Jews, the author's real opponents, for whom life is completely this-worldly, ended by death. See Isa.28.15 for the image of a "pact" with death.

2.1–20: Philosophy of the deluded sinners and its consequences. 2–3: The explanations of life are derived from the science of the author's day. 4: Since *no one will remember*, there is no difference whether one is good or evil. Compare Eccles.2.24; 3.12; 9.7–9. 10–12: The sinners' attitude toward the precepts of Judaism is slightly caricatured for the sake of emphasis. 15: The charge that the ways of the Jews were *different* was common in antiquity; compare Esther 3.8. 18: *God's son*: Ps.22.8–9 is the common source of this verse and of Mt.27.43.

2.21–24: Causes of the sinners' misconceptions. Wickedness leads to illogic. 23: See Gen.1.26.

image of his own eternal self; it was  
 24 the devil's spite that brought death  
 into the world, and the experience of  
 it is reserved for those who take his side.  
 3 But the souls of the just are in God's  
 hand, and torment shall not touch  
 2 them. In the eyes of foolish men they  
 seemed to be dead; their departure was  
 3 reckoned as defeat, and their going  
 from us disaster. But they are at peace,  
 4 for though in the sight of men they  
 may be punished, they have a sure  
 5 hope of immortality; and after a little  
 chastisement they will receive great  
 blessings, because God has tested them  
 6 and found them worthy to be his. Like  
 gold in a crucible he put them to the  
 proof, and found them acceptable  
 like an offering burnt whole upon the  
 7 altar. In the moment of God's coming  
 to them they will kindle into flame,  
 like sparks that sweep through stubble;  
 8 they will be judges and rulers over the  
 nations of the world, and the Lord  
 shall be their king for ever and ever.  
 9 Those who have put their trust in him  
 shall understand that he is true, and the  
 faithful shall attend upon him in love;  
 they are his chosen, and grace and  
 mercy shall be theirs.  
 10 But the godless shall meet with the  
 punishment their evil thoughts deserve,  
 because they took no account of  
 justice and rebelled against the Lord.  
 11 Wretched indeed is he who thinks  
 nothing of wisdom and discipline; such  
 men's hopes are void, their labours  
 12 unprofitable, their actions futile; their  
 wives are frivolous, their children  
 13 criminal, their parenthood is under a  
 curse. No, blessed is the childless  
 woman if she is innocent, if she has  
 never slept with a man in sin; at the

great assize of souls she shall find a  
 fruitfulness of her own. Blessed is the  
 14 eunuch, if he has never done anything  
 against the law and never harboured a  
 wicked thought against the Lord; he  
 shall receive special favour in return  
 for his faith, and a place in the Lord's  
 temple to delight his heart the more.  
 Honest work bears glorious fruit, and  
 15 wisdom grows from roots that are  
 imperishable. But the children of  
 16 adultery are like fruit that never ripens;  
 they have sprung from a lawless union,  
 and will come to nothing. Even if they  
 17 attain length of life, they will be of no  
 account, and at the end their old age  
 will be without honour. If they die  
 18 young, they will have no hope, no  
 consolation in the hour of judgement;  
 the unjust generation has a hard fate  
 19 in store for it.

It is better to be childless, provided  
 4 one is virtuous; for virtue held in  
 remembrance is a kind of immortality,  
 because it wins recognition from God,  
 and from men too. They follow the  
 2 good man's example while it is with  
 them, and when it is gone they mourn  
 its loss; and through all time virtue  
 makes its triumphal progress, crowned  
 with victory in the contest for prizes  
 that nothing can tarnish. But the  
 3 swarming progeny of the wicked will  
 come to no good; none of their bastard  
 offshoots will strike deep root or take  
 firm hold. For a time their branches  
 4 may flourish, but as they have no sure  
 footing they will be shaken by the wind,  
 and by the violence of the winds up-  
 rooted. Their boughs will be snapped  
 5 off half-grown, and their fruit will be  
 worthless, unripe, uneatable, and good  
 for nothing. Children engendered in  
 6

24: *Devil's spite* alludes either to the fall of man (Gen. ch. 3) or to Cain and Abel (Gen. ch. 4).

3.1-19: **Rewards of the righteous and punishment of the ungodly.** 4: *The immortality* reserved for the righteous is of the soul (see v. 1); it is a Greek concept and supplants the Jewish resurrection of the body (Dan.12.2). 5-6: The righteous were only *tested* with *chastisement*, not punished; compare Ps.66.10; 2 Macc.6.12-16. 7-8: *God's coming* seems to allude to his definitive intervention in favor of the just, i.e. Israel, at the end of time. *Flame* and *sparks* in *stubble* are images of victory; see Obad.18. 10: The *punishment* will be appropriate to *their evil thoughts* and not arbitrary. 13: Traditional Jewish belief in large families (see Gen.30.23) is seemingly abandoned. Perhaps the author means that sinful unions are so bad that even childlessness is preferable: see 4.1. The *sin* may be the prohibited marriages of Jews to non-Jews. 14: See Isa. 56.4-5. Whether the *Lord's temple* is in Jerusalem or heaven is unspecified. If the latter, it is one of the first indications in the Bible of heaven as the dwelling of the godly.

4.1-6: **The true hierarchy of virtues.** Compare Eccclus.16.3. 2: *Virtue is crowned with victory* like successful athletes at the Greek athletic games. 4-5: Compare Pss.1.3-5; 92.13-15; Eccclus.23.25.

unlawful union are living evidence of their parents' sin when God brings them to account.

7 But the good man, even if he dies an  
8 untimely death, will be at rest. For it is  
not length of life and number of years  
9 which bring the honour due to age; if  
men have understanding, they have  
grey hairs enough, and an unspotted  
10 life is the true ripeness of age. There  
was once such a man who pleased God,  
and God accepted him and took him  
while still living from among sinful  
11 men. He was snatched away before his  
mind could be perverted by wickedness  
or his soul deceived by falsehood  
12 (because evil is like witchcraft: it dims  
the radiance of good, and the way-  
wardness of desire unsettles an innocent  
13 mind); in a short time he came to the  
perfection of a full span of years. His  
soul was pleasing to the Lord, who  
removed him early from a wicked  
15 world. The mass of men see this and  
give it no thought; they do not lay to  
heart this truth, that those whom God  
has chosen enjoy his grace and mercy,  
and that he comes to the help of his  
16 holy people. Even after his death the  
just man will shame the godless who  
are still alive; youth come quickly to  
perfection will shame the man grown  
old in sin. Men will see the wise man's  
17 end, without understanding what the  
Lord had purposed for him and why  
he took him into safe keeping; they  
will see it and make light of him, but it  
is they whom the Lord will laugh to  
scorn. In death their bodies will be dis-  
honoured, and among the dead they  
will be an object of contempt for ever;  
19 for he shall strike them speechless,  
fling them headlong, shake them from  
their foundations, and make an utter  
desert of them; they shall be full of  
anguish, and all memory of them shall  
20 perish. So in the day of reckoning for  
their sins, they will come cringing, con-  
victed to their face by their lawless  
doings.

5 Then the just man shall take his

stand, full of assurance, to confront  
those who oppressed him and made  
light of all his sufferings; at the sight of 2  
him there will be terror and confusion,  
and they will be beside themselves to  
see him so unexpectedly safe home.  
Filled with remorse, groaning and 3  
gasping for breath, they will say among  
themselves: 'Was not this the man who  
was once our butt, a target for our con- 4  
tempt? Fools that we were, we held his  
way of life to be madness and his end  
dishonourable. To think that he is now 5  
counted one of the sons of God and  
assigned a place of his own among  
God's people! How far we strayed from 6  
the road of truth! The lamp of justice  
never gave us light, the sun never rose  
upon us. We roamed to our heart's 7  
content along the paths of wickedness  
and ruin, wandering through trackless  
deserts and ignoring the Lord's high-  
way. What good has our pride done 8  
us? What can we show for all our  
wealth and arrogance? All those things 9  
have passed by like a shadow, like a  
messenger galloping by; like a ship 10  
that runs through the surging sea, and  
when she has passed, not a trace is to be  
found, no track of her keel among the 11  
waves; or as when a bird flies through  
the air, there is no sign of her passing,  
but with the stroke of her pinions she  
lashes the insubstantial breeze and  
parts it with the whirr and the rush of  
her beating wings, and so she passes  
through it, and thereafter it bears no  
mark of her assault; or as when an 12  
arrow is shot at a target, the air is  
parted and instantly closes up again  
and no one can tell where it passed  
through. So we too ceased to be, as 13  
soon as we were born; we left no token  
of virtue behind, and in our wickedness  
we frittered our lives away.' The hope 14  
of a godless man is like down flying on  
the wind, like spindrift swept before a  
storm and smoke which the wind whirls  
away, or like the memory of a guest  
who stayed for one day and passed  
on.

4.7-20: The fate of the righteous and the ungodly contrasted. 10-11: *Such a man*: Enoch was snatched away in this manner (Gen. 5.21-24).

5.1-14: Remorse of the ungodly. This confession of the ungodly is in deliberate contrast with what they used to say; see 2.1-20. 5: *Sons of God* is a poetic variant for *God's own people*. 9: *Passed by like a shadow*: disappeared.

15 But the just live for ever; their reward is in the Lord's keeping, and the  
 16 Most High has them in his care. Therefore royal splendour shall be theirs, and a fair diadem from the Lord himself; he will protect them with his right hand  
 17 and shield them with his arm. He will put on from head to foot the armour of his wrath, and make all creation his  
 18 weapon against his enemies. With the cuirass of justice on his breast, and on his head the helmet of doom inflexible,  
 19 he will take holiness for his impenetrable shield and sharpen his relentless anger for a sword; and his whole world  
 20 shall join him in the fight against his frenzied foes. The bolts of his lightning shall fly straight on the mark, they shall leap upon the target as if his bow in the  
 21 clouds were drawn in its full arc, and the artillery of his resentment shall let fly a fury of hail. The waters of the sea shall rage over them, and the rivers  
 22 wash them relentlessly away; a great tempest will arise against them, and blow them away like chaff before a whirlwind. So lawlessness will make the whole world desolate, and active wickedness will overturn the thrones of princes.

*In praise of wisdom*

6 HEAR THEN, YOU KINGS, TAKE THIS TO heart; learn your lesson, lords of the  
 2 wide world; lend your ears, you rulers of the multitude, whose pride is in the  
 3 myriads of your people. It is the Lord who gave you your authority; your power comes from the Most High. He will put your actions to the test and  
 4 scrutinize your intentions. Though you are viceroys of his kingly power, you have not been upright judges; you do not stand up for the law or guide your  
 5 steps by the will of God. Swiftly and terribly will he descend upon you, for

judgement falls relentlessly upon those in high place. The small man may find  
 6 pity and forgiveness, but the powerful will be called powerfully to account; for he who is all men's master is  
 7 obsequious to none, and is not overawed by greatness. Small and great alike are of his making, and all are under his providence equally, but it is  
 8 the powerful for whom he reserves the sternest inquisition. To you then who  
 9 have absolute power I speak, in hope that you may learn wisdom and not go astray; those who in holiness have kept  
 10 a holy course, will be accounted holy, and those who have learnt that lesson will be able to make their defence. Be  
 11 eager then to hear me, and long for my teaching; so you will learn.

Wisdom shines bright and never  
 12 fades; she is easily discerned by those who love her, and by those who seek her she is found. She is quick to make  
 13 herself known to those who desire knowledge of her; the man who rises  
 14 early in search of her will not grow weary in the quest, for he will find her seated at his door. To set all one's  
 15 thoughts on her is prudence in its perfect shape, and to lie wakeful in her cause is the short way to peace of  
 16 mind. For she herself ranges in search of those who are worthy of her; on their daily path she appears to them with kindly intent, and in all their purposes meets them half-way. The true  
 17 beginning of wisdom is the desire to learn, and a concern for learning means love towards her; the love of her means  
 18 the keeping of her laws; to keep her laws is a warrant of immortality; and  
 19 immortality brings a man near to God. Thus the desire of wisdom leads to  
 20 kingly stature. If, therefore, you value your thrones and your sceptres, you  
 21 rulers of the nations, you must honour wisdom, so that you may reign for ever.

5.15-23: Fate of the righteous and of the ungodly. 16: Compare Isa.62.3. 17-20: Compare Pss.7.11-14; Isa.59.17. 21: *Lightning* is a traditional representation of divine intervention; see Pss.18.14; 114.6.

6.1-9.18: The nature of Wisdom is explained.

6.1-11: Admonition to the rulers. 1: See 1.1 n. 4: *Law*: compare 2.12. 6-8: Not only is God *not overawed by greatness*, he is stricter in judging the mighty.

6.12-21: *Wisdom desires to be found*. Compare Prov.1.20-33; ch. 8. 17-21: A chain argument called "sorites" of which the Stoics were fond, concludes that Wisdom is essential for rulers.

22 What wisdom is, and how she came into being, I will tell you; I will hide no secret from you. From her first beginnings I will trace out her course, and bring the knowledge of her into the light of day; I will not leave the truth untold. Pale envy shall not travel in my company, for the spiteful man will have no share in wisdom. Wise men in plenty are the world's salvation, and a prudent king is the sheet-anchor of his people. Learn what I have to teach you, therefore, and it will be for your good.

7 I too am a mortal man like all the rest, descended from the first man, who was made of dust, and in my mother's womb I was wrought into flesh during a ten-months space, compacted in blood from the seed of her husband and the pleasure that is joined with sleep. When I was born, I breathed the common air and was laid on the earth that all men tread; and the first sound I uttered, as all do, was a cry; they wrapped me up and nursed me and cared for me. No king begins life in any other way; for all come into life by a single path, and by a single path go out again.

7 Therefore I prayed, and prudence was given to me; I called for help, and there came to me a spirit of wisdom. I valued her above sceptre and throne, and reckoned riches as nothing beside her; I counted no precious stone her equal, because all the gold in the world compared with her is but a little sand, and silver worth no more than clay. I loved her more than health and beauty; I preferred her to the light of day; for her radiance is unsleeping. So all good things together came to me with her,

and in her hands was wealth past counting; and all was mine to enjoy, for all follows where wisdom leads, and I was in ignorance before, that she is the beginning of it all. What I learnt with pure intention I now share without grudging, nor do I hoard for myself the wealth that comes from her. She is an inexhaustible treasure for mankind, and those who profit by it become God's friends, commended to him by the gifts they derive from her instruction.

God grant that I may speak according to his will, and that my own thoughts may be worthy of his gifts; for even wisdom is under God's direction and he corrects the wise; we and our words, prudence and knowledge and craftsmanship, all are in his hand. He himself gave me true understanding of things as they are: a knowledge of the structure of the world and the operation of the elements; the beginning and end of epochs and their middle course; the alternating solstices and changing seasons; the cycles of the years and the constellations; the nature of living creatures and behaviour of wild beasts; the violent force of winds and the thoughts of men; the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots. I learnt it all, hidden or manifest, for I was taught by her whose skill made all things, wisdom.

For in wisdom there is a spirit intelligent and holy, unique in its kind yet made up of many parts, subtle, free-moving, lucid, spotless, clear, invulnerable,<sup>b</sup> loving what is good, eager, unhindered, beneficent, kindly towards men, steadfast, unerring, untouched by

<sup>b</sup> invulnerable: or working no harm.

6.22–25: The true nature of Wisdom. 23: Unlike the old philosophers or founders of mystery cults who hid their teachings out of *envy*, the author will reveal all.

7.1–6: Wisdom is not inherited. 1: Solomon, the wisest of men, was a mortal like the rest. 2: Ten lunar months are nine calendar months. *Compacted in blood* alludes to the ancient view that the menstrual blood united with the sperm to form the fetus. 6: *Single path* of entry and exit emphasizes the equality of all in the search for Wisdom; see Eccles.9.2.

7.7–14: The values of Wisdom. 7: Solomon *prayed* for Wisdom, a course open to all; see ch. 9. 11: Solomon's *wealth* was as fabulous as his Wisdom; see 1 Kgs.3.13.

7.15–22a: The extent of Wisdom. The presentation is in scientific and philosophical terms; compare 1 Kgs.3.16–28; 5.7–12. 17: *Things as they are*: metaphysics. *Structure of the world*: cosmology. *Elements*: the four elements of Greek science. 18–19: *Beginning and end*: chronology. *Alternating . . . cycles*: astronomical knowledge. 20: *Nature of living creatures*: zoology. *Thoughts of men*: psychology. *Varieties of plants*: botany. *Virtues of roots*: medicine and magic (compare Josephus, *Ant.* VIII.4.6).

7.22b–8.1: Nature of Wisdom. 22b–23: Wisdom has  $3 \times 7 (= 21)$ , the most perfect number)

care, all-powerful, all-surveying, and permeating all intelligent, pure, and delicate spirits. For wisdom moves more easily than motion itself, she pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure. Like a fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; so nothing defiled can enter into her by stealth. She is the brightness that streams from<sup>c</sup> everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of his goodness. She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging, she makes all things new; age after age she enters into holy souls, and makes them God's friends and prophets, for nothing is acceptable to God but the man who makes his home with wisdom. She is more radiant than the sun, and surpasses every constellation; compared with the light of day, she is found to excel; for day gives place to night, but against wisdom no evil can prevail.

8 She spans the world in power from end to end, and orders all things benignly.

2 Wisdom I loved; I sought her out when I was young and longed to win her for my bride, and I fell in love with her beauty. She adds lustre to her noble birth, because it is given her to live with God, and the Lord of all things has accepted her. She is initiated into the knowledge that belongs to God, and she decides for him what he shall do. If riches are a prize to be desired in life, what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things? If prudence shows itself in action, who more than wisdom is the artificer of all that is? If virtue is the object of a man's affections, the fruits of wisdom's labours are the virtues; temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, these are her

teaching, and in the life of men there is nothing of more value than these. If a man longs, perhaps, for great experience, she knows the past, she can infer what is to come; she understands the subtleties of argument and the solving of problems, she can read signs and portents, and can foretell the outcome of events and periods. So I determined to bring her home to live with me, knowing that she would be my counsellor in prosperity and my comfort in anxiety and grief. Through her, I thought, I shall win fame in the eyes of the people and honour among older men, young though I am. When I sit in judgement, I shall prove myself acute, and the great men will admire me; when I say nothing, they will wait for me to speak; when I speak they will attend, and though I hold forth at length, they will lay a finger to their lips and listen. Through her I shall have immortality, and shall leave an undying memory to those who come after me. I shall rule over many peoples, and nations will become my subjects. Grim tyrants will be frightened when they hear of me; among my own people I shall show myself a good king, and on the battlefield a brave one. When I come home, I shall find rest with her; for there is no bitterness in her company, no pain in life with her, only gladness and joy.

I thought this over in my mind, and I perceived that in kinship with wisdom lies immortality and in her friendship is pure delight; that in doing her work is wealth that cannot fail, to be taught in her school gives understanding, and an honourable name is won by converse with her. So I went about in search of some way to win her for my own. As a

<sup>c</sup> Or She is the reflection of . . .

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qualities, many of them Greek philosophical terms, some being divine attributes: *all-powerful, all-surveying*. 24: Wisdom *pervades and permeates all things* like the spirit or world-soul of the Stoics. 26: The relationship between Wisdom and God is described philosophically using the most immaterial images possible: *light, power, goodness*.

8.2–16: Solomon desires to take Wisdom as his bride. 3–4: The Lord himself *accepted* Wisdom as a bride; and she lives with him as his wife and *decides* the practicalities of life for him. 7: The four virtues of Greek philosophy and the “cardinal virtues” of Christian morality—*temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude*—are founded on Wisdom. 8: In the academic sphere Wisdom is central to *argument* (logic), *problems* (mathematics), *signs and portents* (religious insight), *events and periods* (history). 11: See 1 Kgs.3.16–28. 12: *Finger to lips*: a sign of silence in admiration of the speaker; see Job 29.9.

8.17–21: Solomon searches for Wisdom. 19–20: The preexistence of the soul is implied in a

child I was born to excellence, and a  
 20 noble soul fell to my lot; or rather, I  
 myself was noble, and I entered into an  
 21 unblemished body; but I saw that there  
 was no way to gain possession of her  
 except by gift of God—and it was a  
 mark of understanding to know from  
 whom that gift must come. So I pleaded  
 with the Lord, and from the depths of  
 my heart I prayed to him in these  
 words:

9 God of our fathers, merciful Lord,  
 who hast made all things by thy word,  
 2 and in thy wisdom hast fashioned man,  
 to be the master of thy whole creation,  
 3 and to be steward of the world in  
 holiness and righteousness, and to  
 administer justice with an upright  
 4 heart, give me wisdom, who sits beside  
 thy throne, and do not refuse me a  
 5 place among thy servants. I am thy  
 slave, thy slave-girl's son, a weak  
 ephemeral man, too feeble to under-  
 6 stand justice and law; for let a man be  
 ever so perfect in the eyes of his fellow-  
 men, if the wisdom that comes from  
 thee is wanting, he will be of no  
 7 account. Thou didst choose me to be  
 king of thy own people, and judge over  
 8 thy sons and daughters; thou didst tell  
 me to build a temple on thy sacred  
 mountain and an altar in the city  
 which is thy dwelling-place, a copy of  
 the sacred tabernacle prepared by thee  
 9 from the beginning. And with thee is  
 wisdom, who is familiar with thy works  
 and was present at the making of the  
 world by thee, who knows what is  
 acceptable to thee and in line with thy  
 10 commandments. Send her forth from  
 the holy heavens, and from thy glorious  
 throne bid her come down, so that she  
 may labour at my side and I may learn  
 11 what pleases thee. For she knows and  
 understands all things, and will guide

me prudently in all I do, and guard  
 me in her glory. So shall my life's work 12  
 be acceptable, and I shall judge thy  
 people justly, and be worthy of my  
 father's throne. For how can any man 13  
 learn what is God's plan? How can he  
 apprehend what the Lord's will is? The 14  
 reasoning of men is feeble, and our  
 plans are fallible; because a perishable 15  
 body weighs down the soul, and its  
 frame of clay burdens the mind so full  
 of thoughts. With difficulty we guess 16  
 even at things on earth, and laboriously  
 find out what lies before our feet; and  
 who has ever traced out what is in  
 heaven? Who ever learnt to know thy 17  
 purposes, unless thou hadst given  
 him wisdom and sent thy holy spirit  
 down from heaven on high? Thus it was 18  
 that those on earth were set upon the  
 right path, and men were taught what  
 pleases thee; thus were they preserved  
 by wisdom.

#### Divine wisdom in history

WISDOM IT WAS WHO KEPT GUARD OVER 10  
 the first father of the human race, when  
 he alone had yet been made; she saved  
 him after his fall, and gave him the 2  
 strength to master all things. It was 3  
 because a wicked man forsook her in  
 his anger that he murdered his brother  
 in a fit of rage, and so destroyed him-  
 self. Through his fault the earth was 4  
 covered with a deluge, and again wis-  
 dom came to the rescue, and taught the  
 one good man to pilot his plain wooden 5  
 hulk. It was she, when heathen nations  
 leagued in wickedness were thrown into  
 confusion, who picked out one good  
 man and kept him blameless in the  
 sight of God, giving him strength to  
 resist his pity for his child. She saved a 6

*noble soul fell to my lot*; compare 9.15. The best that can be said for a body is that it is *unblemished*. Both these doctrines are Platonic and foreign to the OT.

9.1-18: Solomon's prayer. Compare 1 Kgs.3.6-9. 4: Compare Prov.8.30. 8: The attribution of the book to Solomon is here clear in that the author claims to have built a *temple*; see 1 Kgs.6.1. The *sacred mountain* is Mount Zion, identified in Jewish tradition with Mount Moriah, the site of the Temple. The Temple was an earthly *copy* of the divine *tabernacle*, an idea derived from Exod.25.9,40. 15: *Perishable body . . . of clay* alludes to the Platonic doctrine that the material world is less than real and is a prison of the spirit. 17: *Holy spirit* is identified with Wisdom; compare 7.22.

10.1-21: From Adam to the Exodus. 1-2: Adam (Gen.1.26-5.5). 3: Cain and Abel (Gen.4.1-16). 4: Noah (Gen.5.28-9.29). For the flood as Cain's *fault* see Josephus, *Ant.* 1.2.2. 5a: The Tower of Babel (Gen.11.1-9). 5b: Abraham (Gen.11.26-25.10). 6-9: Lot (Gen. ch. 19). The *Five Cities* are Sodom and Gomorrah and their confederates (Gen.14.2; 19.20-33), located by



good man from the destruction of the goddess, and he escaped the fire that came down on the Five Cities, cities whose wickedness is still attested by a smoking waste, by plants whose fruit can never ripen, and a pillar of salt standing there as a memorial of an unbelieving soul. Wisdom they ignored, and they suffered for it, losing the power to recognize what is good and leaving by their lives a monument of folly, such that their enormities can never be forgotten. But wisdom brought her servants safely out of their troubles. It was she, when a good man was a fugitive from his brother's anger, who guided him on the straight path; she showed him that God is king, and gave him knowledge of his holiness;<sup>d</sup> she prospered his labours and made his toil productive. When men in their rapacity tried to exploit him, she stood by him and made him rich. She kept him safe from his enemies, and preserved him from treacherous attacks; she gave him victory after a hard struggle, and taught him that godliness is the greatest power of all. It was she who refused to desert a good man when he was sold as a slave; she preserved him from sin and went down into the dungeon with him, nor did she leave him when he was in chains until she had brought him sceptre and kingdom and authority over his persecutors; she gave the lie to his accusers, and brought him undying fame. It was she who rescued a godfearing people, a blameless race, from a nation of oppressors; she inspired a servant of the Lord, and with his signs and wonders he defied

formidable kings. She rewarded the labours of godfearing men, she guided them on a marvellous journey and became a covering for them by day and a blaze of stars by night. She brought them over the Red Sea and guided them through its deep waters; but their enemies she engulfed, and cast them up again out of the fathomless deep. So good men plundered the ungodly; they sang the glories of thy holy name, O Lord, and praised with one accord thy power, their champion; for wisdom taught the dumb to speak, and made the tongues of infants eloquent.

Wisdom, working through a holy prophet, brought them success in all they did. They made their way across an unpeopled desert and pitched camp in untrodden wastes; they resisted every enemy, and beat off hostile assaults. When they were thirsty they called upon thee, and water to slake their thirst was given them out of the hard stone of a rocky cliff. The self-same means by which their oppressors had been punished were used to help them in their hour of need: those others found their river no unfailing stream of water, but putrid and befouled with blood, in punishment for their order that all the infants should be killed, while to these thou gavest abundant water unexpectedly. So from the thirst they then endured, they learnt how thou hadst punished their enemies; when they themselves were put to the test, though discipline was tempered with mercy,

<sup>d</sup> showed . . . holiness: or gave him a vision of God's realm, and knowledge of his holy angels.

Jewish tradition and some modern writers at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Natural phenomena embellished by legend account for *smoking waste* (heavy evaporation of Dead Sea); *fruit . . . never ripen* (apples of Sodom), and *pillar of salt* (salt deposit formation; Gen.19.26). See Philo, *De Abrahamo*, 137-141; Josephus, *B.J.* IV.8.4. 10-12: Jacob (Gen.25.19-49.33, especially chs. 28-31). 13-14: Joseph (Gen. chs. 37-50). 15-21: The Exodus (Exod.1.1-15.21, especially chs. 12-15). 16: *A servant*: Moses. *Formidable kings* are Pharaoh and others, as in Ps.135.9-10. 17: The cloud of Exod.13.21 is thought of as a *covering*; see Num.10.34 and Ps.105.39. 20: According to Josephus, *Ant.* II.16.6, the Egyptians were *plundered* at the Red Sea. 21: *Dumb who speak* and *eloquent infants* refer to the Jewish tradition that even infants and embryos joined in the song of Israel at the Red Sea; see Exod.15.1-18.

11.1-14: *The wandering in the desert* (Exod.15.22-17.16). 4: Events of Exod.17.1-7 are given according to an idealized version; compare Ps.107.4-6, 5-7: Before the Exodus, water was turned into *blood* for the Egyptians by the first plague (Exod.7.19-25), a punishment, according to the author, for Pharaoh's decree that *all the infants* of the Israelites be *killed* by being drowned in the Nile. The Egyptians were thus punished by the sudden loss of drinking water but the Israelites were rewarded by finding it *unexpectedly* in the desert (Num.20.11). Exod. states that the Pharaoh ordered only the male children to be drowned (Exod.1.22) and the water was turned into blood not because of that decree, but because of Pharaoh's refusal to let Israel leave

they understood the tortures of the goddess who were sentenced in anger.  
 10 Thy own people thou didst subject to an ordeal, warning them like a father; those others thou didst put to the torture, like a stern king passing sentence.  
 11 At home and abroad, they were equally  
 12 in distress, for a double misery had come upon them, and they groaned as  
 13 they recalled the past. When they heard that the means of their own punishment had been used to benefit thy people, they saw thy hand in it, O  
 14 Lord. The man who long ago had been abandoned and exposed, whom they had rejected with contumely, became in the event the object of their wonder and admiration; their thirst was such as the godly never knew.  
 15 In return for the insensate imagination of those wicked men, which deduced them into worshipping reptiles devoid of reason, and mere vermin, thou didst send upon them a swarm of creatures devoid of reason to chastise  
 16 them, and to teach them that the instruments of a man's sin are the instruments of his punishment. For thy  
 17 almighty hand, which created the world out of formless matter, was not without other resource: it could have let loose upon them a host of bears or  
 18 ravening lions or unknown ferocious monsters newly created, either breathing out blasts of fire, or roaring and belching smoke, or flashing terrible sparks like lightning from their eyes,  
 19 with power not only to exterminate them by the wounds they inflicted, but by their mere appearance to kill them  
 20 with fright. Even without these, a single breath would have sufficed to lay them low, with justice in pursuit and the breath of thy power to blow them

away; but thou hast ordered all things by measure and number and weight.

Great strength is thine to exert at  
 21 any moment, and the power of thy arm no man can resist, for in thy sight  
 22 the whole world is like a grain that just tips the scale or a drop of dew alighting on the ground at dawn. But thou art  
 23 merciful to all men because thou canst do all things; thou dost overlook the sins of men to bring them to repentance; for all existing things are dear to  
 24 thee and thou hatest nothing that thou hast created—why else wouldst thou  
 25 have made it? How could anything have continued in existence, had it not  
 been thy will? How could it have endured unless called into being by thee?  
 Thou sparest all things because they  
 26 are thine, our lord and master who lovest all that lives; for thy imperishable  
 27 breath is in them all.

For this reason thou dost correct  
 28 offenders little by little, admonishing them and reminding them of their sins, in order that they may leave their evil ways and put their trust, O Lord, in thee. For example, the ancient  
 29 inhabitants of thy holy land were hateful to thee for their loathsome practices, their sorcery and unholy rites, ruthless  
 30 murders of children, cannibal feasts of human flesh and blood; they were  
 31 initiates of a secret ritual in which parents slaughtered their defenceless children. Therefore it was thy will to destroy them at the hand of our forefathers, so that the land which is of all  
 32 lands most precious in thine eyes could receive in God's children settlers  
 33 worthy of it. And yet thou didst spare  
 34 their lives because even they were men, sending hornets as the advance-guard  
 of thy army to exterminate them

Egypt (Exod.7.16-17). 13: Exod.32.12 also implies that the Egyptians could know what was occurring in the Wilderness, and that the *means of their own punishment had been used to benefit thy people*. 14: Moses is the man . . . abandoned, both in his exposure at birth (Exod.2.1-10), and in his flight (Exod.2.11-22).

11.15-20: The punishment of the Egyptians was appropriate. God could have chosen innumerable punishments. Instead, ironically, they were punished through the animals they worshipped. 15: Exod. ch. 8 does not suggest that the Egyptians worshiped reptiles or vermin. Perhaps the author is exaggerating the practice of the temples of his day. See Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa*, 8-9. *Creatures devoid of reason* were the plagues of frogs, lice, and locusts, Exod. chs. 8 and 10. 17: *Formless matter* may imply the Platonic philosophical concept of preexistent matter out of which the world was made, but compare Gen.1.2.

11.21-12.1: God is merciful to all creatures. See Ps.145.9.

12.2-11: God was merciful even to the Canaanites. 3-8: The charge of *cannibal feasts* is unattested in the Bible, but it was part of the Greek philosophical attack on Greek mythology.

9 gradually. It was well within thy power to let the godly overwhelm the godless in a pitched battle, or to wipe them out in an instant with cruel beasts or by one stern word. But thou didst carry out their sentence gradually to give them space for repentance, knowing well enough that they came of evil stock, their wickedness ingrained, and that their way of thinking would not change to the end of time, for there was a curse on their race from the beginning.

Nor was it out of deference to anyone else that thou gavest them an amnesty for their misdeeds; for to thee no one can say 'What hast thou done?' or dispute thy verdict. Who shall bring a charge against thee for destroying nations which were of thy own making? Who shall appear against thee in court to plead the cause of guilty men? For there is no other god but thee; all the world is thy concern, and there is none to whom thou must prove the justice of thy sentence. There is no king or other ruler who can outface thee on behalf of those whom thou hast punished. But thou art just and orderest all things justly, counting it alien to thy power to condemn a man who ought not to be punished. For thy strength is the source of justice, and it is because thou art master of all that thou sparest all. Thou showest thy strength when men doubt the perfection of thy power; it is when they know it and yet are insolent that thou dost punish them. But thou, with strength at thy command, judgest in mercy and rulest us in great forbearance; for the power is thine to use when thou wilt.

19 By acts like these thou didst teach thy people that the just man must also be kind-hearted, and thou hast filled thy sons with hope by the offer of repentance for their sins. If thou didst

use such care and such indulgence even in punishing thy children's enemies, who deserved to die, granting them time and space to get free of their wickedness, with what discrimination thou didst pass judgement on thy sons, to whose fathers thou hast given sworn covenants full of the promise of good!

So we are chastened by thee, but our enemies thou dost scourge ten thousand times more, so that we may lay thy goodness to heart when we sit in judgement, and may hope for mercy when we ourselves are judged. This is why the wicked who had lived their lives in heedless folly were tormented by thee with their own abominations. They had strayed far down the paths of error, taking for gods the most contemptible and hideous creatures, deluded like thoughtless children. And so, as though they were mere babes who have not learnt reason, thou didst visit on them a sentence that made them ridiculous; but those who do not take warning from such derisive correction will experience the full weight of divine judgement. They were indignant at their own sufferings, but finding themselves chastised through the very creatures they had taken to be gods, they recognized that the true God was he whom they had long ago refused to know. Thus the full rigour of condemnation descended on them.

### *The evils of idolatry*

WHAT BORN FOOLS ALL MEN WERE WHO lived in ignorance of God, who from the good things before their eyes could not learn to know him who really is, and failed to recognize the artificer though they observed his works! Fire, wind, swift air, the circle of the starry signs, rushing water, or the great lights

On the gradual extermination of the *ancient inhabitants* of the holy land (Canaan) see Exod.23.28–30; Deut.7.20. 11: Noah cursed *their race*, i.e. the Canaanites, Gen.9.25.

12.12–21: God's leniency is not due to weakness or fear. God's mercy is an example and warning to the Jews. The author avoids mentioning the sins of the Israelites.

12.22–27: Severe punishment for the Egyptians. 23–24: Compare 11.15–16.

13.1–15.19: Heathen worship is foolishness.

13.1–9: The folly of deifying nature. 1: The argument for God's existence from design was popular among the Stoics. God is described in philosophical terms as he *who really is*; see Sept. Exod.3.14. 2: Fire, wind, etc. are aspects of nature worshiped by pagans and important to Greek philosophers; compare Deut.4.19.

in heaven that rule the world—these  
 3 they accounted gods. If it was through  
 delight in the beauty of these things  
 that men supposed them gods, they  
 ought to have understood how much  
 better is the Lord and Master of it all;  
 for it was by the prime author of all  
 4 beauty that they were created. If it was  
 through astonishment at their power  
 and influence, men should have learnt  
 from these how much more powerful is  
 5 he who made them. For the greatness  
 and beauty of created things give us a  
 corresponding idea of their Creator.  
 6 Yet these men are not greatly to be  
 blamed, for when they go astray they  
 may be seeking God and really wishing  
 7 to find him. Passing their lives among  
 his works and making a close study of  
 them, they are persuaded by appear-  
 ances because what they see is so  
 8 beautiful. Yet even so they do not de-  
 serve to be excused, for with enough  
 understanding to speculate about the  
 universe, why did they not sooner  
 discover the Lord and Master of it all?  
 10 The really degraded ones are those  
 whose hopes are set on dead things,  
 who give the name of gods to the work  
 of human hands, to gold and silver  
 fashioned by art into images of living  
 creatures, or to a useless stone carved  
 11 by a craftsman long ago. Suppose some  
 skilled woodworker fells with his saw a  
 convenient tree and deftly strips off all  
 the bark, then works it up elegantly  
 into some vessel suitable for everyday  
 12 use; and the pieces left over from his  
 work he uses to cook his food, and  
 13 eats his fill. But among the waste there  
 is one useless piece, crooked and full  
 of knots, and this he takes and carves to  
 occupy his idle moments, and shapes  
 it with leisurely skill into the image of  
 14 a human being; or else he gives it the  
 form of some contemptible creature,  
 painting it with vermilion and raddling  
 its surface with red paint, so that every  
 15 flaw in it is painted over. Then he makes  
 a suitable shrine for it and fixes it on  
 16 the wall, securing it with iron nails. It

is he who has to take the precautions on  
 its behalf to save it from falling, for he  
 knows that it cannot fend for itself: it is  
 only an image, and needs help. Yet he  
 17 prays to it about his possessions and  
 his wife and children, and feels no  
 shame in addressing this lifeless object;  
 for health he appeals to a thing that is  
 18 feeble, for life he prays to a dead thing,  
 for aid he implores something utterly  
 incapable, for a prosperous journey  
 something that has not even the use of  
 its legs; in matters of earnings and  
 19 business and success in handicraft he  
 asks effectual help from a thing whose  
 hands are entirely ineffectual.

The man, again, who gets ready for  
 14 a voyage, and plans to set his course  
 through the wild waves, cries to a  
 piece of wood more fragile than the  
 ship which carries him. Desire for gain  
 2 invented the ship, and the shipwright  
 with his wisdom built it;<sup>e</sup> but it is thy  
 3 providence, O Father, that is its pilot,  
 for thou hast given it a pathway  
 through the sea and a safe course  
 among the waves, showing that thou  
 4 canst save from every danger, so that  
 even a man without skill can put to sea.  
 It is thy will that the things made by  
 5 thy wisdom should not lie idle; and  
 therefore men trust their lives even to  
 the frailest spar, and passing through  
 the billows on a mere raft come safe to  
 land. Even in the beginning, when the  
 6 proud race of giants was being brought  
 to an end, the hope of mankind escaped  
 on a raft and, piloted by thy hand, be-  
 queathed to the world a new breed of  
 men. For a blessing is on the wooden  
 7 vessel through which right has pre-  
 vailed; but the wooden idol made by  
 8 human hands is accursed, and so is its  
 maker—he because he made it, and the  
 perishable thing because it was called a  
 god. Equally hateful to God are the  
 9 godless man and his ungodliness; the  
 doer and the deed shall both be  
 punished.

<sup>e</sup> Other witnesses read and wisdom was the shipwright that built it.

13.10–19: The worship of idols is inexcusable. See Isa.44.9–20 and Let. Jer. This was a frequent theme in Jewish literature.

14.1–10: Folly of the idolatrous navigator. 1: The piece of wood more fragile is the protective idol of the ship. 6: Giants: see Gen.6.1–4. Hope of mankind: Noah and his family; see Gen.5.28–9.29.

11 And so retribution shall fall upon the idols of the heathen, because though part of God's creation they have been made into an abomination, to make men stumble and to catch the  
12 feet of fools. The invention of idols is the root of immorality; they are a contrivance which has blighted human  
13 life. They did not exist from the beginning, nor will they be with us for ever; superstition brought them into the  
14 world, and for good reason a short sharp end is in store for them.

15 Some father, overwhelmed with untimely grief for the child suddenly taken from him, made an image of the child and honoured thenceforth as a god what was once a dead human being, handing on to his household the observance of rites and ceremonies. Then this impious custom, established by the passage of time, was observed as a law. Or again graven images came to be worshipped at the command of despotic  
17 princes. When men could not do honour to such a prince before his face because he lived far away, they made a likeness of that distant face, and produced a visible image of the king they sought to honour, eager to pay court to the absent prince as though he were  
18 present. Then the cult grows in fervour as those to whom the king is unknown are spurred on by ambitious craftsmen. In his desire, it may be, to please the monarch, a craftsman skilfully distorts the likeness into an ideal form, and the common people, beguiled by the beauty of the workmanship, take for an object of worship him whom lately they  
21 honoured as a man. So this becomes a trap for living men: enslaved by mischance or misgovernment, men confer on stocks and stones the name that none may share.

22 Then, not content with gross error in their knowledge of God, men live in the constant warfare of ignorance and call this monstrous evil peace. They

perform ritual murders of children and secret ceremonies and the frenzied orgies of unnatural cults; the purity of life and marriage is abandoned; and a man treacherously murders his neighbour or corrupts his wife and breaks his heart. All is in chaos—bloody murder, theft and fraud, corruption, treachery, riot, perjury, honest men driven to distraction; ingratitude, moral corruption, sexual perversion, breakdown of marriage, adultery, debauchery. For the worship of idols, whose names it is wrong even to mention, is the beginning, cause, and end of every evil. Men either indulge themselves to the point of madness, or produce inspired utterance which is all lies, or live dishonest lives, or break their oath without scruple. They perjure themselves and expect no harm because the idols they trust in are lifeless. On two counts judgement will overtake them: because in their devotion to idols they have thought wrongly about God, and because, in their contempt for religion, they have deliberately perjured themselves. It is not any power in what they swear by, but the nemesis of sin, that always pursues the transgression of the wicked.

But thou, our God, art kind and true and patient, a merciful ruler of all that is. For even if we sin, we are thine; we acknowledge thy power. But we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine. To know thee is the whole of righteousness, and to acknowledge thy power is the root of immortality. We have not been led astray by the perverted inventions of human skill or the barren labour of painters, by some gaudy painted shape, the sight of which arouses in fools a passionate desire for a mere image without life or breath. They are in love with evil and deserve to trust in nothing better, those who do these evil things or hanker after them or worship them.

14.11–31: **Origin and evil results of idolatry.** 13: Unnatural idols *did not exist from the beginning* but were invented. 17: The worship of the *prince*, or ruler cult, was popular in the Hellenistic world, particularly in Egypt. See Rom.1.22–32 for similar licentious behavior in defiance of God and society.

15.1–6: **Benefits of worshipping the true God.** 1: See Exod.34.6 and Sept. Deut.32.4. 4: Ancient statues were usually *painted*. 5: Stories were told by Christian authors of the *passionate desire* aroused by a *mere image*.

7 For a potter kneading his clay laboriously moulds every vessel for our use, but out of the self-same clay he fashions without distinction the pots that are to serve for honourable uses and the opposite; and what the purpose of each one is to be, the moulder of the clay decides. And then with ill-directed toil he makes a false god out of the same clay, this man who not long before was himself fashioned out of earth and soon returns to the place whence he was taken, when the living soul that was lent to him must be repaid. His concern is not that he must one day fall sick or that his span of life is short; but he must vie with goldsmiths and silversmiths and copy the bronze-workers, and he thinks it does him credit to make counterfeits. His heart is ashes, his hope worth less than common earth, and his life cheaper than his own clay, because he did not recognize by whom he himself was moulded, or who it was that inspired him with an active soul and breathed into him the breath of life. No, he reckons our life a game, and our existence a market where money can be made; 'one must get a living', he says, 'by fair means or foul'. But this man knows better than anyone that he is doing wrong, this maker of fragile pots and idols from the same earthy stuff. The greatest fools of all, and worse than infantile, were the enemies and oppressors of thy people, for they supposed all their heathen idols to be gods, although they have eyes that cannot see, nostrils that cannot draw breath, ears that cannot hear, fingers that cannot feel, and feet that are useless for walking. It was a man who made them; one who draws borrowed breath gave them their shape. But no human being has the power to shape a god like himself: he is only mortal, but what he makes with his impious hands is dead; and so he is better than the

objects of his worship, for he is at least alive—they never can be.

Moreover, these men worship animals, the most revolting animals. Compared with the rest of the brute creation, their divinities are the least intelligent. Even as animals they have no beauty to make them desirable; when God approved and blessed his work, they were left out.

*The pattern of divine justice*

AND SO THE OPPRESSORS WERE FITTINGLY chastised by creatures like these: they were tormented by swarms of vermin. But while they were punished, thou didst make provision for thy people, sending quails for them to eat, an unwonted food to satisfy their hunger; for thy purpose was that whereas those others, hungry as they were, should turn in loathing even from necessary food because the creatures sent upon them were so disgusting, thy people after a short spell of scarcity should enjoy unwonted delicacies. It was right that the scarcity falling on the oppressors should be inexorable, and that thy people should learn by brief experience how their enemies were tormented. Even when fierce and furious snakes attacked thy people and the bites of writhing serpents were spreading death, thy anger did not continue to the bitter end; their short trouble was sent them as a lesson, and they were given a symbol<sup>f</sup> of salvation to remind them of the requirements of thy law. For any man who turned towards it was saved, not by the thing he looked upon but by thee, the saviour of all. In this way thou didst convince our enemies that thou art the deliverer from every evil. Those other men died from the bite of locusts and flies, and no remedy was found to save their lives, because it

*f Or pledge.*

15.7-19: The manufacture of idols. 7: Compare Isa.45.9. 14-17: *The greatest fools of all in making idols* were the Egyptians. 19: Which *animals* worshiped by the Egyptians *were left out* of God's blessing is not clear, perhaps the unclean animals of 11.15 or the serpent cursed by God in Gen.3.14-15.

16.1-19.22: A theology of history is developed.

16.1-23: The punishment of the Egyptians and wicked Israelites. The theme is similar to that of chs. 10-12. 2: *Quails*: Exod.16.13; Num.11.31; Ps.78.27. 5-6: Num.21.4-9. 7: This is based on Jewish exegesis of Num.21.9. 9: Exod.10.17 may have suggested that the Egyptians *died*

was fitting for them to be chastised by  
 10 such creatures. But thy sons did not  
 succumb to the fangs of snakes, how-  
 ever venomous, because thy mercy  
 11 came to their aid and healed them. It  
 was to remind them of thy utterances  
 that they were bitten and quickly re-  
 covered; it was for fear they might fall  
 into deep forgetfulness and become  
 12 unresponsive to thy kindness. For it  
 was neither herb nor poultice that  
 cured them, but thy all-healing word,  
 13 O Lord. Thou hast the power of life  
 and death, thou bringest a man down  
 to the gates of death and up again.  
 14 Man in his wickedness may kill, but he  
 cannot bring back the breath of life  
 that has gone forth nor release a soul  
 that death has arrested.

15 But from thy hand there is no  
 16 escape; for godless men who refused  
 to acknowledge thee were scourged by  
 thy mighty arm, pursued by extra-  
 ordinary storms of rain and hail in  
 relentless torrents, and utterly destroyed  
 17 by fire. Strangest of all, in water, that  
 quenches everything, the fire burned  
 more fiercely; creation itself fights to  
 18 defend the godly. At one time the  
 flame was moderated, so that it should  
 not burn up the living creatures in-  
 flicted on the godless, who were to  
 learn from this that it was by God's  
 19 justice that they were pursued; at  
 another time it blazed even under water  
 with more than the natural power of  
 fire, to destroy the produce of a sinful  
 20 land. By contrast, thy own people were  
 given angels' food, and thou didst send  
 them from heaven, without labour of  
 their own, bread ready to eat, rich in  
 delight of every kind and suited to  
 21 every taste. The sustenance thou didst  
 supply showed thy sweetness towards  
 thy children, and the bread, serving the  
 desire of each man who ate it, was

changed into what he wished. Its snow 22  
 and ice resisted fire and did not melt,  
 to teach them that whereas their  
 enemies' crops had been destroyed by  
 fire that blazed in the hail and flashed  
 through the teeming rain, that same 23  
 fire had now forgotten its own power,  
 in order that the godly might be fed.

For creation, serving thee its maker, 24  
 exerts its power to punish the godless  
 and relaxes into benevolence towards  
 those who trust in thee. And so it was 25  
 at that time too: it adapted itself end-  
 lessly in the service of thy universal  
 bounty, according to the desire of thy  
 suppliants. So thy sons, O Lord, whom 26  
 thou hast chosen, were to learn that it  
 is not the growing of crops by which  
 mankind is nourished, but it is thy word  
 that sustains those who trust in thee.  
 That substance, which fire did not 27  
 destroy, simply melted away when  
 warmed by the sun's first rays, to 28  
 teach us that we must rise before the  
 sun to give thee thanks and pray to  
 thee as daylight dawns. The hope of an 29  
 ungrateful man will melt like the hoar-  
 frost of winter, and drain away like  
 water that runs to waste.

Great are thy judgements and hard 17  
 to expound; and thus it was that un-  
 instructed souls went astray. Thus 2  
 heathen men imagined that they could  
 lord it over thy holy people; but,  
 prisoners of darkness and captives of  
 unending night, they lay each immured  
 under his own roof, fugitives from  
 eternal providence. Thinking that their 3  
 secret sins might escape detection be-  
 neath a dark pall of oblivion, they lay  
 in disorder, dreadfully afraid, terrified  
 by apparitions. For the dark corner 4  
 that held them offered no refuge from  
 fear, but loud unnerving noises roared  
 around them, and phantoms with  
 downcast unsmiling faces passed before

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from the bite of locusts and flies. See Josephus, *Ant.* II.14.3. 16: See Exod.9.18-34. 17: The strange quality of fire burning in water is derived from Jewish exegesis of Exod.9.24. 18: The author assumes that the frogs and lice of the earlier plagues survived to be spared by the hail. This is contrary to Exod.8.13,31. 20: *Angels' food*: the manna of Exod.16.4-21 ("bread from heaven") and Ps.78.25 ("bread of angels"). It was described by Jewish tradition as *suited to every taste*. 22: *Snow and ice*: "the manna," according to Sept. Num.11.7-8.

16.24-29: *Philosophical and moral lessons of the manna*. 26: Compare Deut.8.3. 27: Manna could be baked, and was seemingly indestructible by fire, but it was *melted away by the sun's first rays*; compare Exod.16.21. 28: Jewish morning prayers may be recited only after *daylight dawns*.

17.1-18.4: *The plague of darkness* (Exod.10.21-23). 3: *Secret sins* may allude to the mystery

5 their eyes. No fire, however great, had force enough to give them light, nor had the brilliant flaming stars strength to illuminate that hideous darkness. 6 There shone upon them only a blaze, of no man's making, that terrified them, and in their panic they thought the real world even worse than that 7 imaginary sight. The tricks of the sorcerers' art failed, and all their boasted wisdom was exposed and put to 8 shame; for the very men who profess to drive away fear and trouble from sick souls were themselves sick with 9 dread that made them ridiculous. Even if nothing frightful was there to terrify them, yet having once been scared by the advancing vermin and the hissing 10 serpents, they collapsed in terror, refusing even to look upon the air from 11 which there can be no escape.<sup>g</sup> For wickedness proves a cowardly thing when condemned by an inner witness, and in the grip of conscience gives way 12 to forebodings of disaster. Fear is nothing but an abandonment of the aid that comes from reason; and hope, 13 defeated by this inward weakness, capitulates before ignorance of the cause by which the torment comes. 14 So all that night, which really had no power against them because it came upon them from the powerless depths of hell, they slept the same haunted 15 sleep, now harried by portentous spectres, now paralysed by the treachery of their own souls; sudden and 16 unforeseen, fear came upon them. Thus a man would fall down where he stood and be held in durance, locked in a 17 prison that had no bars. Farmer or shepherd or labourer toiling in the wilds, he was caught, and awaited the inescapable doom; the same chain of 18 darkness bound all alike. The whispering breeze, the sweet melody of birds in spreading branches, the steady beat of 19 water that rushes by, the headlong crash of rocks falling, the racing of creatures as they bound along unseen, the roar

of fierce wild beasts, or echo reverberating from hollows in the hills—all these sounds paralysed them with fear. The whole world was bathed in the 20 bright light of day, and went about its tasks unhindered; those men alone 21 were overspread with heavy night, fit image of the darkness that awaited them; and heavier than the darkness was the burden each was to himself.

But for thy holy ones there shone a 18 great light. And so their enemies, hearing their voices but not seeing them, counted them happy because they had not suffered like themselves, gave thanks for their forbearance 2 under provocation, and begged as a favour that they should part company. Accordingly, thy gift was a pillar of 3 fire to be the guide of their uncharted journey, a sun that would not scorch them on their glorious expedition. Their 4 enemies did indeed deserve to lose the light of day and be kept prisoners in darkness, for they had kept in durance thy sons, through whom the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world.

They planned to kill the infant 5 children of thy holy people, but when one child had been exposed to death and rescued, thou didst deprive them of all their children in requital, and drown them all together in the swelling waves. Of that night our forefathers were given 6 warning in advance, so that, having sure knowledge, they might be heartened by the promises which they trusted. Thy 7 people were looking for the deliverance of the godly and the destruction of their enemies; for thou didst use the same 8 means to punish our enemies and to make us glorious when we heard thy call. The devout children of a virtuous 9 race were offering sacrifices in secret, and covenanted with one consent to keep the law of God and to share alike in the same blessings and the same dangers, and they were already singing

<sup>g</sup> Or there is no need to escape.

cults of the author's day which he attributes to the ancient Egyptians; compare 14.23. 5: The details are derived from the Jewish exegesis of Exod.10.21. 7: Compare Exod.7.11,22; 8.7,18; 9.11. 18.3: See Exod.13.21; 14.24.

18.5-19: The Egyptians counsel death but are slain themselves. 5: One child: Moses; see Exod.1.15-2.10. 6: The night of the first Passover was so well known as to be called *that night*; see Exod.12.42. 9: *Ancestral songs*: the author anachronistically pictures the first Passover in



their sacred ancestral songs of praise.  
 10 In discordant contrast there came an  
 outcry from their enemies, as piteous  
 lamentation for their children spread  
 11 abroad. Master and slave were pun-  
 ished together with the same penalty;  
 king and common man suffered the  
 12 same fate. All alike had their dead, past  
 counting, struck down by one common  
 form of death; there were not enough  
 living even to bury the dead; at one  
 13 stroke the most precious of their off-  
 spring had perished. Relying on their  
 magic arts, they had scouted all  
 warnings; but when they saw their first-  
 born dead, they confessed that thy  
 people have God as their father.

14 All things were lying in peace and  
 silence, and night in her swift course  
 15 was half spent, when thy almighty  
 Word leapt from thy royal throne in  
 heaven into the midst of that doomed  
 16 land like a relentless warrior, bearing  
 the sharp sword of thy inflexible decree,  
 and stood and filled it all with death,  
 his head touching the heavens, his feet  
 17 on earth. At once nightmare phantoms  
 appalled them, and unlooked-for fears  
 18 set upon them; and as they flung them-  
 selves to the ground half dead, one here,  
 one there, they confessed the reasons  
 19 for their deaths; for the dreams  
 that tormented them had taught them  
 before they died, so that they should  
 not die ignorant of the reason why they  
 suffered.

20 The godly also had a taste of death  
 when a multitude were struck down  
 in the wilderness; but the divine wrath  
 21 did not long continue. A blameless man  
 was quick to be their champion, bearing  
 the weapons of his priestly ministry,  
 prayer and the incense that propitiates;  
 he withstood the divine anger and set a  
 limit to the disaster, thus showing that  
 22 he was thy servant. He overcame the  
 avenging fury not by bodily strength or  
 force of arms; by words he subdued the  
 avenger, appealing to the sworn coven-

ants made with our forefathers. When  
 23 the dead had already fallen in heaps  
 one on another, he interposed himself  
 and beat back the divine wrath, barring  
 its line of attack upon the living. On  
 24 his long-skirted robe the whole world  
 was represented; the glories of the  
 fathers were engraved on his four rows  
 of precious stones; and thy majesty  
 was in the diadem upon his head. To  
 25 these the destroyer yielded, for these  
 made him afraid; only to taste his wrath  
 had been enough.

But the godless were pursued by 19  
 pitiless anger to the bitter end, for  
 God knew their future also: how after  
 2 allowing thy people to depart, and even  
 urging their departure, they would  
 change their minds and set out in  
 pursuit. While they were still mourning,  
 3 still lamenting at the graves of their  
 dead, they rushed into another foolish  
 decision, and pursued as fugitives those  
 4 whom they had begged to leave. For  
 the fate they had merited was drawing  
 them on to this conclusion and made  
 them forget what had happened, so  
 that they might suffer the torments still  
 needed to complete their punishment,  
 and that thy people might achieve an  
 5 incredible journey, and that their  
 enemies might meet an outlandish  
 death.

The whole creation, with all its 6  
 elements, was refashioned in sub-  
 servience to thy commands, so that  
 thy servants might be preserved un-  
 scathed. Men gazed at the cloud that  
 7 overshadowed the camp, at dry land  
 emerging where before was only water,  
 at an open road leading out of the Red  
 Sea, and a grassy plain in place of stormy  
 waves, across which the whole nation  
 8 passed, under the shelter of thy hand,  
 after all the marvels they had seen.  
 They were like horses at pasture, like  
 9 skipping lambs, as they praised thee,  
 O Lord, by whom they were rescued.  
 For they still remembered their life in 10

the format of his day at which Pss.113-118 were sung. 12: *Not enough living*: exaggeration of Num.33.3-4. 15: *Word of God* is personified as the effective executor of his will. Compare "God said" of Gen.1.2-29. 17-19: The content has no foundation in the Exodus story but is an embellishment of it. *Appalled them*: the firstborn who were to die. See Exod.12.28-30.

18.20-25: *The Israelite plague of death was stayed by Aaron* (Num.16.44-50).

19.1-21: *God worked wonders at the time of the Exodus*. The wicked Egyptians were grieved by them and the Israelites liberated. 2: See Exod.12.31-33; 14.23-28. 10: Read Exod. ch. 8.

a foreign land: how instead of cattle the earth bred lice, and instead of fish the river spewed up swarms of frogs; and how, after that, they had seen a new sort of bird when, driven by greed, they had begged for delicacies to eat, and for their relief quails came up from the sea.

13 So punishment came upon those sinners, not unheralded by violent thunderbolts. They suffered justly for their own wickedness, for they had raised bitter hatred of strangers to a new pitch. There had been others who refused to welcome strangers when they came to them, but these made slaves of guests who were their benefactors. 15 There is indeed a judgement awaiting those who treated foreigners as enemies; but these, after a festal welcome, oppressed with hard labour men who had earlier shared their rights. They were struck with blindness also, like the men

at the door of the one good man, when yawning darkness fell upon them and each went groping for his own doorway.

For as the notes of a lute can make various tunes with different names though each retains its own pitch, so the elements combined among themselves in different ways, as can be accurately inferred from the observation of what happened. Land animals took to the water and things that swim migrated to dry land; fire retained its normal power even in water, and water forgot its quenching properties. Flames on the other hand failed to consume the flesh of perishable creatures that walked in them, and the substance of heavenly food, like ice and prone to melt, no longer melted.

In everything, O Lord, thou hast made thy people great and glorious, and hast not neglected in every time and place to be their helper.

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12: As usual, the murmurings of the Israelites prior to the *quails* are omitted. See 16.2 n. 13: There are no *thunderbolts* in Exod. ch. 14, but see Ps.77.16–19 and Josephus, *Ant.* II.16.3. 14: *Others* are the Sodomites, Gen. ch. 19. 16: The Israelites were given a *festal welcome* in Egypt at the time of Joseph (Gen.47.1–12) and were *oppressed with hard labour* by a later Pharaoh (Exod.1.8–11). 17: Gen.19.11; Exod.10.21–23. 18–21: God, dealing with the *elements* of nature as a musician with a *lute*, arranges and rearranges them to achieve the wonderful result.

19.22: The conclusion. God directs Israel's history.

# ECCLESIASTICUS

OR

## THE WISDOM OF JESUS SON OF SIRACH

Ecclesiasticus, literally meaning a "church book," is so called either because it was used extensively in church worship or because the early Christian church rather than the synagogue received it into the canon. It is the work of a Jewish wisdom teacher of about 180 B.C. The book, also called the Wisdom of Sirach, or ben Sirach, or simply Sirach, after its author, Jesus the son of Sirach (see 50.27), stands in the wisdom tradition of Proverbs, which, attempting to discover the patterns at work in the circumstances of human life, concludes that wisdom is God's gift. But unlike the wise men of Proverbs, the author is also a close student of the Jewish Scriptures, especially the Torah (the Law). His work represents a fusion of wisdom and scribal piety.

Written in Hebrew, the original text was lost in early Christian times. About two-thirds of the book in Hebrew was rediscovered in Cairo around 1896. Since then other partial Hebrew manuscripts have been found, among them short fragments in the Judean desert at Qumran and Masada; these discoveries seem to indicate that the Hebrew text of Cairo, though not identical with the original, does derive from the original text, not from a retranslation from the Greek, as was once supposed. The present English translation is made from the Greek version prepared by the author's grandson (see Preface and notes) but is influenced by the recent Hebrew finds. At many points the books had been expanded by later additions, and the omission of these additions from this translation explains why the verse numbers are not always in consecutive order.

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### Preface

A LEGACY OF GREAT VALUE HAS come to us through the law, the prophets, and the writers who followed in their steps, and for this Israel's traditions of discipline and wisdom deserve recognition. It is the duty of those who study the scriptures not only to become expert themselves, but also to use their scholarship for the benefit of the outside world through both the spoken and the written word. So my grandfather Jesus, who had applied himself industriously to the study of the law, the prophets, and the other writings of our ancestors, and had gained a considerable proficiency in them, was moved to compile a book of his own on the themes of discipline and wisdom, so that, with this further help, scholars might make greater progress

in their studies by living as the law directs.

You are asked then to read with sympathetic attention, and make allowances if, in spite of all the devoted work I have put into the translation, some of the expressions appear inadequate. For it is impossible for a translator to find precise equivalents for the original Hebrew in another language. Not only with this book, but with the law, the prophets, and the rest of the writings, it makes no small difference to read them in the original.

When I came to Egypt and settled there in the thirty-eighth year of<sup>a</sup> the reign of King Euergetes, I found great scope for education; and I thought it very necessary to spend some energy and labour on the translation of this book. Ever since then I have been

<sup>a</sup> Or there at the age of thirty-eight in . . .

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**Preface.** The preface was written by the grandson of the author of Ecclesiasticus, when he translated the book into Gk. for the use of Egyptian Jews who did not know Heb. It mentions the three divisions of the Heb. Scriptures: *the law, the prophets, and the other writings*; this is the earliest reference to the third division of the canon, though the limits of the *writings* were not to be defined for another two centuries; see Lk.24.44. The translator, like the author, closely associates wisdom and study of Scripture. He asserts that a scholar should work not only for fellow specialists but for the *outside world*; the translator speaks of his grandfather but is also thinking of his own work. The *thirty-eighth year of King Ptolemy Euergetes II* Physcon of Egypt (one of the longest reigns in Egypt) was 132 B.C. This puts the original composition of Eccles. about 180 B.C., shortly before the Maccabean uprising.

applying my skill night and day to complete it, and to publish it for the use of those who have made their home in a foreign land, and wish to become scholars by training themselves to live according to the law.

*The ways of wisdom*

- 1 ALL WISDOM IS FROM THE LORD;  
wisdom is with him for ever.
- 2 Who can count the sand of the sea,  
the drops of rain, or the days of  
unending time?
- 3 Who can measure the height of the  
sky,  
the breadth of the earth, or the  
depth of the abyss?<sup>b</sup>
- 4 Wisdom was first of all created  
things;  
intelligent purpose has been there  
from the beginning.<sup>c</sup>
- 6 Who has laid bare the root of  
wisdom?  
Who has understood her subtlety?<sup>d</sup>
- 8 One alone is wise, the Lord most  
terrible,  
seated upon his throne.
- 9 It is he who created her, surveyed  
and measured her,  
and infused her into all his works.
- 10 To all mankind he has given her in  
some measure,  
but in plenty to those who love him.
- 11 THE FEAR OF THE LORD BRINGS  
honour and pride,  
cheerfulness and a garland of joy.
- 12 The fear of the Lord gladdens the  
heart;  
it brings cheerfulness and joy and  
long life.

- Whoever fears the Lord will be  
prosperous at the last;  
blessings will be his on the day of  
his death.
- The essence of wisdom is the fear of  
the Lord;  
she is created with the faithful in  
their mother's womb,  
she has built an everlasting home  
among men,  
and will keep faith with their  
descendants.
- Those who fear the Lord have their  
fill of wisdom;  
she gives them deep draughts of her  
wine.
- She stocks her home with all that  
the heart can desire  
and her storehouses with her  
produce.
- Wisdom's garland is the fear of the  
Lord,  
flowering with peace and health.
- She showers down knowledge and  
ability,  
and bestows high honour on those  
who hold fast to her.
- Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the  
Lord,  
and long life grows on her branches.<sup>e</sup>
- Unjust rage can never be excused;  
when anger tips the scale it is a  
man's downfall.
- Until the right time comes, a  
patient man restrains himself,  
and afterwards cheerfulness breaks  
through again;

*b* Some witnesses add or wisdom.

*c* Some witnesses add (5) The fountain of wisdom is God's word on high, and her ways are the eternal commandments.

*d* Some witnesses add (7) Who has discovered all that wisdom knows, or understood her wealth of experience?

*e* Some witnesses add (21) The fear of the Lord drives away sins, and wherever it dwells it averts his anger.

**1.1-10: The source of wisdom.** The two major divisions of the book (chs. 1-23 and 24-51) are each introduced by a poem in praise of wisdom. See 24.1-22; Prov.8.1-31; Job 28.1-28. **1:** *Wisdom* includes the knowledge of man (both practical and ethical), nature, and God. **2-3:** The immeasurability of nature suggests the infinite depth of wisdom. **4:** *Wisdom* existed before the creation and informs it (see v. 9); it was later identified with the divine creative word; Jn.1.1-3. **6-10:** Against the tendency to make wisdom man's achievement, Eccles. repeatedly (as here) affirms that it is God's gift. **10:** *Those who love him:* his people Israel; see 24.7-8.

**1.11-20: The definition of wisdom.** Though much in Eccles. is secular common sense, this poem equates the core of wisdom with the loyal and joyful reverence for the God of Israel. **11:** *The fear of the Lord:* reverent acceptance of God's lordship. **13:** Life's basic fairness to the wise man will be shown, if only *on the day of his death* (see 11.28). **15:** The *everlasting home* of wisdom is specifically Israel; see 24.7-8. **16-20:** The reward of wisdom is a full life in the present world; contrast such full life here with v. 13.

**1.22-30: Signs of wisdom.** **22-23:** Self-control (*restrains himself*) is such a sign (see 6.2-4).

24	until the right moment he keeps his thoughts to himself, and later his good sense is on everyone's lips.	Trust him and he will help you; steer a straight course and set your hope on him.	6
25	In wisdom's store are wise proverbs, but godliness is detestable to a sinner.	You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; do not stray or you will fall.	7
26	If you long for wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will give it you in plenty.	You who fear the Lord, trust in him, and you shall not miss your reward. You who fear the Lord, expect prosperity,	8 9
27	For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline; fidelity and gentleness are his delight.	lasting happiness and favour. Consider the past generations and see:	10
28	Do not disregard the fear of the Lord or approach him without sincerity.	was anyone who trusted the Lord ever disappointed?	
29	Do not act a part before the eyes of the world; keep guard over your lips.	was anyone who stood firm in the fear of him ever deserted? did he ever neglect anyone who prayed to him?	
30	Never be arrogant, for fear you fall and bring disgrace on yourself; the Lord will reveal your secrets and humble you before the assembly, because it was not the fear of the Lord that prompted you, <sup>f</sup> but your heart was full of hypocrisy.	For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; he forgives sins and comes to the rescue in time of trouble.	11
		Woe to faint hearts and nerveless hands and to the sinner who leads a double life!	12
2	MY SON, IF YOU ASPIRE TO BE A servant of the Lord, prepare yourself for testing.	Woe to the feeble-hearted! they have no faith,	13
2	Set a straight course, be resolute, and do not lose your head in time of disaster.	and therefore shall go unprotected. Woe to you who have given up the struggle!	14
3	Hold fast to him, never desert him, if you would end your days in prosperity.	What will you do when the Lord's reckoning comes?	
4	Bear every hardship that is sent you; be patient under humiliation, whatever the cost.	Those who fear the Lord never disobey his words; and all who love him keep to his ways.	15
5	For gold is assayed by fire, and the Lord proves men in the furnace of humiliation.		

<sup>f</sup> Or because you had no concern for the fear of the Lord.

26-28: Here, as in the preceding poem (1.11-20), wisdom is identified with reverence. 29-30: Public *disgrace* is a severe punishment; man's reputation is a frequent theme.

2.1-6: **Testing and endurance.** Testing of one's wholehearted devotion to God is here the central meaning of suffering (as in 4.17; 33.1; Job chs. 1-2), in contrast to discipline for past transgressions (Prov.3.11-12; Job 5.17-19). 1: *My son*: the usual address of teacher to student (Prov.1.8). 3: Though reward may be delayed, the righteous will be vindicated before they *end their days*. 5: Man and *gold* alike show their wholeness through testing.

2.7-11: **God's promise confirmed by experience.** Three lines beginning *You who fear the Lord* are balanced by three with *Those who fear the Lord* (vv. 15-17); three *Woe's* set in between complete the pattern (vv. 12-14). 10: The history of *the past generations* is part of the evidence of experience; see Job 8.8-10.

2.12-14: **Woe to the inconsistent.** 12: The indecisiveness of a *double life* and of those who are *faint* and *feeble of heart* (v. 13) contrasts with the wholehearted decision of those who trust the Lord.

2.15-18: **The character of the reverent.** 15: From parallelism of the two poetic lines it is clear

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| <p>16 Those who fear the Lord try to do<br/>his will;<br/>and all who love him steep<br/>themselves in the law.</p> <p>17 Those who fear the Lord are always<br/>prepared;<br/>they humble themselves before him<br/>and say:</p> <p>18 'We will fall into the hands of the<br/>Lord, not into the hands of<br/>men,<br/>for his majesty is equalled by his<br/>mercy.'</p> <p><b>3 CHILDREN, LISTEN TO ME, FOR I AM<br/>your father;<br/>do what I tell you, if you wish to be<br/>safe.</b></p> <p>2 It is the Lord's will that a father<br/>should be honoured by his<br/>children,<br/>and a mother's rights recognized by<br/>her sons.</p> <p>3 Respect for a father atones for sins,<br/>4 and to honour your mother is to<br/>lay up a fortune.</p> <p>5 A son who respects his father will<br/>be made happy by his own<br/>children;<br/>when he prays, he will be heard.</p> <p>6 He who honours his father will have<br/>a long life,<br/>and he who obeys the Lord comforts<br/>his mother;</p> <p>7 he obeys his parents as though he<br/>were their slave.</p> <p>8 My son, honour your father by word<br/>and deed,<br/>so that you may receive his blessing.</p> <p>9 For a father's blessing strengthens<br/>his children's houses,<br/>but a mother's curse uproots their<br/>foundations.</p> <p>10 Never seek honour at the cost of</p> | <p>discredit to your father;<br/>how can his discredit bring honour<br/>to you?</p> <p>A man is honoured if his father is 11<br/>honoured,<br/>and neglect of a mother is a disgrace<br/>to children.</p> <p>My son, look after your father in 12<br/>his old age;<br/>do nothing to vex him as long as he<br/>lives.</p> <p>Even if his mind fails, make 13<br/>allowances for him,<br/>and do not despise him because you<br/>are in your prime.</p> <p>If you support your father it will 14<br/>never be forgotten,<br/>but be put to your credit against<br/>your sins;</p> <p>when you are in trouble, it will be 15<br/>remembered in your favour,<br/>and your sins will melt away like<br/>frost in the sunshine.</p> <p>To leave your father in the lurch is 16<br/>like blasphemy,<br/>and to provoke your mother's anger<br/>is to call down the Lord's<br/>curse.</p> <p>My son, be unassuming in all you do, 17<br/>and those the Lord approves will<br/>love you.</p> <p>The greater you are, the humbler 18<br/>you must be,<br/>and the Lord will show you favour.<sup>g</sup></p> <p>For his power is great, 20<br/>and he is honoured by the humble.</p> <p>Do not pry into things too hard for 21<br/>you<br/>or examine what is beyond your<br/>reach.</p> <p>Meditate on the commandments 22<br/>you have been given;</p> |
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<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses add (19) Many are high and mighty;  
but he reveals his secrets to the modest.

that *fear* and *love* of God are synonymous. **16:** The *law* of Israel is associated with wisdom throughout *Ecclus.*, in contrast to *Prov.* **18:** See 2 *Sam.* 24.14; in contrast to *Prov.*, *Ecclus.* refers frequently to God's *mercy*.

**3.1-16: Respect for parents.** The topic is drawn both from the wise men (*Prov.* 10.1) and especially from the Law (*Exod.* 20.12; *Deut.* 5.16). **1:** *Safe*, lit. "saved," means doing well in this world. **2:** *The Lord's will* joins divine command to the teacher's mandate. The *mother's rights* are asserted with the father's. **3:** *Atoning for sin* here and in v. 30 means that a good deed cancels out a bad one; see vv. 14-15 and *Dan.* 4.27. **16:** *Deserting one's parents* is considered to be as serious as *blasphemy*; see *Exod.* 21.17. *The Lord's curse* is an expression of God's role in retribution. In closing, the poem returns to God's will, with which it began.

**3.17-24: Need for humility.** Students of the wise men were often from wealthy and successful families; see v. 18. **21-24:** The warning may be against Greek philosophy or against Jewish apocalyptic speculation. The *commandments*—the Law—are sufficient study for the wise man.

- what the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours.
- 23 Do not busy yourself with matters that are beyond you; even what has been shown you is above man's grasp.
- 24 Many have been led astray by their speculations, and false conjectures have impaired their judgement.<sup>h</sup>
- 26 Stubbornness will come to a bad end, and the man who flirts with danger will lose his life.
- 27 Stubbornness brings a load of troubles; the sinner piles sin on sin.
- 28 When calamity befalls the arrogant, there is no cure; wickedness is too deeply rooted in him.
- 29 A sensible man will take a proverb to heart; an attentive ear is the desire of the wise.
- 30 As water quenches a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin.
- 31 He who repays a good turn is mindful of the future; when he falls he will find support.
- 4 My son, do not cheat a poor man of his livelihood or keep him waiting with hungry eyes.
- 2 Do not tantalize a starving man or drive him to desperation in his need.
- 3 If a man is desperate, do not add to his troubles or keep him waiting for the charity he asks.
- 4 Do not reject the appeal of a man in distress
- or turn your back on the poor; when he begs for alms, do not look the other way
- 5 and so give him reason to curse you, for if he curses you in his bitterness, his Maker will listen to his prayer.
- 6 Make yourself popular in the assembly, and show deference to the great.
- 7 When a poor man speaks to you, give him your attention
- 8 and answer his greeting politely. Rescue the downtrodden from the oppressor,
- 9 and be firm when giving a verdict. Be a father to orphans
- 10 and like a husband to their mother; then the Most High will call you his son,
- and his love for you will be greater than a mother's.
- WISDOM RAISES HER SONS TO greatness
- 11 and cares for those who seek her. To love her is to love life;
- 12 to rise early for her sake is to be filled with joy.
- 13 The man who attains her will win recognition;
- the Lord's blessing rests upon every place she enters.
- 14 To serve her is to serve the Holy One,
- and the Lord loves those who love her.
- 15 Her dutiful servant will give laws to the heathen,
- and because he listens to her, his home will be secure.
- 16 If he trusts her, he will possess her and bequeath her to his descendants.

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses add (25) Without eyes you will be deprived of light; if you have no knowledge, do not lay claim to it.

3.26-31: The stubborn and the sensible man. The destructive consequences of not following the warnings of vv. 17-24 are in contrast to the success of the teachable person. 28: Calamity will not work a cure, i.e. repentance in the arrogant.

4.1-6: Responsibility to the poor. 1-2: Compare the proverb, "He who gives quickly gives twice." 6: The curse was a prayer of special potency; see Num.22.1-6.

4.7-10: On being a leader. Leadership requires concern for, and courtesy to, rich and poor alike. 10: One becomes a son of God by acting as he does.

4.11-19: Wisdom gives life. The rewards of greatness (v. 11), recognition (v. 13), and security (v. 15) are summed up as life (v. 12). 11: Sons: those who put wisdom into practice, i.e. her disciples. 12: The comparison of wisdom to an attractive woman was widespread (see Prov. chs. 8-9), and the more striking since the danger of a woman's lure was also a standard motif (9.2-9). 14: Wisdom is not only common sense, it is also the worship of the Holy One.

- 17 At first she will lead him by devious ways,  
filling him with craven fears.  
Her discipline will be a torment to him,  
and her decrees a hard test  
until he trusts her with all his heart.<sup>f</sup>
- 18 Then she will come straight back  
to him again and gladden him,  
and reveal her secrets to him.
- 19 But if he strays from her, she will  
desert him  
and abandon him to his fate.
- 20 WATCH YOUR CHANCE AND DEFEND  
yourself against wrong,  
and do not be over-modest in your  
own cause;
- 21 for there is a modesty that leads to  
sin,  
as well as a modesty that brings  
honour and favour.
- 22 Do not be untrue to yourself in  
deference to another,  
or so diffident that you fail in your  
duty.
- 23 Never remain silent when a word  
might put things right,
- 24 for wisdom shows itself by speech,  
and a man's education must find  
expression in words.
- 25 Do not argue against the truth,  
but have a proper sense of your  
own ignorance.
- 26 Never be ashamed to admit your  
mistakes,  
nor try to swim against the current.
- 27 Do not let yourself be a doormat  
to a fool  
or curry favour with the powerful.
- 28 Fight to the death for truth,  
and the Lord God will fight on  
your side.
- 29 Do not be forward in your speech
- but slack and neglectful in your  
work.
- Do not play the lion in your home 30  
or swagger<sup>g</sup> among your servants.
- Do not keep your hand open to 31  
receive  
and close it when it is your turn to  
give.
- Do not rely upon your money 5  
and say, 'I am independent.'
- Do not yield to every impulse you 2  
can gratify  
or follow the desires of your heart.
- Do not say, 'I am my own master'; 3  
you may be sure the Lord will call  
you to account.
- Do not say, 'I sinned, yet nothing 4  
happened to me';  
it is only that the Lord is very  
patient.
- Do not be so confident of pardon 5  
that you sin again and again.
- Do not say, 'His mercy is so great, 6  
he will pardon my sins, however  
many.'
- To him belong both mercy and  
wrath,  
and sinners feel the weight of his  
retribution.
- Come back to the Lord without 7  
delay;  
do not put it off from one day to  
the next,  
or suddenly the Lord's wrath will be  
upon you,  
and you will perish at the time of  
reckoning.
- Do not rely upon ill-gotten gains, 8  
for they will not avail in time of  
calamity.
- Do not winnow in every wind 9  
or walk along every path.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Or until she can trust him.

<sup>j</sup> Possible meaning: Gk. *obscure*.

<sup>k</sup> Gk. adds this is the mark of duplicity (from 6. 1).

17: Nowhere else is the anguish of wisdom's *discipline* put so sharply; but see 6.18–21. 18: Wisdom is not a public knowledge, but the *secret* of the few who earn it (39.7; Job 11.6).

4.20–31: **False and inadequate humility.** Just as true humility is praised (3.17–24), so both false humility, vv. 20–28, and its opposite, the fault of arrogance, vv. 29–31, are condemned. *Truth* (vv. 25,28) is the balance. 26: To try to justify one's *mistakes* is as useless as swimming against the *current*.

5.1–7: **Reliance on God.** Three sections (4.20–31; 5.1–7; 5.8–6.4) are held together by the frequent use of the negative command. In 5.1–6, six negatives show false bases of trust. 1: *Do not rely*: this ties 5.1 to 5.8. 7: *Coming back to the Lord* gives the true basis of trust. Though a delay of justice may be observed, nevertheless God will repay in this life.

5.8–6.4: **Sincerity, integrity, and self-control.** 9: To *winnow in every wind* means to be an



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| 10 | Stand firmly by what you know<br>and be consistent in what you say.   | but is nowhere to be found in time<br>of trouble;   |          |
| 11 | Be quick to listen,<br>but take time over your answer.  | when you are prosperous, he will<br>be your second self   | 11       |
| 12 | Answer a man if you know what to<br>say,<br>but if not, hold your tongue.   | and make free with your servants,<br>but if you come down in the world,<br>he will turn against you   | 12       |
| 13 | Honour or shame can come through<br>speaking,<br>and a man's tongue may be his<br>downfall.   | and you will not see him again.<br>Hold your enemies at a distance,<br>and keep a wary eye on your<br>friends.  | 13       |
| 14 | Do not get a name for being a gossip<br>or lay traps with your tongue;<br>for as there is shame in store for the<br>thief,<br>so there is harsh censure for<br>duplicity. | A faithful friend is a secure shelter;<br>whoever finds one has found a<br>treasure.  | 14       |
| 15 | Avoid the little faults as well as the<br>great.  | A faithful friend is beyond price;<br>his worth is more than money can<br>buy.  | 15       |
| 6  | Do not change from a friend into<br>an enemy,<br>for a bad name brings shame and<br>disgrace,<br>and this is the mark of duplicity.                                       | A faithful friend is an elixir of life,<br>found only by those who fear the<br>Lord.<br>The man who fears the Lord keeps<br>his friendships in repair,<br>for he treats his neighbour as himself. | 16<br>17 |
| 2  | Never be roused by violent passions;<br>they will tear you apart like a bull, <sup>1</sup>  | MY SON, SEEK WISDOM'S DISCIPLINE<br>while you are young,<br>and when your hair is white, you<br>will find her still.  | 18       |
| 3  | they will eat up your leaves, destroy<br>your fruit,<br>and leave you a withered tree.  | Come to her like a farmer ploughing<br>and sowing;  | 19       |
| 4  | Evil passion ruins the man who<br>harbours it,<br>to the delight of his gloating enemies.   | then wait for her plentiful harvest.<br>If you cultivate her, you will labour<br>for a little while,<br>but soon you will be eating her<br>crops.   | 19       |
| 5  | Pleasant words win many friends,<br>and an affable manner makes<br>acquaintance easy.   | How harsh she seems to the<br>undisciplined!  | 20       |
| 6  | Accept a greeting from everyone,<br>but advice from only one in a<br>thousand.  | The fool cannot abide her;<br>like a stone she is a burden that<br>tests his strength,  | 21       |
| 7  | When you make a friend, begin by<br>testing him,<br>and be in no hurry to trust him.  | but he is quick to toss her aside.<br>Wisdom well deserves her name,<br>for she is not accessible to many.  | 22       |
| 8  | Some friends are loyal when it suits<br>them<br>but desert you in time of trouble.  | Listen, my son, accept my<br>judgement;   | 23       |
| 9  | Some friends turn into enemies<br>and shame you by making the<br>quarrel public.  |   |          |
| 10 | Another sits at your table,   |   |          |

<sup>1</sup> they . . . bull: probable meaning; Gk. and Heb. both obscure.

opportunist. 6.2-3: Control of *passions* rather than their free expression is real vitality. 4: *Gloating enemies*: a form of punishment.

6.5-17: *Friendship*. 5: *Pleasant words*: contrast with 5.10-14. 6-15: *Friends*, false and true, are nearly universal themes of secular wisdom. 16-17: This common-sense section ends on the religious note, *fear of the Lord*. On treating the *neighbour* as oneself, see 31.15.

6.18-7.3: *The struggle for, and choice of, wisdom*. (Compare with 4.11-19.) 21: *Stone . . . that tests his strength*: perhaps a training exercise. 22: An obscure Heb. pun may lie behind this verse. 23-31: *Slavery to wisdom* (*fetters, collar*, v. 24) becomes a princely status (vv. 29-31).

	do not reject my advice.	Do not sow in the furrows of	3
24	Put your feet in wisdom's fetters	injustice,	
	and your neck into her collar.	for fear of reaping a sevenfold crop.	
25	Stoop to carry her on your shoulders	Do not ask the Lord for high office	4
	and do not chafe at her bonds.	or the king for preferment.	
26	Come to her whole-heartedly,	Do not pose as a righteous man	5
	and keep to her ways with all your	before the Lord	
	might.	or play the sage in the king's presence.	
27	Follow her track, and she will make	Do not aspire to be a judge,	6
	herself known to you;	unless you have the strength to	
	once you have grasped her, never	put an end to injustice;	
	let her go.	for you may be intimidated by a	
28	In the end you will find the relief	man of rank	
	she offers;	and so compromise your integrity.	
	she will transform herself into joy	Do not commit an offence against	7
	for you.	the community	
29	Her fetters will become your strong	and so incur a public disgrace.	
	defence		
	and her collar a gorgeous robe.	Do not pile sin upon sin,	8
30	Her yoke <sup>m</sup> is a golden ornament	for even one is enough to make you	
	and her bonds a purple cord.	guilty.	
31	You shall put her on like a gorgeous	Do not say, 'My liberality will be	9
	robe	taken into account;	
	and wear her like a splendid crown.	when I make an offering to God	
		Most High he will accept it.'	
32	If it is your wish, my son, you can	Do not grow weary of praying	10
	be trained;	or neglect the giving of charity.	
	if you give your mind to it, you can	Never laugh at a man in his bitter	11
	become clever;	humiliation,	
33	if you enjoy listening, you will learn;	for there is One who both humbles	
	if you are attentive, you will grow	and exalts.	
	wise.	Do not plot to deceive your	12
34	When you stand among your elders,	brother	
	decide who is wise and join him.	or pay back a friend in his own coin.	
35	Listen gladly to every godly	Refuse ever to tell a lie;	13
	argument	it is a habit from which no good	
	and see that no wise proverb	comes.	
	escapes you.	Never be garrulous among your	14
36	If you discover a wise man, rise	elders	
	early to visit him;	or repeat yourself when you pray.	
	let your feet wear out his doorstep.	Do not resent manual labour or	15
37	Ponder the decrees of the Lord	farm-work,	
	and study his commandments at	for it was ordained by the Most	
	all times.	High.	
	He will strengthen your mind	Do not enlist in the ranks of	16
	and grant your desire for wisdom.	sinners;	
7	Do no evil, and evil will not come	remember that retribution will not	
	upon you;	delay.	
2	turn away from wrong, and it will		
	avoid you.		

*m* *So Heb.*; *Gk.* Upon her.

For *relief* (v. 28) and *yoke* (v. 30; compare 51.26), see Mt.11.28–30. 32–33: The fourfold *if* emphasizes freedom of choice. 34–37: To *listen* to the wise (vv. 34–36) and to *study* the Law (v. 37) bring the same wisdom.

7.4–17: **Warnings against pride.** In this series of imperatives, the interplay of common sense and faith is noteworthy. 5: Action *before the Lord* is paralleled to that *in the king's presence*. 14: See Mt.6.7. 15: *Farm-work* was widely praised as honorable (see Gen.2.15), but in 38.25

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 17 | Humble yourself to the uttermost,<br>for the doom of the impious is fire<br>and worms.                                  | Love your Maker with all your might 30<br>and do not leave his ministers<br>without support.   |
| 18 | Do not part with a friend for gain, <sup>n</sup><br>or a true brother for all the gold of<br>Ophir.                     | Fear the Lord and honour the priest 31<br>and give him his dues, as you have<br>been commanded,<br>the firstfruits, the guilt-offering, and<br>the shoulder of the victim,<br>the dedication sacrifice, and the<br>firstfruits of holy things. |
| 19 | Do not lose the chance of a wise<br>and good wife,<br>for her attractions are worth more<br>than gold.                  | Be open-handed also with the poor, 32<br>so that your own well-being may be<br>complete.   |
| 20 | Do not ill-treat a slave who works<br>honestly<br>or a hired servant whose heart is in<br>his work.                     | Every living man appreciates 33<br>generosity;<br>do not withhold your kindness<br>even when a man is dead.  |
| 21 | Love a good slave from the bottom<br>of your heart<br>and do not grudge him his freedom.                                | Do not turn your back on those 34<br>who weep,<br>but mourn with those who mourn.  |
| 22 | Have you cattle? Take care of them,<br>and if they bring you profit, keep them.   | Do not hesitate to visit the sick, 35<br>for by such visits you will win their<br>affection.   |
| 23 | Have you sons? Discipline them<br>and break them in from their earliest<br>years.                                       | Whatever you are doing, remember 36<br>the end that awaits you;<br>then all your life you will never go<br>wrong.  |
| 24 | Have you daughters? See that they<br>are chaste,<br>and do not be too lenient with them.                                | Do not pit yourself against a great 8<br>man,<br>for fear of falling into his power.   |
| 25 | Marry your daughter, and a great<br>load will be off your hands;<br>but give her to a sensible husband.                 | Do not quarrel with a rich man; 2<br>you may be sure he will outbid you.<br>For money has been the ruin of many<br>and has misled the minds of kings.  |
| 26 | If you have a wife after your own<br>heart, do not divorce her;<br>but do not trust yourself to one you<br>cannot love. | Do not argue with a long-winded 3<br>man,<br>and so add fuel to his fire.  |
| 27 | Honour your father with all your<br>heart<br>and do not forget your mother's<br>birth-pangs;                            | Never make fun of an ill-mannered 4<br>man,<br>or you may hear your ancestors<br>insulted.   |
| 28 | remember that your parents brought<br>you into the world;<br>how can you repay what they have<br>done for you?          |  |
| 29 | Fear the Lord with all your heart<br>and reverence his priests.   |  |

<sup>n</sup> Probable reading (compare 27. 1), supported by Vss.:  
Gk. for a trifle.

it is seen as in conflict with study. 17: *Fire and worms*: the underlying Gk. differs from the Heb., which speaks rather of death (worms) as the fate of all men, and not as punishment for the impious.

7.18–28: **How to act in life's closest relationships.** 18: *Ophir*: a well-known source for gold, perhaps in southwest Arabia; see 1 Kgs.9.28. 19: *Do not lose the chance*: Heb. lit. "do not reject," alludes to divorce; see v. 26 and Deut.24.1. 22: The only nonpersonal relationship in the list. 24–25: Marriage was arranged by the father; until then the *daughter* was kept under close supervision. 27–28: Here gratitude is the motive for honoring parents; contrast 3.1–16.

7.29–36: **Religious duties.** 29–31: In contrast to Prov., the priests and formal worship are important to the author; compare 50.1–21. 32–35: Other religious duties are care for the *poor* and *sick*. *Kindness to the dead* means providing proper burial; see Tob.1.17. 36: The same closing advice as in v. 17.

8.1–19: **Behavior toward various people.** This section deals with a wider circle than 7.18–28. 1–7: Wisdom advises caution in difficult relationships; See also vv. 10–19. 3: See Prov.26.21.

- 5 Do not rebuke a man who is  
already penitent;  
remember that we are all guilty.
- 6 Despise no man for being old;  
some of us are growing old as well.
- 7 Do not be smug over another man's  
death;  
remember that we must all die.
- 8 Do not neglect the studies of the  
learned,  
but apply yourself to their maxims;  
from these you will learn discipline,  
and how to be the servant of  
princes.
- 9 Do not ignore the discourse of your  
elders,  
for they themselves learned from  
their fathers;  
they can teach you to understand  
and to have an answer ready in time  
of need.
- 10 Do not kindle a sinner's coals,  
for fear of being burnt in the flames  
of his fire.
- 11 Do not let a man's insolence bring  
you to your feet;  
he will only sit waiting to trap you  
with your own words.
- 12 Do not lend to a man with more  
influence than yourself,  
or, if you do, write off the loan as a  
loss.
- 13 Do not stand surety beyond your  
means,  
and, when you do stand surety, be  
prepared to pay.
- 14 Do not go to law with a judge,  
for in deference to his position they  
will give him the verdict.
- 15 Do not go travelling with a reckless  
man:  
you may find him a burden on you.  
He will do as he fancies,
- and his folly will bring death on you  
as well.
- Do not fall out with a hot-tempered 16  
man  
or walk with him in unfrequented  
places;  
he thinks nothing of bloodshed,  
and where no help is at hand he will  
set upon you.
- Never discuss your plans with a fool, 17  
for he cannot keep a secret.
- Do nothing private in the presence 18  
of a stranger;  
you do not know what use he will  
make of it.
- Do not tell what is in your mind to 19  
all comers  
or accept favours from them.
- Do not be jealous over the wife you 9  
cherish,  
and so put into her head the idea of  
wronging you.
- Do not surrender yourself to a woman 2  
and let her trample down your  
strength.
- Do not go near a loose woman, 3  
for fear of falling into her snares.
- Do not keep company with a 4  
dancing-girl,  
or you may be caught by her tricks.
- Do not let your mind dwell on a 5  
virgin,  
or you may be trapped into paying  
damages for her.
- Never surrender yourself to 6  
prostitutes,  
for fear of losing all you possess,  
nor gaze about you in the city streets 7  
or saunter in deserted corners.
- Do not let your eye linger on a 8  
woman's figure  
or your thoughts dwell on beauty  
not yours to possess.
- Many have been seduced by the  
beauty of a woman,

**8-9:** In contrast, toward the *learned* and the *elders*, one can be open. **8:** Training for the service of *princes*, i.e. government service, was an age-old function of wisdom teaching; here the maxim may be merely traditional, or it may apply to the defense of Jewish interests before Hellenistic rulers. **9:** The chain of tradition was important to the ancients. **15:** Caution in traveling comes from the author's own experience; see 39.4; 51.13. **19:** Here, as throughout the chapter, except in vv. 8-9, the clue to wisdom is withholding oneself.

**9.1-9:** Behavior toward women. All that follows, aside from v. 1, urges holding oneself back from trouble. **1:** *Do not be jealous*, i.e. have confidence, is the only positive advice. **2:** *Do not surrender yourself*: probably alludes to one's wife; a warning against too much confidence. **5:** *Damages* would be paid to her father (Exod.22.16-17; Deut.22.29). Financial and social risks rather than personal loyalty in marriage are stressed.

	which kindles passion like fire.	A wise ruler trains his people,	10
9	Never sit at table with another man's wife or join her in a drinking party, for fear of succumbing to her charms and slipping into fatal disaster.	and gives them sound and orderly government. Like ruler, like ministers; like sovereign, like subjects; a king untutored is the people's ruin, but wise rulers make a city fit to live in.	2 3
10	Do not desert an old friend; a new one is not worth as much. A new friend is like new wine; you do not enjoy drinking it until it has matured.		
		<i>Man's life under divine providence</i>	
11	Do not envy a bad man his success; you do not know what fate is in store for him.	THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD IS in the hand of the Lord; at the right time he appoints the right man to rule it.	4
12	Take no pleasure in the pleasures of the wicked; remember that they will not go scot-free all their lives.	In the Lord's hand is all human success; it is he who confers honour on the legislator.	5
13	Keep clear of a man who has power to kill, and you will not be haunted by the fear of death. If you do approach him, make no false step or you will risk losing your life. Tell yourself that you are making your way among pitfalls, or walking on the battlements of the city.	Do not nurse a grievance against your neighbour for every offence, and do not resort to acts of insolence. Arrogance is hateful to God and man, and injustice is offensive to both. Empire passes from nation to nation because of injustice, insolence, and greed.	6 7 8
14	Take the measure of your neighbours as best you can, and accept advice from those who are wise.	What has man to be so proud of? He is only dust and ashes, subject even in life to bodily decay. <sup>o</sup> A long illness mocks the doctor's skill; today's king is tomorrow's corpse.	9 10
15	Let your discussion be with intelligent men and all your talk about the law of the Most High.	When a man dies, he comes into an inheritance of maggots and vermin and worms. The origin of pride is to forsake the Lord, man's heart revolting against his Maker; as its origin is sin,	11 12 13
16	Choose the company of good men at table, and take pride in fearing the Lord.		
17	A craftsman is recognized by his skilful hand and a councillor by his words of wisdom.		
18	A gossip is the terror of his town, detested for his unguarded talk.		

<sup>o</sup> subject . . . decay: probable meaning, based on Heb.;  
Gk. obscure.

9.10-16: Social behavior. 11: God's justice and the uncertainty of life are held together in this statement. 13: *Walk on battlements*: expose oneself to deadly weapons.

9.17-10.3: The skill of rulers. The language shifts from command to description. 17: A leader is like a *craftsman*. 10.2-3: The ideal government is paternalistic. *King* was a traditional term in wisdom, here equivalent to *ruler*; the Jews had no king at this time.

10.4-11.28: Rulership and pride. A series of poems on pride repeatedly alludes to the ruler as prince, a model of the man tempted to pride. 1 Sam.2.1-10 may have suggested many of the themes in this section. 4-5: Babylonian and Egyptian kings also claimed to be appointed by God. 6-11: Against pride which destroys both *man* (v. 9) and *nation* (v. 8), the poet points

- so persistence in it brings on a deluge  
of depravity.  
Therefore the Lord sends upon  
them signal punishments  
and brings them to utter disaster.
- 14 The Lord overturns the thrones of  
princes  
and enthrones the gentle in their  
place.
- 15 The Lord pulls up nations by the  
roots  
and plants the humble instead.
- 16 The Lord lays waste the territory of  
nations,  
destroying them to the very  
foundations of the earth.
- 17 Some he shrivels away to nothing,  
so that all memory of them vanishes  
from the earth.
- 18 Pride was not the Creator's design  
for man  
nor violent anger for those born of  
woman.
- 19 What creature is worthy of honour?  
Man.  
What men? Those who fear the Lord.  
What creature is worthy of contempt?  
Man.  
What men? Those who break the  
commandments.
- 20 As the members of the family honour  
their head,  
so the Lord honours those who fear  
him.<sup>p</sup>
- 22 The rich, the famous, and the  
poor—  
their only boast is the fear of the  
Lord.
- 23 It is unjust to despise a poor man  
who is intelligent,  
and wrong to honour a man who is  
a sinner.
- 24 The prince, the judges, and the ruler  
win high honours,  
but none of them is as great as the  
godfearing man.
- 25 The wise slave will have free men to  
wait on him,  
and a man of sense will not grumble  
at it.
- DO NOT BE TOO CLEVER TO DO A  
day's work  
or boast when you have nothing to  
live on.  
It is better to work and have more  
than enough  
than to boast and go hungry.  
My son, in all modesty, keep your  
self-respect  
and value yourself at your true  
worth.  
Who will speak up for a man who  
is his own enemy,  
or respect one who disparages  
himself?  
A poor man may be honoured for  
his wisdom,  
a rich man for his wealth;  
if a man is honoured in poverty,  
how much more in wealth!  
And if he is despised in wealth,  
how much more in poverty!  
A poor man with wisdom can hold  
his head high  
and take his seat among the great.
- 26
- 27
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31
- 11
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- Do not overrate one man for his  
good looks  
or be repelled by another man's  
appearance.  
The bee is small among winged  
creatures,  
yet her produce takes first place  
for sweetness.  
Do not pride yourself on your fine  
clothes  
or be haughty when honours come  
to you;  
for the Lord can perform marvels  
which are hidden from the eyes of  
men.  
Many kings have been reduced to  
sitting on the ground  
while a mere nobody has worn the  
crown.  
Many rulers have been stripped of  
their honours,  
and great men have found themselves  
at the mercy of others.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses add (21) Fear the Lord, and you will be accepted; be obstinate and proud, and you will be rejected.

to death which levels all, even the *king* (vv. 10–11). 14–18: Compare Isa.40.15–17,23–24. 19: The same answer to opposite questions was a teaching device. 25: There is no literal implication here of freeing the slave; contrast 7.21. 30–31: In themselves *poverty* and *wealth* are neutral as true values but wealth does make a difference in the way a man is treated. 11.2–6:

- |    |   |   |                |
|----|---|---|----------------|
| 7  | Do not find fault before examining the evidence; think first, and criticize afterwards.   | grow old at your work.<br>Do not envy a rogue his success;  | 21             |
| 8  | Do not answer without first listening, and do not interrupt when another is speaking.   | trust the Lord and stick to your job.<br>It is no difficult thing for the Lord to make a poor man rich in a moment.   |                |
| 9  | Never take sides in a quarrel not your own or become involved in the disputes of rascals.   | The Lord's blessing is the reward of piety, which blossoms in one short hour.<br>Do not say, 'What use am I? What good <sup>r</sup> can the future hold for me?'  | 22<br>23       |
| 10 | My son, do not engage in too many transactions; if you attempt too much, you will come to grief. When you are in pursuit, you will not overtake; when you are in flight, you will not escape. | And do not say, 'I am independent; nothing can ever go wrong for me.'<br>Hardship is forgotten in time of success, and success in time of hardship.<br>Even on the day a man dies it is easy for the Lord | 24<br>25<br>26 |
| 11 | One man slaves and strains and hurries and is all the farther behind.   | to give him his deserts.<br>One hour's misery wipes out all memory of delight,  | 27             |
| 12 | Another is slow-witted and in need of help, lacking in strength and abounding in poverty; but the Lord turns a kindly eye upon him and lifts him up out of his miserable plight.              | and a man's end reveals his true character.<br>Call no man happy before he dies, for not until death is a man known for what he is. <sup>s</sup>  | 28             |
| 13 | He raises him to dignity to the amazement of all.   | DO NOT INVITE ALL COMERS INTO YOUR home;<br>dishonesty has many disguises.<br>A proud man's mind is like a decoy-partridge in its cage,   | 29<br>30       |
| 14 | Good fortune and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, all come from the Lord. <sup>q</sup>  | or like a spy watching for a false step.<br>He waits for a chance to twist good into evil   | 31             |
| 17 | His gifts to the devout are lasting; his approval brings unending success.  | or to cast blame on innocent actions.<br>A small spark kindles many coals, and the insinuations of a bad man end in bloodshed.  | 32             |
| 18 | A man may grow rich by stinting and sparing, but what does he get for his pains?  | Beware of a scoundrel and his evil plots,<br>or he may ruin your reputation for ever.   | 33             |
| 19 | When he says, 'I have earned my rest, now I can live on my savings', he does not know how long it will be before he must die and leave his wealth to others.                                  |   |                |
| 20 | Stand by your contract and give your mind to it;  |   |                |

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses add (15) From the Lord come wisdom, understanding, and love, knowledge of the law, and the doing of good works. (16) Error and darkness have been with sinners from their birth, and evil grows old along with those who take delight in it.  
<sup>r</sup> Or 'What more do I need? What greater success . . .  
<sup>s</sup> not . . . he is: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* a man is known by his children.

The unpredictability of life is a warning against pride. 7-9: Discretion in judgment implies avoiding overinvolvement. 10-13: Overreaching oneself is self-destructive; compare vv. 2-6. 14-19: God's gifts are *lasting* (v. 17); one's own achievement may be snatched away (v. 19). 20-28: This poem is a meditation on the popular proverb, *Call no man happy before he dies* (v. 28). The skeptical proverb is given religious meaning.

11.29-13.13: Caution against being taken advantage of. God is mentioned only in 12.2,6 in

- 34 Admit a stranger to your home and he will stir up trouble for you and make you a stranger to your own flesh and blood.
- 12 If you do a good deed, make sure to whom you are doing it; then you will have credit for your kindness.
- 2 A good turn done to a godfearing man will be rewarded, if not by him, then by the Most High.
- 3 No good comes to the persistent wrong-doer or to the man who never gives alms;<sup>t</sup>
- 5 refuse him bread; give him nothing at all; he will only use your gifts to get the better of you, and you will suffer a double wrong in return for the favours you have done him.
- 6 The Most High himself hates sinners and sends bad men what they deserve.
- 7 Give to a good man, but never help a sinner; keep your good works for the humble, not the insolent.<sup>u</sup>
- 8 Prosperity does not reveal your friends; adversity does not conceal your enemies.
- 9 When all goes well a man's enemies are friendly,<sup>v</sup> but in hard times even his friend will desert him.
- 10 Never trust your enemy; he will turn vicious as sure as metal rusts.
- 11 If he appears humble and obsequious, take care! Be on your guard against him! Behave towards him like a man who polishes a mirror to make sure that it does not corrode away.
- 12 Do not have him at your side,
- or he will trip you up and supplant you.  
Do not let him sit at your right hand,  
or he will soon be wanting your own seat;  
and in the end you will see the force of my words  
and recall my warning with regret.  
Who sympathizes with a snake-charmer when he is bitten,  
or with a tamer of wild animals? 13  
No more does anyone pity the man 14  
who keeps bad company  
and involves himself in another's wickedness.  
He may stand by you for a while, 15  
but, if you falter, his friendship will not last.
- An enemy has honey on his lips, 16  
but in his heart he plans to trip you into the ditch.  
He may have tears in his eyes,  
but give him a chance and he will not stop at bloodshed.  
If disaster overtakes you, you will 17  
find him there ahead of you,  
ready, with a pretence of help, to pull your feet from under you.  
Then he will nod his head and rub 18  
his hands  
and spread gossip, showing his true colours.  
Handle pitch and it will make you 13  
dirty;  
keep company with an arrogant man  
and you will grow like him.
- Do not lift a weight too heavy for 2  
you,  
keeping company with a man greater  
and richer than yourself.  
How can a jug be friends with a  
kettle?

<sup>t</sup> The order of the following verses has been disturbed in all versions: Gk. reads . . . gives alms; (4) give to a godfearing man, but never help a sinner; (5) keep your good works for the humble, not the insolent; refuse him . . . (compare verse 7).

<sup>u</sup> keep . . . insolent: this is the beginning of verse 5 in Gk.  
<sup>v</sup> So Heb.; Gk. grieve.

this hardheaded, practical section. 12.1-7: Reciprocity in good deeds is urged. God's hatred of sinners is the motivation for the advice, *never help a sinner* (vv. 6-7); contrast Ezek.18.23. 11: The *mirror* was of metal and needed constant polishing; likewise, constant vigilance is the only protection from the corrosion (v. 10) of the enemy's wiles. 12: The reference to *my words* is a threat of "I told you so" from the teacher. 18: *Nod his head*: a gesture of triumphant derision. 13.1: The first line has become an English proverb. 2: The *jug* of clay would be broken



	If they knock together, the one will be smashed.	so keep your secrets to yourself and be very careful,	13
3	A rich man does wrong, and adds insult to injury; a poor man is wronged, and must apologize into the bargain.	for you are walking on the brink of ruin. <sup>w</sup>	
4	If you can serve his turn, a rich man will exploit you, but if you are in need, he will leave you alone.	Every animal loves its like, and every man his neighbour.	15
5	If you are in funds, he will be your constant companion, and drain you dry without a twinge of remorse.	All creatures flock together with their kind, and men form attachments with their own sort.	16
6	He may need you; and then he will deceive you, and will be all smiles and encouragement, paying you compliments and asking, 'What can I do for you?'	What has a wolf in common with a lamb, or a sinner with a man of piety? What peace can there be between hyena and dog, what peace between rich man and pauper?	17
7	embarrassing you with his hospitality, until he has drained you two or three times over; but in the end he will laugh at you. Afterwards, when he sees you, he will pass you by, nodding his head over you.	As lions prey on the wild asses of the desert, so the rich batten on the poor. As humility disgusts the proud, so is the rich man disgusted by the poor.	18
8	Take care not to be led astray and humiliated when you are enjoying yourself.		19
9	If a great man invites you, be slow to accept, and he will be the more pressing in his invitation.	If a rich man staggers, he is held up by his friends; a poor man falls, and his friends disown him as well.	21
10	Do not be forward, for fear of a rebuff, but do not keep aloof, or you may be forgotten.	When a rich man slips, many come to his rescue; if he says something outrageous, they make excuses for him. A poor man makes a slip, and they all criticize him; even if he talks sense, he is not given a hearing.	22
11	Do not presume to converse with him as an equal or be over-confident if he holds you long in talk. The more he speaks, the more he is testing you, examining you even while he smiles.	A rich man speaks, and all are silent; then they praise his speech to the skies. A poor man speaks, and they say, 'Who is this?', and if he stumbles, they give him an extra push.	23
12	The man who cannot keep your secrets is without compunction and will not spare you harm or imprisonment;		24

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses add When you hear this in your sleep, wake up. (14) Love the Lord all your life and appeal to him for salvation.

by the metal *kettle*. 3-7: The tactics of the *rich* require constant guard. 9: The *great man* is the political authority who is trying to extract information; see vv. 12-13.

13.15-23: The incompatibility of rich and poor. 21-23: Society readily supports the rich; compare v. 3 and contrast 10.23-24.

13.24-14.2: True contentment. The harsh facts of the preceding section are balanced by the thought that true happiness comes from within.

	poverty is a crime only to the ungodly.		always offering to the Lord the sacrifice due to him.	
25	It is a man's heart that changes the look on his face either for better or worse.		Remember that death is not to be postponed;	12
26	The sign of a happy heart is a cheerful face, but the invention of proverbs involves wearisome thought.		the hour of your appointment with the grave is undisclosed.	
14	Happy the man who has never let slip a careless word, who has never felt the sting of remorse!		Before you die, do good to your friend;	13
2	Happy the man whose conscience does not accuse him, whose hope has never been disappointed!		reach out as far as you can to help him.	
			Do not miss a day's enjoyment or forgo your share of innocent pleasure.	14
2	Happy the man whose conscience does not accuse him, whose hope has never been disappointed!		Are you to leave to others all you have laboured for	15
			and let them draw lots for your hard-earned wealth?	
			Give and receive; indulge yourself; you need not expect luxuries in the grave.	16
3	It is not proper for a mean man to be rich; what use is money to a miser?		Man's body wears out like a garment;	17
4	He deprives himself only to hoard for other men; others will live in luxury on his riches.		for the ancient sentence stands: You shall die.	
5	How can a man be hard on himself and kind to others? His possessions bring him no enjoyment.		In the thick foliage of a growing tree	18
6	No one is worse than the man who is grudging to himself: his niggardliness is its own punishment.		one crop of leaves falls and another grows instead; so the generations of flesh and blood pass	
7	If ever he does good, it is by mistake, and then in the end he reveals his meanness.		with the death of one and the birth of another.	
8	It is a hard man who has a grudging eye; he turns his back on need and looks the other way.		All man's works decay and vanish, and the workman follows them into oblivion.	19
9	A covetous man's eye is not satisfied with his share; greedy injustice shrivels the soul.			
10	A miser grudges bread and keeps an empty table.		HAPPY THE MAN WHO FIXES HIS thoughts on wisdom	20
11	My son, if you can afford it, do yourself well,		and uses his brains to think, the man who contemplates her ways and ponders her secrets.	21
			Stalk her like a hunter and lie in wait beside her path!	22
			The man who peers in at her windows and listens at her keyhole, who camps beside her house, driving his tent-peg into her wall,	23 24

14.3–19: Wrong and right uses of money. 3–10: Money is useless to a *mean man* or a *miser*; it is a basic conviction of the author that if you cannot be good to yourself, you cannot be good to others; see v. 5. 12: *The grave*: lit. Hades, Heb. *Sheol*, the gloomy underworld. God knows the *hour* of death, but it is unknown to man. 17: *The ancient sentence*: see Gen.2.17. 18: Comparison of passing generations to falling *leaves* was widespread; compare Homer, *Iliad*, VI 145–50. 19: Contrast Rev.14.13.

14.20–15.10: *The quest for wisdom*. Compare with 4.11–19 and Prov.8.32–9.6. 20: *Happy* (“blessed” in the earlier translations) introduces a set style of wisdom speech which declares the way to the fullness of life. 23: *Peers in*: is on familiar terms; contrast the etiquette of 21.23–24 (“a well-bred man stands outside”). 24: *The tent peg*: a symbol of setting up a home.

<p>25 who pitches his tent close by her, where it is best for men to live— 26 he will put his children in her shade and camp beneath her branches, 27 sheltered by her from the heat, and dwelling in the light of her presence.</p> <p><b>15</b> The man who fears the Lord will do all this, and if he masters the law, wisdom will be his.</p> <p>2 She will come out to meet him like a mother; she will receive him like a young bride.</p> <p>3 For food she will give him the bread of understanding and for drink the water of knowledge.</p> <p>4 He will lean on her and not fall; he will rely on her to save him from disgrace.</p> <p>5 She will promote him above his neighbours, and find words for him when he speaks in the assembly.</p> <p>6 He shall be crowned with joy and exultation; lasting honour shall be his heritage.</p> <p>7 Fools shall never possess wisdom; sinners shall catch no glimpse of her.</p> <p>8 She holds aloof from arrogance, far from the thoughts of liars.</p> <p>9 Worship is out of place on the lips of a sinner, unprompted as he is by the Lord.</p> <p>10 Worship is the outward expression of wisdom, and the Lord himself inspires it.</p> <p>11 Do not say, 'The Lord is to blame for my failure'; it is for you to avoid doing what he hates.</p> <p>12 Do not say, 'It was he who led me astray';</p>	<p>he has no use for sinful men. The Lord hates every kind of vice; 13 you cannot love it and still fear him. When he made man in the beginning, 14 he left him free to take his own decisions; if you choose, you can keep the 15 commandments; whether or not you keep faith is yours to decide. He has set before you fire and 16 water; reach out and take which you choose; before man lie life and death, 17 and whichever he prefers is his. For in his great wisdom and mighty 18 power the Lord sees everything. He keeps watch over those who 19 fear him; no human act escapes his notice. But he has commanded no man to 20 be wicked, nor has he given licence to commit sin.</p> <p><b>DO NOT SET YOUR HEART ON A LARGE 16</b> family of ne'er-do-wells or be content if your sons are godless. However many they are, do not 2 think yourself happy, unless the fear of the Lord is in them. Do not count on their living to be 3 old or rely on their numbers; for one son can be better than a thousand; better indeed to die childless than to have godless children. Thanks to one man of good sense a 4 city may be populous, while a tribe of lawless men becomes a desert. Many a time have I seen this with 5 my own eyes,</p>
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15.1: *All this* ties 15.1-8 to 14.20-27. *Law* and *wisdom* coincide here as throughout the book. 6: Compare this poetic glorification of the wise man with the pragmatic observation of wisdom's limits in 13.2-13. 9-10: Wisdom is *worship*; compare 1.11-20. *Sinners*: probably Hellenized Jews careless about observation of the Law.

15.11-20: **Freedom of choice.** "Determinism" or "predestination" is strongly rejected, to make clear that God is not responsible for man's sin, which he *hates* (vv. 11,13). 14-15: Man was created free and is still free; contrast Rom.1.18-3.20; 7.1-25. 16-17: Compare Deut.30.19-20. 18-20: Though God does not determine man's deeds, he *keeps watch* over the pious.

16.1-14: **Retribution and reward.** 1-3: A large family was held to be one of God's greatest gifts. 5: *Seen this with my own eyes*: the teacher's personal experience gives weight to tradition.

	and still weightier examples have come to my ears.		what is my life compared with the measureless creation?	
6	Where sinners gather, the fire breaks out; retribution blazes up in a rebellious nation.		Heaven itself, the highest heaven, the abyss and the earth are shaken at his coming;	18
7	There was no pardon for the giants of old, who revolted in all their strength.		the very mountains and the foundations of the world tremble when he looks upon them. What human mind can grasp this, or comprehend his ways?	19
8	There was no reprieve for Lot's adopted home, abhorrent in its arrogance.		As a squall takes men unawares, so most of his works are done in secret.	21
9	There was no mercy for the doomed nation, exterminated for their sins—		Who is to declare his acts of justice or wait for his remote decree?	22
10	those six hundred thousand warriors marshalled in stubborn defiance.		These are the thoughts of a small mind,	23
11	Even if only one man were obstinate, it would be a miracle for him to escape punishment.		the absurdities of a senseless and misguided man.	
	For mercy and anger belong to the Lord;		LISTEN TO ME, MY SON, AND LEARN sense;	24
	he shows his power in forgiveness, or in the flood of his wrath.		pay close attention to what I say; I will show you exact discipline and teach you accurate knowledge.	25
12	His mercy is great, but great also is his condemnation; he judges a man by what he has done.		When the Lord created his works in the beginning, and after making them defined <sup>y</sup> their boundaries,	26
13	He does not let the sinner escape with his loot or try the patience of the godly too long.		he disposed them in an eternal order and fixed their influences for all time. They do not grow hungry or weary, or abandon their tasks;	27
14	He opens a way for every work of mercy, and everyone is treated according to his own deserts. <sup>x</sup>		one does not jostle another; they never disobey his word.	28
			The Lord then looked at the earth and filled it with his good things.	29
			With every kind of living creature he covered the ground,	30
17	Do not say, 'I am hidden from the Lord; who is there in heaven to give a thought to me? Among so many I shall not be noticed;		into which they must all return.	

<sup>x</sup> *Some witnesses add (15) The Lord made Pharaoh too stubborn to acknowledge him, so that his deeds might be published to the world. (16) He displays his mercy to the whole creation, and has separated light from darkness with a plumb-line.*

<sup>y</sup> *When . . . defined; probable reading, based on Heb.: Gk. The works of the Lord have been under his judgement from the beginning, . . . he defined . . .*

7: The *giants*: see Gen.6.4; compare Bar.3.26–28; Wis.14.6. 8: *Lot's adopted home*: Sodom; see Gen.19.23–25. 9: *The doomed nation*: the Canaanites; see Deut.7.1–6 and Gen.15.16. 10: *Six hundred thousand*: rebellious Israelites; see 46.8; Exod.12.37; Num.14.22–23. 11–14: *God's mercy and anger* are in tension; the author is sure that mercy will not provide an easy out for sinners.

16.17–23: *God's universal knowledge*. Only the *absurdities* of a *small mind* (v. 23) will lead to the wrong view that man can escape God's notice because his *creation* is *measureless* (v. 17).

16.24–30: *God the Creator*. This section, extending vv. 17–23, is drawn especially from Gen. ch. 1. 26–28: The orderly heavens are *his works* (compare Isa.40.26) which do not *grow hungry or weary*. 29–30: In contrast to the eternal heavens, the living beings on earth, even though *good*, are temporary.

<p>17 The Lord created man from the earth and sent him back to it again.</p> <p>2 He set a fixed span of life for men and granted them authority over everything on earth.</p> <p>3 He clothed them with strength like his own,<sup>z</sup> forming them in his own image.</p> <p>4 He put the fear of man into all creatures and gave him lordship over beasts and birds.<sup>a</sup></p> <p>6 He gave men tongue and eyes and ears, the power of choice and a mind for thinking.</p> <p>7 He filled them with discernment and showed them good and evil.</p> <p>8 He kept watch over their hearts, to display to them the majesty of his works.<sup>b</sup></p> <p>10 They shall praise his holy name, proclaiming the grandeur of his works.</p> <p>11 He gave them knowledge as well and endowed them with the life-giving law.</p> <p>12 He established a perpetual covenant with them and revealed to them his decrees.</p> <p>13 Their eyes saw his glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of his voice.</p> <p>14 He said to them, 'Guard against all wrongdoing', and taught each man his duty towards his neighbour.</p> <p>15 Their conduct always lies open before him, never hidden from his scrutiny.<sup>c</sup></p> <p>17 For every nation he appointed a ruler,</p>	<p>but chose Israel to be his own possession.<sup>d</sup></p> <p>So whatever they do is clear to him as daylight; he keeps constant watch over their lives.</p> <p>Their wrongdoing is not hidden from the Lord; he observes all their sins.<sup>e</sup></p> <p>A man's good deeds he treasures like a signet-ring, and his kindness like the apple of his eye.</p> <p>In the end he will rise up and give the wicked their deserts, bringing down their recompense on their own heads.</p> <p>Yet he leaves a way open for the penitent to return to him, and gives the waverer strength to endure.</p> <p>Turn to the Lord and have done with sin; make your prayer in his presence, and so lessen your offence.</p> <p>Come back to the Most High, renounce wrongdoing, and hate intensely what he abhors. Who will praise the Most High in the grave</p>	<p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p>
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<sup>z</sup> So one Vs. : Gk. their own.  
<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses add (5) The Lord gave them the use of the five faculties; as a sixth gift he distributed to them mind, and as a seventh, reason, the interpreter of those faculties.  
<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses add (9) He has given them the right to boast for ever of his marvels.  
<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read . . . scrutiny. (16) Every man from his youth tended towards evil; they could not make themselves hearts of flesh in place of their hearts of stone. (17) When he distributed the nations over all the earth, for every . . .  
<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses add (18) He rears them with discipline as his first-born, imparting to them the light of love and never neglecting them.  
<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses add (21) The Lord who is gracious and knows what they are made of has neither rejected nor deserted them, but spared them.

**17.1-14: God's creation of man.** The recurring *He* (God) emphasizes that man is God's creature. **1:** Man's transitory nature links this poem to 16.24-30. **2-4:** Compare Gen.1.26-28. **6:** The *power of choice* is what makes man man; it links the universally human to the covenant at Sinai (v. 12). **11:** The apex of creation is the *Law*, which enables man to be fully human. **13:** *Glorious majesty*: theophany on Sinai; see Exod.19.16-19. **14:** *Duty towards the neighbour* is the core of the Law.

**17.15-24: God's watchful care of his people.** This is the closing poem of the section beginning in 16.17, the final answer to the absurdities of 16.17-23. **17:** A higher standard is set for *Israel*, which stands directly under God, not under an earthly ruler. **23-24:** The familiar contrast between the righteous and the *wicked* is modified by the introduction of the *penitent*, those who pass from the wicked group to the righteous. *Strength to endure*: the phrase, from Isa.40.31, ties the end of the section to its beginning, 16.17, which is drawn from Isa.40.27.

**17.25-32: A call to repentance.** This poem gives a practical application to what precedes. The sharp contrast between man's insignificance and God's greatness makes the point that pride is the basic sin. **27:** The *grave*: see 14.12 n.

	in place of the living who give him thanks?	lavishing his mercy upon them.	
28	When a man is dead and ceases to be, his gratitude dies with him; it is when he is alive and well that he praises the Lord.	He sees and knows the harsh fate in store for them, and therefore gives full play to his forgiveness.	12
29	How great is the Lord's mercy and his pardon to those who turn to him!	Man's compassion is only for his neighbour,	13
30	Not everything is within man's reach,	but the Lord's compassion is for every living thing.	
	for the human race is not immortal.	He corrects and trains and teaches and brings them back as a shepherd his flock.	
31	Is anything brighter than the sun? Yet the sun suffers eclipse.	He has compassion on those who accept discipline	14
	So flesh and blood have evil thoughts.	and are eager to obey his decrees.	
32	The Lord marshals the armies of high heaven,	My son, do good without scolding; do not spoil your generosity with hard words.	15
	but all men are dust and ashes.	Does not the dew give respite from the sweltering heat?	16
18	He who lives for ever is the Creator of the whole universe;	So a word can do more than a gift.	
2	right belongs to the Lord alone. <sup>f</sup>	A kind word counts for more than a rich present;	17
4	To no man is it given to unfold the story of his works;	with a gracious man you will find both.	
	who can trace his marvels to their source?	A fool cannot refrain from tactless criticism,	18
5	No one can measure his majestic power,	and a grudging giver makes no eyes sparkle.	
	still less, tell the full tale of all his mercies.	Before you speak, learn;	19
6	Man can neither increase nor diminish them,	and before you fall sick, consult a doctor.	
7	When a man comes to the end of them he is still at the beginning,	Before judgement comes, examine yourself,	20
	and when he has finished he will still be perplexed.	and you will find pardon in the hour of scrutiny.	
8	What is man and what use is he? What do his good or evil deeds signify?	Before you fall ill, humble yourself; show your penitence as soon as you sin.	21
9	His span of life is at the most a hundred years;	Let nothing hinder the prompt discharge of your vows;	22
10	compared with endless time, his few years	do not wait till death to be absolved.	
	are like one drop of sea-water or a single grain of sand.	Before you make a vow, give it due thought;	23
11	This is why the Lord is patient with them,	<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses add and there is none beside him, (3) who can steer the world with his little finger, so that all things obey his will; as king of the universe, he has power to fix the bounds between what is holy and what is profane.	

18.1-7: The limits of man's knowledge. This poem expands the thought of 17.30-32.

18.8-14: God's compassion. 8: Contrast Ps.8. 9: The *hundred years* of a life span extend the seventy or eighty of Ps.90.10. 12: The *harsh fate* is death. 13-14: God is presented as a patient teacher; it is not accidental that the author was a teacher himself.

18.15-18: The deed and the word. The theme of doing *good* is suggested by 18.13.

18.19-29: Looking ahead. Foresight is a central virtue of secular wisdom. 19: The advice to *consult a doctor* views illness in common-sense terms. 21: Here illness is seen as punishment

- do not be like those who try the Lord's patience.
- 24 Think of the wrath you must face in the hour of death, when the time of reckoning comes, and he turns away his face.
- 25 In time of plenty remember the time of famine, poverty and need in days of wealth.
- 26 Between dawn and dusk times may alter; all change comes quickly, when the Lord wills it.
- 27 A wise man is always on his guard; when sin is rife, he will beware of negligence.
- 28 Every man of sense makes acquaintance with wisdom, and to him who finds her she gives cause for thankfulness.
- 29 Skilled speakers display their special wisdom by a flow of apt proverbs.

*Maxims of prudence and self-discipline*

- 30 DO NOT LET YOUR PASSIONS BE YOUR guide, but restrain your desires.
- 31 If you indulge yourself with all that passion fancies, it will make you the butt of your enemies.
- 32 Do not revel in great luxury, or the expense of it may ruin you.
- 33 Do not beggar yourself by feasting on borrowed money, when there is nothing in your purse.
- 19 A drunken workman never grows rich; carelessness in small things leads little by little to ruin.
- 2 Wine and women rob the wise of their wits, and a frequenter of prostitutes becomes more and more reckless,
- 3 till sores<sup>g</sup> and worms take possession of him,

- and his recklessness becomes his undoing.
- To trust a man hastily shows a shallow mind, and to sin is to do an injury to yourself.
- To delight in wickedness is to court condemnation, but evil loses its hold on the man who hates gossip.
- Never repeat what you hear, and you will never be the loser.
- Tell no tales about friend or foe; unless silence makes you an accomplice, never betray a man's secret.
- Suppose he has heard you and learnt to distrust you, he will seize the first chance to show his hatred.
- Have you heard a rumour? Let it die with you.
- Never fear, it will not make you burst.
- A fool with a secret goes through agony like a woman in childbirth.
- As painful as an arrow through the thigh is a rumour in the heart of a fool.
- Confront your friend with the gossip about him; he may not have done it; or if he did it, he will know not to do it again.
- Confront your neighbour; he may not have said it; or if he did say it, he will know not to say it again.
- Confront your friend; it will often turn out to be slander; do not believe everything you hear.
- A man may let slip more than he intends; whose tongue is always free from guilt?
- Confront your neighbour before you threaten him,

<sup>g</sup> Or decay.

for sin. 24: Since retribution, for Ecclus., is limited to this life, man will be repaid for his deeds before the *hour of death*. When God *turns away his face* from a person, it is always a sign of his wrath; see Pss.13.1; 44.24.

18.30-19.17: **Self-control.** 30: The poem of 18.30-19.3 is a commentary on this popular proverb. 19.2: *Wine and women* are frequently associated already in Egyptian wisdom. See Prov.31.3-5. 4-17: Self-control in speech is discussed in two sections: vv. 4-12 on not speaking and vv.13-17 on proper speech, direct confrontation of rumor. 17: God's *law* is mentioned in closing, a typical pattern.

- and let the law of the Most High  
take its course.<sup>h</sup>
- 20 All wisdom is the fear of the Lord  
and includes the fulfilling of the law.<sup>i</sup>
- 22 The knowledge of wickedness is not  
wisdom,  
nor is there good sense in the advice  
of sinners.
- 23 There is a cleverness that is  
loathsome,  
and some fools are merely ignorant.
- 24 Better to be godfearing and lack  
brains  
than to have great intelligence and  
break the law.
- 25 A meticulous cleverness may lead  
to injustice,  
and a man may make himself  
offensive in order that right  
may prevail.
- 26 There is a scoundrel who stoops  
and wears mourning,  
but who is a fraud at heart.
- 27 He covers his face and pretends to  
be deaf,  
but when nobody is looking, he  
will steal a march on you;
- 28 and if lack of strength prevents  
him from doing wrong,  
he will still harm you at the first  
opportunity.
- 29 Yet you can tell a man by his looks  
and recognize good sense at first  
sight.
- 30 A man's clothes, and the way he  
laughs,  
and his gait, reveal his character.
- 20 A reproof may be untimely,  
and silence may show a man's good  
sense.
- 2 Yet how much better it is to complain  
than to nurse a grudge,  
and confession saves a man from  
disgrace.<sup>j</sup>
- 4 Like a eunuch longing to seduce a  
girl
- is the man who tries to do right by  
violence.
- One man is silent and is found to be 5  
wise;  
another is hated for his endless  
chatter.
- One man is silent, at a loss for an 6  
answer;  
another is silent, biding his time.  
The wise man is silent until the right 7  
moment,  
but a swaggering fool is always  
speaking out of turn.
- A garrulous man makes himself 8  
detested,  
and one who abuses his position  
arouses hatred.
- A MAN SOMETIMES FINDS PROFIT IN 9  
adversity,  
and a windfall may result in loss.  
Sometimes liberality does not benefit 10  
the giver,  
sometimes it brings a double return.  
The quest for honour may lead to 11  
disgrace,  
but there are those who have risen  
from obscurity to eminence.
- A man may make a good bargain, 12  
but pay for it seven times over.  
A wise man endears himself when 13  
he speaks,  
but fools scatter compliments in vain.  
A gift from a fool will bring you no 14  
benefit;  
it looks bigger to him than it does  
to you.
- He gives small gifts accompanied by 15  
long lectures,

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses add without giving way to anger. (18) The fear of the Lord is the way towards acceptance, and wisdom wins love from him. (19) The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving discipline, and those who do what pleases him eat from the tree of immortality.

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses add and a knowledge of his omnipotence. (21) A servant who says, 'I will not do as you wish', even if he does it later, angers the man who feeds him.

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses add (3) How good it is to respond to reproof with repentance, and so escape deliberate sin!

19.20–30: True wisdom and mere cleverness. This is the first of a series of observations; except for 21.1–11, after the initial reference to God (v. 20), he is not mentioned again until 23.1. Notice also the scarcity of imperatives. 22–28: Clever knowledge (probably Hellenistic learning) that disregards God's law (v. 24) destroys human trust. Covering the face (v. 27) was probably a begging technique. 29–30: Wisdom includes the ability to judge character.

20.1–8: Qualities of silence and speaking. The poem searches for a middle way between the wrong silence of nursing a grudge (v. 2) and the wrong self-expression of doing right by violence (v. 4).

20.9–17: Surprising outcomes. The wise man expects the unexpected. 12: Seven times: many times.



- and opens his mouth as wide as the town crier.  
He gives a loan today and asks it back tomorrow,  
obnoxious fellow that he is!
- 16 The fool says, 'I have no friends, I get no thanks for my kindnesses; though they eat my bread, they speak ill of me.'
- 17 How everyone will laugh at him—and how often!
- 18 Better a slip on the stone floor than a slip of the tongue;  
and the fall of the wicked comes just as suddenly.
- 19 An ill-mannered man is like an unseasonable story,  
continually on the lips of the ill-bred.
- 20 A proverb will fall flat when uttered by a fool,  
for he will produce it at the wrong time.
- 21 Poverty may keep a man from doing wrong;  
when the day's work is over,  
conscience will not trouble him.
- 22 A man's diffidence may be his undoing,  
or the foolish figure he cuts in the eyes of the world.
- 23 A man may be shamed into making promises to a friend  
and needlessly turn him into an enemy.
- 24 A lie is an ugly blot on a man's name,  
and is continually on the lips of those who know no better.
- 25 It is better to be a thief than a habitual liar,  
but both will come to the same bad end.
- 26 A lying disposition brings disgrace;  
the shame of it can never be shaken off.
- A wise man advances himself when he speaks,  
and a man of sense makes himself pleasant to the great.  
The man who tills his land heaps up a harvest,  
and he who pleases the great reaps pardon for his wrongdoing.  
Hospitality and presents make wise men blind;  
like a gag in the mouth they silence criticism.  
Hidden wisdom and buried treasure,  
what use is there in either?  
Better a man who hides his folly than one who hides his wisdom!<sup>k</sup>
- Have you done wrong, my son? Do it no more,  
but ask pardon for your past wrongdoing.  
Avoid wrong as you would a viper,  
for if you go near, it will bite you;  
its teeth are like a lion's teeth  
and can destroy the lives of men.  
Every breach of the law is like a two-edged sword;  
it inflicts an incurable wound.  
By intimidation and insolence a man forfeits his wealth;  
thus a proud man will be stripped of his possessions.  
The Lord listens to the poor man's appeal,  
and his verdict follows without delay.  
To hate reproof is to go the way of sinners,  
but whoever fears the Lord will repent whole-heartedly.  
A great talker is known far and wide,  
but a sensible man is aware of his failings.  
To build a house with borrowed money  
is like collecting stones for your own tomb.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses add (32) Better to seek the Lord with unremitting patience than to be the masterless charioteer of one's own life.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read like harvesting stones against the winter.

16-17: The fool is disappointed because he expects to be repaid for everything he does.

20.18-31: Wise and foolish speech. 18: A popular proverb, known also from the Greek philosopher Zeno, recorded in Diogenes Laertius VII, 26. 21-23: Improper shame (especially of a debtor who is not candid to his creditor) will destroy a friendship. 30-31: Wisdom must not be hidden; contrast the wise man's silence, 20.1-8.

21.1-11: Warnings against sin. This section differs from the shrewd observations of 19.20-20.31 in its frequent reference to the Lord. 8: A house: a symbol of one's whole existence.

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| <p>9 A gathering of lawless men is like a bundle of tow,<br/>which ends by going up in flames.</p> <p>10 The road of sinners is smoothly paved,<br/>but it leads straight down to the grave.</p> <p>11 Whoever keeps the law keeps his thoughts under control;<br/>the fear of the Lord has its outcome in wisdom.</p> <p>12 A MAN WHO IS NOT CLEVER CANNOT be taught,<br/>but there is a cleverness which only breeds bitterness.</p> <p>13 A wise man's knowledge is like a river in full spate,<br/>and his advice is a life-giving spring.</p> <p>14 A fool's mind is a leaky bucket:<br/>it cannot hold anything it learns.</p> <p>15 If an instructed man hears a wise saying,<br/>he applauds it and improves on it.<br/>If a rake hears it, he is annoyed and throws it behind his back.</p> <p>16 Listening to a fool is like travelling with a heavy pack,<br/>but there is delight to be found in intelligent conversation.</p> <p>17 The assembly welcomes a word from the wise man,<br/>and thinks over what he says.</p> <p>18 A fool's wisdom is like a tumbledown house;<br/>his knowledge is a string of ill-digested sayings.</p> <p>19 To fools education is like fetters,<br/>like a handcuff on the wrist.</p> <p>21 To the wise education is a golden ornament<br/>like a bracelet on the arm.</p> <p>20 A fool laughs out loud;<br/>a clever man smiles quietly, if at all.</p> <p>22 A fool rushes into a house,</p> | <p>while a man of experience hangs back politely.</p> <p>A boor peers into the house from the doorstep,<br/>while a well-bred man stands outside.<br/>It is bad manners to listen at doors;<br/>a man of sense would think it a crushing disgrace.</p> <p>The glib only repeat what others have said,<br/>but the wise weigh every word.<br/>Fools speak before they think;<br/>wise men think first and speak afterwards.</p> <p>When a bad man curses his adversary,<sup>m</sup><br/>he is cursing himself.</p> <p>A tale-bearer blackens his own character<br/>and makes himself hated throughout the neighbourhood.</p> <p>An idler is like a filthy stone;<br/>everyone jeers at his disgrace.<br/>An idler is like a lump of dung;<br/>whoever picks it up shakes it off his hand.</p> <p>There is shame in being father to a spoil son,<br/>and the birth of a daughter means loss.</p> <p>A sensible daughter wins a husband,<br/>but an immodest one is a grief to her father.</p> <p>A brazen daughter disgraces both father and husband<br/>and is despised by both.</p> <p>Unseasonable talk is like music in time of mourning,<br/>but the lash of wisdom's discipline is always in season.</p> <p>Teaching a fool is like mending pottery with glue,<br/>or like rousing a sleeper from heavy sleep.</p> <p>As well reason with a drowsy man as with a fool;</p> | <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p> <p>26</p> <p>27</p> <p>28</p> <p>22</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> |
|--|--|--|

*m* Or curses Satan.

9: See 16.6. 10: The smooth *road* leads quickly to one's destruction; see Prov.14.12; Mt.7.13. 21.12-28: The wise man and the fool. 12: See 19.20-30 on *cleverness*. 13: The *river* and *life-giving spring* are contrasted to stagnant cistern water and even more to the *leaky bucket* (v. 14). 22-28: Etiquette was a major subject of ancient wisdom. 27: *His adversary* is literally "Satan" (see Tfn. *m*), but here the reference is to the human adversary.

22.1-26: Bad experiences. 1-2: The *idler* is frequently rebuked in Prov. (Prov.10.4; 15.19; 24.30-34), but is a target of Eccles. only here and in 33.24-28. 3-5: The *daughter* meant *loss* because she could not carry on the family name. 7: Ancient *glue* was not strong enough to

- when you have finished, he will say,  
'What was that?'<sup>n</sup>
- 11 Mourn over the dead for the eclipse  
of his light;  
mourn over the fool for the eclipse  
of his wits.  
Mourn less bitterly for the dead,  
for he is at rest;  
but the fool's life is worse than  
death.
- 12 Mourning for the dead lasts seven  
days,  
but for a godless fool it lasts all his  
life.
- 13 Do not talk long with a fool  
or visit a stupid man.  
Beware of him, or you may be in  
trouble  
and find yourself bespattered when  
he shakes himself.  
Avoid him, if you are looking for  
peace,  
and you will not be worn out by his  
folly.
- 14 What is heavier than lead?  
What is its name but 'Fool'?
- 15 Sand, salt, and a lump of iron  
are less of a burden than a stupid  
man.
- 16 A tie-beam fixed firmly into a  
building  
is not shaken loose by an  
earthquake;  
so a mind kept firm by intelligent  
advice  
will not be daunted in a crisis.
- 17 A mind solidly backed by intelligent  
thought  
is like the stucco that decorates a  
smooth wall.
- 18 As a fence set on a hill-top  
cannot stand against the wind,  
so a mind made timid by foolish  
fancies  
is not proof against any terror.
- 19 Hurt the eye and tears will flow;  
hurt the mind and you will find it  
sensitive.
- Throw a stone at the birds and you  
scare them away; 20  
abuse a friend and you break off  
your friendship.  
If you have drawn your sword on a  
friend, 21  
do not give up hope, there is still a  
way back.  
If you have quarrelled with your  
friend, 22  
never fear, there can still be a  
reconciliation.  
But abuse, scorn, a secret betrayed,  
a stab in the back—  
these will make any friend keep his  
distance.  
Win your neighbour's confidence 23  
while he is poor,  
and you will share the joy of his  
prosperity;  
stand by him in time of trouble,  
and you will be his partner when he  
comes into a fortune.
- As furnace-fumes and smoke come 24  
before the flame,  
so insults come before bloodshed.  
I will not be afraid to protect my  
friend 25  
nor will I turn my back on him.  
If harm should befall me on his  
account, 26  
everyone who hears of it will beware  
of him.
- OH FOR A SENTRY TO GUARD MY 27  
mouth  
and a seal of discretion to close my  
lips,  
to keep them from being my  
downfall,  
and to keep my tongue from  
causing my ruin!  
Lord, Father, and Ruler of my life, 23  
do not abandon me to the tongue's  
control  
or allow me to fall on its account.

<sup>n</sup> Some witnesses add (9) Children well brought up reveal no trace of any humble origin. (10) But those who run riot, haughty and undisciplined, sully the nobility of their parentage.

mend pottery. 11-13: These imperatives are not the usual moral commands (as in 21.1) but shrewd observation of life. The *seven days of mourning* (v. 12) were traditional (see Gen.50.10); contrast 38.17. 19: The *mind* is that of a friend who will be hurt. 23: The pairing of opposites (*prosperity, trouble*) was a favorite way of building proverbs.

22.27-23.6: A prayer for self-control. 27: The *mouth* is viewed as a gate which needs a *sentry*. See Ps.141.3 and compare Prov.21.23. 23.1: God is *Father* also in the closing prayer of 51.10.

- 2 Oh for wisdom's lash to curb my thoughts  
and to discipline my mind,  
without overlooking my mistakes  
or condoning my sins!
- 3 Then my mistakes would not multiply  
nor my sins increase,  
humiliating me before my opponents  
and giving my enemy cause to gloat.
- 4 Lord, Father, and God of my life,  
do not let me have a supercilious  
eye.
- 5 Protect me from the onslaught of  
desire;
- 6 let neither gluttony nor lust take hold  
of me,  
nor give me over to the power of  
shameless passion.
- 7 Hear, my sons, how to discipline the  
mouth,  
take warning, and you will never be  
caught out.
- 8 It is by his own words that the sinner  
is ensnared;  
he is tripped up by his own scurrility  
and pride.
- 9 Do not inure your mouth to oaths  
or make a habit of naming the Holy  
One.
- 10 As a slave constantly under the lash  
is never free from weals,  
so the man who has oaths and the  
sacred name for ever on his lips  
will never be clear of guilt.
- 11 A man given to swearing is lawless  
to the core;  
the scourge will never be far from  
his house.  
If he goes back on his word, he must  
bear the blame;  
if he wilfully neglects it, he sins twice  
over;  
if his oath itself was insincere, he  
cannot be acquitted;  
his house will be filled with trouble.
- 12 There is a kind of speech that is the  
counterpart of death;
- may it never be found among  
Jacob's descendants!  
The pious keep clear of such conduct  
and do not wallow in sin.  
Do not make a habit of coarse,  
vulgar talk,  
or you will be bound to say  
something sinful.
- Remember your father and mother  
when you take your seat among  
the great,  
or you may forget yourself in their  
presence  
and make a fool of yourself through  
bad habit;  
then you will wish you had never  
been born,  
and curse the day of your birth.  
A man addicted to scurrilous talk  
will never learn better as long as he  
lives.
- TWO KINDS OF MEN ADD SIN TO SIN,  
and a third brings retribution on  
himself.  
Hot lust that blazes like a fire  
can never be quenched till life is  
destroyed.  
A man whose whole body is given  
to sensuality  
never stops till the fire consumes  
him.
- To a seducer every loaf is as sweet  
as the last,  
and he does not weary until he dies.  
The man who strays from his own  
bed  
says to himself, 'Who can see me?  
All around is dark and the walls  
hide me;  
nobody can see me, why need I  
worry?  
The Most High will not take note  
of my sins.'
- The eyes of men are all he fears;  
he forgets that the eyes of the Lord  
are ten thousand times brighter than  
the sun,

4: The *supercilious eye* may mean the eye of desire (the "bold looks" of 26.9 represents the same word).

23.7-15: Control of the tongue. 9-11: Oaths carried a special weight of punishment if not fulfilled. The naming of the *Holy One* made an oath sacred, but such use of the holy name was to be avoided (see Exod.20.7). 12-15: Here the subject is restraint from vulgar talk.

23.16-27: Sins of lust.

23.16-21: The adulterous man. 16: A sequence of numbers (*two . . . a third*) was a favorite way of shaping a proverb; compare 25.7; Prov.30.15-31. The three *kinds of men* are put in a

- observing every step men take  
and penetrating every secret.
- 20 Before the universe was created, it  
was known to him,  
and so it is since its completion.
- 21 This man will pay the penalty in the  
public street,  
caught where he least expected it.
- 22 So too with the woman who is  
unfaithful to her husband,  
presenting him with an heir by a  
different father:
- 23 first, she disobeys the law of the  
Most High;  
secondly, she commits an offence  
against her husband;  
thirdly, she has prostituted herself  
by bearing bastard children.
- 24 She shall be disgraced before the  
assembly,  
and the consequences will fall on  
her children.
- 25 Her children will not take root,  
nor will fruit grow on her branches.
- 26 A curse will rest on her memory,  
and her shame will never be blotted  
out.
- 27 All who survive her will learn  
that nothing is better than the fear  
of the Lord  
or sweeter than obeying his  
commandments.<sup>o</sup>

it was I who covered the earth like  
a mist.

My dwelling-place was in high  
heaven; 4  
my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

Alone I made a circuit of the sky 5  
and traversed the depth of the abyss.

The waves of the sea, the whole 6  
earth,  
every people and nation were under  
my sway.

Among them all I looked for a home: 7  
in whose territory was I to settle?

Then the Creator of the universe 8  
laid a command upon me;  
my Creator decreed where I should  
dwell.

He said, "Make your home in  
Jacob;  
find your heritage in Israel."  
Before time began he created me, 9  
and I shall remain for ever.

In the sacred tent I ministered in 10  
his presence,  
and so I came to be established in  
Zion.

Thus he settled me in the city he 11  
loved  
and gave me authority in Jerusalem.

I took root among the people 12  
whom the Lord had honoured  
by choosing them to be his special  
possession.

*The praise of wisdom*

- 24 HEAR THE PRAISE OF WISDOM FROM  
her own mouth,  
as she speaks with pride among her  
people,
- 2 before the assembly of the Most High  
and in the presence of the heavenly  
host:
- 3 'I am the word which was spoken by  
the Most High;
- 'There I grew like a cedar of Lebanon, 13  
like a cypress on the slopes of  
Hermon,
- like a date-palm at Engedi, 14  
like roses at Jericho.
- I grew like a fair olive-tree in the  
vale,  
or like a plane-tree planted beside  
the water.

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses add (28) To follow God brings great  
honour; to win his approval means long life.

climactic order in vv. 16–18. 20: God's knowledge *before the universe was created* is not in conflict with freedom of choice (15.11–20) in the author's total view.

23.22–27: **The adulterous woman.** The penalty for adultery was death (Deut.22.22). For the suspicion of adultery on the part of a wife, and for the attendant consequences, see Num.5.11–31.

24.1–22: **Wisdom's praise.** A hymn to wisdom introduces the second main part of the book; compare 1.1–10. 1: The *people* are Israel. 2: The *assembly* is the heavenly council; see Ps.89.6–7. 3: Wisdom speaks, as in Prov.8.22–36 on which much of this section is modeled. The *mist* represents the creative power of wisdom, parallel to the wind of Gen.1.2; compare Gen.2.6. 4: *High heaven*: God's throne above the reservoir of waters supported by the vault of the sky; see Gen.1.6–8; Ps.29.10. 7: Wisdom looked for a *home*, but found it only in Israel (v. 8), which has God's law. 13–14: The massiveness and majesty of the *cedar* and *cypress*, the fruitfulness of the *date-palm*, the beauty of the *rose*, and the fairness of the *olive* are symbolic of wisdom.

- 15 Like cassia or camel-thorn I was  
redolent of spices;  
I spread my fragrance like choice  
myrrh,  
like galban, aromatic shell, and gum  
resin;  
I was like the smoke of incense in  
the sacred tent.
- 16 Like a terebinth I spread out my  
branches,  
laden with honour and grace.
- 17 I put forth lovely shoots like the vine,  
and my blossoms were a harvest of  
wealth and honour.<sup>p</sup>
- 19 'Come to me, you who desire me,  
and eat your fill of my fruit.
- 20 The memory of me is sweeter than  
syrup,  
the possession of me sweeter than  
honey dripping from the comb.
- 21 Whoever feeds on me will be hungry  
for more,  
and whoever drinks from me will  
thirst for more.
- 22 To obey me is to be safe from  
disgrace;  
those who work in wisdom will not  
go astray.'
- 23 All this is the covenant-book of  
God Most High,  
the law which Moses enacted to be  
the heritage of the assemblies  
of Jacob.<sup>q</sup>
- 25 He sends out wisdom in full flood  
like the river Pishon  
or like the Tigris at the time of  
firstfruits;
- 26 he overflows with understanding like  
the Euphrates  
or like Jordan at the time of  
harvest.
- 27 He pours forth instruction like the  
Nile,<sup>r</sup>
- like the Gihon at the time of vintage.  
No man has ever fully known  
wisdom;  
from first to last no one has fathomed  
her;  
for her thoughts are vaster than the  
ocean  
and her purpose deeper than the  
great abyss.
- As for me, I was like a canal leading  
from a river,  
a watercourse into a pleasure-garden.  
I said, 'I will water my garden,  
drenching its flower-beds';  
and at once my canal became a river  
and my river a sea.
- I will again make discipline shine  
like the dawn,  
so that its light may be seen from  
afar.
- I will again pour out doctrine like  
prophecy  
and bequeath it to future generations.  
Truly, my labour has not been for  
myself alone  
but for all seekers of wisdom.
- THERE ARE THREE SIGHTS WHICH  
warm my heart<sup>s</sup>  
and are beautiful in the eyes of the  
Lord and of men:  
concord among brothers, friendship  
among neighbours,  
and a man and wife who are  
inseparable.
- There are three kinds of men who  
arouse my hatred,

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses add (18) I give birth to noble love, reverence, knowledge, and holy hope; and I give all these my eternal progeny to God's elect (probable meaning; Gk. obscure).

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses add (24) Never fail to be strong in the Lord; hold fast to him, so that he may strengthen you; the Lord Almighty is God alone; beside him there is no saviour.

<sup>r</sup> So one Vss.; Gk. He makes instruction shine like light.  
<sup>s</sup> So Vss.; Gk. which make me beautiful.

15: These were prized aromatic substances used in worship. 19-22: Wisdom's call is paralleled in 51.23-30, where a wisdom teacher speaks; see also Prov.9.1-6 and Mt.11.28-30. 21: Unlike food for the stomach which satiates, the use of wisdom creates *more hunger* for it and so brings continual enjoyment; contrast Jn.6.35.

24.23-29: *Wisdom and Law*. This is the author's interpretation of wisdom's speech above. 25-27: The productiveness of *wisdom* is compared to the *Jordan* and the four rivers of Gen.2.10-14. The *Gihon* was identified with the *Nile* (but see Tfn. *r*), which is at its height in the time of vintage.

24.30-34: *The author's encounter with wisdom*. The life-giving symbolism of water is carried forward from wisdom (24.23-29) to the author himself.

25.1-2: *A numerical saying*. The main theme is marriage which is the final element in each series of three.

	who disgust me by their manner of life: a poor man who boasts, a rich man who lies, and an old fool who commits adultery.		
3	If you have not gathered wisdom in your youth, how will you find it when you are old?		
4	Sound judgement sits well on grey hairs and wise advice comes well from older men.		
5	Wisdom is fitting in the aged, and ripe counsel in men of eminence.		
6	Long experience is the old man's crown, and his pride is the fear of the Lord.		
7	I can think of nine men I count happy, and I can tell you of a tenth: a man who can take delight in his children, and one who lives to see his enemy's downfall;		
8	happy the husband of a sensible wife, the farmer who does not plough with ox and ass together, <sup>t</sup> the man whose tongue never betrays him, and the servant who has never worked for an inferior!		
9	Happy the man who has found a friend, <sup>u</sup> and the speaker who has an attentive audience!		
10	How great is the man who finds wisdom! But no greater than he who fears the Lord.		
11	The fear of the Lord excels all other gifts; to what can we compare the man who has it? <sup>v</sup>		
		<i>Counsels upon social behaviour</i>	
		ANY WOUND BUT A WOUND IN THE heart! Any spite but a woman's! Any disaster but one caused by hate! Any vengeance but the vengeance of an enemy! There is no venom <sup>w</sup> worse than a snake's, and no anger worse than an enemy's.	13
		I would sooner share a home with a lion or a snake than keep house with a spiteful wife. Her spite changes her expression, making her look as surly as a bear. Her husband goes to a neighbour for his meals and cannot repress a bitter sigh.	14
		There is nothing so bad as a bad wife; may the fate of the wicked overtake her! <sup>x</sup> It is as easy for an old man to climb a sand-dune as for a quiet husband to live with a nagging wife.	15
		Do not be enticed by a woman's beauty or set your heart on possessing her. If a man is supported by his wife he must expect tantrums, shamelessness, and outrage.	16
		A bad wife brings humiliation, downcast looks, and a wounded heart.	17
		Slack of hand and weak of knee is the man whose wife fails to make him happy.	18
		Woman is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die. Do not leave a leaky cistern to drip	19

<sup>t</sup> the farmer . . . together: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* omits.

<sup>u</sup> *So Vss.*; *Gk.* found good sense.

<sup>v</sup> *Some witnesses add* (12) The fear of the Lord is the source of love for him, and faith is the source of loyalty to him.

<sup>w</sup> *Probable meaning, based on one Vss.*; *Gk.* head.

<sup>x</sup> *Or* may it fall to her lot to marry a scoundrel!

25.3-6: Wisdom is the crown of old age. 6: Experience in a stable environment makes the old man's advice valuable.

25.7-11: A numerical saying. The speaker is the wisdom teacher. 10: Wisdom is here distinguished as a lower stage than *fear of the Lord*, a distinction not usually made in this book. 11: *Fear of the Lord* is the climactic happiness.

25.13-26.18: The good and bad wife. Ecclesiasticus is not affirmative about women; his view is not merely personal, but draws on an old wisdom tradition. 24: The woman: Eve (Gen.3.1-24); apparently the earliest interpretation of Gen. as teaching that woman was the origin of sin.

- or allow a bad wife to say what she likes.
- 26 If she does not accept your control, divorce her and send her away.
- 26 A good wife makes a happy husband;  
she doubles the length of his life.
- 2 A staunch wife is her husband's joy;  
he will live out his days in peace.
- 3 A good wife means a good life;  
she is one of the Lord's gifts to those who fear him.
- 4 Rich or poor, they are light-hearted,  
and always have a smile on their faces.
- 5 Three things there are that alarm me,  
and a fourth I am afraid to face:  
the scandal of the town, the gathering of a mob,  
and calumny—all harder to bear than death;
- 6 but it is heart-ache and grief when a wife is jealous of a rival,  
and everyone alike feels the lash of her tongue.
- 7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke;  
controlling her is like clutching a scorpion.
- 8 A drunken wife is a great provocation;  
she cannot keep her excesses secret.
- 9 A loose woman betrays herself by her bold looks;  
you can tell her by her glance.
- 10 Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter;  
if she finds you off your guard, she will take her chance.
- 11 Beware of her impudent looks  
and do not be surprised if she disobeys you.
- 12 As a parched traveller with his tongue hanging out  
drinks from any spring that offers,  
she will open her arms to every embrace,  
and her quiver to the arrow.
- A wife's charm is the delight of her husband,  
and her womanly skill puts flesh on his bones.
- A silent wife is a gift from the Lord;  
her restraint is more than money can buy.
- A modest wife has charm upon charm;  
no scales can weigh the worth of her chastity.
- As beautiful as the sunrise in the Lord's heaven  
is a good wife in a well-ordered home.
- As bright as the light on the sacred lamp-stand  
is a beautiful face in the settled prime of life.
- Like a golden pillar on a silver base  
is a shapely leg with a firm foot.<sup>y z</sup>
- TWO THINGS GRIEVE MY HEART,  
and a third excites my anger:  
a soldier in distress through poverty,  
wise men treated with contempt,  
and a man deserting right conduct for wrong—  
the Lord will bring him to the scaffold.

y is . . . foot: *probable meaning; Gk. obscure.*

z *Some witnesses add*

My son, guard your health in the bloom of your youth,  
and do not waste your vigour on what belongs to others.

Search the whole plain for a fertile plot;  
sow your own seed, trusting in your pedigree.

Then the children you leave behind  
will prosper, confident in their parentage.

A woman of the streets counts as mere spittle,  
a married woman as a mortuary for her lovers.

A godless woman is a good match for a lawless husband,

a pious one for a man who fears the Lord.

A brazen woman courts disgrace,  
but a virtuous one is modest even before her husband.

A wilful woman is a shameless bitch,  
but a modest one fears the Lord.

A woman who honours her husband is accounted wise by all,  
but if she despises him, all know her as proud and godless.

A good wife makes a happy husband;  
she doubles the length of his life.

A strident, garrulous wife is like a trumpet  
sounding the charge;

in a home like hers a man lives in the tumult of war.

26: Divorce was permitted in Deut.24.1. 26.1-3: The long life of the husband is the direct result of his marriage to a good wife. 4: Inner harmony is important to marital relationships. 6: The rival presupposes polygamy; see Lev.18.18; Deut.21.15-17; 1 Sam.1.1-7. 9-12: The disloyal wife is the theme of the poem, despite the word *daughter* (v. 10), which means wife. 13-18: Meditation on the good wife climaxes in appreciation of her physical beauty.

26.28-28.26: Types of sin. 26.29-27.3: Dishonesty destroys the merchant just as the *peg*



- 29 How hard it is for a merchant to  
keep clear of wrong  
or for a shopkeeper to be innocent  
of dishonesty!
- 27 Many have cheated for gain;<sup>a</sup>  
a money-grubber will always turn  
a blind eye.
- 2 As a peg is held fast in the joint  
between stones,  
so dishonesty squeezes in between  
selling and buying.
- 3 Unless a man holds resolutely to the  
fear of the Lord,  
his house will soon be in ruins.
- 4 Shake a sieve, and the rubbish  
remains;  
start an argument and discover a  
man's faults.
- 5 As the work of a potter is tested in  
the furnace,  
so a man is tried in debate.
- 6 As the fruit of the tree reveals the  
skill of its grower,  
so the expression of a man's thought  
reveals his character.
- 7 Do not praise a man till you hear  
him in discussion,  
for this is the test.
- 8 If justice is what you seek, you will  
succeed,  
and wear it like a splendid robe.
- 9 Birds of a feather roost together,  
and honesty comes home to those  
who practise it.
- 10 A lion lies in wait for its prey,  
and so do sins for those who do  
wrong.
- 11 The conversation of the pious is  
constantly wise,  
but a fool is as changeable as the  
moon.
- 12 Grudge every minute spent among  
fools,  
but linger among the thoughtful.
- 13 The conversation of fools is  
repulsive;  
they make a joke of unbridled vice.
- 14 Their cursing and swearing make  
the hair stand on end;
- when such men quarrel, others stop  
their ears.  
The quarrels of the proud lead to  
bloodshed;  
their abuse offends the ear.
- The betrayer of secrets loses his  
credit  
and can never find an intimate friend.  
Love your friend and keep faith with  
him,  
but if you betray his secrets, keep  
out of his way;  
as a man kills his enemy,  
so you have killed your neighbour's  
friendship.
- As a bird that is allowed to escape  
your hand,  
your neighbour, once lost, will not  
be caught again.
- He has gone too far for you to  
pursue him,  
and escaped like a gazelle from a  
trap.
- A wound may be bandaged, an  
insult pardoned,  
but the betrayer of secrets has  
nothing to hope for.
- A man who winks is plotting  
mischief;  
those who know him will keep their  
distance.
- He speaks sweetly enough to your  
face  
and admires whatever you say,  
but later he will change his tune  
and use your own words to trip you.  
There are many things I hate, but  
him above all;  
The Lord will hate him too.
- Whoever throws a stone up in the air  
is throwing it at his own head,  
and a treacherous blow means  
wounds all round.
- Dig a pit and you will fall into it;  
set a trap and you will be caught  
by it.
- The wrong a man does recoils on  
him,

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read for a trifle.

(27.2) driven between the *stones* is the first step in tearing down the house. 27.16–21: Betraying *secrets* has irreversible results; but contrast 22.21–22 which says that broken friendships can be restored. 22: Winking was a frequent symbol for deception; compare Prov.6.12–13. 25: The *stone* describes any deception which is self-destructive. 26: One digs a *pit* to trap another.

	and he does not know where it has come from.	and his anger in proportion to his wealth.	
28	An arrogant man deals in mockery and insults, but retribution lies in wait for him like a lion.	A hasty argument kindles a fire, and a hasty quarrel leads to bloodshed.	11
29	Those who rejoice at the downfall of good men will be trapped and consumed with pain before they die.	Blow on a spark to make it glow, or spit on it to put it out; both results come from the one mouth.	12
30	Rage and anger, these also I abhor, but a sinner has them ready at hand.	Curses on the gossip and the tale-bearer!	13
28	The vengeful man will face the vengeance of the Lord, who keeps strict account of his sins.	For they have been the ruin of many peaceable men.	
2	Forgive your neighbour his wrongdoing; then, when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.	The talk of a third party has wrecked the lives of many and driven them from country to country;	14
3	If a man harbours a grudge against another,	it has destroyed fortified towns and demolished the houses of the great.	
	is he to expect healing from the Lord?	The talk of a third party has brought divorce on staunch wives and deprived them of all they have laboured for.	15
4	If he has no mercy on his fellow-man,	Whoever pays heed to it will never again find rest	16
	is he still to ask forgiveness for his own sins?	or live in peace of mind.	
5	If a mere mortal cherishes rage, where is he to look for pardon?	The lash of a whip raises weals, but the lash of a tongue breaks bones.	17
6	Think of the end that awaits you, and have done with hate; think of mortality and death, and be true to the commandments;	Many have been killed by the sword,	18
7	think of the commandments, and do not be enraged at your neighbour;	but not so many as by the tongue.	
	think of the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults.	Happy the man who is sheltered from its onslaught,	19
8	To avoid a quarrel is a setback for sin,	who has not borne its yoke, or been chained with its fetters!	
	for it is a hot temper that kindles quarrels.	For its yoke is of iron,	20
9	A sinner sows trouble between friends	its fetters of bronze.	
	and spreads scandal where before there was peace.	The death it brings is an evil death; better the grave than the tongue!	21
10	A fire is kept hot by stoking and a quarrel by persistence.	But it has no power over the godfearing;	22
	A man's rage is in proportion to his strength,	they cannot be burned in its flames.	
		Those who desert the Lord fall victim to it;	23
		among them it will burn like fire and not be quenched.	

28.2-5: Man's forgiveness is prerequisite to receiving God's forgiveness; compare Lev.19.18; Mt.5.7,23-24; Mk.11.25. 3: *Healing* means forgiveness. 13-26: This poem on slander is noteworthy for the tension between the shrewd observation that the righteous do suffer (the *staunch wives*, v. 15) and the assertion of faith that the *godfearing* (v. 22) are protected from the power of slander.

- It will launch itself against them  
like a lion  
and tear them like a leopard.
- 24 As you enclose your garden with  
a thorn hedge,  
and lock up your silver and gold,  
25 so weigh your words and measure  
them,  
and make a door and a bolt for  
your mouth.
- 26 Beware of being tripped by your  
tongue  
and falling into the power of a  
lurking enemy.
- 29 A DEVOUT MAN LENDS TO HIS  
neighbour;  
by supporting him he keeps the  
commandments.
- 2 Lend to your neighbour in his time  
of need;  
repay your neighbour punctually.
- 3 Be as good as your word and keep  
faith with him,  
and your needs will always be met.
- 4 Many treat a loan as a windfall  
and bring trouble on those who  
helped them.
- 5 Until he gets a loan, a man kisses  
his neighbour's hand  
and talks with bated breath about  
his money;  
but when it is time to repay, he  
postpones it,  
pays back only perfunctory promises,  
and alleges that the time is too  
short.<sup>b</sup>
- 6 If he can pay, his creditor will  
scarcely get back half,  
and will count himself lucky at  
that;  
if he cannot pay, he has defrauded  
the other of his money,  
and gratuitously made an enemy  
of him;<sup>c</sup>  
he will pay him back in curses and  
insults  
and with shame instead of honour.
- 7 Because of such dishonesty many  
refuse to lend,  
for fear of being needlessly defrauded.
- Nevertheless be patient with the  
penniless,  
and do not keep him waiting for  
your charity;  
for the commandment's sake help  
the poor,  
and in his need do not send him  
away empty-handed.
- Be ready to lose money for a  
brother or a friend;  
do not leave it to rust away under  
a stone.
- Store up for yourself the treasure  
which the Most High has  
commanded,  
and it will benefit you more than  
gold.
- Let almsgiving be the treasure in  
your strong-room,  
and it will rescue you from every  
misfortune.
- It will arm you against the enemy  
better than stout shield or strong  
spear.
- A good man will stand surety for  
his neighbour;  
only a man who has lost all sense  
of shame will fail him.
- If a man stands surety for you, do  
not forget his kindness,  
for he has staked his very self for  
you.
- A sinner wastes the property of his  
surety,  
and an ungrateful man fails his  
rescuer.
- Suretyship has ruined the prosperity  
of many  
and wrecked them like a storm at sea;  
it has driven men of influence into  
exile,  
and set them wandering in foreign  
countries.
- When a sinner commits himself to  
suretyship,  
his pursuit of gain will involve him  
in lawsuits.
- Help your neighbour to the best  
of your ability,

<sup>b</sup> Or that times are hard.

<sup>c</sup> and . . . him: *some witnesses read* and the other has won himself an enemy at his own expense.

29.1–28: **Borrowing and lending.** 1–7: Lending is encouraged in accord with the *commandment* (see Deut.15.7–11), though the risks are clearly stated. 14–20: Becoming *surety* for another is here favored within common-sense limits, in contrast to Prov., which warns against suretyship (Prov.6.1–5; 11.15). In other words, Eccles. advocates surety, but not to the extent of

- but beware of becoming too deeply involved.
- 21 The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothes, and a home with its decent privacy;
- 22 better the life of a poor man in his own hut than a sumptuous banquet in another man's house.
- 23 Be content with whatever you have, and do not get a name for living on hospitality.<sup>d</sup>
- 24 It is a poor life going from house to house, keeping your mouth shut because you are a visitor.
- 25 You receive the guests and hand the drinks without being thanked for it, and into the bargain must listen to words that rankle:
- 26 'Come here, stranger, and lay the table; whatever you have there, hand it to me.'
- 27 'Be off, stranger! Make way for a more important guest; my brother has come to stay, and I need the guest-room.'
- 28 How hard it is for a sensible man to bear criticism from the household or abuse from his creditor!
- 30 A MAN WHO LOVES HIS SON WILL whip him often so that when he grows up he may be a joy to him.
- 2 He who disciplines his son will find profit in him and take pride in him among his acquaintances.
- 3 He who gives his son a good education will make his enemy jealous and will boast of him among his friends.
- When the father dies, it is as if he were still alive, for he has left a copy of himself behind him.
- While he lived he saw and rejoiced, and when he died he had no regrets. He has left an heir to take vengeance on his enemies and to repay the kindness of his friends.
- A man who spoils his son will bandage every wound and will be on tenterhooks at every cry.
- An unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out headstrong.
- Pamper a boy and he will shock you; play with him and he will grieve you. Do not share his laughter, for fear of sharing his pain; you will only end by grinding your teeth.
- Do not give him freedom while he is young or overlook his errors. Break him in while he is young, beat him soundly while he is still a child, or he may grow stubborn and disobey you and cause you vexation. Discipline your son and take pains with him or he may offend you by some disgraceful act.
- BETTER A POOR MAN WHO IS HEALTHY and fit than a rich man racked by disease. Health and fitness are better than any gold, and bodily vigour than boundless prosperity.

<sup>d</sup> Reading based on one Vs.; Gk. and do not hear reproaches from your family.

deprivation. 21–28: This praise of simplicity and warning against a life of imposition on the hospitality of others was directed to the teacher's upper-class clientele. 23: The theme of being content is quite usual in both Jewish and Christian counsel. (Phil.4.11; 1 Tim.6.8; Heb. 13.5).

30.1–13: Raising children. 1–6: Discipline and education (v. 3) will enable a son to carry on his father's tradition, even to avenging him against his enemies (v. 6); the motive for discipline is the benefit to the parent. 7: The author is making fun of the oversolicitous parent. 8–13: Lack of discipline will produce a rebellious son.

30.14–20: Health better than wealth. 18: Food offerings . . . placed on a tomb were forbidden

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| <p>16 There is no wealth to compare with health of body, no festivity to equal a joyful heart.</p> <p>17 Better death than a life of misery, eternal rest than a long illness.</p> <p>18 Good things spread before a man without appetite are like offerings of food placed on a tomb.</p> <p>19 What use is a sacrifice to an idol which can neither taste nor smell? So it is with the man afflicted by the Lord.</p> <p>20 He gazes at the food before him and sighs as a eunuch sighs when he embraces a girl.</p> <p>21 Do not give yourself over to sorrow or distress yourself deliberately.</p> <p>22 A merry heart keeps a man alive, and joy lengthens his span of days.</p> <p>23 Indulge yourself, take comfort, and banish sorrow; for sorrow has been the death of many, and no advantage ever came of it.</p> <p>24 Envy and anger shorten a man's life, and anxiety brings premature old age.</p> <p>25 A man with a gay heart has a good appetite and relishes the food he eats.</p> <p>31 A rich man loses weight by wakeful nights, when the cares of wealth drive sleep away;</p> <p>2 sleepless worry keeps him wide awake, just as serious illness banishes<sup>e</sup> sleep.</p> <p>3 A rich man toils to amass a fortune, and when he relaxes he enjoys every luxury.</p> <p>4 A poor man toils to make a slender living,</p> | <p>and when he relaxes he finds himself in need.</p> <p>Passion for gold can never be right; the pursuit of money leads a man astray.<sup>f</sup></p> <p>Many a man has come to ruin for the sake of gold and found disaster staring him in the face.</p> <p>Gold is a pitfall to those who are infatuated with it, and every fool is caught by it.</p> <p>Happy the rich man who has remained free of its taint and has not made gold his aim! Show us that man, and we will congratulate him;</p> <p>he has performed a miracle among his people.</p> <p>Has anyone ever come through this test unscathed?</p> <p>Then he has good cause to be proud. Has anyone ever had it in his power to sin and refrained, or to do wrong and has not done it? Then he shall be confirmed in his prosperity, and the whole people will hail him as a benefactor.</p> <p>IF YOU ARE SITTING AT A GRAND table, do not lick your lips and exclaim, 'What a spread!' Remember, it is a vice to have a greedy eye.</p> <p>There is no greater evil in creation than the eye; that is why it must shed tears at every turn.</p> <p>Do not reach for everything you see,</p> | <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> |
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<sup>e</sup> banishes: probable meaning, based on Heb.; Gk. obscure.

<sup>f</sup> the pursuit . . . astray: so Heb.; Gk. the man who pursues destruction shall have his fill of it.

Jews; see Deut.26.14, but compare Tob.4.17. 19: Compare Ps.115.4-6. Sickness is heavy to bear because it is an affliction from the Lord.

30.21-31.4: **Enjoyment of the present.** 21-25: In contrast to the frequent advice to restrain the emotions in the face of insecurity (as in 11.29-13.13), here a relaxed self-expression in security is the ideal; compare 14.11-19. 31.1-4: Indicatives (rather than the imperatives of 30.21-25) offer a sober comment on the difficulty of enjoying the present.

31.5-11: **Good and bad uses of money.** The ambiguity of wealth is a problem in Eccles. The temptations are clearly stated. 10: The rhetorical question seems to expect the answer "no." 11: Yet financial security is the proper reward for righteousness; compare v. 8.

31.12-21: **Etiquette.** Table manners was a subject of wisdom teaching through the centuries.

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| <p>or jostle your fellow-guest at the dish;<br/>                 15 judge his feelings by your own and always behave considerately.<br/>                 16 Eat what is set before you like a gentleman;<br/>                 do not munch and make yourself objectionable.<br/>                 17 Be the first to stop for good manners sake<br/>                 and do not be insatiable, or you will give offence.<br/>                 18 If you are dining in a large company, do not reach out your hand before others.<br/>                 19 A man of good upbringing is content with little,<br/>                 and he is not short of breath when he goes to bed.<br/>                 20 The moderate eater enjoys healthy sleep;<br/>                 he rises early, feeling refreshed.<br/>                 But sleeplessness, indigestion, and colic<br/>                 are the lot of the glutton.<br/>                 21 If you cannot avoid overeating at a feast,<br/>                 leave the table and find relief by vomiting.<br/>                 22 Listen to me, my son; do not disregard me,<br/>                 and in the end my words will come home to you.<br/>                 Whatever you do, do it shrewdly,<br/>                 and no illness will come your way.<br/>                 23 Everyone has a good word for a liberal host,<br/>                 and the evidence of his generosity is convincing.<br/>                 24 The whole town grumbles at a mean host,<br/>                 and there is precise evidence of his meanness.<br/>                 25 Do not try to prove your manhood by drinking,</p> | <p>for wine has been the ruin of many.<br/>                 As the furnace tests iron when it is being tempered, 26<br/>                 so wine tests character when boastful men are wrangling.<br/>                 Wine puts life into a man, 27<br/>                 if he drinks it in moderation.<br/>                 What is life to a man deprived of wine?<br/>                 Was it not created to warm men's hearts?<br/>                 Wine brings gaiety and high spirits, 28<br/>                 if a man knows when to drink and when to stop;<br/>                 but wine in excess makes for bitter 29<br/>                 feelings<br/>                 and leads to offence and retaliation.<br/>                 Drunkenness inflames a fool's anger 30<br/>                 to his own hurt;<br/>                 it saps his strength and exposes him to injury.<br/>                 At a banquet do not rebuke your 31<br/>                 fellow-guest<br/>                 or make him feel small while he is enjoying himself.<br/>                 This is no time to take up a quarrel with him<br/>                 or pester him to pay his debts.<br/>                 If they choose you to preside at a 32<br/>                 feast, do not put on airs;<br/>                 behave to them as one of themselves.<br/>                 Look after the others before you sit down;<br/>                 do not take your place until you 2<br/>                 have discharged all your duties.<br/>                 Let their enjoyment be your pleasure,<br/>                 and you will win the prize for good manners.<br/>                 Speak, if you are old—it is your 3<br/>                 privilege—<br/>                 but come to the point and do not interrupt the music.<br/>                 Where entertainment is provided, do 4<br/>                 not keep up a stream of talk;<br/>                 it is the wrong time to show off your wisdom.</p> |
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Moderation is the key. 15: This is a form of the "Golden Rule"; compare 6.17; Tob.4.15; Mt.7.12. 18: The *before* is temporal.

31.22–24: How to entertain. 23: The *liberal host* is the ideal.

31.25–31: Moderation in drinking. 26: *Wine*, which tests character, is not to be avoided but rightly used; for Ecclesiasticus life was full of such tests. 27–28: The good effects of *wine* point up the motif of enjoying the moment; compare 30.21–25.

32.1–13: Behavior at banquets. 1–2: Presiding at a feast was a great honor. 3: The right of the *old* to *speak* first was widely recognized. 4: Incessant talkers disturb a concert and bore

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| <p>5 Like a signet of ruby in a gold ring<br/>is a concert of music at a banquet.</p> <p>6 Like a signet of emerald in a gold<br/>setting<br/>is tuneful music with good wine.</p> <p>7 Speak, if you are young, when the<br/>need arises,<br/>but twice at the most, and only<br/>when asked.</p> <p>8 Be brief, say much in few words,<br/>like a man who knows and can still<br/>hold his tongue.</p> <p>9 Among the great do not act as their<br/>equal<br/>or go on chattering when another is<br/>speaking.</p> <p>10 As lightning travels ahead of<br/>thunder,<br/>so popularity goes before a modest<br/>man.</p> <p>11 Leave in good time and do not be<br/>the last to go;<br/>go straight home without lingering.</p> <p>12 There you may amuse yourself to<br/>your heart's content,<br/>and run no risk of arrogant talk.</p> <p>13 And one thing more: give praise to<br/>your Maker,<br/>who has filled your cup with his<br/>blessings.</p> <p>14 THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD WILL<br/>accept his discipline,<br/>and the diligent will receive his<br/>approval.</p> <p>15 The genuine student will find<br/>satisfaction in the law,<br/>but it will prove a stumbling-block<br/>to the insincere.</p> <p>16 Those who fear the Lord will<br/>discover what is right,<br/>and will make his decrees<sup>g</sup> shine out<br/>like a lamp.</p> <p>17 A sinner will not accept criticism;<br/>he will find precedents to justify<br/>his choice.</p> | <p>A sensible man can always take a<br/>hint;<br/>but an arrogant heathen does not<br/>know the meaning of diffidence.<br/>Never do anything without<br/>deliberation,<br/>and afterwards you will have no<br/>regrets.<sup>h</sup></p> <p>Do not travel by a road full of<br/>obstacles<br/>and stumble along through its<br/>boulders.<br/>Do not be careless on a clear road<br/>but watch where you are going.<sup>i</sup><br/>Whatever you are doing, rely on<br/>yourself,<br/>for this too is a way of keeping the<br/>commandments.<br/>To rely on the law is to heed its<br/>commandments,<br/>and to trust the Lord is to want for<br/>nothing.</p> <p>Disaster never comes the way of<br/>the man who fears the Lord:<br/>in times of trial he will be rescued<br/>again and again.</p> <p>A wise man never hates the law,<br/>but the man who is insincere about<br/>it is like a boat in a squall.<br/>A sensible man trusts the law<br/>and finds it as reliable as the divine<br/>oracle.</p> <p>Prepare what you have to say, if you<br/>want a hearing.<br/>marshall your learning and then give<br/>your answer.</p> <p>The feelings of a fool turn like a<br/>cart-wheel,<br/>and his thoughts spin like an axle.<br/>A sarcastic friend is like a stallion<br/>which neighs no matter who is on<br/>its back.</p> | <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>33</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> |
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<sup>g</sup> Or their good conduct.  
<sup>h</sup> you . . . regrets: or do not change your mind.  
<sup>i</sup> but . . . going: so Heb.; Gk. and keep an eye on your children.

and annoy. 7: The *young* are to speak *only when asked*. 13: The poem closes on a religious note, as frequently, with *praise to your Maker*.

32.14–33.6: Contrasts between the reverent man and the fool. 15: The receptiveness of the wise man enables him to find *satisfaction in the law*. 17: By contrast, the *sinner* is not receptive and cannot *accept criticism*. 18–24: Foresight and self-reliance mark the wise. 33.1–2: The staying power of the reverent man derives from his trust in the Law. 3: The *divine oracle*: the Urim and Thummim (see Exod.28.15 n.), which were no longer in use. Ecclesiasticus holds that such oracles are no longer necessary since the *law* fully discloses God's will. 6: The *stallion* has no fixed loyalty to anyone.

7	why is one day more important than another, when every day in the year has its light from the sun?	but for all who seek learning. Listen to me, you dignitaries; leaders of the assembly, give me your attention.	18
8	It was by the Lord's decision that they were distinguished; he appointed the various seasons and festivals:	As long as you live, give no one power over yourself— son or wife, brother or friend. Do not give your property to another,	19
9	some days he made high and holy, and others he assigned to the common run of days.	in case you change your mind and want it back.	
10	All men alike come from the ground; Adam was created out of earth.	As long as you have life and breath, never change places with anyone.	20
11	Yet in his great wisdom the Lord distinguished them	It is better for your children to ask from you	21
12	and made them go various ways: some he blessed and lifted high, some he hallowed and brought near to himself,	than for you to be dependent on them.	
13	some he cursed and humbled and removed from their place.	Whatever you are doing, keep the upper hand, and allow no blot on your reputation.	22
14	As clay is in the potter's hands, to be moulded just as he chooses, so are men in the hands of their Maker,	Let your life run its full course, and then, at the hour of death, distribute your estate.	23
15	to be dealt with as he decides.	Fodder, and stick, and burdens for the donkey; bread, and discipline, and work for the servant!	24
16	Good is the opposite of evil, and life of death; yes, and the sinner is the opposite of the godly.	Make your slave work, if you want rest for yourself; if you leave him idle, he will be looking for his liberty.	25
17	Look at all the works of the Most High: they go in pairs, one the opposite of the other.	The ox is tamed by yoke and harness, the bad servant by racks and tortures.	26
18	I was the last to wake up, I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers;	Put him to work to keep him from being idle, for idleness is a great teacher of mischief.	27
19	by the Lord's blessing I arrived in time to fill my winepress as full as any of them.	Set him to work, for that is what he is for, and if he disobeys you, load him with fetters.	28
20	Remember that I did not toil for myself alone,		

**33.7–15: God and the opposites.** Clinging things in pairs and opposites was a favorite way of finding order in the world. **8:** Pairs and distinctions exist by *the Lord's decision*. **13:** The varied vessels made of *clay* correspond to the various stations of men; compare Jer.18.1–12; Rom.9.19–23. **14–15:** The *sinner* is paired against the *godly* among the *works of the Most High*; yet sin remains man's responsibility; compare 15.11–20.

**33.16–18: The author's task.** In the light of vv. 11–13, the author now sets forth the mission given him by God. Ancient writers tended to glorify the old (compare chs. 44–50); here Ecclesiasticus boldly states that his teaching is as good as the old.

**33.19–23: The father as property holder.** **20:** Do not *change places* of authority. **21:** *Children* were dependent on their fathers until the latter's death.

**33.24–31: Relations with slaves.** **24–28:** Bad and lazy slaves require stern treatment. The slave is made parallel to the domestic animal. **29–31:** The stern verses (24–28) are balanced



29	Do not be too exacting towards anyone or do anything contrary to justice.	An inexperienced man knows little, but a man who travels grows in ability.	10
30	If you have a servant, treat him as an equal, because you bought him with blood.	I have seen many things in the course of my travels, and understand more than I can tell.	11
31	If you have a servant, treat him like a brother; you will need him as much as you need yourself. If you ill-treat him and he takes to his heels, where will you go to look for him?	I have often been in deadly danger and escaped, thanks to the experience I had gained.	12
<i>True piety and the mercy of God</i>			
34	Vain hopes delude the senseless, and dreams give wings to a fool's fancy.	THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD SHALL live, for their trust is in one who can keep them safe.	13
2	It is like clutching a shadow, or chasing the wind, to take notice of dreams.	The man who fears the Lord will have nothing else to fear; he will never be a coward, because his trust is in the Lord.	14
3	What you see in a dream is nothing but a reflection, like the image of a face in a mirror.	How blest is the man who fears the Lord!	15
4	Purity cannot come out of filth; how then can truth issue from falsehood?	He knows where to look for support. The Lord keeps watch over those who love him,	16
5	Divination, omens, and dreams are all futile, mere fantasies, like those of a woman in labour.	their strong shield and firm support, a shelter from scorching wind and midday heat, a safeguard against stumbles and falls.	
6	Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High, pay no attention to them.	He raises the spirits and makes the eyes sparkle,	17
7	Dreams have led many astray and ruined those who built their hopes on them.	giving health, and life, and blessing.	
8	Such delusions can add nothing to the completeness of the law; the wisdom spoken by the faithful is complete in itself.	A sacrifice derived from ill-gotten gains is contaminated, a lawless mockery that cannot win approval.	18
9	An educated man knows many things, and a man of experience understands what he is talking about.	The Most High is not pleased with the offering of the godless, nor do endless sacrifices win his forgiveness.	19
		To offer a sacrifice from the possessions of the poor	20

by advice about equitable relations with good servants. 30: *Blood* refers to the hard labor by which the slave was bought.

34.1-12: **The unsubstantiality of dreams.** 1: *Empty hopes delude* because they are an escape from reality. 5: The objection here stems from such practices by pagan peoples. 6: Nonetheless, "true" dreams may be *sent* by the *Most High*. 8: Normally, however, the *wisdom* provided in the *law* is sufficient. 9: Empirical experience, rather than dreams, provides real knowledge. 11-12: *Travels* were a practical source of experience (compare 51.13); the author's opposition to paganism does not prevent him from gaining knowledge of the world outside Judea.

34.13-36.17: **True piety and the mercy of God** are united only in good conduct.

34.13-17: **A psalm of deliverance from fear.** It is God who gives what the dream seekers (34.1-8) were after.

34.18-26: **Empty observances.** 18: *A sacrifice*: this cannot substitute for moral obedience.

	is like killing a son before his father's eyes.	Be generous in your worship of the Lord	8
21	Bread is life to the destitute, and it is murder to deprive them of it.	and present the firstfruits of your labour in full measure.	
22	To rob your neighbour of his livelihood is to kill him, and the man who cheats a worker of his wages sheds blood.	Give all your gifts cheerfully and be glad to dedicate your tithe. Give to the Most High as he has given to you,	9 10
23	When one builds and another pulls down, what have they gained except hard work?	as generously as you can afford. For the Lord always repays; you will be repaid seven times over.	11
24	When one prays and another curses, which is the Lord to listen to?	Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it,	12
25	Wash after touching a corpse and then touch it again, and what have you gained by your washing?	and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice;	
26	So it is with the man who fasts for his sins and goes and does the same again; who will listen to his prayer? what has he gained by his penance?	for the Lord is a judge who knows no partiality. He has no favourites at the poor man's expense, but listens to his prayer when he is wronged.	13
35	Keeping the law is worth many offerings; to heed the commandments is to sacrifice a thank-offering.	He never ignores the appeal of the orphan or the widow when she pours out her complaint.	14
2	A kindness repaid is an offering of flour, and to give alms is a praise-offering.	How the tears run down the widow's cheeks, and her cries accuse the man who caused them!	15
3	The way to please the Lord is to renounce evil; and to renounce wrongdoing is to make atonement.	To be accepted a man must serve the Lord as he requires, and then his prayer will reach the clouds.	16
4	Yet do not appear before the Lord empty-handed;	The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,	17
5	perform these sacrifices because they are commanded.	but he is not consoled until it reaches its destination.	
6	When the just man brings his offering of fat to the altar, its fragrance rises to the presence of the Most High.	He does not desist until the Most High intervenes, gives the just their rights, and sees justice done.	
7	The just man's sacrifice is acceptable; it will never be forgotten.	The Lord will not be slow, neither will he be patient with the wicked,	18

21–22: Withholding *wages* was forbidden in Lev.19.13. 24–26: When the poor *curses* the rich, he will cancel out the latter's prayers; compare 35.17. Likewise, *penance*, in the form of ritual washing or fasting, is nullified by the repetition of the act which necessitated it. God, who *listens* to the *prayer* of the penitent, will not heed the prayer of the insincere.

35.1–11: **Right sacrifice. 1:** The moral commands come first in *keeping the law*. 4–5: Nevertheless, the ceremonial acts are not to be neglected. 9–11: The view here draws on the motivation of self-interest.

35.12–20: **God's justice and mercy. 12:** The *bribe* refers to the false sacrifices of 34.18–20. God shows no *partiality* to the rich; compare Deut.10.17–18. 13–17: Delay of justice means that the *prayer of orphan* and *widow* may have to be very persistent; but God will see *justice done*. 18–20: Perhaps by the metaphor of Israel as a widow (v. 14; Lam.1.1), the justice of God toward Israel becomes the subject.

	until he crushes the sinews of the merciless and sends retribution on the heathen; until he blots out the insolent, one and all, and breaks the power of the unjust;	and grant them their inheritance, <sup>k</sup> as thou didst long ago.	
19	until he gives all men their deserts, judging their actions by their intentions;	Have pity, O Lord, on the people called by thy name, Israel, whom thou hast named thy first-born.	12
	until he gives his people their rights and gladdens them with his mercy.	Show mercy to the city of thy sanctuary, Jerusalem, the city of thy rest.	13
20	His mercy is as timely in days of trouble as rain-clouds in days of drought.	Fill Zion with the praise of thy triumph; fill thy people with thy glory. Thou didst create them at the beginning; acknowledge them now	14
		and fulfil the prophecies spoken in thy name.	
36	HAVE PITY ON US, O LORD, THOU God of all; look down, and send thy terror upon all nations.	Reward those who wait for thee; prove thy prophets trustworthy. Listen, O Lord, to the prayer of thy servants, who claim Aaron's blessing upon thy people.	16
2	Raise thy hand against the heathen, and let them see thy power.	Let all who live on earth acknowledge that thou art the Lord, the eternal God.	17
3	As they have seen thy holiness displayed among us, so let us see thy greatness displayed among them.		
4	Let them learn, as we also have learned, that there is no God but only thou, O Lord.		
5	Renew thy signs, repeat thy miracles, win glory for thy hand, for thy right arm.		
6	Rouse thy wrath, pour out thy fury, destroy the adversary, wipe out the enemy.		
7	Remember the day thou hast appointed and hasten it, <sup>j</sup> and give men cause to recount thy wonders.		
8	Let fiery anger devour the survivors, and let the oppressors of thy people meet their doom.		
9	Crush the heads of hostile princes, who say, "There is no one to match us."		
10	Gather all the tribes of Jacob,		
11			

*Man in society*

ALL IS FOOD FOR THE STOMACH, but one food is better than another. As the palate identifies game by its taste, so the discerning mind detects lies. A warped mind makes trouble, but a man of experience can pay it back.	18
A woman will take any man for husband, but a man may prefer one girl to another. A woman's beauty makes a man happy,	21
	22

<sup>j</sup> Remember . . . it: *some witnesses read* Hasten the day and remember thy oath.  
<sup>k</sup> Or and take them to be thy own.

36.1-17: A prayer for Israel. In language of appeal to God this section takes up the theme of 35.18-20. 1: *God of all*: compare 50.22. 4: God's *holiness* was shown in his punishing Israel by exile. 6: The *signs* and *miracles* are those of Exod.7.14-11.10; 12.29-32; 14.1-15.21. 8: The *day* of the Lord was both a popular and prophetic hope; see Amos 5.18-20. 9-11: Some of the elements of the "day" were to *crush* the *oppressors* of Israel and to *gather* the dispersed *tribes of Jacob*. *Inheritance*: land of Palestine. 12: *Called by thy name*: belonging to you. 17: Along with the prophecies, the writer invokes the priestly blessing of *Aaron*; see Num.6.23-26. 36.18-20: *Discernment*. Three proverbs introduce a collection of poems (36.18-39.11) about judgment and discrimination.

36.21-26: *The married life*. 21: The *woman* had no choice; marriage was arranged by the

	and there is nothing he desires more.	His advice will be weighted in his own favour	
23	If she has a kind and gentle tongue, then her husband is luckier than most men.	and may tip the scales against you. He may say, 'Your road is clear', and stand aside to see what happens.	9
24	The man who wins a wife has the beginnings of a fortune, a helper to match his needs and a pillar to support him.	Do not consult a man who is suspicious of you or reveal your intentions to those who envy you.	10
25	Where there is no hedge, property is plundered; and where there is no wife, the wanderer sighs for a home.	Never consult a woman about her rival	11
26	Does anyone trust a roving bandit who swoops on town after town? No more will they trust a homeless man who lodges wherever night overtakes him.	or a coward about war, a merchant about a bargain or a buyer about a sale, a skinflint about gratitude or a hard-hearted man about a kind action, an idler about work of any sort, a casual labourer about finishing the job, or a lazy servant about an exacting task—	
37	Every friend says, 'I too am your friend'; but some are friends in name only.	do not turn to them for any advice. Rely rather on a godfearing man whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, whose interests are like your own, who will sympathize if you have a setback.	12
2	What a mortal grief it is when a dear friend turns into an enemy!	But also trust your own judgement, for it is your most reliable counsellor. A man's own mind has sometimes	13
3	Oh this propensity to evil, how did it creep in to cover the earth with treachery?	a way of telling him more than seven watchmen posted high on a tower.	14
4	A friend may be all smiles when you are happy, but turn against you when trouble comes.	But above all pray to the Most High to keep you on the straight road of truth.	15
5	Another shares your toil for the sake of a meal, and yet may protect you against an enemy.		
6	Never forget a friend or neglect him when prosperity comes your way.	Every undertaking begins in discussion, and consultation precedes every action.	16
7	Every counsellor says his own advice is best but some have their own advantage in view.	Here you can trace the mind's variety.	17
8	Beware of the man who offers advice, and find out beforehand where his interest lies.	Four kinds of destiny are offered to men, good and evil, life and death;	18

father. 24–26: Despite negative remarks about women, Ecclesiasticus strongly disapproves of men who avoid marriage.

37.1–6: **Choosing a friend.** Compare 6.5–17. 1–4: A true friend is hard to discern. 6: The section ends with an imperative which sets the qualifications aside.

37.7–15: **Choosing a counselor.** As in 37.1–6, the main theme is watchfulness against the other's interest. 11: Lists were a typical way of collecting wisdom; compare 25.7–10. *Rival*: see 26.6 n. 13–14: Factors that warp others' insight do not apply in the same way to your own. 15: The shrewd, practical section closes on a religious note; see also v. 12.

37.16–26: **Productive and unproductive wisdom.** 22: Success in managing one's own life is a

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| <p>and always it is the tongue that decides the issue.</p> <p>19 A man may be clever enough to teach others and yet be useless to himself.</p> <p>20 A brilliant speaker may make enemies and end by dying of hunger,</p> <p>21 if the Lord has withheld the gift of popular appeal, because he is devoid of wisdom.</p> <p>22 If a man is wise in the conduct of his own life, his good sense can be trusted when he speaks.</p> <p>23 If a man is wise and instructs his people, then his good sense can be trusted.</p> <p>24 A wise man will have praise heaped on him, and all who see him will count him happy.</p> <p>25 The days of a man's life can be numbered, but the days of Israel are countless.</p> <p>26 A wise man will possess the confidence of his people, and his name will live for ever.</p> <p>27 MY SON, TEST YOURSELF ALL YOUR life long; take note of what is bad for you and do not indulge in it.</p> <p>28 For not everything is good for everyone; we do not all enjoy the same things.</p> <p>29 Do not be greedy for every delicacy or eat without restraint.</p> <p>30 For illness is a sure result of overeating, and gluttony is next door to colic.</p> <p>31 Gluttony has been the death of many; be on your guard and prolong your life.</p> <p>38 Honour the doctor for his services, for the Lord created him.</p> | <p>His skill comes from the Most High, 2 and he is rewarded by kings.</p> <p>The doctor's knowledge gives him 3 high standing and wins him the admiration of the great.</p> <p>The Lord has created medicines from 4 the earth, and a sensible man will not disparage them.</p> <p>Was it not a tree that sweetened 5 water and so disclosed its properties? The Lord has imparted knowledge 6 to men, that by their use of his marvels he may win praise; by using them the doctor<sup>m</sup> relieves 7 pain and from them the pharmacist makes 8 up his mixture. There is no end to the works of the Lord, who spreads health over the whole world.</p> <p>My son, if you have an illness, do 9 not neglect it, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you.</p> <p>Renounce your faults, amend your 10 ways, and cleanse your heart from all sin. Bring a savoury offering and bring 11 flour for a token and pour oil on the sacrifice; be as generous as you can.<sup>n</sup></p> <p>Then call in the doctor, for the Lord 12 created him; do not let him leave you, for you need him.</p> <p>There may come a time when your 13 recovery is in their hands; then they too will pray to the Lord 14 to give them success in relieving pain and finding a cure to save their patient's life.</p> |
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*l* Or and revealed the power of the Lord.  
*m* the doctor: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* he heals and . . .  
*n* be . . . can: so *Heb.*; *Gk.* obscure.

mark of productive wisdom. 24: Public reputation is another mark. 26: Lasting fame is a third criterion.

37.27-31: **Know your own limits.** These verses make the generalized proverbs of 36.18-19 into literal rules for finding one's own dietary style.

38.1-15: **The doctor.** 3: Social *standing* is cited as proof of the validity of the doctor's work. 4: Apparently some did *disparage medicines*, because they believed that faith alone should heal. Ecclus. advocates both faith (compare vv. 9-11) and the doctor. 5: For the *sweetened water*, see Exod.15.23-25.

15	When a man has sinned against his Maker, let him put himself in the doctor's hands.	He concentrates on ploughing his furrows, and works late to give the heifers their fodder.	26
16	My son, shed tears for the dead; raise a lament for your grievous loss. Shroud his body with proper ceremony, and do not neglect his burial.	So it is with every craftsman or designer who works by night as well as by day, such as those who make engravings on signets, and patiently vary the design;	27
17	With bitter weeping and passionate lament make your mourning worthy of him. Mourn for a few days as propriety demands, and then take comfort for your grief.	they concentrate on making an exact representation, and sit up late to finish their task. So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil, intent on his iron-work.	28
18	For grief may lead to death, and a sorrowful heart saps the strength.	The smoke of the fire shrivels his flesh, as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace.	
19	When a man is taken away, suffering is over, but to live on in poverty goes against the grain.	The hammer rings again and again in his ears, and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying.	
20	Do not abandon yourself to grief; put it from you and think of your own end.	He concentrates on completing the task, and stays up late to give it a perfect finish.	
21	Never forget! there is no return; you cannot help him and can only injure yourself.	So it is with the potter, sitting at his work, turning the wheel with his feet, always engrossed in the task	29
22	Remember that his fate will also be yours: 'Mine today and yours tomorrow.'	of making up his tally; he moulds the clay with his arm, crouching forward to apply his strength.	30
23	When the dead is at rest, let his memory rest too; take comfort as soon as he has breathed his last.	He concentrates on finishing the glazing, and stays awake to clean out the furnace.	
24	A SCHOLAR'S WISDOM COMES OF ample leisure; if a man is to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks.	All these rely on their hands, and each is skilful at his own craft.	31
25	How can a man become wise who guides the plough, whose pride is in wielding his goad, who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen, and talks only about cattle?	Without them a city would have no inhabitants; no settlers or travellers would come to it. Yet they are not in demand at public discussions	32 33

**38.16–23: Mourning for the dead.** 16–17: *Proper ceremony* is important, partly because it makes possible the psychological break with the dead which is so important; see vv. 20–23. Mourning as *propriety demands* involves a sensitivity to public opinion on which the author constantly kept his eye. 18–23: The finality of *your own end* (v. 20) can help you to accept another's. 22: The dead man speaks a proverb.

**38.24–39.11: Ordinary work and the work of the wise.** 24: *Leisure* is to be used acquiring wisdom. 25–34: Farming (honored in 7.15,22) and crafts allow no leisure for study. Yet later

<p>or prominent in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench or understand the decisions of the courts. They cannot expound moral or legal principles and are not ready with maxims.</p> <p>34 But they maintain the fabric of this world, and their prayers are about their daily work.<sup>o</sup></p> <p>39 How different it is with the man who devotes himself to studying the law of the Most High, who investigates all the wisdom of the past, and spends his time studying the prophecies!</p> <p>2 He preserves the sayings of famous men and penetrates the intricacies of parables.</p> <p>3 He investigates the hidden meaning of proverbs and knows his way among riddles.</p> <p>4 The great avail themselves of his services, and he is seen in the presence of rulers. He travels in foreign countries and learns at first hand the good or evil of man's lot.</p> <p>5 He makes a point of rising early to pray to the Lord, his Maker, and prays aloud to the Most High, asking pardon for his sins.</p> <p>6 If it is the will of the great Lord, he will be filled with a spirit of intelligence; then he will pour forth wise sayings of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer.</p> <p>7 He will have sound advice and knowledge to offer, and his thoughts will dwell on the mysteries he has studied.</p>	<p>He will disclose what he has learnt 8 from his own education, and will take pride in the law of the Lord's covenant.</p> <p>Many will praise his intelligence; 9 it will never sink into oblivion. The memory of him will not die but will live on from generation to generation; the nations will talk of his wisdom, 10 and his praises will be sung in the assembly.</p> <p>If he lives long, he will leave a name 11 in a thousand, and if he goes to his rest, his reputation is secure.<sup>p</sup></p> <p>I HAVE STILL MORE IN MY MIND TO 12 express; I am full like the moon at mid-month. Listen to me, my devout sons, and 13 blossom like a rose planted by a stream. Spread your fragrance like incense, 14 and bloom like a lily. Scatter your fragrance; lift your voices in song, praising the Lord for all his works. Ascribe majesty to his name 15 and give thanks to him with praise, with songs on your lips, and with harps; let these be your words of thanksgiving: 'All that the Lord has made is very 16 good; all that he commands will happen in due time.' No one should ask, 'What is this?' 17 or 'Why is that?' At the proper time all such questions will be answered. When he spoke the water stood up like a heap, and his word created reservoirs for it.</p>
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<sup>o</sup> Or and their daily work is their prayer.  
<sup>p</sup> his reputation is secure: possible reading; Gk. obscure.

on Jewish scholars regularly practiced a craft; compare Acts 18.3. **39.1:** The wise man is a scholar of the Scriptures. In the threefold division of the Bible, the order is usually Law, Prophecy, and the Writings, the latter equivalent to Wisdom. Here the author, because of his own interest, puts *wisdom* before *prophecies*. **4:** He is also a shrewd, practical advisor in public affairs. *Travels:* see 34.11–12 n. **9–11:** Enduring *memory* is an important test to Eccles.; compare 44.10–15.

**39.12–35: God's works. 16–31:** A psalm opposes skeptics with the argument that everything is good in its time. The skeptics (vv. 17,21,34) represent the pessimistic facet in the wisdom tradition (compare the interpretation of "times" in Eccles.3.1–11). **17:** The *water stood up* in

<p>18 When he commands, his purpose is fulfilled, and no one can thwart his saving power.</p> <p>19 He sees the deeds of all mankind; there is no hiding from his gaze.</p> <p>20 From the beginning to the end of time he keeps watch, and nothing is too marvellous for him.</p> <p>21 No one should ask, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?' Everything has been created for its own purpose.</p> <p>22 His blessing is like a river in flood which inundates the parched ground.</p> <p>23 But the doom he assigns the heathen is his wrath, as when he turned a watered plain into a salt desert.</p> <p>24 For the devout his paths are straight, but full of pitfalls for the wicked.</p> <p>25 From the beginning good things were created for the good, and evils for sinners.</p> <p>26 The chief necessities of human life are water, fire, iron, and salt, flour, honey, and milk, the juice of the grape, oil, and clothing.</p> <p>27 All these are good for the godfearing, but turn to evil for sinners.</p> <p>28 There are winds created to be agents of retribution, with great whips to give play to their fury; on the day of reckoning, they exert their force and give full vent to the anger of their Maker.</p> <p>29 Fire and hail, famine and deadly disease, all these were created for retribution;</p> <p>30 beasts of prey, scorpions and vipers, and the avenging sword that destroys the wicked.</p> <p>31 They delight in carrying out his orders,</p>	<p>always standing ready for his service on the earth; and when their time comes, they never disobey.</p> <p>I have been convinced of all this from the beginning; I have thought it over and left it in writing: all the works of the Lord are good, and he supplies every need as it occurs.</p> <p>No one should say, 'This is less good than that', for all things prove good at their proper time.</p> <p>Come then, sing with heart and voice, and praise the name of the Lord.</p> <p><b>HARD WORK IS THE LOT OF EVERY man,</b> and a heavy yoke is laid on the sons of Adam, from the day when they come from their mother's womb until the day of their return to the mother of all; troubled thoughts and fears are theirs, and anxious expectation of the day of their death.</p> <p>Whether a man sits in royal splendour on a throne or grovels in dust and ashes, whether he wears the purple and a crown or is clothed in sackcloth, his life is nothing but anger and jealousy, worry and perplexity, fear of death, and guilt, and rivalry. Even when he goes to bed at night, sleep only brings to mind the same things in a new form.</p> <p>His rest is little or nothing; he begins to struggle as hard in his sleep as in the day.<sup>q</sup> Disturbed by nightmares,</p>	<p>32</p> <p>33</p> <p>34</p> <p>35</p> <p><b>40</b></p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>
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*q* he begins . . . day: possible meaning; Gk. obscure.

being separated from the land, Gen.1.9-10. **23:** The *watered plain* is that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen.19.25; compare Ps.107.34. **26:** This list of ten necessities drawn from secular wisdom (compare 29.21) is used to show that God made all things good, though they can be turned to evil by the sinner.

**40.1-11: Suffering as the lot of man.** In striking contrast to the previous psalm, Eccus. here recognizes the universality of suffering, even for the righteous. 5-7: Eccus. avoids a religious



	he fancies himself a fugitive from the battlefield;	Wine and music gladden the heart,	20
7	and at the moment when he reaches safety, he wakes up, astonished to find his fears groundless.	but better still is the love of wisdom. Flute and harp make pleasant melody,	21
8	To all living creatures, man and beast—	but better still is a pleasant voice. A man likes to see grace and beauty,	22
9	and seven times over to sinners— come death and bloodshed, quarrel and sword,	but better still the green shoots in a cornfield. A friend or companion is always welcome,	23
10	disaster, famine, ruin, and plague. All these were created for the wicked, and on their account the flood happened.	but better still to be man and wife. Brothers and helpers are a standby in time of trouble,	24
11	All that is of earth returns to earth again, and all that is of water finds its way back to the sea.	but better still is almsgiving. Gold and silver make a man stand firm,	25
12	Bribery and injustice will all vanish, but good faith will last for ever.	but better still is good advice. Wealth and strength make for confidence,	26
13	The wealth of the wicked will dry up like a torrent and die away like a great roll of thunder in a storm.	but better still is the fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord is to lack nothing and never to be in need of support. The fear of the Lord is like a luxuriant garden;	27
14	As a generous man will have cause for rejoicing, so law-breakers will come to utter ruin.	it shelters a man better than any riches.	
15	The shoots of an impious stock put out few branches; their tainted roots are planted on sheer rock.	My son, do not live the life of a beggar;	28
16	The rush that grows on every river-bank is pulled up before any other grass,	it is better to die than to beg. When a man starts looking to another man's table,	29
17	but kindness is like a luxuriant garden, and almsgiving lasts for ever.	his existence is not worth calling life. It is demoralizing to live on another man's food,	
18	To be employed and to be one's own master, both are sweet, but it is better still to find a treasure.	and a wise, well-disciplined man will guard against it.	30
19	Offspring and the founding of a city perpetuate a man's name, but better still is a perfect wife.	When a man has lost all shame, he speaks as if begging were sweet, but inside him there is a blazing fire.	
		Death, how bitter is the thought of you	41
		to a man living at ease among his possessions,	
		free from anxiety, prosperous in all things,	

interpretation of dreams (compare 34.1-8); they are part of man's burden. 8-11: At least the burden of suffering is greater for sinners.

40.12-17: The victory of the good. To counteract the previous pessimistic observations, Ecclesiasticus here affirms the transience of bribery and injustice and all evil, and the permanence of good faith and all good.

40.18-30: Good and bad things. 18-27: Eighteen good things are listed in a complex parallel pattern. 26-27: The fear of the Lord is the best. 28-30: A beggar's life is the opposite of a good thing. 30: The inner conflict is the worst feature of begging.

41.1-4: Acceptance of death. Regardless of one's emotional response, one must accept the inevitable.

<p>and still vigorous enough to enjoy a good meal!</p> <p>2 Death, how welcome is your sentence to a destitute man whose strength is failing, worn down by age and endless anxiety, resentful and at the end of his patience!</p> <p>3 Do not be afraid of death's summons; remember those who have gone before you, and those who will come after.</p> <p>4 This is the Lord's decree for all living men; why try to argue with the will of the Most High? Whether life lasts ten years, or a hundred, or a thousand, there will be no questions asked in the grave.</p> <p>5 What a loathsome brood are the children of sinners, brought up in haunts of vice!</p> <p>6 Their inheritance dwindles away, and their descendants suffer a lasting disgrace.</p> <p>7 A godless father is blamed by his children for the disgrace they endure on his account.</p> <p>8 Woe to you, godless men who have abandoned the law of God Most High!</p> <p>9 When you are born, you are born to a curse, and when you die, a curse is your lot.</p> <p>10 Whatever comes from earth returns to earth; so too the godless go from curse to ruin.</p> <p>11 Men grieve over the death of the body, but sinners have no good name to survive them.</p> <p>12 Take thought for your name, for it will outlive you longer than a thousand hoards of gold.</p>	<p>The days of a good life are numbered, but a good name lasts for ever.</p> <p>13</p> <p>MY CHILDREN, BE TRUE TO YOUR training and live in peace. Wisdom concealed and treasure hidden— what is the use of either? Better a man who hides his folly than one who hides his wisdom!</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16 Show deference then to my teaching: shame is not always to be encouraged, or given unqualified approval in all circumstances.</p> <p>17 Be ashamed to be found guilty of fornication by your parents, or of lies by a ruler or prince; of crime by a judge or magistrate, or of a breach of the law by the assembly and people;</p> <p>18 of dishonesty by a partner or friend, or of theft by the neighbourhood;</p> <p>19 be ashamed before the truth of God and his covenant. Be ashamed of bad manners at table, of giving or receiving with a sneer, of refusing to return a greeting, or of ogling a prostitute.</p> <p>20 Be ashamed of turning away a relative, of robbing someone of his rightful share, or of eyeing another man's wife.</p> <p>21 Be ashamed of meddling with his slave-girl, and keep away from her bed. Be ashamed of reproaching your friends, or following up your charity with a lecture.</p> <p>22 Be ashamed of repeating what you have heard and of betraying a secret.</p> <p>23 Then you will be showing a proper shame and will be popular with everyone.</p> <p>24</p>
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41.5–13: Consequences that outlast death. 5–10: Children bear the consequences of their godless father's life. 11–13: A good name is the most lasting memorial; compare Prov.22.1; Eccles.7.1.

41.14–42.8: Proper and improper shame. 17–23: Proper bases of shame are listed. 24: The

- 42 But at other times you must not  
 be ashamed,  
 or you will do wrong out of  
 deference to others.
- 2 Do not be ashamed of the law and  
 covenant of the Most High,  
 or of justice, for fear you acquit the  
 guilty;
- 3 of settling accounts with a partner  
 or a travelling-companion,  
 or of sharing an inheritance with the  
 other heirs;
- 4 of using accurate weights and measures,  
 or of business dealings, large or small,  
 5 and making a profit out of trade;  
 of frequent disciplining of children,  
 or of drawing blood from the back  
 of a worthless servant.
- 6 If your wife is untrustworthy, or  
 where many hands are at work,  
 it is well to keep things under lock  
 and key.
- 7 When you make a deposit, see that  
 it is counted and weighed,  
 and when you give or receive, have  
 it all in writing.
- 8 Do not be ashamed to correct the  
 ignorant and foolish,  
 or a greybeard guilty of fornication.  
 Then you will be showing your  
 sound upbringing  
 and will win everyone's approval.
- 9 A daughter is a secret anxiety to her  
 father,  
 and the worry of her keeps him  
 awake at night;  
 when she is young, for fear she may  
 grow too old to marry,  
 and when she is married, for fear she  
 may lose her husband's love;
- 10 when she is a virgin, for fear she  
 may be seduced  
 and become pregnant in her father's  
 house,  
 when she has a husband, for fear  
 she may misbehave,  
 and after marriage, for fear she may 11  
 be barren.  
 Keep close watch over a headstrong  
 daughter,  
 or she may give your enemies cause  
 to gloat,  
 making you the talk of the town and  
 a byword<sup>r</sup> among the people,  
 and shaming you in the eyes of the  
 world.  
 Do not let her display her beauty to 12  
 any man,  
 or gossip in the women's quarters.<sup>s</sup>  
 For out of clothes comes the moth,  
 and out of woman comes woman's 13  
 wickedness.  
 Better a man's wickedness than a 14  
 woman's goodness;  
 it is woman who brings shame and  
 disgrace.
- The wonders of creation*
- NOW I WILL CALL TO MIND THE 15  
 works of the Lord  
 and describe what I have seen;  
 by the words of the Lord his works  
 are made.  
 As the sun in its brilliance looks 16  
 down on everything,  
 so the glory of the Lord fills his  
 creation.  
 Even to his angels the Lord has not 17  
 given the power  
 to tell the full story of his marvels,  
 which the Lord Almighty has  
 established  
 so that the universe may stand firm  
 in his glory.  
 He fathoms the abyss and the heart 18  
 of man,  
 he is versed in their intricate secrets;  
 for the Lord possesses all knowledge

<sup>r</sup> a byword: so Heb.; Gk. obscure.  
<sup>s</sup> Do not . . . quarters: so Heb.; Gk. obscure.

conclusion is a secular rather than a religious one; but compare v. 19. 42.2-7: Things not to be ashamed of are listed in contrast to 41.17-23. 8: The conclusion parallels 41.24.

42.9-14: **Problems with women.** 9-12: *Anxiety* for a *daughter* is sketched through the stages of her life. 13-14: The generalizing conclusion is probably a popular proverb.

42.15-43.33: **The wonders of creation.** This poem on the wonders of creation introduces 44.1-50.21, on the heroes of Israel's past; Pss.104 (creation) and 105-106 (Israel's past) exhibit a similar pattern. These concluding chapters make clear that the practical human wisdom of the earlier part of the book is to be seen in the framework of God's all-embracing, benign influence in all of nature, but especially in Israel's history and in the lives of those who made it.

42.15-25: **God's lordship in the creation.** 15: The *works of the Lord* make up the whole visible universe. 18: Man's *heart* (i.e. his mind) is considered to be as inscrutable as the *abyss*, the

	and observes the signs of all time.	it is a light that wanes as it completes its course.	
19	He discloses the past and the future, and uncovers the traces of the world's mysteries.	The moon gives its name to the month;	8
20	No thought escapes his notice, and not a word is hidden from him.	it waxes marvellously as its phases change,	
21	He has set in order the masterpieces of his wisdom, he who is from eternity to eternity; nothing can be added, nothing taken away,	a beacon to the armies of heaven, shining in the vault of the sky.	
	and he needs no one to give him advice.	The brilliant stars are the beauty of the sky,	9
22	How beautiful is all that he has made, down to the smallest spark that can be seen!	a glittering array in the heights of the Lord.	
23	His works endure, all of them active for ever and all responsive to their various purposes.	At the command of the Holy One they stand in their appointed place;	10
		they never default at their post.	
24	All things go in pairs, one the opposite of the other; he has made nothing incomplete.	Look at the rainbow and praise its Maker;	11
25	One thing supplements the virtues of another.	it shines with a supreme beauty, rounding the sky with its gleaming arc,	12
	Who could ever contemplate his glory enough?	a bow bent by the hands of the Most High.	
43	What a masterpiece is the clear vault of the sky!	His command speeds the snow-storm and sends the swift lightning to execute his sentence.	13
	How glorious is the spectacle of the heavens!	To that end the storehouses are opened,	14
2	The sun comes into view proclaiming as it rises how marvellous a thing it is, made by the Most High.	and the clouds fly out like birds.	
3	At noon it parches the earth, and no one can endure its blazing heat.	By his almighty power the clouds are piled up	15
4	The stoker of a furnace works in the heat, but three times as hot is the sun scorching the hills.	and the hailstones broken small.	
	It breathes out fiery vapours, and its glare blinds the eyes.	The crash of his thunder makes the earth writhe,	16-17
5	Great is the Lord who made it, whose word speeds it on its course.	and, when he appears, an earthquake shakes the hills.	
		At his will the south wind blows, the squall from the north and the hurricane.	
6	He made the moon also to serve in its turn, a perpetual sign to mark the divisions of time.	He scatters the snow-flakes like birds alighting;	18
		they settle like a swarm of locusts.	
7	From the moon, feast-days are reckoned;	The eye is dazzled by their beautiful whiteness,	19
		and as they fall the mind is entranced.	
		He spreads frost on the earth like salt,	20
		and icicles form like pointed stakes.	
		A cold blast from the north,	

subterranean reservoir of water. 24-25: The appearance of *pairs* helps explain the apparent contradictions in life; compare 33.15.

43.1-26: Examples of God's work. Astonishment at the rapid yet controlled changes of the natural environment is the leading theme.

and ice grows hard on the water,  
 settling on every pool,  
 as though the water were putting  
 on a breastplate.  
 21 He consumes the hills, scorches the  
 wilderness,  
 and withers the grass like fire.  
 22 Cloudy weather quickly puts all to  
 rights,  
 and dew brings welcome relief after  
 heat.  
 23 By the power of his thought he  
 tamed the deep  
 and planted it with islands.  
 24 Those who sail the sea tell stories  
 of its dangers,  
 which astonish all who hear them;  
 25 in it are strange and wonderful  
 creatures,  
 all kinds of living things and huge  
 sea-monsters.  
 26 By his own action he achieves his  
 end,  
 and by his word all things are held  
 together.  
 27 However much we say, we cannot  
 exhaust our theme;  
 to put it in a word: he is all.  
 28 Where can we find the skill to sing  
 his praises?  
 For he is greater than all his works.  
 29 The Lord is terrible and very great,  
 and marvellous is his power.  
 30 Honour the Lord to the best of  
 your ability,  
 and he will still be high above all  
 praise.  
 Summon all your strength to declare  
 his greatness,  
 and be untiring, for the most you  
 can do will fall short.  
 31 Has anyone ever seen him, to be  
 able to describe him?  
 Can anyone praise him as he truly  
 is?  
 32 We have seen but a small part of  
 his works,

and there remain many mysteries  
 greater still.  
 The Lord has made everything 33  
 and has given wisdom to the godly.

*Heroes of Israel's past*

LET US NOW SING THE PRAISES OF 44  
 famous men,  
 the heroes of our nation's history,  
 through whom the Lord established 2  
 his renown,  
 and revealed his majesty in each  
 succeeding age.  
 Some held sway over kingdoms 3  
 and made themselves a name by  
 their exploits.  
 Others were sage counsellors,  
 who spoke out with prophetic power.  
 Some led the people by their 4  
 counsels  
 and by their knowledge of the  
 nation's law;  
 out of their fund of wisdom they  
 gave instruction.  
 Some were composers of music or 5  
 writers of poetry.  
 Others were endowed with wealth 6  
 and strength,  
 living peacefully in their homes.  
 All these won fame in their own 7  
 generation  
 and were the pride of their times.  
 Some there are who have left a name 8  
 behind them  
 to be commemorated in story.  
 There are others who are 9  
 unremembered;  
 they are dead, and it is as though  
 they had never existed,  
 as though they had never been born  
 or left children to succeed them.  
 Not so our forefathers; they were 10  
 men of loyalty,  
 whose good deeds have never been  
 forgotten.  
 Their prosperity is handed on to 11  
 their descendants,

43.27-33: **God's power.** This is the conclusion of 42.15-43.33. 27: To say that God *is all* is a poetic exaggeration, for he is not the things he has created; compare Wis.1.7. 32: What we have *seen* (nature) points beyond itself, to the *mysteries* of the invisible worlds and of God himself.

44.1-15: **Introduction to the praises of famous men.** 1-2: *Famous men* are remembered not for themselves, but because they reveal God's *majesty*. 3-7: The prominence of *sage counsellors* here contrasts with the actual functions of the men named later. 9: The *unremembered*, according to Eccles., are men of power who were disloyal to God.

- and their inheritance to future generations.<sup>†</sup>
- 12 Thanks to them their children are within the covenants—the whole race of their descendants.
- 13 Their line will endure for all time, and their fame will never be blotted out.
- 14 Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name lives for ever.
- 15 Nations will recount their wisdom, and God's people will sing their praises.
- 16 Enoch pleased the Lord and was carried off to heaven, an example of repentance to future generations.
- 17 Noah was found perfect and righteous, and thus he made amends in the time of retribution; therefore a remnant survived on the earth, when the flood came.
- 18 A perpetual covenant was established with him, that never again should all life be swept away by a flood.
- 19 Great Abraham was the father of many nations; no one has ever been found to equal him in fame.
- 20 He kept the law of the Most High; he entered into covenant with him, setting upon his body the mark of the covenant; and, when he was tested, he proved faithful.
- 21 Therefore the Lord swore an oath to him, that nations should find blessing through his descendants, that his family should be countless as the dust of the earth and be raised as high as the stars,
- and that their possessions should reach from sea to sea, from the Great River to the ends of the earth.
- To Isaac he made the same promise for the sake of his father Abraham, a blessing for all mankind and a covenant; and so he transmitted them to Jacob.
- He confirmed him in the blessings he had received and gave him the land he was to inherit, dividing it into portions, which he allotted to the twelve tribes.
- From Jacob's stock the Lord raised up a loyal servant, who won the approval of all mankind, beloved by God and men, Moses of blessed memory. The Lord made him equal in glory to the angels and gave him power to strike terror into his enemies. At his request he put an end to the portents, and enhanced his reputation with kings. He gave him commandments for his people and showed him a vision of his own glory. For his loyalty and humility he consecrated him, choosing him out of all mankind. He let him hear his voice and led him into the dark cloud. Face to face, he gave him the commandments, a law that brings life and knowledge, so that he might teach Jacob the covenant and Israel his decrees.

<sup>†</sup> Their prosperity . . . generations: *probable meaning, based on other Vss.; Gk. obscure.*

44.16–18: Enoch and Noah. 16: Enoch also appears at 49.14 and may be a copyist's addition here. 17–18: On the *covenant* with Noah, see Gen.8.20–22; 9.8–17.

44.19–23: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 20: Ecclus. remembers Abraham because he kept the law (Gen.26.5); contrast Rom.4.1–25. The *mark of the covenant* was circumcision; see Gen.17.10–14,23–27.

45.1–5: Moses. 2: The *angels* represent a weakened Gk. translation of Exod.4.16; 7.1, where Moses is like a "god" to Aaron and Pharaoh; the same Heb. word *elohim* is translated by "god" and "angels." 3: The *portents* were the plagues of Egypt; see Exod.7.14–11.10; 12.29–32. The *vision* was that of Exod.33.18–34.8. 4: For Moses' *humility*, see Num.12.3.

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| 6  | He raised to a like holy office<br>Moses' brother Aaron from the<br>tribe of Levi.  | It was Moses who ordained him<br>and anointed him with sacred oil,<br>in token of the perpetual covenant<br>made with him  | 15 |
| 7  | He made a perpetual covenant with<br>him,<br>conferring on him the priesthood of<br>the nation.<br>He honoured him with splendid<br>ornaments<br>and clothed him in gorgeous<br>vestments.  | and with his descendants as long<br>as the heavens endure,<br>that he should be the Lord's minister<br>in the priestly office<br>and bless his people in his name.<br>He chose him out of all mankind<br>to bring offerings to the Lord,<br>incense and the fragrance of<br>memorial sacrifice,<br>to make atonement for the people.<br>He entrusted to him his<br>commandments,<br>with authority to pronounce legal<br>decisions,<br>to teach Jacob his decrees<br>and enlighten Israel about his law. | 16 |
| 8  | He robed him in perfect splendour<br>and armed him with the emblems<br>of power,<br>the breeches, the mantle, and the<br>tunic.   | Upstarts grew jealous of him<br>and conspired against him in the<br>desert,<br>Dathan and Abiram with their<br>supporters<br>and Korah's band in their violent<br>anger.   | 18 |
| 9  | Round his robe he placed<br>pomegranates<br>and a circle of many golden bells,<br>to make music as he walked,<br>ringing aloud throughout the temple<br>as a reminder to his people.  | The Lord saw and refused his<br>sanction;<br>he destroyed them in the heat of<br>his wrath,<br>and worked a miracle against them<br>by consuming them in a blazing<br>fire.  | 19 |
| 10 | He gave him the sacred vestment<br>adorned by an embroiderer<br>with gold and violet and purple;<br>the oracle of judgement with the<br>tokens of truth; <sup>u</sup>   | But he added fresh honours to<br>Aaron<br>and gave him a special privilege,<br>allotting to the priests the choicest<br>firstfruits,<br>to ensure that they above all should<br>have bread in plenty.  | 20 |
| 11 | the scarlet thread spun with a<br>craftsman's art;<br>the precious stones, engraved like<br>seals,<br>and placed by the jeweller in a gold<br>setting<br>with inscriptions to serve as<br>reminders,<br>one for each of the tribes of Israel; | For they eat the sacrifices of the<br>Lord,<br>which he gave to Aaron and his<br>descendants.  | 21 |
| 12 | the gold crown upon his turban,<br>engraved like a seal with 'Holy to<br>the Lord'. <sup>v</sup><br>What rich adornments to feast the<br>eyes!<br>What a miracle of art! What a<br>proud honour!  | But he was to have no inheritance<br>in the land of his people,<br>no portion allotted to him among<br>them;   | 22 |
| 13 | Before him no such splendour<br>existed,<br>and no one outside his family has<br>ever put them on,<br>no one except his sons<br>and his descendants in perpetuity.  |  |    |
| 14 | Twice every day without fail<br>they present his sacrifice of a whole-<br>offering.   |  |    |

<sup>u</sup> the oracle . . . truth: or the breast-piece of judgement with the Urim and Thummim (*Exodus 28. 30*).  
<sup>v</sup> Compare *Exodus 28. 36*: literally a seal of holiness.

45.6-26: Aaron and Phinehas. As founder of the priestly line, Aaron receives far more attention than Moses; compare the long treatment of Simon (50.1-21). 7-13: For the *splendid ornaments*, see *Exod.28.1-43*; they symbolize the glory of God's service. 15: For Aaron's anointing with *sacred oil*, see *Lev.8.10-13*. 18-22: For *Dathan, Abiram, and Korah*, see

- for the Lord himself is his portion,  
his inheritance.
- 23 Phinehas son of Eleazar ranks third  
in renown  
for being zealous in his reverence  
for the Lord,  
and for standing firm with noble  
courage,  
when the people were in revolt;  
by so doing he made atonement  
for Israel.
- 24 Therefore a covenant was established  
with him,  
assuring him command of the  
sanctuary and of the nation,  
conferring on him and his  
descendants  
the high-priesthood for ever.
- 25 Just as a covenant was made with  
David son of Jesse of the tribe  
of Judah,  
that the royal succession should  
always pass from father to son,  
so the succession was to pass from  
Aaron to his descendants.
- 26 May the Lord grant you a wise mind  
to judge his people with justice,  
so that their prosperity may never  
vanish  
and their glory may be handed on  
to future generations!
- 46 Joshua son of Nun was a mighty  
warrior,  
who succeeded Moses in the prophetic  
office.  
He lived up to his name  
as a great liberator of the Lord's  
chosen people,  
able to take reprisals on the  
enemies who attacked them,  
and to put Israel in possession of  
their territory.
- 2 How glorious he was when he raised  
his hand  
and brandished his sword against  
cities!
- 3 Never before had a man made such  
a stand,  
for he was fighting the Lord's battles.
- Was it not through him that the sun 4  
stood still  
and made one day as long as two?  
He called on the Most High, the 5  
Mighty One,  
when the enemy was pressing him  
on every side,  
and the great Lord answered his  
prayer  
with violent storm of hail. 6  
He overwhelmed that nation in battle  
and crushed his assailants as they  
fled down the pass,  
to make the nations recognize his  
strength in arms  
and teach them that he fought under  
the very eyes of the Lord,  
for he followed the lead of the  
Mighty One.
- In the time of Moses he had proved 7  
his loyalty,  
he and Caleb son of Jephunneh:  
they stood their ground against the  
whole assembly,  
restrained the people from sin,  
and silenced their wicked grumbling.  
Out of six hundred thousand warriors 8  
these two alone escaped with their  
lives  
to enter the land and take possession  
of it,  
the land flowing with milk and honey.  
The Lord gave Caleb strength, 9  
which still remained with him in his  
old age,  
so that he was able to invade the  
hill-country  
and win possession of it for his  
descendants.
- So all Israel could see 10  
how good it is to be a loyal follower  
of the Lord.
- Then there are the judges, name 11  
after famous name,  
all of them men who rejected idolatry  
and never rebelled against the Lord:  
blessings be on their memory!  
May their bones send forth new life 12  
from the ground where they lie!

Num.16.1-33. 23-26: The defense of *Phinehas* (see Num.25.1-13) may reflect a challenge to the priestly line in the time of the author.

46.1-10: *Joshua and Caleb. 1:* For *Joshua's* succession to the *prophetic office*, see Deut.34.9. 7: The *loyalty* of Joshua and Caleb (see Num.14.5-10) makes them exemplary.

46.11-12: The judges.



- May the fame of the honoured dead  
be matched by their sons!
- 13 Samuel was beloved by his Lord;  
as prophet of the Lord he established  
the monarchy  
and anointed rulers over his people.
- 14 As long as he dispensed justice  
according to the law of the  
Lord,  
the Lord kept watch over Jacob.
- 15 Because of his fidelity he proved to  
be an accurate prophet;  
the truth of his vision was shown  
by his utterances.
- 16 He called on the Mighty Lord,  
when enemies were pressing him on  
every side,  
and offered a sucking-lamb in  
sacrifice;
- 17 then the Lord thundered from  
heaven,  
making his voice heard in a mighty  
crash,
- 18 and routed the leaders of the  
enemy,<sup>w</sup>  
all the rulers of the Philistines.
- 19 Before the time came for his eternal  
sleep,  
Samuel called the Lord and his  
anointed to witness:  
'I never took any man's property,  
not so much as a pair of shoes';  
and no man accused him.
- 20 Even after he had gone to his rest  
he prophesied  
and foretold to the king his death,  
lifting up his voice in prophecy  
from the ground  
to wipe out the people's guilt.
- 47 After him Nathan came forward  
to be prophet in the reign of David.
- 2 As the fat is separated from the  
sacrifice,  
so David was chosen out of all  
Israel.
- 3 He played with lions as though they  
were kids,
- with bears as though they were  
lamb.
- In his youth did he not kill a giant 4  
and restore the honour of his  
people,  
when he whirled his sling with its  
stone  
and brought down boastful  
Goliath?  
For he called on the Lord Most 5  
High,  
who gave strength to his right arm  
to strike down that mighty warrior  
and win victory for his people.  
So they hailed him as conqueror of 6  
tens of thousands,  
they sang his praises for the blessings  
bestowed by the Lord,  
when he was offered the royal  
diadem.
- For he subdued their enemies on 7  
every side  
and crushed the resistance of the  
Philistines,  
whose power remains broken to  
this day.
- In all he did he gave thanks, 8  
ascribing glory to the Holy One, the  
Most High.  
With his whole heart he sang hymns  
of praise,  
to show his love for his Maker.
- He appointed musicians to stand 9  
before the altar  
and sing sweet music to the harp.  
So he gave splendour to the 10  
festivals  
and fixed for all time the round of  
sacred seasons,  
when men praise the holy name of  
the Lord  
and the sanctuary resounds from  
morning to night.
- The Lord pardoned his sins 11  
and endowed him with great power  
for ever:  
he gave him a covenant of kingship  
and the glorious throne of Israel.

<sup>w</sup> the enemy: so Heb.: Gk. Tyre.

46.13-20: Samuel. 15: Samuel's *accurate* prophecy (see 1 Sam.3.19-21; 9.6) is based on his *fidelity* which all can emulate. 20: Despite his opposition to divination (compare 34.5), Eccclus. includes the incident of the necromancer of En-dor among Samuel's achievements (see 1 Sam.28.3-20).

47.1-11: Nathan and David. 1: Nathan (2 Sam.7.1-17; 12.1-14) links the prophetic line of Samuel to Elijah. 8-11: David's sponsorship of ceremonial worship (1 Chr.23.1-6,24-32) is mentioned in line with the author's interest in cult.

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| <p>12 He was succeeded by a wise son,<br/>Solomon,<br/>who, thanks to his father David,<br/>lived in spacious days.</p> <p>13 He reigned in an age of peace,<br/>because God made all his frontiers<br/>quiet,<br/>and so he was able to build a house<br/>in God's honour,<br/>a sanctuary founded to last for ever.</p> <p>14 How wise you were, Solomon, in<br/>your youth!<br/>Your mind was like a brimming river;<br/>15 your influence spread throughout<br/>the world,<br/>which you filled with your proverbs<br/>and riddles.</p> <p>16 Your fame reached to distant islands,<br/>and you were beloved for your<br/>peaceful reign.</p> <p>17 Your songs, your proverbs, your<br/>parables,<br/>and the answers you gave were the<br/>admiration of the world.</p> <p>18 In the name of the Lord God,<br/>who is known as the God of Israel,<br/>you amassed gold and silver<br/>as though they were tin and lead.</p> <p>19 But you took women to lie at your<br/>side<br/>and gave yourself up to their control.</p> <p>20 You stained your reputation<br/>and tainted your line.<br/>You brought retribution on your<br/>children<br/>and made them grieve over your<br/>folly,</p> <p>21 because it divided the sovereignty<br/>and produced out of Ephraim a rebel<br/>kingdom.</p> <p>22 But the Lord never ceases to be<br/>merciful;<br/>he does not destroy what he himself<br/>has made;<br/>he will not wipe out the children of<br/>his chosen servant<br/>or cut short the line of the man who<br/>has loved him.<br/>So he granted a remnant to Jacob<br/>and let one scion of David survive.</p> | <p>So Solomon died like his forefathers 23<br/>and left one of his sons to succeed<br/>him,<br/>a man of weak intelligence, the fool<br/>of the nation,<br/>Rehoboam, whose policy drove the<br/>people to revolt.</p> <p>Then Jeroboam son of Nebat led<br/>Israel into sin<br/>and started Ephraim on its wicked<br/>course.</p> <p>Their sins increased beyond measure, 24<br/>until they were driven into exile<br/>from their native land;<br/>for they had explored every kind of 25<br/>wickedness,<br/>until retribution came upon them.</p> <p>Then Elijah appeared, a prophet 48<br/>like fire,<br/>whose word flamed like a torch.<br/>He brought famine upon them, 2<br/>and his zeal made their numbers<br/>small.</p> <p>By the word of the Lord he shut up 3<br/>the sky<br/>and three times called down fire.<br/>How glorious you were, Elijah, in 4<br/>your miracles!<br/>Who else can boast such deeds?<br/>You raised a corpse from death 5<br/>and from the grave, by the word of<br/>the Most High.</p> <p>You sent kings and famous men 6<br/>from their sick-beds down to their<br/>deaths.</p> <p>You heard a denunciation at Sinai, 7<br/>a sentence of doom at Horeb.<br/>So you anointed kings for vengeance, 8<br/>and prophets to succeed you.</p> <p>You were taken up to heaven in a 9<br/>fiery whirlwind,<br/>in a chariot drawn by horses of fire.<br/>It is written that you are to come 10<br/>at the appointed time with<br/>warnings,<br/>to allay the divine wrath before its<br/>final fury,<br/>to reconcile father and son,<br/>and to restore the tribes of Jacob.</p> |
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47.12–22: Solomon. 14–17: Solomon was a model *wise* man; see 1 Kgs.3.6–12; 4.29–34. 19–20: *Women* were Solomon's downfall; compare 9.2; 1 Kgs.11.1–13. 21: Solomon's greed and *folly* were the root of the *rebel kingdom*; 1 Kgs.12.1–5.

47.23–25: Rehoboam and Jeroboam. See 1 Kgs.12.1–20. 23: Jeroboam *led Israel into sin* by initiating illicit worship; 1 Kgs.12.28–31.

48.1–16: Elijah and Elisha. See 1 Kgs.17.1–19.21; 21.1–29; 2 Kgs.1.1–9.3. 10: *It is written*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>11 Happy are those who saw you<br/>and were honoured with your love!<sup>x</sup></p> <p>12 When Elijah had vanished in a<br/>whirlwind,<br/>Elisha was filled with his spirit.<br/>Throughout his life no ruler made<br/>him tremble;<br/>no one could make him subservient.</p> <p>13 Nothing was too difficult for him;<br/>even in the grave his body kept its<br/>prophetic power.</p> <p>14 In life he worked miracles,<br/>and in death his deeds were marvellous.</p> <p>15 In spite of all this the people did not<br/>repent<br/>or renounce their sins,<br/>until they were carried off as plunder<br/>from their land<br/>and scattered over the whole earth.<br/>Only a tiny nation was left,<br/>with a ruler from the house of<br/>David;</p> <p>16 and of these some did what was<br/>pleasing to the Lord,<br/>but others heaped sin upon sin.</p> <p>17 Hezekiah fortified his city,<br/>bringing water within its walls;<br/>he drilled through the rock with<br/>tools of iron<br/>and made cisterns for the water.</p> <p>18 In his reign Sennacherib invaded<br/>the country.<br/>He sent Rab-shakeh from Lachish,<sup>y</sup><br/>who made threats against Zion<br/>and grew arrogant in his boasting.</p> <p>19 Then they were unnerved in heart<br/>and hand;<br/>they suffered the anguish of a<br/>woman in labour.</p> <p>20 So they called on the merciful<br/>Lord,<br/>spreading out their hands in<br/>supplication to him.<br/>The Holy One quickly answered<br/>their prayer from heaven<br/>by sending Isaiah to the rescue;</p> <p>21 he struck down the Assyrian camp,<br/>and his angel wiped them out.</p> | <p>For Hezekiah did what was pleasing 22<br/>to the Lord,<br/>and kept firmly to the ways of his<br/>ancestor David,<br/>as he was instructed by Isaiah,<br/>the great prophet whose vision could<br/>be trusted.</p> <p>In his time the sun went back, 23<br/>and he added many years to the<br/>king's life.</p> <p>With inspired power he saw the 24<br/>future<br/>and comforted the mourners in Zion.<br/>He revealed things to come before 25<br/>they happened,<br/>the secrets of the future to the end<br/>of time.</p> <p>The memory of Josiah is fragrant 49<br/>as incense<br/>blended by the skill of the perfumer,<br/>sweet as honey to every palate<br/>or as music at a banquet.<br/>He did what was right: he reformed 2<br/>the nation<br/>and rooted out their loathsome and<br/>lawless practices.<br/>He was whole-heartedly loyal to the 3<br/>Lord<br/>and in lawless times made godliness<br/>prevail.</p> <p>Except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, 4<br/>all were guilty of wrongdoing,<br/>for they deserted the law of the Most<br/>High;<br/>and so the royal line of Judah came<br/>to an end.</p> <p>They surrendered their power to 5<br/>others<br/>and their glory to a foreign nation,<br/>who set fire to the chosen city, the 6<br/>city of the sanctuary,<br/>and left its streets deserted, as<br/>Jeremiah prophesied;<br/>for they had ill-treated him, 7<br/>a prophet consecrated even before<br/>his birth</p> |
|---|--|

<sup>x</sup> honoured . . . love: *probable meaning: Gk. adds for we also shall certainly live.*  
<sup>y</sup> from Lachish: *other witnesses read and went away.*

refers to Mal.4.5-6; compare 2 Esd.6.26; Mt.17.10-13. 15: *Scattered*: see 2 Kgs.17.6.  
48.17-25: *Hezekiah and Isaiah*. See 2 Kgs. chs. 18-20. 24: See Isa.40.1-2. 25: The view that  
prophecy revealed . . . secrets for later times was widespread; compare Isa.41.22-23; 44.7.  
49.1-7: *Josiah and Jeremiah*. 1-3: See 2 Kgs.22.1-23.30. 7: *Ill-treated*: see Jer.37.15-38.  
*Uproot . . . plant*: see Jer.1.10.

	to uproot, to destroy, and to demolish, but also to build and to plant.		
8	Ezekiel had a vision of the Glory, which was revealed enthroned on the chariot of the cherubim.		
9	The Lord remembered his enemies and sent a storm, but he did good to those who kept to the straight path.		
10	May the bones of the twelve prophets also send forth new life from the ground where they lie! For they put new heart into Jacob, and rescued the people by their confident hope.		
11	How can we tell the greatness of Zerubbabel, who was like a signet-ring on the Lord's right hand?		
12	With him was Joshua son of Jehozadak; in their days they built the house, raising a holy temple to the Lord, destined for eternal glory.		
13	Great is the memory of Nehemiah, who raised our fallen walls, constructed gates and bars, and rebuilt our ruined homes.		
14	No one on earth has been created to equal Enoch, for he was taken up from the earth.		
15	No man has been born to be Joseph's peer, the ruler of his brothers and the strength of his people; and the Lord kept watch over his body.		
16	Shem and Seth were given distinction among men, but Adam holds pre-eminence over all creation.		
		It was the high priest Simon son of Onias in whose lifetime the house was repaired, in whose days the temple was fortified. He laid the foundation for the high double wall, the high retaining wall of the temple precinct. In his day they dug <sup>z</sup> the reservoir, a cistern broad as the sea. He applied his mind to protecting his people from ruin and strengthened the city against siege. How glorious he was, surrounded by the people, when he came from behind the temple curtain! He was like the morning star appearing through the clouds or the moon at the full; like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High or the light of the rainbow on the gleaming clouds; like a rose in spring or lilies by a fountain of water; like a green shoot upon Lebanon on a summer's day or burning incense in the censer; like a cup of beaten gold, decorated with every kind of precious stone; like an olive-tree laden with fruit or a cypress with its top in the clouds. When he put on his gorgeous vestments, robed himself in perfect splendour, and went up to the holy altar, he added lustre to the court of the sanctuary. When the priests were handing him the portions of the sacrifice, as he stood by the altar hearth	50 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

<sup>z</sup> they dug: *so Heb.; Gk. obscure.*

**49.8-10: Ezekiel and the twelve prophets.** 8: See Ezek.1.1-28. 10: The *twelve* minor *prophets* are regarded as a single book. Some of the twelve lived after the return from captivity and encouraged the captives to rebuild: see Zech.1.16; Hag.1.8; 2.3-9.

**49.11-13: Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Nehemiah.** Hag.1.1; 2.2-4; Zech. chs. 3-4; Neh.7.1. Note that Ezra is not specifically named.

**49.14-16: Ancient heroes.** Rather oddly these early heroes are inserted at this point; see 44.16.

**50.1-21: Simon the son of Onias.** He was high priest about 225-200 B.C.; although there may have been an earlier Simon, it is the consensus that this one, actually known to the author, is meant. **5-21:** These verses describe the service on the Day of Atonement. On this day only, in connection with the blessing, the high priest pronounced the sacred *name* of Yahweh (v. 20).

with his brothers round him like  
 a garland,  
 he was like a young cedar of  
 Lebanon  
 in the midst of a circle of palms.  
 13 All the sons of Aaron in their  
 magnificence  
 stood with the Lord's offering in  
 their hands  
 before the whole congregation of  
 Israel.  
 14 To complete the ceremonies at the  
 altar  
 and adorn the offering of the Most  
 High, the Almighty,  
 15 he held out his hand for the libation  
 cup  
 and poured out the blood of the  
 grape,  
 poured its fragrance at the foot of  
 the altar  
 to the Most High, the King of all.  
 16 Then the sons of Aaron shouted  
 and blew their trumpets of beaten  
 silver;  
 they sounded a mighty fanfare  
 as a reminder before the Lord.  
 17 Instantly the people as one man fell  
 on their faces  
 to worship the Lord their God, the  
 Almighty, the Most High.  
 18 Then the choir broke into praise,  
 in the full sweet strains of resounding  
 song,  
 19 while the people of the Most High  
 were making their petitions to the  
 merciful Lord,  
 until the liturgy of the Lord was  
 finished  
 and the ritual complete.  
 20 Then Simon came down and raised  
 his hands  
 over the whole congregation of  
 Israel,  
 to pronounce the Lord's blessing,  
 proud to take his name on his lips:  
 21 and a second time they bowed in  
 worship  
 to receive the blessing from the  
 Most High.

COME THEN, PRAISE THE GOD OF THE 22  
 universe,  
 who everywhere works great  
 wonders,  
 who from our birth ennobles our  
 life<sup>a</sup>  
 and deals with us in mercy.  
 May he grant us a joyful heart, 23  
 and in our time send Israel lasting  
 peace.  
 May he confirm his mercy towards 24  
 us,  
 and in his own good time grant us  
 deliverance.  
 Two nations I detest, 25  
 and a third is no nation at all:  
 the inhabitants of Mount Seir,<sup>b</sup> the 26  
 Philistines,  
 and the senseless folk that live at  
 Shechem.  
 In this book I have written 27  
 lessons of good sense and  
 understanding,  
 I, Jesus son of Sirach,<sup>c</sup> of Jerusalem,  
 whose mind was a fountain of  
 wisdom.  
 Happy the man who occupies 28  
 himself with these lessons,  
 who lays them to heart and grows  
 wise!  
 If he lives by them, he will be equal 29  
 to anything,  
 with the light of the Lord shining on  
 his path.

*Epilogue*

I THANK THEE, MY LORD AND KING, 51  
 I praise thee, my God and Saviour,  
 I give thee thanks,  
 because thou hast been my protector 2  
 and helper,  
 rescuing me from death,  
 from the trap laid by a slanderous  
 tongue

*a* ennobles our life: or brings us up.  
*b* Mount Seir: so *Heb.*: *Gk.* the mountain of Samaria.  
*c* Sirach: some witnesses read Sirach Eleazar.

50.22–24: Conclusion to the praise of famous men. 23: The language shows uneasiness about lasting peace.

50.25–26: A fragment. It is directed against the Idumeans, the Philistines, and the Samaritans.  
 50.27–29: The author's conclusion. Unlike other writers in the Apocrypha, he gives his own name.

51.1–30: Epilogue; two psalms. 1–12: This psalm is modeled after the psalms of deliverance;

	and from lips that utter lies.	In the forecourt of the sanctuary	14
	In the face of my assailants thou	I laid claim to her,	
	didst come to my help;	and I shall seek her out to the end.	
3	in the fullness of thy mercy and	From the first blossom to the	15
	glory thou didst rescue me	ripening of the grape	
	from grinding teeth which waited	she has been the delight of my	
	to devour me,	heart.	
	from hands that threatened my	From my youth my steps have	
	life,	followed her without swerving.	
	from the many troubles I endured,	I had hardly begun to listen when	16
4	from the choking fire around me,	I was rewarded,	
	from the flames I had not kindled,	and I gained for myself much	
5	from the deep recesses of the	instruction.	
	grave,	I made progress in my studies;	17
	from the foul tongue and its lies—	all honour to him who gives me	
6	a wicked slander spoken in the	wisdom!	
	king's presence.	I determined to practise what I had	18
	I came near to death;	learnt;	
	I was on the brink of the grave.	I pursued goodness, and shall never	
7	They surrounded me on every	regret it.	
	side,	I strove for wisdom with all my	19
	and there was no one to help me.	might,	
	I looked for human aid and there	and was scrupulous in whatever	
	was none.	I did.	
8	Then I remembered thy mercy,	I spread out my hands to heaven	
	Lord,	above,	
	thy deeds in bygone days;	deploring my ignorance;	
	thou dost deliver those who patiently	I set my heart on possessing wisdom,	20
	trust thee	and by keeping myself pure I found	
	and free them from the power of	her.	
	their enemies.	With her I gained understanding	
9	So I sent up a prayer from the	from the first;	
	earth	therefore I shall never be at a	
	and begged for rescue from death.	loss.	
10	I cried, 'Lord, thou art my Father,' <sup>d</sup>	Because I passionately yearned to	21
	do not desert me in time of trouble,	discover her,	
	when I am helpless in the face of	I won a noble prize.	
	arrogance.	The Lord gave me eloquence as my	22
11	I will praise thee continually,	reward,	
	I will sing hymns of thanksgiving.'	and with it I will praise him.	
	And my prayer was granted;		
12	for thou didst save me from death	Come to me, you who need	23
	and rescue me from my desperate	instruction,	
	plight.	and lodge in my house of learning.	
	Therefore I will thank thee and	Why do you admit to a lack of	24
	praise thee	these things,	
	and bless thee, O Lord.	yet leave your great thirst	
		unslaked?	
13	When I was still young, before I set	I have made my proclamation:	25
	out on my travels,	'Buy for yourself without money,	
	I asked openly for wisdom in my		
	prayers.		

<sup>d</sup> thou . . . Father: *so Heb.*; *Gk.* Father of my lord.

compare Ps.18.1–19.49. 13–30: An acrostic (alphabetic) psalm. 13–22: A young man searches for wisdom, which is personified as a beautiful woman; see 4.12 n. 23–30: A wisdom teacher invites pupils in language very similar to the appeal of wisdom; see 4.11–19; 24.19–22. 23: The *house of learning* was later the regular term for rabbinical schools.

- 26 bend your neck to the yoke,  
be ready to accept discipline;  
you need not go far to find it.’
- 27 See for yourselves how little were  
my labours  
compared with the great peace I  
have found.
- 28 Your share of instruction may cost  
you a large sum of silver,

but it will bring you a large return  
in gold.

May you take delight in the Lord’s  
mercy 29  
and never be ashamed of praising  
him.

Do your duty in good time,  
and in his own time he will reward  
you. 30

# BARUCH

This book carries the name of Baruch, Jeremiah's close friend and secretary (Jer. chs. 32 and 45). If that Baruch were indeed the author, the book would have come from the sixth pre-Christian century, but a later date and different authorship seem involved. The book was probably written in Hebrew, but the original writing has not survived. It shows little or no unity respecting authorship, style, age, and even Greek translator or translators. The divergent viewpoints (compare 1.11 and 2.22 with 4.15,25) and the book's dependence on later writings (i.e. 1.15-3.8 on Neh. ch. 9 and Dan.9.4-19) suggest a date between 200 and 150 B.C., although a date as late as the first century B.C. is possible.

This anthology of prayers and hymns provides a rare glimpse of religion in the synagogues outside Palestine, reflecting devotion to the Temple and the religious authority at Jerusalem, resistance to foreign idolatry, and continuous meditation on the Law and other sacred writings like Jeremiah, Isaiah (chs. 40-55, 60-62), Daniel, Proverbs, and Job.

After a narrative introduction (1.1-14), there follow a group confession of sins and lamentation in prose (1.15-3.8), then in poetic meter a hymnic praise of Wisdom (3.9-4.4) and a medley of prophetic poems of hope or tender lament about Jerusalem (4.5-5.9).

## *A message to a conquered people*

1 **T**HIS IS THE BOOK OF BARUCH, SON  
of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, son  
2 of Zedekiah, son of Hasadiah, son  
of Hilkiah, written in Babylon, on  
the seventh day of the month, in the fifth  
year after the Chaldaeans had captured  
and burnt Jerusalem.  
3 Baruch read the book aloud to  
Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of  
Judah, and to all the people who had  
4 assembled to hear it: the nobles, the  
princes of the royal blood, the elders,  
and the whole community, high and  
low—in short, all who lived in Babylon,  
5 by the river Soud. Then they prayed to  
the Lord with tears and fasting; and  
6 each of them collected as much money  
7 as he could, and they sent it to Jeru-  
salem, to Jehoiakim the high priest, son  
of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, and to the  
priests and all the people who were  
8 with him. This was the time when he  
took the vessels belonging to the house  
of the Lord which had been looted from

the temple, and returned them to the  
land of Judah, on the tenth of the month  
Sivan. These were the silver vessels  
made by Zedekiah son of Josiah, king  
9 of Judah, after Nebuchadnezzar king  
of Babylon had deported Jeconiah, the  
rulers, the captives, the nobles, and the  
common people from Jerusalem and  
taken them to Babylon.

They said: We are sending you 10  
money to buy whole-offerings, sin-  
offerings, and incense; provide a grain-  
offering, and offer them all upon the  
altar of the Lord our God; and pray 11  
for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,  
and for his son Belshazzar, that their  
life on earth may last as long as the  
heavens. So the Lord will give us 12  
strength, and light to walk by, and we  
shall live under the protection of  
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and  
of Belshazzar his son; we shall give  
them long service and gain their favour.  
13 Pray also for us to the Lord our God,  
because we have sinned against him,  
and to this day the Lord's anger and

**1.1-14: Introduction.** By means of a pseudohistorical setting this section unites the liturgical prayers and pilgrimages of the Jews in the Diaspora with those of their forefathers in the Babylonian Exile (587-539 B.C.). Historical difficulties are many, such as the *month* intended in v. 2. Too, *Jehoiakim the high priest* (v. 7) is unknown to us except in the historical romance of Jdt.4.6 (see n. there), where the spelling is "Joakim." The Temple is presumed to be destroyed in v. 2 and to be already rebuilt by its devastator in v. 10. *Belshazzar* (v. 11) was actually the son of Nabonidus, not of *Nebuchadnezzar*; see Dan.1.1 n., 5.2,13,18,22. (Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, reigned from 555-539 B.C.). 2: *Jerusalem* fell in July 587 B.C. and was burned to the ground by order of Nebuchadnezzar a month later (2 Kgs.25.3,8-9). 3: *Jeconiah*: King Jehoiachin, considered the legitimate king by fellow exiles (see Ezek.1.2). 4: *The river Soud* was undoubtedly one of the many irrigation canals carrying water from the Euphrates. 5: *Fasting* became more frequent in postexilic times (Dan.9.3; Zech.7.1-5). 8: *Sivan*: third month (May-June). 11: This request to pray for the foreigner *Nebuchadnezzar* reveals a broad-minded spirit of prayer reaching beyond national prejudice as well as a monotheistic faith in one God for



wrath have not been averted from us.  
 14 You are to read this book that we  
 are sending you, and make your confession  
 in the house of the Lord on the  
 feast day and during the festal season,  
 15 and say: The Lord our God is in the  
 right; but on us the shame rests to this  
 very day—on the men of Judah, the  
 16 citizens of Jerusalem, on our kings and  
 rulers, on our priests and prophets, and  
 17 on our fathers. We have sinned against  
 the Lord and disobeyed him; we did not  
 18 listen to the Lord our God or follow  
 the precepts he gave us. From the day  
 19 when the Lord brought our fathers out  
 of Egypt until now, we have been dis-  
 obedient to the Lord our God and have  
 20 heedlessly disregarded his voice. So  
 here we are today in the grip of ad-  
 versity, suffering under the curse which  
 the Lord commanded his servant Moses  
 to pronounce, when he led our fathers  
 21 out of Egypt to give us a land flowing  
 with milk and honey. Moreover we  
 refused to hear the Lord our God  
 speaking in all the words of the proph-  
 22 ets he sent us; we went our own way,  
 each following the promptings of his  
 own wicked heart, serving other gods,  
 doing what was evil in the sight of the  
 Lord our God.

2 So the Lord made good the warning  
 he had given to us, to our magistrates  
 in Israel, our kings and our rulers, and  
 2 the men of Israel and Judah. Nowhere  
 under heaven have such deeds been  
 done as were done in Jerusalem, thus  
 fulfilling what was foretold in the law  
 3 of Moses, that we should eat the flesh  
 of our children, one his own son and  
 4 another his own daughter. The Lord  
 made our nation subject to all the king-  
 doms round us, our land a waste, our  
 name a byword to all the nations among  
 5 whom he had scattered our people. In-  
 stead of rising to the top, they sank to

the bottom, because we sinned against  
 the Lord our God and did not listen  
 to his voice. The Lord our God is in the  
 6 right; but on us and our fathers the  
 shame rests to this very day. All these  
 7 evils of which the Lord warned us have  
 come about. Yet we did not entreat the  
 8 Lord that we might all turn away from  
 the thoughts of our wicked hearts. The  
 9 Lord kept strict watch and brought  
 these evils on our heads, because he is  
 just; he laid all these commandments  
 upon us, but we did not listen to his  
 10 voice or follow the precepts which he  
 gave us.

And now, Lord God of Israel, who  
 11 didst bring thy people out of Egypt  
 with a mighty hand, with signs and  
 portents, with great power and arm  
 uplifted, winning for thyself a renown  
 that lives on to this day: by our sin,  
 12 our godlessness, and our injustice we  
 have broken all thy commandments, O  
 Lord our God. Be angry with us, O  
 13 longer, for we are left a mere handful  
 among the heathen where thou hast  
 scattered us. Listen, O Lord, to our  
 14 prayer and our entreaty, deliver us for  
 thy own sake, and grant us favour with  
 those who have taken us into exile, so  
 15 that the whole earth may know that thou  
 art the Lord our God, who hast named  
 Israel and his posterity as thy own.

O Lord, look down from thy holy  
 16 dwelling and think of us. Turn thy ear  
 to us, Lord, and hear us; open thine  
 17 eyes and see. The dead are in their  
 graves, the breath is gone from their  
 bodies; it is not they who can sing the  
 Lord's praises or applaud his justice;  
 18 it is living men, mourning their fall  
 from greatness, walking the earth bent  
 and feeble, blind and famished—it is  
 these who will sing thy praises, O Lord,  
 and applaud thy justice.

Not for any just deeds of our fathers 19

all men; see Rom.13.1-7. 14: The Jews fortunate to be living in Jerusalem are directed to *make* their humble *confession* of sin in the name of the exiles on the *feast day* of Tabernacles, the final harvest festival and victory celebration of the Lord's kingship (Lev.23.33-43; Zech.14.16-21).

1.15-3.8: *Penitential prayer of the exiles*. From an original Heb. text, this prose lament recasts a popular prayer, preserved even more carefully in Dan.9.4-19; see Ezra 9.6-15; Neh. ch. 9. Because of 2.17, this lament is to be dated around 180 B.C., the period of Ecclus., since both books are silent about the resurrection (Ecclus.17.27-28; Ps.6.5), which is explicitly stated in Dan.12.1-3 and 2 Macc. ch. 7. The principal theme is that of God's justice, his merciful fidelity in fulfilling his promises to Israel; see 1.15; 2.6. 20: *Curse of Moses*: Deut.28.15-37. 2.3: *Eat the flesh of our children*: see 2 Kgs.6.28; Lam.2.20. 11: Transition from the lament to Israel's petition. 17-18: For the pious Jew the impossibility of praising God in Sheol is the

and our kings do we lay before thee  
 our plea for pity, O Lord our God.  
 20 Thou hast vented upon us that wrath  
 and anger of which thou didst warn us  
 through thy servants the prophets who  
 21 said: 'These are the words of the Lord:  
 Bow your shoulders and serve the king  
 of Babylon and you shall remain in the  
 22 land that I gave to your fathers; but if  
 you do not listen to the Lord and serve  
 23 the king of Babylon, then I will banish  
 from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah  
 all sounds of joy and merriment, the  
 voice of bride and bridegroom; the  
 whole land shall lie waste and uninhabited.'  
 24 But we did not obey thy command to  
 serve the king of Babylon. And so thou  
 didst make good the warning given through  
 thy servants the prophets: the bones of  
 our kings and of our fathers have been  
 25 taken from their resting-place; and there  
 they lie, exposed to the heat by day and  
 the frost by night. They died a painful  
 death by famine, sword, and disease.<sup>a</sup>  
 26 And because of the wickedness of  
 Israel and Judah the house that was  
 named as thine has become what it is  
 today.  
 27 Yet thou hast shown us, O Lord our  
 God, all thy wonted forbearance and  
 28 great mercy. For this is what thou didst  
 promise through thy servant Moses, on  
 the day thou didst command him to  
 write thy law in the presence of the  
 29 Israelites: 'If you will not listen to my  
 voice, this great swarming multitude  
 will be reduced to a tiny remnant among  
 30 the heathen where I will scatter them. I  
 know they will not hear me, this stub-  
 born people, but in the land of their  
 31 exile they will come to their senses and  
 know that I am the Lord their God. I  
 will give them a mind to understand  
 32 and ears to hear. Then they will praise

me in the land of their exile and will  
 turn their thoughts to me; they will  
 33 repent of their stubbornness and their  
 wicked deeds, for they will recall how  
 their fathers sinned against the Lord.  
 Then I will restore them to the land that  
 34 I swore to give to their forefathers,  
 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they  
 shall rule over it. And I will increase  
 their number: they shall never dwindle  
 away. I will enter into an eternal cov-  
 35 enant with them, that I will become their  
 God and they shall become my people.  
 Never again will I remove my people  
 Israel from the land that I have given  
 them.'

O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the  
 3 soul in anguish and the fainting spirit  
 cry out to thee. Listen, Lord, and have  
 2 mercy, for we have sinned against thee.  
 Thou art enthroned for ever; we are  
 3 for ever passing away. Now, Almighty  
 4 Lord, God of Israel, hear the prayer of  
 Israel's dead and of the sons of those  
 who sinned against thee. They did not  
 heed the voice of their God, and so we  
 are in the grip of adversity. Do not re-  
 5 call the misdeeds of our fathers, but  
 remember now thy power and thy  
 name, for thou art the Lord our God,  
 6 and we will praise thee, O Lord. It is  
 7 for this that thou hast put the fear of  
 thee in our hearts, to make us call upon  
 thy name. And we will praise thee in  
 our exile, for we have put away from us  
 all the wrongdoing of our fathers who  
 sinned against thee. Today we are in  
 8 exile; thou hast scattered us and made  
 us a byword and a curse, to be punished  
 for all the sins of our fathers, who  
 rebelled against the Lord our God.

LISTEN, ISRAEL, TO THE COMMANDMENTS 9

<sup>a</sup> disease: probable meaning (compare Jeremiah 32. 36);  
 Gk. obscure.

greatest tragedy of death. Here it is given as a motive in asking God for deliverance. See Ps. 115.17-18. 21-24: Jer. 7.34 and 27.12 are merged; to have rejected Jeremiah was to have disobeyed God. Jeremiah advised surrender to the Babylonians while the city was under siege, and was considered a traitor; see Jer. 26.16-19; 38.1-13. 35: *Eternal covenant*: see Jer. 31.31; Ezek. 37.26. This expression of hope reverts to a more primitive stage of "messianism," for it is silent about David and Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7.12-16; 1 Chr. chs. 28-29) and the glorious rule (Amos 9.11-15) over all nations (Isa. 2.1-4). 3.4: *Israel's dead*: those still in exile; see Ezek. 37.11-13. 5-8: Here reappears the old theology which held that social and religious solidarity implied collective guilt and demanded collective punishment (Josh. ch. 7) so that children were *punished for all the sins of the fathers*. This view was condemned in its excessive form by Jeremiah (31.29) and Ezekiel (ch. 18). Compare Jn. 9.2.

3.9-4.4: *In praise of Wisdom*. This passage is in verse form like other Wisdom writings. Composed originally in Heb. during a peaceful period like that of Ecclus. (200-180 B.C.), it

10 of life; hear, and learn wisdom. Why is  
 it, Israel, that you are in your enemies'  
 country, that you have grown old in an  
 alien land? Why have you shared the  
 11 defilement of the dead and been num-  
 bered with those that lie in the grave?  
 12 It is because you have forsaken the  
 fountain of wisdom. If you had walked  
 13 in the way of God, you would have  
 lived in peace for ever. Where is under-  
 standing, where is strength, where is  
 intelligence? Learn that, and then you  
 will know where to find life and light to  
 14 walk by, long life and peace. Has any  
 man discovered the dwelling-place of  
 wisdom or entered her storehouse?  
 15 Where are the rulers of the nations  
 now? Where are those who have hunted  
 16 wild beasts or the birds of the air for  
 sport? Where are those who have  
 hoarded the silver and gold men trust  
 in, never satisfied with their gains?  
 17 Where are the silversmiths with their  
 patient skill and the secrets of their  
 18 craft? They have all vanished and gone  
 down to the grave, and others have  
 risen to take their place. A younger  
 19 generation saw the light of day and  
 dwelt in the land. But they did not learn  
 20 the way of knowledge, or discover its  
 paths; they did not lay hold of it; their  
 21 sons went far astray. Wisdom was not  
 heard of in Canaan, nor seen in Teman.  
 22 The sons of Hagar who sought for  
 understanding on earth, the merchants  
 of Merran and Teman, the myth-  
 makers, the seekers after knowledge,  
 none of them discovered the way of  
 wisdom, or remembered her paths.  
 23 How great, O Israel, is God's  
 dwelling-place, how vast the extent of  
 24 his domain! Great it is, and boundless,  
 25 lofty, and immeasurable. There in  
 26 ancient time the giants were born, a

famous race, great in stature, skilled in  
 war. But these men were not chosen by 27  
 God, nor shown the way of knowledge.  
 So their race died out because they had 28  
 no understanding; they lacked the wit  
 to survive. Has any man gone up to 29  
 heaven to gain wisdom and brought  
 her down from the clouds? Has any 30  
 man crossed the sea to find her or  
 bought her for fine gold? No one can 31  
 know the path or conceive the way that  
 will lead to her. Only the One who 32  
 knows all things knows her: his under-  
 standing discovered her. He who estab-  
 lished the earth for all time filled it with  
 four-footed beasts. He sends forth the 33  
 light, and it goes on its way; he called  
 it, it feared him and obeyed. The stars 34  
 shone at their appointed stations and  
 rejoiced; he called them and they  
 answered, 'We are here!' Joyfully they  
 shone for their Maker. This is our God; 35  
 there is none to compare with him. The  
 whole way of knowledge he found out  
 and gave to Jacob his servant, and to  
 Israel, whom he loved. Thereupon 37  
 wisdom appeared on earth and lived  
 among men. She is the book of the 4  
 commandments of God, the law that  
 stands for ever. All who hold fast to  
 her shall live, but those who forsake  
 her shall die. Return, Jacob, and lay 2  
 hold of her; set your course towards  
 her radiance, and face her beacon light.  
 Do not give up your glory to another 3  
 or your privileges to an alien people.  
 Happy are we, Israel, because we know 4  
 what is pleasing to God!

Take heart, my people, you who keep 5  
 Israel's name alive. You were sold to the 6  
 heathen, but not to be destroyed; it was  
 because you roused God's anger that  
 you were handed over to your enemies.  
 You provoked your Maker by sacrific- 7

is related thematically to texts like Prov. ch. 1-9, Job 28.12-28, and Eccus. ch. 24. Addressing Israel, the writer celebrates God's supreme gift of the Law as the source of all life (see Deut. 4.1-40; Eccus. 24.19-34)—the extent of Baruch's "messianic" expectations. 10: *Defilement of the dead*: contact with the Babylonians who do not know the Lord or the Law, the source of life; see Deut. 4.4; Ezek. 4.13; 7.21-22; Ps. 119.93. 22-23: Israel's God-given *wisdom* excelled that of places famous for knowledge, like *Canaan*, from whom the invading Israelites learned city culture and its vices, or like *Teman* to the southeast (Job 4.1; Jer. 49.7), or the bedouin *sons of Hagar* (Gen. ch. 16), or *Merran* (perhaps, Midian, renowned merchants, Gen. 37.28). 24: *God's dwelling-place* is not the Jerusalem Temple but the cosmos (Ezek. ch. 1; Isa. 40.21-28). 26: *Giants* (Gen. 6.4) destroyed at the flood of Noah were popular figures in later Jewish literature.

4.5-5.9: *Songs of encouragement and lament*. These lyrics, composed originally in Gk. and showing the influence of Deut., Isa. chs. 40-66, and Jer., are unified by the recurring theme of God's eternity. 5: *Keep Israel's name alive*: physically by new generations of children and

ing to demons and to that which is not  
 8 God. You forgot the Everlasting God  
 who nurtured you, and you grieved  
 9 Jerusalem who fostered you; for she  
 saw how God's anger had come upon  
 you, and she said: Listen, you neigh-  
 10 bours of Zion, God has brought great  
 grief upon me. I have seen the captivity  
 of my sons and daughters which the  
 11 Everlasting has inflicted upon them; I  
 nursed them in delight, but with tears  
 and mourning I saw them go. Let no  
 12 one exult over me in my widowhood,  
 bereaved of so many. I have been left  
 desolate through the sins of my chil-  
 13 dren, through their turning away from  
 the law of God. They would not learn  
 his statutes, or follow his command-  
 ments, or let God guide and train them  
 in his righteousness.  
 14 Come then, neighbours of Zion,  
 remember the captivity of my sons  
 and daughters which the Everlasting  
 15 has inflicted upon them. For he brought  
 down on them a nation from far away,  
 a ruthless nation speaking a strange  
 language and without reverence for age  
 16 or pity for children. They carried off  
 the widow's beloved sons, and left her  
 in loneliness, deprived of her daughters.  
 17,18 But I, how can I help you? Only the  
 One who brought these evils upon you  
 can deliver you from your enemies. Go  
 19 your way, my children, go, for I am left  
 desolate. I have put off the robes of  
 20 peaceful days, and put on the sackcloth  
 of a suppliant. I will cry out to the  
 Everlasting as long as I live.  
 21 Take heart, my children! Cry out to  
 God, and he will rescue you from  
 tyranny and from the power of your  
 22 enemies. For I have set my hope of your  
 deliverance on the Everlasting; the Holy  
 One, your everlasting saviour, has filled  
 me with joy over the mercy soon to be  
 23 granted you. I saw you go with mourn-  
 ing and tears, but God will give you  
 back to me with joy and gladness for  
 24 ever. For as the neighbours of Zion have

now seen your captivity, so they will  
 soon see your deliverance coming upon  
 you from your God with the great glory  
 and splendour of the Everlasting. My 25  
 children, endure in patience the wrath  
 God has brought upon you; your  
 enemy has hunted you down, but soon  
 you will see him destroyed, and will  
 put your foot upon his neck. My pam- 26  
 pered children have trodden rough  
 paths; they have been carried off like a  
 flock seized by raiders.

Take heart, my children! Cry out to 27  
 God, for he who afflicted you will not  
 forget you. You once resolved to go 28  
 astray from God; now with tenfold zeal  
 you must turn about and seek him.  
 He who brought these calamities upon 29  
 you will bring you everlasting joy when  
 he delivers you.

Take heart, Jerusalem! He who 30  
 called you by name will comfort you.  
 Wretched shall they be who despoiled 31  
 you and gloated over your fall;  
 wretched the cities where your children 32  
 were slaves; wretched the city that re-  
 ceived your sons! The same city that 33  
 rejoiced at your downfall and made  
 merry over your ruin shall grieve over  
 her own desolation. I will strip her of 34  
 the multitudes that were her boast, and  
 turn her pride to mourning. Fire from 35  
 the Everlasting shall be her doom for  
 many a day, and long shall she be a  
 haunt of demons.

Jerusalem, look eastwards and see 36  
 the joy that is coming to you from God.  
 They come, the sons from whom you 37  
 parted, they come, gathered together  
 at the word of the Holy One from east  
 to west, rejoicing in the glory of God.

Jerusalem, strip off the garment of 5  
 your sorrow and affliction, and put on  
 for ever the glorious majesty that is the  
 gift of God. Wrap about you his robe 2  
 of righteousness; set on your head for  
 diadem the splendour of the Everlast-  
 ing; for God will show your radiance 3  
 to every land under heaven. You shall 4

spiritually by obedience to God. 8: *Everlasting God*: a recurring expression found only in the poetic section 3.8-5.9. In contrast, the word "Lord" is found only in the first section. 12: Jerusalem's *widowhood*, as in Isa. ch. 54 or Lam.1.1-2, symbolizes her seeming rejection by God, her spouse. 24: *Glory and splendour* indicate an extraordinary manifestation of God's wonder from within Zion or Jerusalem (Isa.60.2). 30: *Called you by name* probably refers to God's own name (see 3.5), just as Jerusalem is to be clothed in God's robes (5.1-4), because she reveals his redemptive action in her midst. 35: Jerusalem's persecutors will be a desert, the traditional

receive from God for ever the name  
Righteous Peace, Godly Splendour.  
5 Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the  
height; look eastwards and see from  
west to east your children gathered  
together at the word of the Holy One, re-  
joicing that God has remembered them.  
6 They went away from you on foot, led  
off by their enemies, but God is bring-  
ing them home to you borne aloft in  
7 glory, like a king on his throne. For

God has commanded every high moun-  
tain and the everlasting hills to be made  
low, and the valleys to be filled and  
levelled, so that Israel may walk safely  
in the glory of God. And woods and  
8 every fragrant tree shall give Israel  
shade by God's command. For God  
9 shall lead Israel with joy in the light of  
his glory, granting them his mercy and  
his righteousness.

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haunt of *demons* (Tob.8.3; Lk.11.24). 5.5-9: These lines, reflecting Isa.40.3-5 and 60.1-2, are quoted almost verbatim in the nonbiblical Psalms of Solomon 11.2-7, dated around 50 B.C. Again the messianic prospects of Baruch are limited to the ingathering of the exiles (see Jer.31.7-14; Isa.43.1-7).

# A LETTER OF JEREMIAH

This harangue against idolatry is repetitious, sarcastic, and impassioned. Possibly it originated as a synagogal sermon. Following a tradition known from 2 Macc.2.1-4, the author attributed it to Jeremiah, who actually did write a letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer. ch. 29). The writer drew upon Jer.10.1-16 and other sources, mainly Isa.44.9-20.

The period in which he wrote, according to v. 3, was seven generations after the beginning of the Babylonian Exile; that date could be about 317 B.C. Some scholars, however, tend to date the book in the Maccabean period, between 165 and 110 B.C.

If "Babylon" is taken as a cryptic name for the area outside Judea, the letter could have been intended for the Jews in the Greek dispersion.

The language of the original seems to have been Hebrew (v. 72 n.); since there are no extant Hebrew manuscripts, some scholars think it could have been Aramaic or Greek. A fragment in the Greek (vv. 43-44) turned up in one of the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found; scholars date the writing around 100 B.C.

The Latin Vulgate and the Authorized Version consider A Letter of Jeremiah to be ch. 6 of Baruch.

Two series of refrains divide the letter into paragraphs; vv. 16,23,29,65,69; and vv. 40,44,52,56.

## *The folly of idolatry*

- 6<sup>a</sup> **A** COPY OF A LETTER SENT BY Jeremiah to the captives who were to be taken to Babylon by the king of Babylon, conveying a message entrusted to him by God.
- 2 The sins you have committed in the sight of God are the cause of your being led away captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
- 3 Once you are in Babylon, your stay there will be long; it will last for many years, up to seven generations; but afterwards I will lead you out in peace and prosperity.
- 4 Now in Babylon you will see carried on men's shoulders gods made of silver, gold, and wood, which fill the heathen with awe. Be careful, then, never to imitate these Gentiles; do not be overawed by their gods when you see them in the midst of a procession of worshippers. But say in your hearts, 'To thee alone, Lord, is worship due.'
- 7 For my angel is with you; your lives are in his care.
- 8 The idols are plated with gold and

silver, they have tongues fashioned by a craftsman, but they are a fraud and cannot speak. And the people take gold and make crowns for the heads of their gods, as one might for a girl fond of finery. Sometimes also the priests filch gold and silver from their gods and spend it on themselves; they will even give some of it to the prostitutes in the inner chamber. They dress up the idols in clothes like human beings, these gods of silver, gold, and wood. But the gods, decked in purple though they are, cannot protect themselves against rust and moth. The dust in the temple, too, lies thick upon them, so that their faces have to be wiped clean. Like a human judge the god holds a sceptre, yet he cannot put to death anyone who offends him. In his right hand he has a dagger and an axe, yet he cannot deliver himself from war and pillage. This shows they are not gods, so have no fear of them.

Their gods are no more use than a broken tool, sitting there in their tem-

<sup>a</sup> The chapter and verse numbering is that of the Authorized Version, in which this forms chapter 6 of Baruch.

6.1-73: The folly of idolatry. 1: Major Gk. MSS. do not include this opening inscription as v. 1 and therefore differ in the numbering of the verses, being one digit lower than the numbers that appear here. 3: *Seven generations* may be symbolic of perfection or fullness, rounding out the Exile. But since this phrase differs from the phrase "seventy years" in Jer.25.12, some scholars take it literally, and reckoning a generation as forty years (Num.32.13), relate the 280 years to the fall of Jerusalem, either in 597 B.C. or in 587 B.C. (2 Kgs.24.10-17; 25.1-12). Hence, a Let. Jer. would then have been written in 317 or 307 B.C. See Introduction. 7: *My angel*: an indirect reference to God's continuing protection (Ex.23.20-23). 11: Sacred *prostitutes* accommodated

18 ples. Their eyes get filled with dust from the feet of those who come in. And just as the palace-court is barricaded to secure a traitor awaiting execution, so the priests secure their temples with doors and bolts and bars to guard  
 19 against plundering by robbers. They light lamps, more than they need for themselves—yet the idols can see none  
 20-21 of them. They are like one of the beams of the temple; their hearts are eaten out, as the saying is, for creatures crawl out of the ground and devour them and their clothing. When their faces are blackened by the smoke of the temple they are quite unaware of it.  
 22 Bats and swallows and birds of all kinds perch on their heads and bodies, and cats do the same. From all this  
 23 you may be sure that they are not gods, so have no fear of them.  
 24 Though plated with gold for ornament, the idols will not shine, unless someone rubs off the tarnish. Even when they were being cast they did not  
 25 feel it. They were bought at great cost, but there is no breath in them. As they  
 26 have no real feet they are carried on men's shoulders, which shows how  
 27 worthless they are. Even those who serve them are ashamed, because if ever an idol falls on the ground, it does not get up by itself; nor, if anyone sets it up again, can it move by its own effort, and if it is tilted it cannot  
 28 straighten itself. To set offerings before them is like setting them before the dead. The sacrifices made to gods are sold by the priests, who spend the proceeds on themselves. Their wives are no better; they take portions of these sacrifices and cure the meat, and give  
 29 no share to the poor or helpless. Their offerings are touched by women who are menstruating or by mothers fresh from childbed. Be assured by all this that they are not gods, and have no  
 30 fear of them. Why should they be called gods? These gods of silver, gold, and wood

have food served to them by women. In their temples the priests sit shaven and shorn, with their clothes rent, and their heads uncovered. They shout and howl before these gods of theirs, like mourners at a funeral feast. The priests strip vestments from the gods to clothe their own wives and children. Should anyone do these gods either injury or service they will not be able to repay it. They cannot set up or depose a king. So also they are incapable of bestowing wealth or money; if someone makes a vow to them and does not honour it, they will never exact payment. They will never save any man from death, never rescue the weak from the strong. They cannot restore the blind man's sight or give relief to the needy. They do not pity the widow or befriend the orphan. They are like blocks from the quarry, these wooden things plated with gold and silver, and their worshippers will be humiliated. How then can anyone suppose them to be gods or call them so?

Besides, even the Chaldaeans themselves bring these idols of theirs into disrepute; for, when they see a dumb man without the power of articulate speech, they bring him into the temple and make him call upon Bel, as if Bel could understand him. They cannot see the folly of it and abandon the idols, because they themselves have no understanding. The women too sit in the street with cords round them, burning bran for incense. And when a passer-by has pulled one of them to him and she has lain with him, she taunts her neighbour, because she has not been thought as attractive as herself and her cord has not been broken. Everything to do with these idols is fraud and delusion. How then can anyone suppose them to be gods or call them so?

They are things manufactured by carpenters and goldsmiths; they can be nothing but what the craftsmen

male devotees for fertility rites in the *inner chamber* of their temples. 28: The *poor* were to be helped (Deut.14.28-29). 29-32: These actions at the pagan *temples* were forbidden to the Jews and indeed were repellent to them (Lev.12.1-4; 15.19-20; 21.5,11). 36-38: These statue-gods do not possess the kindly power of the Lord (Ps.146.7-9; Isa.35.4-6). 40: *Chaldaeans*: Babylonians. 41: *Bel*: the same as Marduk, the main god of Babylon (see Dan. & Bel) 43: The Greek writer, Herodotus, verifies this practice, demanded of all Babylonian women, to ask the gods

46 wish them to be. Even their makers' lives cannot be prolonged; what, then, 61  
 47 can the things they make expect? It is simply a scandalous fraud that they have 62  
 48 bequeathed to posterity. When war and disasters befall the gods, it is the priests who discuss amongst themselves where 63  
 49 they and their gods can hide. How then can men fail to see that these are not gods, when they cannot save themselves 64  
 50 from war and disaster? Since they are nothing but wood plated with gold and silver, they will in time be recognized for the frauds they are. All the heathen and their kings will plainly see that they are not gods but the work of men's hands, with no divine power in them at all. Can there still be anyone who does not realize that they are not gods?

53 They cannot set up a king over a country, and they cannot give men rain. They cannot decide a case or redress a wrong.<sup>b</sup> They are as helpless as crows tossed about in mid air. When fire breaks out in a temple belonging to those wooden gods all gilded and silvered, their priests will run away to safety, but the gods will be burnt up in the flames like timbers. They cannot resist king or enemy. How then can anyone allow or believe that they are gods?

57 They cannot save themselves from thieves and robbers, these wooden gods, plated with silver and gold. Anyone who can will strip away their gold and silver and make off with the clothing they wear, and the gods can do nothing to help themselves. It is better to be a king who proves his courage than such a sham god, better a household vessel that serves its owner's purpose, better even the door of a house that keeps the contents safe, or a wooden pillar in a palace. Sun and moon and the

stars that shine so brightly are sent to serve a purpose, and they obey. So 61  
 too, when the lightning flashes, it is seen far and wide. It is the same with the wind; it blows in every land. And 62  
 when God orders the clouds to travel over all the world they carry out their task, and so does fire when it is sent down from above to consume mountains and forests. But idols are not to be compared with any of these, in appearance or in power. It follows that they are not to be considered gods or called by that name, seeing that they are incapable of pronouncing judgement or of conferring benefits on mankind. Recognize, therefore, that 65  
 they are not gods, and have no fear of them.

They wield no power over kings, 66  
 either to curse them or to bless them; and they cannot provide heavenly 67  
 signs for the nations, either by shining like the sun or by giving light like the moon. They are more helpless than 68  
 wild beasts, which can at least save themselves by taking cover. There is no 69  
 evidence at all that they are gods, so have no fear of them.

These wooden gods of theirs, plated 70  
 with gold and silver, give no better protection than a scarecrow in a plot of cucumbers. They are like a thorn-bush 71  
 in a garden, a perch for every bird, like a corpse cast out in the dark. Such are their wooden gods, with their plating of gold and silver. The purple and 72  
 fine linen<sup>c</sup> rotting on them proves that they are not gods; in the end they will themselves be eaten away, held in contempt throughout the land.

Better, then, is an upright man who 73  
 has no idols; he will be in no danger of contempt.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read cannot judge in their own cause or redress a wrong done them.  
<sup>c</sup> fine linen: probable meaning; Gk. marble.

for fertility in their marriage. 67: Even God cannot use the idols as *signs* (portents of his presence and activity) as he can do with natural phenomena; see Joel 2.30; Lk.21.11,25. 72: The Gk. text (see Tfn. c) apparently mistranslated a Heb. word meaning "linen."



# THE SONG OF THE THREE

## AN ADDITION IN THE GREEK VERSION OF DANIEL BETWEEN 3. 23 AND 3. 24

The three most substantial of many additions to the Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel are: The Song of the Three; Daniel and Susanna; and Daniel, Bel, and the Snake. Whether these materials were first written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek is debated, but puns on two Greek words in Daniel and Susanna favor Greek as the original language of at least that addition. These additions were probably written during the second or first century B.C.

The Song of the Three has two parts: a prayer of Azariah (Abed-nego), vv. 1-22, and a hymn to God sung by the three companions of Daniel: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, vv. 23-68. The addition echoes major biblical themes, reflecting especially the thought of Ps. 148 and the form of Ps. 136. The prayer and the hymn were used extensively in worship by churches in later centuries.

1 **T**HEY WALKED IN THE HEART OF the fire, praising God and blessing  
2 the Lord. Azariah stood still servants and thy worshippers. For thy  
3 among the flames and began to pray ever; do not abandon us for  
4 aloud: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord, the ever; do not annul thy covenant. Do  
5 God of our fathers, thy name is not withdraw thy mercy from us, for  
6 worthy of praise and glorious for ever: the sake of Abraham, thy beloved, for  
7 thou art just in all thy deeds and true the sake of Isaac, thy servant, and  
8 in all thy works; straight are thy Israel, thy holy one. Thou didst  
9 paths, and all thy judgements just. promise to multiply their descendants  
10 Just sentence hast thou passed in all as the stars in the sky and the sand on  
11 that thou hast brought upon us and the sea-shore. But now, Lord, we  
12 upon Jerusalem the holy city of all have been made the smallest of all  
13 our fathers: yes, just sentence thou most abject in the world. We have no  
14 passed upon our sins. For indeed ruler, no prophet, no leader now; there  
15 we sinned and broke thy law in is no burnt-offering, no sacrifice, no  
16 rebellion against thee, in all we did we oblation, no incense, no place to  
17 sinned; we did not heed thy command- make an offering before thee and find  
18 ments, we did not keep them, we did mercy. But because we come with  
19 not do what thou hadst commanded con- trite heart and humbled spirit,  
20 us for our good. In all the punish- accept us. As though we came with  
21 ments thou hast sent upon us thy burnt-offerings of rams and bullocks  
22 judgements have been just. Thou hast and with thousands of fat lambs, so let  
23 handed us over to our bitterest our sacrifice be made before thee this  
24 enemies, rebels against thy law, and day. Accept our pledge of loyalty to  
25 to a wicked king, the vilest in the thee,<sup>a</sup> for no shame shall come to those  
26 And so now we are speechless for who put their trust in thee. Now we will  
27 shame: contempt has fallen on thy follow thee with our whole heart

<sup>a</sup> Accept our . . . thee: possible meaning; Gk. obscure.

1-27: Azariah prays. 1: *They*: Daniel's friends; see Dan.3.23. 2: *Azariah*: Abed-nego's Heb. name; see Dan.1.7. 3: Many OT passages declare that God was *just* in punishing Israel by the Babylonian Exile; see Neh.9.33; Lam.1.18. 9: The *wicked king* in Dan. is Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.3.19); in the writer's day, however, Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the *vilest* because he sacked Jerusalem and profaned the Temple; see 1 Macc.1.41-60. 11: *For thy honour's sake*: compare Ezek.36.22. 13: *Thou didst promise*: see Gen.15.5; 22.17. 14-15: Judah, deprived of its ruler, was *the most abject* because God's covenant with the Davidic dynasty seemed to be broken. See 2 Sam.7.13-16; Lam.2.9; Hos.3.4. 16-18: *Accept*: a technical cult term applied to sacrifices pleasing to God. Qualities of the spirit are seen as the cultic equivalents of animal

and fear thee. We seek thy presence;  
 19 do not put us to shame, but deal  
 with us in thy forbearance and in the  
 20 greatness of thy mercy. Grant us again  
 thy marvellous deliverance, and win  
 glory for thy name, O Lord. Let all  
 who do thy servants harm be humbled;  
 21 may they be put to shame and stripped  
 of all their power, and may their  
 22 strength be crushed; let them know  
 that thou alone art the Lord God, and  
 glorious over all the world.’  
 23 The servants of the king who threw  
 them in kept on feeding the furnace  
 with naphtha, pitch, tow, and faggots,  
 24 and the flames poured out above it to  
 25 a height of seventy-five feet.<sup>b</sup> They  
 spread out and burnt those Chaldeans  
 who were caught near the furnace.  
 26 But the angel of the Lord came down  
 into the furnace to join Azariah and  
 his companions; he scattered the flames  
 27 out of the furnace and made the heart  
 of it as if a moist wind were whistling  
 through. The fire did not touch them  
 at all and neither hurt nor distressed  
 them.

*The praises of creation*

28 THEN THE THREE WITH ONE VOICE  
 praised and glorified and blessed God  
 in the furnace:  
 29 ‘Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God  
 of our fathers;  
 worthy of praise, highly exalted for  
 ever.  
 30 Blessed is thy holy and glorious  
 name;  
 highly to be praised, highly exalted  
 for ever.  
 31 Blessed art thou in thy holy and  
 glorious temple;

most worthy to be hymned and  
 glorified for ever.  
 Blessed art thou who dost behold 32  
 the depths from thy seat upon  
 the cherubim;  
 worthy of praise, highly exalted for  
 ever.  
 Blessed art thou on thy royal throne; 33  
 most worthy to be hymned, highly  
 exalted for ever.  
 Blessed art thou in the dome of 34  
 heaven;  
 worthy to be hymned and glorified  
 for ever.  
 ‘Let the whole creation bless the Lord, 35  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, you heavens; 36  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, you angels of the 37  
 Lord;  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, all you waters above 38  
 the heavens;  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, all you his hosts; 39  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, sun and moon; 40  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, stars of heaven; 41  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, all rain and dew; 42  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.  
 Bless the Lord, all winds that blow; 43  
 sing his praise and exalt him for  
 ever.

<sup>b</sup> *Gk.* forty-nine cubits.

sacrifices; compare 1 Sam.15.22; Ps.51.16–17; Hos.6.6. 20–21: God would *win glory* for his *name* by ending the power of Babylon and granting Israel *deliverance* from captivity as he did at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. 24: *Naphtha*: a natural petroleum substance. *Faggots*: bundles of sticks. 25: See Dan.3.22. 26: *The angel of the Lord* in the OT is often the Lord himself in angelic form; see Gen.16.7–14. 27: In Palestine, when a *moist wind* blows from the Mediterranean it brings refreshing coolness, in contrast to the hot wind which blows from the eastern desert.

28–68: A song of exaltation. The constant refrain recalls Ps. 136. 32: *Thy seat* is the mercy seat atop the Ark of the Covenant which was conceived as God’s throne; see Exod.25.20–22. 35: *Let . . . creation bless*: after addressing the Lord (vv. 29–34; see Ps.104), the song exhorts the whole creation, part by part (vv. 35–59), person by person (vv. 60–68), to *bless the Lord*, i.e. to *praise* God (compare Ps.148). 38: *Waters . . . heavens*: see Gen. 1.7; Ps.148.4. 39: *Hosts*:

44	Bless the Lord, fire and heat; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, all birds of the air; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	58
45	Bless the Lord, scorching blast and bitter cold; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, you cattle and wild beasts; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	59
46	Bless the Lord, dews and falling snow; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	'All men on earth, bless the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	60
47	Bless the Lord, nights and days; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord. O Israel; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	61
48	Bless the Lord, light and darkness; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, you priests of the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	62
49	Bless the Lord, frost and cold; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, you servants of the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	63
50	Bless the Lord, rime and snow; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, all men of upright spirit; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	64
51	Bless the Lord, lightnings and clouds; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, you that are holy and humble in heart; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	65
52	'O earth, bless the Lord; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Bless the Lord, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	66
53	Bless the Lord, mountains and hills; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	For he has rescued us from the grave and from the power of death: he has saved us from the furnace of burning flame; he has rescued us from the heart of the fire.	
54	Bless the Lord, all that grows in the ground; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures for ever.	67
56	Bless the Lord, seas and rivers; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.	All who worship the Lord, bless the God of gods; sing his praise and give him thanks, for his mercy endures for ever.'	68
55	Bless the Lord, you springs; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.		
57	Bless the Lord, you whales and all that swim in the waters; sing his praise and exalt him for ever.		

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compare Ps.148.2-3. 44-51: See Ps.148.8. 50: *Rime*: a type of frost. 53: See Ps.148.9. 56-65: Compare Ps.148.10-12.

# DANIEL AND SUSANNA

The story of Susanna is a "detective story" from the second or first pre-Christian centuries. It is about Daniel, and is an addition to that book.

A masterpiece of the storyteller's art, the tale combines effective characterization with suspenseful plot development to proclaim its moral that God does not desert the innocent who trust and pray.

Some interpreters see the story as a criticism of the judicial system, especially the need to examine witnesses more carefully (vv. 48-49) and to insure against perjury by inflicting adequate punishment (v. 62).

This addition to Daniel appears in different places in the versions. In the Septuagint and Vulgate a slightly variant form of the story follows the end as ch. 13. The story comes first in the Greek text of Theodotus and in other versions, perhaps because Daniel is described (v. 45) as a "young man." On original language and the date, see Introduction to the Song of the Three.

## *Innocence vindicated*

1 **T**HERE ONCE LIVED IN BABYLON A  
2 man named Joakim. He married  
3 Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, a  
4 very beautiful and devout woman. Her  
5 parents, religious people, had brought  
6 up their daughter according to the law  
7 of Moses. Joakim was very rich and his  
8 house had a fine garden adjoining it,  
9 which was a regular meeting-place for  
10 the Jews, because he was the man of  
11 greatest distinction among them.  
12 Now two elders of the community  
13 were appointed that year as judges. It  
14 was of them that the Lord had said,  
15 'Wickedness came forth from Babylon  
16 from elders who were judges and were  
17 supposed to govern my people.' These  
18 men were constantly at Joakim's house,  
19 and everyone who had a case to be tried  
20 came to them there.  
21 When the people went away at noon,  
22 Susanna used to go and walk in her  
23 husband's garden. Every day the two  
24 elders saw her entering the garden and  
25 taking her walk, and they were obsessed  
26 with lust for her. They no longer prayed  
27 to God, but let their thoughts stray  
28 from him and forgot the claims of  
29 morality. They were both infatuated  
30 with her; but they did not tell each  
31 other what pangs they suffered, because  
32 they were ashamed to confess that they

wanted to seduce her. Day after day 12  
they watched eagerly to see her.

One day they said, 'Let us go home; 13  
it is time for lunch.' So they went off in 14  
different directions, but soon retraced  
their steps and found themselves face  
to face. When they questioned one  
another, each confessed his passion.  
Then they agreed on a time when they  
might find her alone.

And while they were watching for an 15  
opportune day, she went into the  
garden as usual with only her two  
maids; it was very hot, and she wished  
to bathe there. No one else was in the 16  
garden except the two elders, who had  
hidden and were spying on her. She said 17  
to her maids, 'Bring me soap and olive  
oil, and shut the garden doors so that I  
can bathe.' They did as she told them: 18  
they closed the garden doors and went  
out by the side door to fetch the things  
they had been ordered to bring; they  
did not see the elders because they were  
hiding. As soon as the maids had gone, 19  
the two elders started up and ran to  
Susanna. 'Look!' they said, 'the garden 20  
doors are shut, and no one can see us.  
We are burning with desire for you, so  
consent and yield to us. If you refuse, 21  
we shall give evidence against you that  
there was a young man with you and  
that was why you sent your maids  
away.' Susanna groaned and said: 'I 22

1-64: God's direct intervention fills a youth with wisdom to confound the craftiness of old age, thus vindicating innocence.

1-14: Wicked elders lust after Susanna. 2: *Susanna* means "lily." 4: Jewish names recorded on clay tablets in Babylonian archives show that some Jews became rich and rose to positions of distinction in their captivity in Babylon. 5: *The Lord had said* may allude to Jer.29.21-23.

15-27: Seduction attempted. 22: For an unfaithful wife the penalty was death by stoning; see

see no way out. If I do this thing, the penalty is death; if I do not, you will have me at your mercy. My choice is made: I will not do it. It is better to be at your mercy than to sin against the Lord.'

With that Susanna gave a loud shout, but the two elders shouted her down. One of them ran and opened the garden door. The household, hearing the uproar in the garden, rushed in through the side door to see what had happened to her. And when the elders had told their story, the servants were deeply shocked, for no such allegation had ever been made against Susanna.

Next day, when the people gathered at her husband Joakim's house, the two elders came, full of their criminal design to put Susanna to death. In the presence of the people they said, 'Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, Joakim's wife.' So they sent for her, and she came with her parents and children and all her relatives. Now Susanna was a woman of great beauty and delicate feeling. She was closely veiled, but those scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. Her family and all who saw her were in tears. Then the two elders stood up before the people and put their hands on her head. She looked up to heaven through her tears, for she trusted in the Lord. The elders said: 'As we were walking alone in the garden, this woman came in with two maids. She shut the garden doors and dismissed her maids. Then a young man, who had been in hiding, came and lay down with her. We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran up to them. Though we saw them in the act, we could not hold the man; he was too strong for us, and he opened the door and forced his way out. We seized the woman and asked who the young man was, but she

would not tell us. That is our evidence.'

As they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death. Then Susanna cried out loudly: 'Eternal God, who dost know all secrets and foresee all things, thou knowest that their evidence against me was false. And now I am to die, guiltless though I am of all the wicked things these men have said against me.'

The Lord heard her cry. Just as she was being led off to execution, God inspired a devout young man named Daniel to protest, and he shouted out, 'I will not have this woman's blood on my head.' All the people turned and asked him, 'What do you mean by that?' He came forward and said: 'Are you such fools, you Israelites, as to condemn a woman of Israel, without making careful inquiry and finding out the truth? Re-open the trial; the evidence these men have brought against her is false.'

So the people all hurried back, and the rest of the elders said to him, 'Come, take your place among us and state your case, for God has given you the standing of an elder.' Daniel said to them, 'Separate these men and keep them at a distance from each other, and I will examine them.' When they had been separated Daniel summoned one of them. 'You hardened sinner,' he said, 'the sins of your past have now come home to you. You gave unjust decisions, condemning the innocent, and acquitting the guilty, although the Lord has said, "You shall not put to death an innocent and guiltless man." Now then, if you saw this woman, tell us, under what tree did you see them together?' He answered, 'Under a clove-tree.'<sup>a</sup> Then Daniel retorted, 'Very good: this lie has cost you your life, for already God's angel has

*a clove: literally mastic.*

Lev.20.10; Deut.22.21-22. 23: *Sin against the Lord:* see Gen.39.9; Ps.51.4. All sin is against God.

28-43: *Susanna condemned through perjury.* 34: To identify her as accused and themselves as witnesses of the crime and accusers, the elders *put their hands on her head*; see Lev.24.14.

44-49: *Daniel intervenes.* 46: According to Jewish tradition a herald preceded one being led to execution and appealed for possible evidence of his innocence. The entire community shared responsibility for *blood shed* in executions.

50-64: *Susanna is acquitted; her accusers, the two elders, are put to death.* 50: The invitation to Daniel to take his place as an *elder* is undoubtedly said in sarcasm. 53: See Exod.23.7.

56 received your sentence from God, and he will cleave<sup>b</sup> you in two.' And he told him to stand aside, and ordered them to bring in the other.

He said to him: 'Spawn of Canaan, no son of Judah, beauty has been your undoing, and lust has corrupted your 57 heart! Now we know how you have been treating the women of Israel, frightening them into consorting with you; but here is a woman of Judah who would not submit to your villainy. 58 Now then, tell me, under what tree did you surprise them together?' 'Under a yew-tree',<sup>c</sup> he replied. Daniel said to 59 him, 'Very good: this lie has cost you your life, for the angel of God is waiting with his sword to hew<sup>d</sup> you down and destroy you both.'

60 Then the whole assembly gave a

great shout and praised God, the saviour of those who trust in him. They 61 turned on the two elders, for out of their own mouths Daniel had convicted them of giving false evidence; they 62 dealt with them according to the law of Moses, and put them to death, as they in their wickedness had tried to do to their neighbour. And so an innocent life was saved that day. Then Hilkiah 63 and his wife gave praise for their daughter Susanna, because she was found innocent of a shameful deed, and so did her husband Joakim and all her relatives. And from that day forward 64 Daniel was a great man among his people.

*b* clove . . . cleave: *there is a play on words in the Gk.*

*c* yew: *literally oak.*

*d* yew . . . hew: *there is a play on words in the Gk.*

56: *Spawn of Canaan* may be an allusion to the notorious sexual laxity of the Canaanites. 62: Deut.19.16-21 requires that a false witness receive the treatment he intended for the accused. During Alexander Jannaeus' reign (105-79 B.C.) the Sadducees sought to apply this law only in cases where the falsely accused was executed, but the Pharisees demanded stricter interpretation.

# DANIEL, BEL, AND THE SNAKE

The third major addition to the Book of Daniel consists of two related tales designed to ridicule heathen idolatry. In the first story (vv. 1–22), Daniel is again presented (see Daniel and Susanna) as a clever detective who exposes the deception practiced by the priests of Bel. Daniel thus exposes the Bel statue as lifeless, no god at all. In the second story (vv. 23–42), Daniel demonstrates that a serpent worshiped by the Babylonians, while a living being, is surely not divine.

The wisdom and courage of the faithful Daniel and the truth that God delivers his faithful people are significant themes in both stories.

On date and original language, see Introduction to the Song of the Three.

## *The destruction of Bel*

1 **W**HEN KING ASTYAGES WAS gathered to his fathers he was succeeded on the throne  
2 by Cyrus the Persian. Daniel was a confidant of the king, the most honoured of all the King's Friends.  
3 Now the Babylonians had an idol called Bel, for which they provided every day twelve bushels of fine flour, forty sheep, and fifty gallons of wine.  
4 The king held it to be divine and went daily to worship it, but Daniel worshipped his God. So the king said to him, 'Why do you not worship Bel?'  
5 He replied, 'Because I do not believe in man-made idols, but in the living God who created heaven and earth and is sovereign over all mankind.'  
6 The king said, 'Do you think that Bel is not a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks each day?'  
7 Daniel laughed and said, 'Do not be deceived, your majesty; this Bel of yours is only clay inside and bronze outside, and has never eaten anything.'  
8 Then the king was angry, and summoned the priests of Bel and said to them, 'If you cannot tell me who it is that eats up all these provisions, you shall die; but if you can show that it is Bel that eats them, then Daniel shall die for blasphemy against Bel.'  
9 Daniel said to the king, 'Let it be as you command.' (There were seventy priests of Bel, not counting their wives

and children.) Then the king went with Daniel into the temple of Bel. The 11 priests said, 'We are now going outside; set out the food yourself, your majesty, and mix the wine; then shut the door and seal it with your signet. When you come back in the morning, 12 if you do not find that Bel has eaten it all, let us be put to death; but if Daniel's charges against us turn out to be false, then he shall die.' They treated 13 the whole affair with contempt, because they had made a hidden entrance under the table, and they regularly went in by it and ate everything up.

So when the priests had gone, the 14 king set out the food for Bel; and Daniel ordered his servants to bring ashes and sift them over the whole temple in the presence of the king alone. Then they left the temple, closed the door, sealed it with the king's signet, and went away. During the night the 15 priests, with their wives and children, came as usual and ate and drank everything. Early in the morning the king 16 came, and Daniel with him. The king 17 said, 'Are the seals intact, Daniel?' He answered, 'They are intact, your majesty.' As soon as he opened the 18 door, the king looked at the table and cried aloud, 'Great art thou, O Bel! In thee there is no deceit at all.' But 19 Daniel laughed and held back the king from going in. 'Just look at the floor,' he said, 'and judge whose footprints these are.' The king said, 'I see the 20

1–22: Daniel destroys an idol. 1: King Astyages was the last king of the Medes, defeated by Cyrus the Persian about 550 B.C. 2: King's Friends: a technical term; see 1 Macc.2.18 n. 3: Cyrus became the king of the Babylonians by defeating Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, in 539 B.C. Bel: the chief Babylonian god, also known as Marduk; see Jer.51.44. 6: Represented by a colossal image, Bel was believed a voracious eater. Historical sources confirm the huge

footprints of men, women, and  
 21 children.' In a rage he put the priests  
 under arrest, with their wives and  
 children. Then they showed him the  
 secret doors through which they used  
 22 to go in and consume what was on the  
 table. So the king put them to death,  
 and handed Bel over to Daniel, who  
 destroyed the idol and its temple.

*The destruction of the snake*

23 NOW THERE WAS A HUGE SNAKE,  
 which the Babylonians held to be divine.  
 24 The king said to Daniel, 'You cannot  
 say that this is not a living god; so  
 25 worship him.' Daniel answered, 'I  
 will worship the Lord my God, for he  
 26 is the living God. But give me authority,  
 your majesty, and without sword or  
 staff I will kill the snake.' 'I give it  
 27 you', said the king. So Daniel took  
 pitch and fat and hair, boiled them  
 together, and made them into cakes,  
 which he put into the mouth of the  
 snake. When the snake ate them, it  
 burst. Then Daniel said, 'See what  
 28 things you worship!' When the Bab-  
 ylonians heard of this they gathered in  
 an angry crowd to oppose the king.  
 'The king has turned Jew!' they cried.  
 'He has pulled down Bel, killed the  
 snake, and put the priests to the  
 29 sword.' So they went to the king and  
 said, 'Hand Daniel over to us, or else  
 we will kill you and your family.'  
 30 The king, finding himself hard pressed,  
 was compelled to give Daniel up to

them. They threw him into the lion- 31  
 pit, and he was there for six days.  
 There were seven lions in the pit, and 32  
 every day two men and two sheep were  
 fed to them; but now they were given  
 nothing, to make sure that they would  
 devour Daniel.

Now the prophet Habakkuk was in 33  
 Judaea; he had made a stew and  
 crumbled bread into the bowl, and he  
 was on the way to his field, carrying it  
 to the reapers, when an angel of the LORD 34  
 said, 'Habakkuk, carry the meal you  
 have with you to Babylon, for Daniel,  
 who is in the lion-pit.' Habakkuk said, 35  
 'My lord, I have never been to Bab-  
 ylon. I do not know where the lion-pit  
 is.' Then the angel took the prophet 36  
 by the crown of his head, and carrying  
 him by his hair, he swept him to  
 Babylon with the blast of his breath  
 and put him down above the pit.  
 Habakkuk called out, 'Daniel, Daniel, 37  
 take the meal that God has sent you!'  
 Daniel said, 'O God, thou dost indeed 38  
 remember me; thou dost never forsake  
 those who love thee.' Then he got up 39  
 and ate; and God's angel returned  
 Habakkuk at once to his home. On the 40  
 seventh day the king went to mourn for  
 Daniel, but when he arrived at the  
 pit and looked in, there sat Daniel!  
 Then the king cried aloud, 'Great art 41  
 thou, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and  
 there is no God but thou alone.'  
 So the king drew Daniel up; and 42  
 the men who had planned to destroy  
 him he flung into the pit, and then and  
 there they were eaten up before his eyes.

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food offerings (v. 3). 22: *Put them to death*: see Dan.2.12; 6.24. Ancient historians record that the Persian King Xerxes (485-464 B.C.) destroyed the idol and its temple in 479 B.C.

23-42: *The destruction of the snake*. The serpent was often regarded in the Ancient Near East as a religious symbol; see Num.21.8; 2 Kgs.18.4. There is no evidence that the Babylonians worshiped a live *snake*. Earlier English translations speak of "dragon," rather than snake.

28-42: *Daniel rescued*. 31: *The lion-pit*: see Dan.6.16-24. 33: *Habakkuk* lived a century earlier and hence could not have so served. 34: *The meal*: see 1 Kgs.17.4-6. 36: For a precedent of a prophet carried *by his hair* see Ezek.8.3. 38: That God does not *forsake those who love him* is the point of all three additions to the Hebrew Daniel; it was an assurance needed by the Jews during the Maccabean struggle against King Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.).



# THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH

This brief devotional piece conveys sincere repentance and deep religious feeling.

Manasseh, son of the good king Hezekiah, appears in 2 Kgs.21.1-18 as a most wicked ruler who led Judah into gross idolatry, including human sacrifice, and perpetrated extensive violence. The Chronicler adds, however, that this evil king, after a very, very long reign, repented of his evil and called upon God for deliverance. Restored to his kingdom after being carried off to Babylon, he instituted partial reforms (2 Chr.33.1-20).

Mention is made in 2 Chr.33.19 of a prayer of Manasseh, but no prayer is given there. To fill this gap, some pious Jew composed a prayer such as Manasseh might have voiced.

The date and origin of the prayer are uncertain, but many place the composition in the last pre-Christian centuries and consider it originally written in Greek instead of Hebrew or Aramaic.

In Roman Catholic tradition, wherein the Apocrypha are regarded as canonical, this book is not so regarded.

## Repentance

1 **L**ORD ALMIGHTY,  
God of our fathers,  
of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
and of their righteous offspring;  
2 who hast made heaven and earth in  
their manifold array;  
3 who hast confined the ocean by thy  
word of command,  
who hast shut up the abyss and sealed  
it with thy fearful and glorious  
name;  
4 all things tremble and quake in the  
face of thy power.  
5 For the majesty of thy glory is more  
than man can bear,  
and none can endure thy menacing  
wrath against sinners;  
6 the mercy in thy promise is beyond  
measure: none can fathom it.  
7 For thou art Lord Most High,  
compassionate, patient, and of great  
mercy,  
relenting when men suffer for their  
sins.  
For out of thy great goodness thou,  
O God,  
hast promised repentance and  
remission to those who sin  
against thee,

and in thy boundless mercy thou hast  
appointed repentance for sinners  
as the way to salvation.<sup>a</sup>  
So thou, Lord God of the righteous, 8  
didst not appoint repentance for  
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,  
who were righteous and did not sin  
against thee,  
but for me, a sinner,  
whose sins are more in number than 9  
the sands of the sea.  
My transgressions abound, O Lord,  
my transgressions abound,  
and I am not worthy to look up and  
gaze at the height of heaven  
because of the number of my  
wrongdoings.  
Bowed down with a heavy chain of 10  
iron,  
I grieve over my sins and find no relief,  
because I have provoked thy anger  
and done what is evil in thine eyes,  
setting up idols and so piling sin on  
sin.  
Now I humble my heart, imploring 11  
thy great goodness.  
I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, 12  
and I acknowledge my transgressions.  
I pray and beseech thee, 13  
spare me, O Lord, spare me,

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses omit For out of . . . salvation.

1-8: God is praised as mighty Creator (1-4) who offers forgiveness to the penitent (5-8). 1: *Righteous offspring*: faithful Israelites, descendants of the patriarchs. 2-3: *Word of command*: the creative "God said" of Gen.1.6,10. Compare Job 38.8-11. 5: God's majesty was considered so awesome that no man could experience it and live. Compare Isa.6.5; Ezek. 1.28-2.2. 7: Since men suffer for their sins the possibility for repentance is a mercy from God.

9-13a: *Repentance*. 9: *My wrongdoings*: Manasseh's sins; see 2 Kgs.21.1-8. 10: *Chain of iron*: Manasseh's captivity in Babylon (2 Chr.33.11).

PRAYER OF MANASSEH

*Repentance*

destroy me not with my transgressions  
on my head,  
do not be angry with me for ever, nor  
store up evil for me.  
Do not condemn me to the grave,  
for thou, Lord, art the God of the  
penitent.  
14 Thou wilt show thy goodness towards  
me,

for unworthy as I am thou wilt save  
me in thy great mercy;  
and so I shall praise thee continually 15  
all the days of my life.  
For all the host of heaven sings thy  
praise,  
and thy glory is for ever and ever.  
Amen.

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**13b–15:** Confidence in divine mercy followed by a doxology closes the prayer. **13b:** God stored up *evil* by being *angry* and not giving a person repentance. **15:** To *praise* God *continually* with the lips as well as with a repentant and upright life was considered the object and fulfillment of human life and Israel's call; see Ps.51.13–17.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

The word Maccabee, possibly meaning "hammer," was a popular epithet for Judas (1 Macc.2.4), the third son of the priest Mattathias. The plural Maccabees came to allude to the Jewish guerrillas who, under Mattathias, revolted against the Seleucid kings of Syria then ruling Palestine. The revolt began in 167 B.C. This and three other books bear the name Maccabees; 1 and 2 Maccabees and the nonbiblical 4 Maccabees are about the revolt, but 3 Maccabees is not.

Written originally in Hebrew (only a Greek translation survived antiquity), 1 Maccabees summarizes the events (1.1-64) which spurred the revolt of Mattathias (2.1-70) and follows the course of the resistance as it was carried on by his sons, especially Judas (3.1-9.22), Jonathan (9.23-12.53), and Simon (13.1-16.24). The latter was named King of Judea about 150 B.C.

1 Maccabees is a simple history written in the manner of the day by an unknown adherent of the Hasmonean kings descended from Simon. It is also meant to teach the author's Palestinian contemporaries that by fidelity to the Law of God the Jewish people may expect continued divine support, for God is still active in Israel's history. The book was probably written about 100 B.C.

## *Antiochus and the Jewish revolt*

1 **A**LLEXANDER OF MACEDON, THE SON  
of Philip, marched from the  
land of Kittim, defeated Darius,  
king of Persia and Media, and seized  
his throne, being already king of  
2 Greece.<sup>a</sup> In the course of many cam-  
paigns he captured fortified towns,  
3 slaughtered kings, traversed the earth  
to its remotest bounds, and plundered  
innumerable nations. When at last the  
world lay quiet under his rule, his  
4 pride knew no limits; he built up an  
extremely powerful army, and ruled  
over countries, nations, and domin-  
ions; all paid him tribute.  
5 The time came when he fell ill, and,  
6 knowing that he was dying, he sum-  
moned his generals, nobles who had  
been brought up with him from child-  
hood, and divided his empire among  
7 them while he was still alive. Alexander  
had reigned twelve years when he died.  
8 His generals took over the government,  
9 each in his own province. On his death

they were all crowned as kings, and  
their descendants succeeded them for  
many years. They brought untold  
miseries upon the world.

A scion of this stock was that 10  
wicked man, Antiochus Epiphanes,  
son of King Antiochus. He had been a  
hostage in Rome before he succeeded  
to the throne in the year 137 of the  
Greek era.<sup>b</sup>

At that time there appeared in Israel 11  
a group of renegade Jews, who  
incited the people. 'Let us enter into a  
covenant with the Gentiles round  
about,' they said, 'because disaster  
upon disaster has overtaken us since  
we segregated ourselves from them.'  
The people thought this a good argu- 12  
ment, and some of them in their en- 13  
thusiasm went to the king and received  
authority to introduce non-Jewish laws  
and customs. They built a sports- 14  
stadium in the gentile style in Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup> being . . . Greece: probable meaning; Gk. obscure.  
<sup>b</sup> That is 175 B.C.

1.1-64: **Background to the Maccabean revolt.** The author notes the spread of Greek power from Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) through his successors, down to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This Seleucid king's harsh treatment of the Jews and brutal imposition of Hellenic culture upon them led Mattathias to revolt. 1: *Kittim*: Macedonia. 3: Alexander's army reached the *remotest bounds* of the author's Mediterranean world, the Beas river of the Punjab in northern India. In *his pride*, Alexander accepted divine honors. 7: *Alexander* died at Babylon in June, 323 B.C., at the age of thirty-two. 8-9: After *his death*, Alexander's *generals* fought over his empire. Three powers emerged, the Antigonids of Macedonia, the Ptolemies of Egypt, and the Seleucids of Syria. 10: *Antiochus IV*, surnamed *Epiphanes*, i.e. "[God] manifest" but nicknamed "madman" (Gk. *epimanes*), was the son of Antiochus III, "the Great." On the father's defeat by the Romans at the battle of Magnesia (190 B.C.), the son was sent as a hostage to Rome to insure fidelity to the treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.). See 8.6-8. 11: The *renegade Jews* were led by

They removed their marks of circum-  
cision and repudiated the holy cov-  
enant. They intermarried with Gentiles,  
and abandoned themselves to evil  
ways.

When he was firmly established on  
his throne, Antiochus made up his  
mind to become king of Egypt and so  
to rule over both kingdoms. He assem-  
bled a powerful force of chariots, ele-  
phants, and cavalry, and a great fleet,  
and invaded Egypt. When battle was  
joined, Ptolemy king of Egypt was  
seized with panic and took to flight,  
leaving many dead. The fortified  
towns were captured and the land  
pillaged.

On his return from the conquest of  
Egypt, in the year 143,<sup>c</sup> Antiochus  
marched with a strong force against  
Israel and Jerusalem. In his arrogance  
he entered the temple and carried off  
the golden altar, the lamp-stand with  
all its equipment, the table for the Bread  
of the Presence, the sacred cups and  
bowls, the golden censers, the curtain,  
and the crowns. He stripped off all the  
gold plating from the temple front. He  
seized the silver, gold, and precious  
vessels, and whatever secret treasures  
he found, and took them all with him  
when he left for his own country. He  
had caused much bloodshed, and he  
gloated over all he had done.

Great was the lamentation  
throughout Israel;  
rulers and elders groaned in bitter  
grief.  
Girls and young men languished;  
the beauty of our women was  
disfigured.  
Every bridegroom took up the  
lament,  
and every bride sat grieving in her  
chamber.  
The land trembled for its inhabitants,

and all the house of Jacob was  
wrapped in shame.

Two years later, the king sent to  
the towns of Judaea a high revenue  
official, who arrived at Jerusalem  
with a powerful force. His language  
was friendly, but full of guile. For,  
once he had gained the city's confidence,  
he suddenly attacked it. He dealt it a  
heavy blow, and killed many Israelites,  
plundering the city and setting it ablaze.  
He pulled down houses and walls on  
every side; women and children were  
made prisoners, and the cattle seized.

The city of David was turned into a  
citadel, enclosed by a high, stout wall  
with strong towers, and garrisoned by  
impious foreigners and renegades.  
Having made themselves secure, they  
accumulated arms and provisions,  
and deposited there the massed plunder  
of Jerusalem. There they lay in ambush,  
a lurking threat to the temple and a  
perpetual menace to Israel.

They shed the blood of the innocent  
round the temple;  
they defiled the holy place.  
The citizens of Jerusalem fled for  
fear of them;  
she became the abode of aliens,  
and alien herself to her offspring:  
her children deserted her.  
Her temple lay desolate as a  
wilderness;  
her feasts were turned to mourning,  
her sabbaths to a reproach,  
her honour to contempt.  
The shame of her fall matched the  
greatness of her renown,  
and her pride was bowed low in grief.

The king then issued a decree  
throughout his empire: his subjects  
were all to become one people and

<sup>c</sup> That is 169 B.C.

Jason (Joshua), the brother of the Jewish high priest Onias III; see 2 Macc.4.7–20. 18: Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 B.C.). 20–24: Antiochus robbed the temple to replenish the royal treasury depleted by war. 29–32: Antiochus invaded Egypt again in 168 B.C. Forced to retire by the Roman emissary Popilius Laenas, who threatened war with Rome, Antiochus vented his wrath on Judea, which he thought to be in revolt. See 2 Macc.5.1–14. Two years later than Antiochus' first Egyptian campaign, i.e. in 167 B.C., Apollonius, chief of the Mysian mercenaries, was sent to put down the unruly city again; see 2 Macc.5.23b–26. 33–34: Impious foreigners (Seleucid troops) and renegades (Hellenizing Jews) now fortified the westernmost hill of Jerusalem. This citadel remained in their hands until 141 B.C., when Simon drove them out (1 Macc.13.49–50). 37–40: A lament similar to that of Ps.79. 41–50: Hoping to weld into a political unity the

abandon their own laws and religion. The nations everywhere complied with the royal command, and many in Israel accepted the foreign worship, sacrificing to idols and profaning the sabbath. Moreover, the king sent agents with written orders to Jerusalem and the towns of Judaea. Ways and customs foreign to the country were to be introduced. Burnt-offerings, sacrifices, and libations in the temple were forbidden; sabbaths and feast-days were to be profaned; the temple and its ministers to be defiled. Altars, idols, and sacred precincts were to be established; swine and other unclean beasts to be offered in sacrifice. They must leave their sons uncircumcised; they must make themselves in every way abominable, unclean, and profane, and so forget the law and change all their statutes. The penalty for disobedience was death.

Such was the decree which the king issued to all his subjects. He appointed superintendents over all the people, and instructed the towns of Judaea to offer sacrifice, town by town. People thronged to their side in large numbers, every one of them a traitor to the law. Their wicked conduct throughout the land drove Israel into hiding in every possible place of refuge.

On the fifteenth day of the month Kislev in the year 145,<sup>d</sup> 'the abomination of desolation' was set up on the altar. Pagan altars were built throughout the towns of Judaea; incense was offered at the doors of houses and in the streets. All scrolls of the law which were found were torn up and burnt. Anyone discovered in possession of a Book of the Covenant, or conforming to the law, was put to death by the

king's sentence. Thus month after month these wicked men used their power against the Israelites whom they found in their towns,

On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the pagan altar which was on top of the altar of the Lord. In accordance with the royal decree, they put to death women who had had their children circumcised. Their babies, their families, and those who had circumcised them, they hanged by the neck. Yet many in Israel found strength to resist, taking a determined stand against eating any unclean food. They welcomed death rather than defile themselves and profane the holy covenant, and so they died. The divine wrath raged against Israel.<sup>e</sup>

AT THIS TIME A CERTAIN MATTATHIAS, son of John, son of Symeon, appeared on the scene. He was a priest of the Joarib family from Jerusalem, who had settled at Modin. Mattathias had five sons, John called Gaddis, Simon called Thassis, Judas called Maccabaeus, Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus.

When Mattathias saw the sacrilegious acts committed in Judaea and Jerusalem, he said:

'Oh! Why was I born to see this, the crushing of my people, the ruin of the holy city?

They sat idly by when it was surrendered, when the holy place was given up to the alien.

Her temple is like a man robbed of honour;

<sup>d</sup> That is 167 B.C.

<sup>e</sup> The divine . . . Israel: or Israel lived under a reign of terror.

many ethnic and linguistic groupings over which he ruled, Antiochus IV decreed a common culture (Hellenism) and religion (the worship of Zeus Olympios) for all of his subjects. For Jews, conformity to the decree meant abandonment of the Mosaic Law and apostasy from the God of Israel. 54: On December 7, 167 B.C., Antiochus built an altar to Zeus Olympios on the Temple's altar of holocausts (see v. 59). This *abomination* replaced the Holy of Holies as the center of worship in the Temple, and the worship of Zeus replaced that of Israel's God. 55: Apparently, Jews adopted Grecian shrines for their streets and houses. 57: *Book of the Covenant*: the Law of Moses. 59: December 17, 167 B.C. 62-63: See 2 Macc. 6.18-7.42 for examples.

2.1-70: Mattathias begins active resistance. What began under Mattathias' direction as armed resistance to the Hellenizing program eventually escalated into a war for autonomy led by his sons. 1: Joarib headed one priestly division of twenty-four appointed for alternate duty in the Temple. See 1 Chr. 24.1-19 (especially v. 7). Modin is modern el-Midyah, seven miles east of Lod. 2: The surnames of Mattathias' sons have been explained as meaning "fortunate," "burning," "designated by Yahweh" (or "the hammerer," or "hammer-headed"), "awake,"

- 9 its glorious vessels are carried off as spoil.  
Her infants are slain in the street,  
her young men by the sword of the foe.
- 10 Is there a nation that has not  
usurped her sovereignty,<sup>f</sup>  
a people that has not plundered her?
- 11 She has been stripped of all her  
adornment,  
no longer free, but a slave.
- 12 Now that we have seen our temple  
with all its beauty and splendour  
laid waste and profaned by the  
13 Gentiles, why should we live any  
longer? So Mattathias and his sons  
14 tore their garments, put on sackcloth,  
and mourned bitterly.
- 15 The king's officers who were en-  
forcing apostasy came to the town of  
Modin to see that sacrifice was offered,  
16 and many Israelites went over to them.  
Mattathias and his sons stood in a  
17 group. The king's officers spoke to  
Mattathias: 'You are a leader here,'  
they said, 'a man of mark and influence  
18 in this town, with your sons and  
brothers at your back. You be the first  
now to come forward and carry out  
the king's order. All the nations have  
done so, as well as the leading men in  
Judaea and the people left in Jerusalem.  
Then you and your sons will be enrolled  
among the King's Friends; you will all  
receive high honours, rich rewards of  
silver and gold, and many further  
benefits.'
- 19 To this Mattathias replied in a  
ringing voice: 'Though all the nations  
within the king's dominions obey him  
and forsake their ancestral worship,  
though they have chosen to submit to  
20 his commands, yet I and my sons and  
brothers will follow the covenant of  
21 our fathers. Heaven forbid we should  
ever abandon the law and its statutes.  
22 We will not obey the command of the  
king, nor will we deviate one step from  
our forms of worship.'
- 23 As soon as he had finished, a Jew

stepped forward in full view of all to  
offer sacrifice on the pagan altar at  
Modin, in obedience to the royal  
command. The sight stirred Mattathias 24  
to indignation; he shook with passion,  
and in a fury of righteous anger rushed  
forward and slaughtered the traitor on  
the very altar. At the same time he 25  
killed the officer sent by the king to  
enforce sacrifice, and pulled the pagan  
altar down. Thus Mattathias showed 26  
his fervent zeal for the law, just as  
Phinehas had done by killing Zimri  
son of Salu. 'Follow me,' he shouted 27  
through the town, 'every one of you  
who is zealous for the law and strives  
to maintain the covenant.' He and his 28  
sons took to the hills, leaving all their  
belongings behind in the town.

At that time many who wanted to 29  
maintain their religion and law went  
down to the wilds to live there. They 30  
took their sons, their wives, and their  
cattle with them, for their miseries  
were more than they could bear. Word 31  
soon reached the king's officers and the  
forces in Jerusalem, the city of David,  
that men who had defied the king's  
order had gone down into hiding-  
places in the wilds. A large body of 32  
men went quickly after them, came  
up with them, and occupied positions  
opposite. They prepared to attack them  
on the sabbath. 'There is still time,' 33  
they shouted; 'come out, obey the  
king's command, and your lives will  
be spared.' 'We will not come out,' 34  
the Jews replied; 'we will not obey the  
king's command or profane the sab-  
bath.' Without more ado the attack 35  
was launched; but the Israelites did 36  
nothing in reply; they neither hurled  
stones, nor barricaded their caves.  
'Let us all meet death with a clear 37  
conscience,' they said; 'we call heaven  
and earth to testify that there is no  
justice in this slaughter.' So they were 38  
attacked and massacred on the sabbath,  
men, women, and children, up to a thou-  
sand in all, and their cattle with them.

<sup>f</sup> Or occupied her palaces.

and "favorite." 18: Mattathias was offered the lowest of four honorary ranks of the *King's Friends* (friends, honored friends, first, and preferred friends). See 10.65; 11.27; 2 Macc.8.9. 24: Mattathias obeyed God's law. See Deut.13.6-11. 26: See Num.25.6-15. 29-38: Josephus (*Ant.* XII.6.2) records that Jews who had met secretly in a cave to observe the Sabbath were suffocated by setting fire to brush that had been piled at the mouth of the cave; see also 2

39 Great was the grief of Mattathias and his friends when they heard the news. They said to one another, 'If we all do as our brothers have done, if we refuse to fight the Gentiles for our lives as well as for our laws and customs, then they will soon wipe us off the face of the earth.' That day they decided that, if anyone came to fight against them on the sabbath, they would fight back, rather than all die as their brothers in the caves had done.

42 It was then that they were joined by a company of Hasidaeans, stalwarts of Israel, every one of them a volunteer in the cause of the law; and all who were refugees from the troubles came to swell their numbers, and so add to their strength. Now that they had an organized force, they turned their wrath on the guilty men and renegades. Those who escaped their fierce attacks took refuge with the Gentiles.

45 Mattathias and his friends then swept through the country, pulling down the pagan altars, and forcibly circumcising all the uncircumcised boys found within the frontiers of Israel. They hunted down their arrogant enemies, and the cause prospered in their hands. Thus they saved the law from the Gentiles and their kings, and broke the power of the tyrant.

49 The time came for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons: 'Arrogance now stands secure and gives judgement against us; it is a time of calamity and raging fury. But now, my sons, be zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. Remember the deeds they did in their generations, and great glory and eternal fame shall be yours. Did not Abraham prove steadfast under trial, and so gain credit as a righteous man? Joseph

kept the commandments, hard-pressed though he was, and became lord of Egypt. Phinehas, our father, never flagged in his zeal, and his was the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. Joshua kept the law, and he became a judge in Israel. Caleb bore witness before the congregation, and a share in the land was his reward. David was a man of loyalty, and he was granted the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Elijah never flagged in his zeal for the law, and he was taken up to heaven. Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael had faith, and they were saved from the blazing furnace. Daniel was a man of integrity, and he was rescued from the lions' jaws. As generation succeeds generation, follow their example; for no one who trusts in Heaven shall ever lack strength. Do not fear a wicked man's words; all his success will end in filth and worms. Today he may be high in honour, but tomorrow there will be no trace of him, because he will have returned to the dust and all his schemes come to nothing. But you, my sons, draw your courage and strength from the law, for by it you will win great glory.

'Now here is Symeon, your brother; I know him to be wise in counsel: always listen to him, for he shall be a father to you. Judas Maccabaeus has been strong and brave from boyhood; he shall be your commander in the field, and fight his people's battles. Gather to your side all who observe the law, and avenge your people's wrongs. Repay the Gentiles in their own coin, and always heed the law's commands.'

Then Mattathias blessed them, and was gathered to his fathers. He died in the year 146,<sup>g</sup> and was buried by his

<sup>g</sup> That is 166 B.C.

Macc.6.11. 42: The *Hasidaeans* ("Pious" or "Faithful") were the forerunners of both the Pharisees and the Essenes. 44: 2 Macc.8.1 estimates this *organized force* as numbering about 6,000. *Guilty men*: pagans. *Renegades*: apostate Jews. 48: *They saved the law* by preventing the absorption of Judaism into a mixture of pagan and Jewish worship. 49-70: Mattathias' deathbed scene recalls that of Jacob (Gen. ch. 49) and Moses (Deut. ch. 33). Mattathias urges imitation of those who remained faithful to God's word despite difficult circumstances: Abraham (Gen. ch. 22), Joseph (Gen. ch. 39), Phinehas (Num. ch. 25), Joshua (Josh. ch. 1), Caleb (Num. chs. 13-14), David (2 Sam. ch. 7.), Elijah (1 Kgs. ch. 18; 2 Kgs. ch. 2), Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael (Dan. ch. 1), and Daniel (Dan. ch. 6). See similar praises in Ecclus. chs. 44-50. 62: *Filth and worms* were the final lot of Antiochus (2 Macc.9.5-10). 65: Although *Symeon* was older, he became the leader of the people only after his brothers Judas and Jonathan had died. 70: *Family tomb at Modin*: see 13.25-30.

sons in the family tomb at Modin. All Israel raised a loud lament for him.

*The war under Judas and Jonathan*

3 THEN JUDAS MACCABAEUS CAME FORWARD in his father's place. He had the support of all his brothers and his father's followers, and they carried on the fight for Israel with zest.

3 He enhanced his people's glory. He put on his breastplate like a giant, and girt himself with weapons of war. He fought battle on battle; he guarded his army with his sword. 4 He was like a lion in his exploits, like a lion's whelp roaring for prey. 5 He hunted and tracked down the lawless; he blasted the troublers of his people. 6 The lawless cowered in fear of him; all evil-doers were confounded. The cause of freedom prospered in his hands; 7 he provoked many kings to anger. But he made Jacob glad by his deeds; he is remembered for ever in blessing. 8 He passed through the towns of Judaea; he destroyed the godless there. He turned wrath away from Israel; 9 his fame spread to the ends of the earth, and he rallied a people near to destruction.

10 Apollonius now collected a gentile force and a large contingent from 11 Samaria, to fight against Israel. When Judas heard of it, he marched out to

meet him, and defeated and killed him. Many of the Gentiles fell, and the rest took to flight. From the arms they 12 captured, Judas took the sword of Apollonius, and used it in his campaigns for the rest of his life.

When Seron, who commanded the 13 army in Syria, heard that Judas had mustered a large force, consisting of all his loyal followers of military age, he 14 said to himself, 'I will win a glorious reputation in the empire by making war on Judas and his followers, who defy the royal edict.' Seron was re- 15 inforced by a strong contingent of renegade Jews, who marched up to help him take vengeance on Israel. When 16 he reached the pass of Beth-horon, Judas advanced to meet him with a handful of men. When his followers 17 saw the host coming against them, they said to Judas, 'How can so few of us fight against so many? Besides, we have had nothing to eat all day, and we are exhausted.'

Judas replied: 'Many can easily 18 be overpowered by a few; it makes no difference to Heaven to save by many or by few. Victory does not depend on 19 numbers; strength comes from Heaven alone. Our enemies come filled with 20 insolence and lawlessness to plunder and to kill us and our wives and children. But we are fighting for our 21 lives and our religion. Heaven will crush 22 them before our eyes. You need not be afraid of them.'

When he had finished speaking, he 23 launched a sudden attack, and Seron and his army broke before him. They 24 pursued them down the pass of Beth-horon as far as the plain; some eight hundred of the enemy fell, and the rest fled to Philistia.

**3.1-9.73: The Jews regain religious freedom.** Under Judas, the Jews defeat the forces of Antiochus and his son, purify the Temple, punish persecutors and regain religious freedom. When persecution is renewed, Judas resumes the struggle. Jonathan continues the war with success.

**3.1-9: A poetic preface praises Judas.** 5: *Blasted*: burned; see 5.5,35,44. 7: *Kings*: Antiochus IV Epiphanes (3.27), Antiochus V Eupator (6.28, but not mentioned by name; see 3.33 n.) and Demetrius I Soter (9.1). 8: By purging the land, Judas mollified the divine *wrath*. See 2 Macc. 6.12-16. 9: *Ends of the earth*: Rome; see 8.17-32.

**3.10-24: Judas' early victories.** 10: *Apollonius*, who had earlier sacked Jerusalem (1.29-35), now led a contingent including his Mysian mercenaries (2 Macc.5.24) against Judea. 16: Two towns, two miles apart, "Upper" and "Lower" *Beth-horon*, were connected by a pass which led from the coastal plains to the highlands north of Jerusalem. Judas ambushed Seron in the pass and defeated him with fewer men. 18-19: 1 Macc. never uses "God" or "Lord," but prefers *Heaven*. 24: *Philistia*: the seacoast, once home of the Philistines.



25 Thus Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and alarm spread to the  
 26 Gentiles all round. His fame reached the ears of the king, and the story of his battles was told in every nation.  
 27 When King Antiochus heard this news, he flew into a rage and ordered all the forces of his empire to be assembled, an  
 28 immensely powerful army. He opened his treasury and gave a year's pay to his troops, ordering them to be prepared  
 29 for any duty. But he found that his resources were running low; his tribute, too, had dwindled as a result of the disaffection and violence he had brought upon the world by abolishing  
 30 traditional laws and customs. He now saw with alarm that he might be short of money, as had happened once or twice before, both for his normal expenses and for the gifts he had been accustomed to distribute with an even more lavish hand than any of his predecessors on the throne.  
 31 For a time he was much perplexed; then he decided to go to Persia, collect the tribute due from the provinces, and raise a large sum of ready money.  
 32 He left Lysias, a distinguished member of the royal family, as viceroy of the territories between the Euphrates and the Egyptian frontier. He also appointed him guardian of his son Antiochus  
 33 until his return. He transferred to Lysias half the armed forces, together with the elephants, and told him all that he wanted done, especially to the population of Judaea and Jerusalem.  
 34 Against these Lysias was to send a force, and break and destroy the strength of Israel and those who were

left in Jerusalem, to blot out all memory of them from the place. He was to settle  
 36 foreigners in all their territory, and allot the land to the settlers. The other  
 37 half of the forces the king took with him, and set out from Antioch, his capital, in the year 147.<sup>b</sup> He crossed the Euphrates and marched through the upper provinces.

Lysias chose Ptolemaeus son of 38 Dorymenes, with Nicanor and Gorgias, all three powerful members of the order of King's Friends, and sent with 39 them forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry to invade Judaea and devastate the country as the king had commanded. They set out 40 with all their forces and encamped near Emmaus in the lowlands. The 41 merchants of the region, impressed by what they heard of the army, took a large quantity of silver and gold, with a supply of fetters, and came into the camp to buy the Israelites for slaves. The army was also reinforced by troops from Syria and Philistia.

Judas and his brothers saw that their 42 plight had become grave, with the enemy encamped inside their frontiers. They learnt, too, of the commands which the king had given for the complete destruction of the nation. So they 43 said to one another, 'Let us restore the shattered fortunes of our nation; let us fight for our nation and for the holy place.' They gathered in full 44 assembly to prepare for battle, and to pray and seek divine mercy and compassion.

<sup>b</sup> That is 165 B.C.

3.25-37: **Antiochus goes to Persia.** He makes provision for settling the "Jewish question" in his absence. That the king gathered a powerful army in response to the exploits of Judas is an exaggeration. A more likely reason was to quell a rebellion in the east, indicated by overdue tribute (v. 31), to secure the eastern frontier against the Parthians and to replenish his depleted treasury (vv. 29-30) by conquest. 29: Antiochus' problems largely resulted from his imposition of Hellenic religion and customs on native populations. 31: *Persia* in 1 and 2 Macc. is all the area east of the Tigris. 32: *Lysias* belonged to the highest court order of the realm, "the king's kinsmen." 33: The son is *Antiochus V Eupator* (164-161 B.C.), who was then only seven. 37: *Antioch* is modern Antakya in eastern Turkey. The *upper provinces* included the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

3.38-4.27: **Judas defeats the Seleucid generals.** See 2 Macc.8.8-29. 38: *Ptolemaeus*: in 2 Macc. 8.8, he is governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia. His region included Palestine. *Nicanor*: see 1 Macc.7.26-50; 2 Macc.8.9; 14.15. *Gorgias*: see 5.59; 2 Macc.8.9; 10.14; 12.32-35. *King's Friends*: see 2:18 n. 40: *Emmaus* is about twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. 41: Jews were to be sold as *slaves* to raise money for tribute (2 Macc.8.10-11). The Greek translator probably misread Aram (= *Syria*) for Edom, the Heb. words being easily confused. The main body of troops was already from Syria. 43-46: Because *the holy place*, the Temple, was defiled by the pagans and apostates (v. 45), the Jews assembled for prayer at *Mizpah*, an ancient Israelite

45 Jerusalem lay deserted like a wilderness;  
 none of her children went in or out.  
 Her holy place was trampled down;  
 aliens and heathen lodged in her citadel.  
 Joy had been banished from Jacob;  
 and flute and harp were dumb.

46 They assembled at Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, for in former times Israel had a place of worship at Mizpah.  
 47 That day they fasted, put on sackcloth, sprinkled ashes on their heads, and tore their garments. They unrolled the scroll of the law, seeking the guidance which Gentiles seek from the images of their gods. They brought the priestly vestments, the firstfruits, and the tithes; they presented Nazirites who had completed their vows, and they cried to Heaven: 'What shall we do with these Nazirites, and where shall we take them? Thy holy place is trodden down and defiled, and sorrow and humiliation have come upon thy priests.  
 52 And see, the Gentiles have gathered against us to destroy us. Thou knowest the fate they plan for us; how can we withstand them unless thou help us?'  
 54 Then the trumpets sounded, and a great shout went up.

55 Judas then appointed leaders of the people, officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. As the law commands, he ordered back to their homes those who were building their houses or were newly wed or who were planting vineyards, or who were faint-hearted. Thereupon the army moved and took up their positions to the south of Emmaus, where Judas thus addressed them: 'Prepare for action and show yourselves men. Be ready at dawn to fight these Gentiles who are massed against us to destroy us and our holy place. Better die fighting than look on while calamity overwhelms

our people and the holy place. But it will be as Heaven wills.'

Gorgias, taking a detachment of 4 five thousand men and a thousand picked cavalry, set out by night to attack 2 the Jewish army and fall upon them unawares; his guides were men from the citadel. But Judas had word of this, 3 and he and his soldiers moved out to attack the king's army in Emmaus, while its forces were still divided. 4 Gorgias reached the camp of Judas 5 during the night, but found no one there. He set out to search for them in the hills, thinking, 'These Jews are running away from us.'

At daybreak, there was Judas in the 6 plain with three thousand men, though they had not all the armour and the swords they wanted. They saw the 7 Gentiles' camp strongly fortified with breastworks, while mounted guards, seasoned troops, patrolled round it.

Judas said to his men: 'Do not be 8 afraid of their great numbers or panic when they charge. Remember how 9 fathers were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his army were pursuing them. Let us cry now to 10 Heaven to favour our cause, to remember the covenant made with our fathers, and to crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that 11 there is One who saves and liberates Israel.'

When the foreigners looked up and 12 saw them advancing to the attack, they marched out of their camp to give 13 battle. Judas and his men sounded their trumpets and closed with them. The 14 Gentiles broke, and fled to the plain. All the rearmost fell by the sword. 15 The pursuit was pressed as far as Gazara and the lowlands of Idumaea, Azotus and Jamnia; about three thousand of the enemy were killed.

Judas and his force then broke off 16 the pursuit and returned. He said to 17

sanctuary eight miles north of Jerusalem. See Judg.20.1; 1 Sam.7.5; 10.17; Jer.40.6. 48: Unable to cast lots (the Urim and Thummim of 1 Sam.14.41), after the Exile (Ezra 2.63; Neh.7.65), Israel sought guidance from the Lord by reading *the scroll of the law*. 49-51: The Nazirites could not complete *their vows* (see Num.6.1-21), because the *holy place* (Temple) was defiled. 55: The *leaders* included Judas' brothers (2 Macc.8.22-23). 56: See Deut.20.5-8. 2 Macc.8.13 cites only cowardice. 4.2: *Men from the citadel*: renegade Jews probably; see 1.33-34 n. 6: 2 Macc.8.16 doubles Judas' army. 8-11: See 2 Macc.8.16-20, where the incidents cited in Judas' speech as motives for confidence are different. Ancient authors reported what a speaker should have said rather than exact words. 15: The defeated enemy fled to the cities of the coastal

the people: 'Curb your greed for spoil; there is more fighting before us; 18 Gorgias and his force are in the hills near by. Stand firm now against our enemies and fight; after that, plunder as you please.'

19 Before Judas had finished speaking, an enemy patrol appeared, reconnoitring from the hills. They saw that their army was in flight, and that their camp was being set on fire; the smoke that met their gaze showed what had 21 happened. They were filled with panic as they took in the scene, and when they saw the army of Judas in the 22 plain, ready for battle, they all fled to Philistia.

23 Then Judas turned back to plunder the camp, and there they got much gold and silver, violet and purple stuffs, 24 and great riches. On their return they sang songs of thanksgiving and praised Heaven, 'for it is right, because his 25 mercy endures for ever'. That day saw a great deliverance for Israel.

26 Those of the Gentiles who escaped with their lives went and reported to 27 Lysias all that had happened. On hearing the news he was overwhelmed with disappointment, because Israel had not suffered the disaster he had 28 hoped for, and the issue was not what the king had ordered.

29 In the following year he gathered sixty thousand picked infantry and five thousand cavalry to make war on the Jews. They marched into Idumaea, and encamped at Bethsura, where Judas met them with ten thousand men. 30 When he saw the strength of the enemy's army, he prayed: 'All praise to thee, the Saviour of Israel, who didst break the attack of the giant by thy servant

David. Thou didst deliver the army of the Philistines into the power of Saul's son, Jonathan, and of his armour-bearer. In like manner put his army 31 into the power of thy people Israel. Humble their pride in their forces and their mounted men. Strike them with 32 panic, turn their insolent strength to water, make them reel under a crushing defeat. Overthrow them by the sword 33 of those who love thee, and let all who know thy name praise thee with songs of thanksgiving.'

So they joined battle, and Lysias 34 lost about five thousand men in the close fighting. When he saw his own 35 army routed and Judas's army full of daring, ready to live or die nobly, he departed for Antioch, and there collected a force of mercenaries, in order to return to Judaea with a much larger army than before.<sup>i</sup>

But Judas and his brothers said: 36 'Now that our enemies have been crushed, let us go up to Jerusalem to cleanse the temple and rededicate it.' 37 So the whole army was assembled and went up to Mount Zion. There they 38 found the temple laid waste, the altar profaned, the gates burnt down, the courts overgrown like a thicket or wooded hill-side, and the priests' rooms in ruin. They tore their garments, wailed 39 loudly, put ashes on their heads, and fell on their faces to the ground. They 40 sounded the ceremonial trumpets, and cried aloud to Heaven.

Then Judas detailed troops to engage the garrison of the citadel while he cleansed the temple. He selected 42 priests without blemish, devoted to the law, and they purified the temple, 43

*i in order . . . before: probable meaning; Gk. obscure.*

lowlands: *Gazara* (Gezer), *Azotus* (Ashdod), and *Jammia* (Jabneh). 23: The gold and silver of the slave traders now fell to their intended victims (2 Macc.8.25). 24: See the refrain of Ps.136. 26: The survivors included Nicanor (2 Macc.8.34-36).

4.28-35: Judas defeats Lysias at Bethsura. See 2 Macc.11.1-12. 28-29: In the following year, 164 B.C., Lysias besieged *Bethsura* (Beth-zur), which was friendly toward Judas (2 Macc.11.6-7). 30: Judas encouraged his men by recalling how, against all odds, David overcame Goliath (1 Sam. ch. 17) and Jonathan slew the Philistine outpost (1 Sam. ch. 14). 35: 2 Macc.11.13-15 notes that Lysias came to terms with the Jews some time after his devastating defeat in this battle.

4.36-61: The purification and dedication of the Temple. See 2 Macc.10.1-8. The death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (6.1-16), and the accession of his son Antiochus V Eupator (6.17) preceded the Temple's purification (4.36-51) and dedication (4.52-59) in December 164 B.C. (2 Macc.9.1-29). 10.10-11 retains the correct historical sequence. 41: *The citadel*: see 1.33-34 n. 42: For earlier purifications of the Temple see 2 Kgs. 23.4-25; 2 Chr. ch. 29. 43: *The stones which defiled the Temple*, those of the altar to Zeus Olympios (1.54,59), were taken to an unclean

removing to an unclean place the stones  
 44 which defiled it. They discussed what to  
 do with the altar of burnt-offering,  
 45 which was profaned, and rightly decided  
 to demolish it, for fear it might  
 become a standing reproach to them  
 because it had been defiled by the  
 Gentiles. They therefore pulled down  
 46 the altar, and stored away the stones in  
 a fitting place on the temple hill, until  
 a prophet should arise who could be  
 47 consulted about them. They took un-  
 hewn stones, as the law commands,  
 and built a new altar on the model of  
 48 the previous one. They rebuilt the  
 temple and restored its interior, and  
 49 consecrated the temple courts. They re-  
 newed the sacred vessels and the  
 lamp-stand, and brought the altar of  
 incense and the table into the temple.  
 50 They burnt incense on the altar and lit  
 the lamps on the lamp-stand to shine  
 51 within the temple. When they had put  
 the Bread of the Presence on the table  
 and hung the curtains, all their work  
 was completed.

52 Then, early on the twenty-fifth day  
 of the ninth month, the month Kislev,  
 53 in the year 148,<sup>j</sup> sacrifice was offered  
 as the law commands on the newly  
 54 made altar of burnt-offering. On the  
 anniversary of the day when the  
 Gentiles had profaned it, on that very  
 day, it was rededicated, with hymns of  
 thanksgiving, to the music of harps and  
 55 lutes and cymbals. All the people pro-  
 strated themselves, worshipping and  
 praising Heaven that their cause had  
 prospered.

56 They celebrated the rededication of

the altar for eight days; there was  
 great rejoicing as they brought burnt-  
 offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings  
 and thank-offerings. They decorated the  
 57 front of the temple with golden wreaths  
 and ornamental shields. They renewed  
 the gates and the priests' rooms, and  
 fitted them with doors. There was great  
 58 merry-making among the people, and  
 the disgrace brought on them by the  
 Gentiles was removed.

Then Judas, his brothers, and the  
 59 whole congregation of Israel decreed  
 that the rededication of the altar should  
 be observed with joy and gladness at the  
 same season each year, for eight days,  
 beginning on the twenty-fifth of  
 Kislev.

At that time they encircled Mount  
 60 Zion with high walls and strong  
 towers to prevent the Gentiles from  
 coming and trampling it down as they  
 had done before. Judas set a garrison  
 61 there; he also fortified Bethsura, so that  
 the people should have a fortress facing  
 Idumaea.

WHEN THE GENTILES ROUND ABOUT 5  
 heard that the altar had been rebuilt  
 and the temple rededicated, they were  
 furious, and determined to wipe out all 2  
 those of the race of Jacob who lived  
 among them. Thus began the work of  
 massacre and extermination among the  
 people.

Judas then made war on the descen- 3  
 dants of Esau in Idumaea and attacked  
 Acrabattene, because they had humbled  
 Israel in. There he inflicted on them a

<sup>j</sup> That is 164 B.C.

place, i.e. a place for refuse (possibly the Kidron valley, see 2 Kgs.23.4,6,12). 44: The altar of burnt-offering had been profaned by the altar to Zeus built upon it, but because it had been devoted to the worship of the Lord, the stones were sacred and could not be put to a secular use. 46: Only a prophet could declare what should be done with the stones, but lack of a prophet is noted; see also 9.27; 14.41. 47: The law: Exod.20.25; Deut.27.5-6. 53-54: For the pertinent laws on sacrifice, see Exod.29.38-41; Num. 7.10-88. 56-59: The Jewish feast which commemorates the Temple's rededication in December 164 B.C., takes its present name from the Heb. word "Hanukkah," meaning "dedication." 60-61: Judas took precautions against further efforts of Lysias (v. 35).

5.1-68: Judas rescues his persecuted countrymen. The dedication of the Temple and the Jewish exemption from the edict of Antiochus (2 Macc.11.27-33) which followed Judas' victory over Lysias (1 Macc.4.28-35) aroused the envy and hostility of neighboring peoples. Soon after Antiochus' death, a series of anti-Jewish incidents led Judas to undertake reprisals and to rescue and relocate those Jews in danger. 1: The Gentiles round about are those of Idumaea (vv. 3-5; 2 Macc.10.14-23), Ammon (vv. 6-8; possibly 2 Macc.8.30-33), Gilead (vv. 9-13,24-54; 2 Macc. 12.10-31), Galilee (vv. 14-23), and the land of the Philistines (vv. 66-68; 2 Macc.12.3-9). 2: The race of Jacob and similar archaic expressions in this chapter (e.g. the descendants of Esau, v. 3) are meant to evoke the memory of Israel's earlier conquest of the land, which the Jews still regarded as their own. 3: The location of Acrabattene is unknown. 4: The Baeanites

severe and humiliating defeat, and took  
 4 spoils from them. He remembered also  
 the wrong done by the Baeanites, who  
 with their traps and road-blocks were  
 5 continually ambushing the Israelites. He  
 first confined them to their forts and  
 took up positions against them; then  
 he solemnly committed them to de-  
 struction and set the forts ablaze with  
 6 all their occupants. He crossed over to  
 the Ammonites, and came upon a  
 strong and numerous force under the  
 7 command of a certain Timotheus. He  
 fought many battles with them, and they  
 broke before him and were crushed.  
 8 After capturing Jazer and its dependent  
 villages, he returned to Judaea.  
 9 Then the Gentiles in Gilead gathered  
 against the Israelites within their  
 territory, intending to destroy them;  
 but they took refuge in the fortress of  
 10 Dathema, and sent this letter to Judas  
 and his brothers:

The Gentiles round us have  
 11 gathered to wipe us out. They are  
 preparing to come and seize the  
 fortress where we have taken refuge;  
 Timotheus is in command of their  
 12 army. So come at once and rescue  
 us from their clutches, for many of  
 our number have already fallen.  
 13 All our fellow-Jews in the region of  
 Tubias have been massacred, their  
 wives and their children taken cap-  
 tive, and their property carried off.  
 About a thousand men there have  
 lost their lives.

14 While the letter was being read,  
 other messengers with their garments  
 15 torn arrived from Galilee. 'Ptolemais,  
 Tyre and Sidon,' they said, 'and all  
 heathen Galilee have mustered their  
 forces to make an end of us.'

16 When Judas and the people heard

this, a full assembly was called to  
 decide what they should do for their  
 fellow-countrymen in distress and  
 under enemy attack. Judas said to  
 17 Simon his brother, 'Choose your men,  
 and go and rescue your countrymen  
 in Galilee while I and my brother  
 Jonathan march into Gilead.' The rest  
 18 of his forces he left for the defences of  
 Judaea, with Josephus son of Zacharias,  
 and Azarias, leading citizens, and gave  
 19 them this order: 'Take charge of the  
 people of Jerusalem, but on no account  
 join battle with the Gentiles until we  
 return.' Simon was allotted three  
 20 thousand men for the march on Galilee,  
 and Judas eight thousand for the march  
 on Gilead.

Simon invaded Galilee and, after  
 21 many battles, broke the resistance of  
 the Gentiles. He pursued them as far as  
 22 the gate of Ptolemais, killed nearly  
 three thousand of them, and stripped  
 their corpses. He took back with him  
 23 the Jews from Galilee and Arbatta,  
 their wives and children, and all their  
 property, and brought them to Judaea  
 with great jubilation.

Meanwhile Judas Maccabaeus and  
 24 his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan  
 and made a three days' march through  
 the desert. They came upon some  
 25 Nabataeans, who met them peace-  
 fully, and gave them an account of all  
 that had happened to their fellow-  
 Jews in Gilead: many of them were  
 26 held prisoner in Bozrah and Bezer, in  
 Alema, Casphor, Maked, and Carnaim  
 —all large fortified towns; and in  
 27 other towns of Gilead. 'Your enemies',  
 they told them, 'are marshalling their  
 forces to storm your fortresses to-  
 morrow so as to capture them and  
 destroy all the Jews in them in a single  
 day.'

Then Judas and his army suddenly  
 28

are difficult to identify; perhaps they were nomads and the mercenaries of 2 Macc.10.14.  
 6: *Ammonites*: people in the region near modern Amman, Jordan. 8: Ancient *Jazer* was west  
 and slightly north of Amman. 9: *Gilead*, the area immediately east of the Jordan and to the  
 north of the Jabbok river, extended north of the Yarmuk river in Hellenistic times. *Dathema*:  
 location unknown. 11–13: The letter exaggerates. Not all the Jews in the region of *Tubias*, i.e.  
 Gilead, were massacred; see vv. 26–27. 14–15: *Heathen Galilee*: the coastal region of Galilee,  
 as the cities named indicate. 22: *Ptolemais* is modern Acre, a coastal town north of Haifa.  
 23: For their own protection against reprisals, the *Jews from Galilee and Arbatta* (i.e. Nabata,  
 the coastal region just south of Galilee) resettled in Judea. 25: The *Nabataeans*, an Arab  
 people, grew rich as caravan traders. 26–36: These towns were all located east of the Sea of  
 Galilee and just north of the Yarmuk river, but the precise location is not known in every

turned aside to Bozrah by way of the desert, captured the town, and put all the males to the sword. He plundered all their property and set fire to the town. From there he made a night-march and came within reach of the fortress of Dathema. When dawn broke they saw in front of them an innumerable host, bringing up scaling-ladders and siege-engines and engaging the defenders, to capture the fortress. Judas saw that battle was already joined, and a cry went up to heaven from the town, with trumpeting and loud shouting. Judas said to his men: 'Now is the time to fight for our brothers.'

They marched out in three columns to take the enemy in the rear. Then they sounded the trumpets and cried aloud in prayer, and the army of Timotheus recognized that it was Maccabaeus and took to flight before him. He inflicted a severe defeat on them, and nearly eight thousand of the enemy fell that day.

Judas then turned aside to Alema,<sup>k</sup> attacked and captured it, and killed all the males. He plundered the town and set it on fire. From there he moved on and occupied Casphor, Maked, Bezer, and the other towns of Gilead.

After these events, Timotheus gathered another army, and took up position opposite Raphon, on the other side of the ravine. Judas sent spies to their camp, and they reported that all the Gentiles in the neighbourhood had rallied in very great strength to Timotheus, who had also hired Arab mercenaries to help them; they were encamped on the far side of the ravine, ready to engage him in battle. So Judas marched to meet them.

As Judas and his army were approaching the flooded ravine, Timotheus said to his officers: 'If Judas crosses over to our side first, we shall not be able to stand up to him; he will certainly get the better of us. If, however, his courage fails him and he takes up

a position on the other side of the river, then we will cross over and get the better of him.' When Judas reached the ravine, he stationed the officers of the muster on its banks, with instructions that no one should be allowed to take up a fixed position, but that all should advance to battle. Thus Judas forestalled the enemy by crossing to attack them, with all his people following. The Gentiles broke before him; they all threw away their arms and took refuge in the temple at Carnaim. Judas captured the town and burnt the temple together with all its occupants: Carnaim was completely subdued and could no longer withstand him.

Then Judas gathered together all the Israelites in Gilead to escort them to Judaea. They amounted to an immense host, small and great, women and children, with their property. They came as far as Ephron, a large and strongly fortified town on the road: it was impossible to pass by it on either side; the only route was through the town. But the townsmen kept them out, barricading their gates with boulders. Judas sent them a conciliatory message: 'We have to pass through your territory to reach our own. No one shall do you any harm: we shall only march through.' But they refused to open their gates to him.

Judas issued orders to the whole host for everyone to halt where he was. Then the fighting men took up battle positions and attacked the town all that day and all the night, until it fell into their hands. They put every male to the sword, razed the town to the ground and plundered it, and then marched through it over the bodies of the dead. They crossed the Jordan to the great plain opposite Bethshan, while Judas brought up the stragglers and encouraged the people all along the road till he arrived in Judaea. They went up to Mount Zion with gladness and

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read Maapha.

instance. 37: *Raphon* lay on a northern tributary of the Yarmuk. 39: Perhaps these *mercenaries* were the Arabs of 2 Macc.12.10-12. 42: *The officers of the muster* were scribes, who could easily make notes of the laggards. 43: *The temple* was that of Atargatis (the horned Astarte) at *Carnaim*, another city in the same region; see 2 Macc.12.26. 46: *Ephron* lay to the south of the Yarmuk, close to the Jordan. 52: *Bethshan* is the Scythopolis of 2 Macc.12.29-30, about four miles west of the Jordan and eighteen south of the Sea of Galilee. 54: The victors arrived

jubilation, and offered burnt-offerings, because they had returned in safety without the loss of a single man.

55 Now while Judas and Jonathan were  
56 in Gilead, and Simon their brother in  
Galilee was besieging Ptolemais, the  
two commanders, Josephus son of  
Zacharias, and Azarias, heard of their  
57 exploits in battle. 'We too', they said,  
'must make a name for ourselves: let us  
go and fight the Gentiles in our neigh-  
58 bourhood.' So they gave orders to their  
forces and marched against Jamnia.  
59 Gorgias came out of the town with his  
men to meet them in battle; and Jose-  
60 phus and Azarias were routed and  
pursued to the frontier of Judaea. Some  
two thousand of the people fell that  
61 day. So the Israelites suffered a heavy  
defeat, because their commanders,  
thinking to play the hero themselves,  
had not obeyed Judas and his brothers.  
62 They were not, however, of that family  
to whom it was granted to bring deliv-  
erance to Israel.

63 Judas and his brothers won a great  
reputation in all Israel and among the  
Gentiles, wherever their fame was  
64 heard, and crowds flocked to acclaim  
them.

65 After this, Judas marched out with  
his brothers and made war on the  
descendants of Esau to the south. He  
struck at Hebron and its villages, dem-  
olished its fortifications, and burnt  
66 down its forts on all sides. He then set  
out to invade Philistine territory, march-  
67 ing through Marisa. On that day several  
priests, who had ill-advisedly gone into  
action wishing to distinguish them-  
68 selves, fell in battle. Then Judas turned  
aside to Azotus in Philistia. He  
pulled down their altars, burnt the  
images of their gods, carried off the  
spoil from their towns, and returned  
to Judaea.

As King Antiochus marched through 6  
the upper provinces he heard that  
there was a city in Persia called Elymais,  
famous for its wealth in silver and  
gold. Its temple was very rich, full of 2  
gold shields, coats of mail, and arms,  
left there by Alexander son of Philip,  
king of Macedon and the first to be  
king over the Greeks. Antiochus came 3  
and tried to capture and plunder the  
city, but failed because his plan had  
become known to the citizens. They 4  
gave battle and put him to flight, and  
he withdrew to Babylon in bitter  
disappointment.

A messenger met him in Persia with 5  
the news that the armies which had  
invaded Judaea were in full retreat.  
Lysias had marched up with an 6  
exceptionally strong force, only to be  
flung back before the enemy, and the  
strength of the Jews had grown by the  
capture of arms, equipment, and spoils  
from the Syrian armies they had  
defeated. They had pulled down the 7  
abomination he had built on the altar  
in Jerusalem, and surrounded their  
temple with high walls as before, and  
had even fortified Bethsura.

When the king heard this news, 8  
he was thrown into such deep dismay  
that he took to his bed, ill with grief  
at the miscarriage of his plans. There 9  
he lay for many days, his bitter grief  
breaking out again and again, and he  
realized that he was dying. So he 10  
summoned all his Friends and said to  
them: 'Sleep has deserted me; the  
weight of care has broken my heart.  
At first I said to myself, "Why am I 11  
overwhelmed by this flood of trouble,  
I who was kind and well-loved in the  
day of my power?" But now I re- 12  
member the wrong I did in Jerusalem,  
when I took all her vessels of silver and  
gold, and when I made an unjustified

in time to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost); 2 Macc.12.31. 55-64: The punitive raids of 2 Macc.12.3-9 preceded this incident. The defeat is here attributed to disobedience of orders, but 2 Macc.12.40 notes a different reason for the casualties. 62: The *family* is that of Mattathias and his sons. 65: The *descendants of Esau*: Edomites. *Hebron* is twenty miles south of Jerusalem. 66: *Marisa* lay west of Hebron. 67: See vv. 55-64.

6.1-17: The death of Antiochus IV. See 2 Macc.9.1-29. The author continues the story begun in 3.37. 1: The *upper provinces* were in Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. *Elymais* is not a city but the country Elam, the area around Susa, particularly north and east of that city. 2: Possibly the *temple* was that of Nanaea at Susa (see 2 Macc.1.13). *Alexander*: the Great. 5-7: Antiochus died after Lysias' defeat but before Judas purified the Temple. The author merely summarizes 4.28-61 here. 10: *Friends*: see 2.18 n. 12-13: Obviously, these are the

attempt to wipe out the inhabitants of  
 13 Judaea. It is for this, I know, that these  
 misfortunes have come upon me; and  
 here I am, dying of grief in a foreign  
 land.'

14 He summoned Philip, one of his  
 Friends, and appointed him regent  
 15 over his whole empire, giving him the  
 crown, the royal robe, and the signet-  
 ring, with authority to take his son  
 Antiochus and bring him up to be king.  
 16 King Antiochus died there in the year  
 149.<sup>l</sup>

17 When Lysias learnt that the king  
 was dead, he placed the young Antioch-  
 us, whom he had brought up from  
 boyhood, on the throne in succession to  
 his father, and gave him the name of  
 Eupator.

18 MEANWHILE THE GARRISON OF THE  
 citadel were confining the Israelites to  
 the neighbourhood of the temple, and  
 giving continual support to the Gentiles  
 19 by their harassing tactics. Judas there-  
 fore determined to make an end of them.  
 He gathered all the people together to  
 lay siege to the citadel in the year  
 150,<sup>m</sup> erecting emplacements and  
 siege-engines against the enemy.

21 Now some of the besieged garrison  
 escaped and were joined by a number  
 22 of renegade Israelites. They went to  
 the king and said: 'How long must we  
 wait for you to do justice and avenge  
 23 our comrades? We were willing to serve  
 your father, to follow his instructions  
 and to obey his decrees, and what was  
 24 the result? Our own countrymen be-  
 came our enemies. They actually killed  
 as many of us as they could find, and  
 25 robbed us of our property. Nor are we  
 the only ones to suffer at their hands.  
 They have attacked all their neigh-  
 26 bours as well. At this very moment  
 they are besieging the citadel in Jeru-

salem and mean to capture it; and they  
 have fortified both the temple and  
 Bethsura. Unless your majesty quickly  
 27 overpowers them they will go to yet  
 greater lengths, and you will not be  
 able to keep them in check.'

When the king heard this he was  
 28 furious. He assembled all his Friends,  
 the commanders of his army, and his  
 cavalry officers. He was joined by  
 29 mercenary troops from other kingdoms  
 and from the islands. His forces  
 30 numbered one hundred thousand in-  
 fantry, twenty thousand cavalry, and  
 thirty-two war-elephants. They passed  
 31 through Idumaea and laid siege to  
 Bethsura. They kept up the attack for  
 a long time and erected siege-engines,  
 but the defenders made a sortie and set  
 fire to them, and fought back manfully.

Judas now withdrew from the citadel  
 32 and encamped at Bethzacharia, oppo-  
 site the camp of the king. Early next  
 33 morning the king broke camp and  
 rushed his army along the road to  
 Bethzacharia; there his forces were  
 drawn up for battle and the trumpets  
 34 were sounded. The elephants were  
 roused for battle with the juice of grapes  
 and of mulberries. The great beasts  
 35 were distributed among the phalanxes;  
 by each were stationed a thousand  
 men, equipped with coats of chain-mail  
 and bronze helmets. Five hundred  
 picked horsemen were also assigned  
 to each animal. These had been station-  
 36 ed beforehand where the beast was;  
 and wherever it went, they went with it,  
 never leaving it. Each animal had  
 37 strong wooden turret fastened on its  
 back with a special harness, by way of  
 protection, and carried four<sup>n</sup> fighting  
 men as well as an Indian driver. The  
 38 rest of the cavalry Lysias stationed on

<sup>l</sup> That is 163 B.C.

<sup>m</sup> That is 162 B.C.

<sup>n</sup> Probable reading; Gk. thirty-two (compare verse 30).

sentiments of the author and not those of Antiochus. 14-15: Earlier, Antiochus had entrusted his son to Lysias (3.33), who faithfully declared the young Antiochus V Eupator king (v. 17). Philip soon proved to be ambitious (vv. 55-56). 17: *Eupator* means "of a good father."

6.18-63: Lysias' second Judean campaign. 18-27: To neutralize the citadel (1.33-34 n.), Judas besieged it. King Antiochus V Eupator (v. 21) was reminded of the garrison's loyalty to his father, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (v. 23), and of Judas' attacks on *all their neighbours* (v. 25; 5.1-68). Actually, Lysias, the regent, was in charge, since the king was then only ten years old (1.33 n.). 28-63: See 2 Macc.13.1-26. 28: *Friends*: see 2.18 n. 29: These *mercenary troops* were Greek-speaking (2 Macc.13.2). 30: The exaggerated numbers soften Judas' defeat. 31: Because of his elephants and cavalry, Lysias kept to the coastal plain until he reached Bethsura, which Judas had garrisoned (4.61); then Lysias swung in from the south through Idumaea. 34: *Roused*:



either flank of the army, to harass the enemy while themselves protected by the phalanxes. When the sun shone on the gold and bronze shields, they lit up the hills, which flashed like torches.

Part of the king's army was deployed over the heights, and part over the low ground. They advanced confidently and in good order. All who heard the din of this marching multitude and its clashing arms shook with fear. It was a very great and powerful array indeed.

Judas advanced with his army and gave battle, and six hundred of the king's men were killed. Eleazar Avaran, seeing that one of the elephants wore royal armour and stood out above all the rest, thought that the king was riding on it. So he gave his life to save his people and win everlasting renown for himself. He ran boldly towards it, into the middle of the phalanx, dealing death right and left, while they fell back on either side before him. He got in underneath the elephant, and thrust at it from below and killed it. It fell to the ground on top of him, and there he died.

When the Jews saw the strength and impetus of the imperial forces, they fell back before them. Part of the king's army marched up to Jerusalem to renew the engagement, and the king put Judaea and Mount Zion into a state of siege. He made peace with the people of Bethsura, who abandoned the town, having no more food there to withstand a siege, as it was a sabbatical year when the land was left fallow. Thus the king occupied Bethsura and detailed a garrison to hold it.

He then attacked the temple and subjected it to a long siege; he set up emplacements and siege-engines, with flame-throwers, catapults for discharging stones and barbed missiles, and slings. But the defenders too constructed engines to counter his engines, and put up a prolonged resistance.

There was no food, however, in the stores<sup>o</sup> because of the sabbatical year; those who from time to time had arrived in Judaea as refugees from the Gentiles had eaten up all that remained of the provisions. There were only a few men left in the temple, because the famine had been too severe for them, and they had scattered to their own homes.

Lysias heard that Philip, whom King Antiochus had appointed before he died to educate his son Antiochus for the kingship, had returned from Persia and Media with the late king's expeditionary force, and that he was seeking to take over the government. So he hastily gave orders for departure, saying to the king, his commanders, and his troops: 'Every day we are growing weaker, provisions are low, the place we are besieging is strong, and the affairs of the empire are pressing. So let us offer these men terms and make peace with them and their whole nation. Let us guarantee their right to follow their laws and customs as they used to do, for it was our abolition of these very customs and laws that roused their resentment, and produced all these consequences.'

The proposal met with the approval of the king and the commanders, and an offer of peace was sent and accepted. The king and his commanders bound themselves by oath, and on the agreed terms the besieged emerged from their stronghold. But when the king entered Mount Zion and saw how strongly the place was fortified, he went back on the oath he had sworn, and gave orders for the surrounding wall to be demolished. He then set off at top speed for Antioch, where he found Philip in possession; a battle ensued, and the city was taken by storm.

IN THE YEAR 151,<sup>p</sup> DEMETRIUS SON OF Seleucus left Rome, landed with a

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses read in the temple. <sup>p</sup> That is 161 B.C.

intoxicated. 43: *Eleazar* was Judas' brother (2.5). 47: On lower ground (v. 40), Judas' guerrillas were no match for the superior armament and professionalism of the king's soldiers. 49: On the sabbatical year, see Exod.23.10-11; Lev.25.3-7. 55: *King Antiochus*: IV Epiphanes. 60: *The king*, i.e. Lysias (see vv. 18-27 n.), granted religious but not civil liberty. 2 Macc.11.22-26,27-33 describe the peace terms. 63: Josephus says Antiochus captured and killed *Philip* (*Ant.* XII.9.7).

7.1-25: **The expedition of Bacchides and Alcimus**. 1: *Demetrius I Soter* (161-150 B.C.), whose

- handful of men at a town on the coast, and there made himself king.
- 2 While he was travelling to the royal seat of his ancestors, the army seized Antiochus and Lysias, intending to hand them over to him. When this was reported to him, he said, 'Do not let me set eyes on them.' The soldiers accordingly put them to death, and Demetrius ascended the throne.
- 3 All the godless renegades from Israel, led by Alcimus, who aspired to be high priest, came to the king and brought charges against their people. They said to him: 'Judas and his brothers have killed all your supporters, and have driven us from our country.
- 4 Be pleased now to send a man whom you trust, to go and see what devastation they have brought upon us and upon the king's territory, and to punish them and all their supporters.' The king chose Bacchides, one of the royal Friends, who was governor beyond the Euphrates, a man of high standing in the empire and loyal to the king. He sent him and the godless Alcimus, on whom he had conferred the high-priesthood, with orders to take vengeance on Israel.
- 5 They set out with a large army and entered Judaea. Bacchides sent envoys to Judas and his brothers to make false offers of friendship; but when they saw what a large force he had brought with him, they took no notice of these offers.
- 6 A deputation of doctors of the law came before Alcimus and Bacchides, asking for justice. The Hasidaeans were in fact the first group in Israel to make overtures to them; for they said
- to themselves, 'A priest of the family of Aaron has come with their forces, and he will do us no harm.' The language of Alcimus was conciliatory; he assured them on oath that no harm was intended to them or their friends. But once he had gained their confidence, he arrested sixty of them and put them to death in a single day; as Scripture says:
- 'The bodies of thy saints were scattered,  
their blood was shed round Jerusalem,  
and there was none to bury them.'
- This put all the people in fear and terror of them, and they said to each other, 'There is neither truth nor justice among them; they have broken their pledge and the oath they swore.' Then Bacchides left Jerusalem and camped in Bethzaith; and he ordered the arrest of many of those who had deserted to him, together with some of the people, and had them slaughtered and thrown into a great pit. He assigned the whole district to Alcimus, detailed some troops to assist him, and returned to the king.
- Alcimus fought hard for his high-priesthood. All the trouble-makers rallied to him; they gained control over Judaea, and did terrible damage in Israel. When Judas saw all the mischief which Alcimus and his followers had brought upon the Israelites, far worse than anything the Gentiles had done, he marched through all the territory of Judaea and its environs, punishing deserters and debarring

hopes to succeed his uncle Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) were frustrated earlier when the Romans instead recognized the young Eupator (164–161 B.C.), escaped from Rome, where he had been held hostage, and moved to claim the kingdom once ruled by his father *Seleucus IV* (187–175 B.C.). The coastal town was Tripolis (2 Macc.14.1). 2: As Demetrius marched on Antioch, his ancestral seat, the citizens there and the army switched allegiance to him. 5–7: The Jewish historian Josephus says (*Ant.* XII.9.7) that *Alcimus* (also called *Jakeimos*) succeeded *Menelaus* (2 Macc.13.4–8) as high priest. Perhaps Judas was forced by his treaty with Lysias to accept the defiled Alcimus for a time (2 Macc.14.3). The change of government may have seemed to Judas the opportunity for driving out Alcimus. 8: *Bacchides, one of the royal Friends* (see 2.18 n.), governed the area between the *Euphrates* and Egypt (Lysias had the same territory; 3.32). The king planned to go east—as Epiphanes had (3.27–37)—to subdue the eastern provinces. 12–13: Some of Judas' *Hasidaeans* (2.42; 2 Macc.14.6) now left him, recognized Alcimus, and asked for *justice*, i.e. terms for reconciliation. 16–17: See Ps.79.2–3. 19: *Bethzaith* is about three and a half miles north of Bethsura. Bacchides thus fulfilled his commission (v. 9). 20–25: Pushed from the cities by Alcimus' superior numbers, Judas denied him the countryside by guerrilla warfare.

25 them from access to the country districts. When Alcimus saw that Judas and his band had grown powerful, and recognized that he was unable to withstand them, he returned to the king and accused them of atrocities.

26 Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his distinguished commanders and a bitter enemy of Israel, with orders to wipe them out. Nicanor arrived at Jerusalem with a large force, and sent envoys to Judas and his brothers to make false offers of friendship: 'Let there be no quarrel between us,' he said; 'I propose to come with a few men for a friendly personal meeting.'

29 He came to Judas and they greeted one another as friends, yet the enemy were preparing to kidnap Judas. 30 When Judas discovered that Nicanor's visit was a trick, he took alarm and 31 refused to meet him again. Nicanor, realizing that his plan had been detected, marched out to engage Judas 32 near Capharsalama. About five hundred of Nicanor's army were killed, and the rest escaped to the city of David.

33 After these events, Nicanor went up to Mount Zion, and some of the priests and members of the senate came out from the temple to give him a friendly welcome, and to show him the burnt-offering which was being sacrificed for the king. But he mocked them, jeered at them, and spat on them,<sup>q</sup> boasting and swearing angrily: 'Unless Judas and his army are surrendered to me at once, when I return victorious I will burn down this house.' And he went off 36 in a rage. Thereupon the priests went in, and stood facing the altar and the 37 temple. They wept and said: 'Thou didst choose this house to bear thy name, to be a house of prayer and 38 supplication for thy people; take vengeance on this man and his army, and

make them fall by the sword. Remember all their blasphemy, and grant them no reprieve.'

Nicanor moved from Jerusalem and 39 encamped at Beth-horon, where he was joined by an army from Syria. Judas 40 encamped at Adasa with three thousand men; there he prayed in these words: 'There was a king whose followers 41 blasphemed, and thy angel came forth and struck down one hundred and 42 eighty-five thousand of them. So do thou crush this army before us today, and let all men know that Nicanor has 43 reviled thy holy place; judge him as his wickedness deserves.'

The armies joined battle on the 43 thirteenth of the month Adar, and the army of Nicanor suffered a crushing defeat, he himself being the first to fall in the battle. When his army saw that 44 Nicanor had fallen, they threw away their arms and took to flight. The 45 Jews, sounding the signal trumpets in the enemy's rear, pursued them as far as Gazara, a day's journey from Adasa. From all the villages of Judaea 46 round about, the inhabitants came out and attacked their flanks, forcing them back upon their pursuers. They all fell by the sword; there were no survivors. The Jews seized spoil and booty; 47 they cut off Nicanor's head and that right hand which he had stretched out so arrogantly, and brought them to be displayed at Jerusalem. There was 48 great public rejoicing and that day was kept as a special day of jubilation. It 49 was ordained that the day should be observed annually, on the thirteenth of Adar. Thus Judaea entered upon a short 50 period of peace.

NOW JUDAS HAD HEARD ABOUT THE 8 Romans: they were renowned for their

<sup>q</sup> Literally and polluted them.

7.26-50: Nicanor's defeat. See 2 Macc.14.11-15.37. 26: Nicanor had ample reason (3.38-4.25) to be Israel's bitter enemy. Formerly in charge of the king's elephants, he was now made governor of Judea (2 Macc.14.12). 27-30: 2 Macc.14.18-30 records a brief period of peace and friendship between Judas and Nicanor which is omitted here. 31: Capharsalama is about seven miles from Jerusalem. 32: City of David: Jerusalem. 33: The sacrifice offered for the king was proof of basic loyalty to the empire. 34-38: Contrast Nicanor's attitude with that expressed in Isa.56.6-8. 41: Judas refers to the angelic slaughter (plague may be meant) of Sennacherib's army besieging Jerusalem (2 Kgs.19.35; 2 Macc.15.22). 43: Adar: March, 160 B.C. 49: The feast of Nicanor was dropped from the Jewish calendar after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.

8.1-32: Judas' treaty with the Romans. Hoping to curb the Seleucids, Judas allied himself

military power and for the welcome they gave to those who became their allies; any who joined them could be sure of their firm friendship. He was told about the wars they had fought, and the valour they had shown in their conquest of the Gauls, whom they had laid under tribute. He heard of their successes in Spain, where they had seized silver-mines and gold-mines, maintaining their hold on the entire country—distant as it was from their own land—by their patience and good judgement. There were kings from far and near who had marched against them, but they had been beaten off after crushing defeats; others paid them annual tribute.

They had crushed in battle and conquered Philip, and Perseus king of Kittim, and all who had attacked them. Antiochus the Great, king of Asia, had marched against them with one hundred and twenty elephants, with cavalry and chariots and an immense force, but they had totally defeated him. They had taken the king alive, and had required that he and his successors should pay them a large annual tribute, give hostages, and cede the territories of India, Media, and Lydia, together with some of their finest provinces. These they had taken from him and given to King Eumenes.

When the Greeks planned to attack and destroy them, they heard of it and sent a single general against them. Battle was joined, and many of the Greeks fell; the Romans took their women and children prisoner, plundered their territory and annexed it, razed their fortifications, and made

them slaves, as they are to this day. The remaining kingdoms, the islands, and all who had ever opposed them, they destroyed or reduced to slavery. With their friends, however, and who put themselves under their protection, they maintained firm friendship. They thus conquered kings near and far, and all who heard their fame went in fear of them. Those whom they wished to help and to appoint as kings, became kings, and those they wished to depose, they deposed; and thus they rose to great heights of power. For all this, not one of them made any personal claim to greatness by wearing the crown or donning the purple. They had established a senate where three hundred and twenty senators met daily to deliberate, giving constant thought to the proper ordering of the affairs of the common people. They entrusted their government and the ruling of all their territory to one of their number every year, all obeying this one man without envy or jealousy among themselves.

Judas accordingly chose Eupolemus son of John son of Accos, and Jason son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to conclude a treaty of friendship and alliance, so that the Romans might rid them of tyranny, for it was clear that the Greek empire was reducing Israel to slavery. They made the long journey to Rome and entered the Senate, where they spoke as follows: 'Judas, known as Maccabaeus, his brothers, and the Jewish people have sent us to you to conclude a treaty of friendly alliance with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends.' The Romans

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with the Romans, who seized the opportunity to befriend an enemy of Demetrius while extending their own influence. 2: The Cisalpine *Gauls* were conquered very easily in the second century B.C. 5: *Philip V* of Macedon (*Kittim*) was defeated in 197 B.C.; *Perseus*, Philip's son, was defeated in 168 B.C. 6–8: *Antiochus (III) the Great, king of Asia*, i.e. the lands at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, lost to Lucius Scipio at Magnesia (now western Turkey) in 190 B.C. The author uses an exaggerated report; *Antiochus* had only fifty-four elephants and was not captured. Under the treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.), Antiochus and his successors had to pay tribute (see 2 Macc. 8.10) and give hostages; see 1.10 n. 8: Ionia (here by scribal error, *India*), Mysia (here, *Media*), and *Lydia*, territories in Asia Minor, were ceded to *Eumenes II* of Pergamum (in western Turkey), an ally of Rome at Magnesia. 9–10: The Roman consul Lucius Mummius defeated the Achaean League of Greek city-states in 146 B.C. The author gets ahead of himself here; in 160 B.C., Judas would not have heard of this. 13: Among the kings appointed by the Romans was Alexander Balas (10.1). 15–16: It was three hundred (not *three hundred and twenty*) Roman senators, who did not meet *daily*, nor did they elect *one man*, but two consuls, who ruled jointly. While very pro-Roman in his report, the author has an imperfect knowledge of Rome's government. 17: *John*, the father of *Eupolemus*, had earlier won concessions for the

22 found the proposal acceptable, and the following is a copy of the reply which they inscribed on tablets of bronze and sent to Jerusalem, so that the Jews there might have a record of the treaty of alliance:

23 Success to the Romans and the Jewish nation by sea and land for ever! May sword and foe be far from them! But if war breaks out first against Rome or any of her allies throughout her dominion, then the Jewish nation shall support them whole-heartedly as occasion may require. To the enemies of Rome or of her allies the Jews shall neither give nor supply provisions, arms, money, or ships; so Rome has decided; and they shall observe their commitments, without compensation.

27 Similarly, if war breaks out first against the Jewish nation, then the Romans shall give them hearty support as occasion may require. To their enemies there shall be given neither provisions, arms, money, nor ships; so Rome has decided. These commitments shall be kept without breach of faith.

29 These are the terms of the agreement which the Romans have made with the Jewish people. But if, hereafter, both parties shall agree to add or to rescind anything, then they shall do as they decide; any such addition or rescindment shall be valid.

31 To this the Romans added: As for the misdeeds which King Demetrius is perpetrating against the Jews, we have written to him as follows: 'Why have you oppressed our friends and allies the Jews so harshly? If they make any further complaint against you, then we will see that justice is done them, and will make war upon you by sea and by land.'

When Demetrius heard that Nicanor 9 and his forces had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus a second time into Judaea, with the right wing of his army. They marched along the 2 Gilgal road, laid siege to Messaloth in Arbela, and captured it, inflicting heavy loss of life.

In the first month of the year 152,<sup>r</sup> 3 they moved camp to Jerusalem. From 4 there they marched to Berea with twenty thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. Now Judas was in 5 camp at Alasa, with three thousand picked men. But when they saw the size 6 of the enemy forces, their courage failed, and many deserted, leaving a mere eight hundred men in the field.

When Judas saw that with the 7 campaign going against him his army had melted away, his heart sank, for there was no time to rally them. Though much discouraged, he said to 8 those who were left, 'Let us move to the attack and see if we can defeat them.' But his men tried to dissuade 9 him: 'Impossible!' they said. 'No; let us save our lives now and come back later with our comrades to fight them. Now we are too few.' But Judas replied: 10 'Heaven forbid that I should do such a thing as run away! If our time is come, let us die bravely for our fellow-countrymen, and leave no stain on our honour.'

The Syrian army left its camp and 11 took up position to meet the Jews. The cavalry<sup>s</sup> was divided into two detachments; the slingers and the archers went ahead of the main force, and the picked troops were in the front line. Bacchides was on the right. 12 The phalanx came on in two divisions with trumpets sounding; Judas's men 13 also sounded their trumpets. The earth shook at the din of the armies as

<sup>r</sup> That is 160 B.C.

<sup>s</sup> The Syrian army . . . cavalry; or The Jewish army left its camp and stood to meet the enemy. The Syrian cavalry . . .

Jews from Antiochus III (2 Macc.4.11). 22: Josephus says that the *tablets of bronze* were kept in Rome's capitol (*Ant.* XII.10.6); a copy was sent in a letter to Judas. 23-30: The treaty follows the standard Roman form for a treaty between equals. 31: This addition came separately; it is not part of the treaty.

9.1-22: **The defeat and death of Judas.** 1: As before (7.8-10), the king sent an army too large for Judas to defeat in open battle. 2: *Messaloth in Arbela*: about three miles west of Lake Gennesaret. 4-5: *Berea* is located ten miles north of Jerusalem; *Alasa* is less than a mile away.

battle was joined, and they fought from dawn until evening.

14 When Judas saw that Bacchides and the main strength of his army was on the right flank, all his stout-hearted  
15 men rallied to him, and they broke the Syrian right; then he pursued them as  
16 far as Mount Azotus. When the Syrians on the left wing saw that their right had been broken, they turned about and followed on the heels of Judas and his men, attacking them in the  
17 rear. The fighting became very heavy,  
18 and many fell on both sides. Judas himself fell, and the rest of the Jews  
19 took to flight. Jonathan and Simon carried off Judas their brother; they buried him in the family tomb at  
20 Modin, and wept over him. Great was the grief in Israel, and they mourned for many days, saying,

21 'How is our champion fallen,  
the saviour of Israel!'

22 The rest of the history of Judas, his wars, exploits, and achievements—all these were so numerous that they have not been written down.

23 AFTER THE DEATH OF JUDAS THE renegades raised their heads in every part of Israel, and all the evil-doers  
24 reappeared. In those days a terrible famine broke out, and the country went  
25 over to their side. Bacchides chose apostates to be in control of the country.  
26 These men set inquiries on foot, and tracked down the friends of Judas and brought them before Bacchides, who

took vengeance on them, loading them with indignities. It was a time of  
27 great affliction for Israel, worse than any since the day when prophets ceased to appear among them. Then all the  
28 friends of Judas assembled and said to Jonathan: 'Since your brother Judas  
29 died, there has not been a man like him to take the lead against our enemies, Bacchides and those of our own nation who are hostile to us. Today,  
30 therefore, we choose you to succeed him as our ruler and leader and to fight our battles.' So Jonathan took over the  
31 leadership at that time in place of his brother Judas.

The news reached Bacchides, and he  
32 set himself to kill Jonathan. When  
33 Jonathan and his brother Simon and all their men learnt of this, they took refuge in the desert of Tekoa, encamping by the pool of Asphar. Bacchides discovered this on the sabbath,  
34 and crossed the Jordan with his whole army. So Jonathan sent his brother  
35 John to take the camp followers and appeal to his friends the Nabataeans to look after their baggage train, which was of some size. But the Jambrites  
36 appeared from Medaba and kidnapped John; they seized the baggage and made off with it. Some time afterwards, news  
37 was brought to Jonathan and his brother Simon that the Jambrites were celebrating an important wedding, and bringing the bride, the daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan, from Nadabath with a large retinue. Remembering how their brother John  
38 had been killed, Jonathan and his men

15: *Mount Azotus* is a scribal error for Mount Hazor, some six miles from Berea; see 2 Sam. 13.23; Neh. 11.33. 19: Later, Simon turned *the family tomb at Modin* into a monument; see 13.25–30. 22: This verse echoes the stock phrase used of the kings (1 Kgs. 11.41).

9.23–73: **Jonathan continues the struggle.** Jonathan improves the Jewish position through political and military activity and fortifies Judea.

9.23–31: **Jonathan replaces Judas.** Passing over Simon, the elder brother, for reasons unknown to us, the Jews chose Jonathan to lead them. 24: Since the king's men controlled food supplies, the *famine* brought about desertions to their side. 27: Malachi is the last of the universally recognized *prophets* in the Bible (about 500–450 B.C.), but scholars discern the presence of later prophetic material in other books, as in Zech. chs. 9–14, which speak of the Greeks and describe conditions during the Greek period of the fourth and third centuries B.C. The author also notes the lack of a prophet in 4.46; 14.41.

9.32–49: **Jonathan escapes Bacchides.** 33: The mountainous and deserted region about *Tekoa* enabled Jonathan to evade pursuit and to assemble his forces. 34: This verse is a misplaced repetition of the substance of v. 43. 35: *Nabataeans*: see 5.25 n. 36: The *Jambrites*, probably an Arab tribe, were based at *Medaba*, a city some fifteen miles southeast of the Jordan's entrance into the Dead Sea. They not only *kidnapped John*, they killed him (vv. 38,42). 37: The Greek translator misread the original Heb. *kenaani*, "trader," as the ancient name for the Holy Land, Canaan. This was a great merchant's daughter. *Nadabath* (= Nabatha =

39 set out and hid themselves under cover of a hill. They looked out and there they saw the bridegroom, in the middle of a bustling crowd and a train of baggage, coming to meet the bridal party, escorted by his friends and kinsmen fully armed, to the sound of drums and instruments of music.  
40 Emerging from ambush, Jonathan attacked and cut them down; many fell, while others made off into the hills and the Jews took all their goods as  
41 spoil. So the wedding was turned into mourning, and the sound of music to  
42 lamentation. The blood of their brother was fully avenged, and Jonathan returned to the marshes of Jordan.

43 Bacchides heard this and came to the banks of Jordan on the sabbath  
44 with a powerful force. Jonathan said to his men: 'Now is the time to fight for our lives; we are today in worse  
45 plight than ever: the enemy in front, the water of Jordan behind, to right and left marsh and thicket; there is  
46 no escape. Cry to Heaven to save you from the hands of the enemy.' Battle  
47 was joined, and Jonathan had raised his hand to strike down Bacchides, when he fell back and evaded him.  
48 Then Jonathan and his men leapt into the Jordan and swam over to the other side; but the enemy did not cross the  
49 river in pursuit. The army of Bacchides lost about a thousand men that day.

50 Bacchides returned to Jerusalem and fortified with high walls, gates, and bars a number of places in Judaea: the fortress at Jericho, Emmaus and Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnath-pharathon, and Tephon; in all of these he

placed garrisons to harass Israel. He 52 fortified the towns of Bethsura and Gazara and the citadel, placing forces and stores of provisions there. He took 53 the sons of the leading men of the country as hostages and put them under guard in the citadel at Jerusalem.

In the second month of the year 54 153,<sup>t</sup> Alcimus gave orders for the wall of the inner court of the temple to be demolished, thereby destroying the work of the prophets. But at the 55 moment when he began demolition, Alcimus had a stroke, which put a stop to his activities. Paralysed and with his speech impaired, he could not utter a word or give final instructions about his property. Thus he died in 56 great torment. On learning that Alcimus was dead, Bacchides returned 57 to the king, and for two years Judaea had peace.

Then the renegades put their heads 58 together: 'Look!' they said, 'Jonathan and his people are living in peace and security. Let us bring Bacchides here; he will capture them all in a single 59 night.' They went and conferred with Bacchides, and he set out with a large 60 force, sending letters secretly to all his supporters in Judaea, with instructions to seize Jonathan and his men. But they were unable to do so, because their plan leaked out. About 61 fifty of the ringleaders of this villainy in Judaea were seized and put to death. Jonathan, Simon, and their men then 62 made their way out to Bethbasi in the desert, built up its ruined fortifications, and strengthened it. When Bacchides 63

<sup>t</sup> That is 159 B.C.

Nebo) was a little town on Mount Nebo not far from Medaba. 42: *Blood* vengeance was considered a duty by ancient Semitic peoples. In desert regions, it was a deterrent to the type of crime committed against John. 43: *Bacchides* thought ambush on the sabbath would add to the surprise. 44-48: When the trap was sprung, in one of the many loops of the Jordan where it enters the Dead Sea, Jonathan had to abandon his spoils and save his men. Bacchides blocked his way; Jambrites probably pursued. Fighting his way through, Jonathan crossed to the west bank and the safety of his camp. Bacchides did not follow, perhaps pausing to pick up the spoils. 49: A *thousand* casualties, the report of the partisan, seems exaggerated.

9.50-53: *Bacchides fortifies Judea*. Bacchides assured Seleucid control of Judea by fortifying strategic sites. *Timnath-pharathon*, and *Tephon* were in Samaria and governed the northern approaches to Judea. The *hostages* guaranteed the cooperation of their fathers.

9.54-57: *Alcimus dies*. The author views the death of *Alcimus* as punishment for his ordering the destruction of the *wall* separating the *inner court*, to which the Israelites had access, from the outer court, where Gentiles were permitted. 54: The *prophets* whose work Alcimus destroyed were Haggai and Zechariah, who had brought about reconstruction of the Temple (520-516 B.C.), after the Babylonian Exile. 57: *Judaea had peace*, because Bacchides had effectively curbed Jewish resistance for a time.

9.58-73: *Jonathan escapes and defeats Bacchides*. 62: *Bethbasi* lay between Bethlehem and

learnt of this, he gathered together all his army and sent word to those in 64 Judaea. He came and took up position against Bethbasi, and attacked it for a 65 long time, erecting siege-engines. Jonathan left his brother Simon in the town and slipped out into the country 66 with a few men. He attacked Odomera and his people and the Phasirites in 67 their encampment; he began to get the better of them and to advance towards Bethbasi with his forces.

Simon and his men made a sally out of the town and set fire to the siege-engines. They fought Bacchides and 68 defeated him. They kept up heavy pressure upon him, and so his plan and his expedition proved fruitless. 69 There was great anger against the renegades at whose instance he had invaded the land, and many of them were put to death. Bacchides then decided to return to his own country. 70 When Jonathan learnt of this, he sent envoys to Bacchides to arrange terms of peace with him and a return of the 71 Jewish prisoners. Bacchides agreed and did as Jonathan proposed, swearing to do him no harm for the rest of his 72 life. He sent him back the prisoners he had taken previously from Judaea, and returned to his own country; never 73 again did he enter their territory. So the war came to an end in Israel. Jonathan took up residence in Michmash and began to govern the people, rooting the godless out of Israel.

#### *Jonathan rules the nation*

10 IN THE YEAR 160,<sup>u</sup> ALEXANDER EPIPHANES son of Antiochus came and took

possession of Ptolemais, where he was 2 welcomed and proclaimed king. When King Demetrius heard of this, he 3 raised a huge army and marched out to meet him in battle. At the same 4 time Demetrius sent Jonathan a letter in friendly and flattering terms; for he 5 said to himself, 'Let us forestall Alexander by making peace with the Jews before Jonathan comes to terms with 6 him against us, for he will remember all the harm we have done him by our 7 treatment of his brothers and of his nation.' He gave Jonathan authority to 8 collect and equip an army, conferred on him the title of ally, and ordered the hostages in the citadel to be handed 9 over to him. Jonathan came to Jerusalem and read the letter aloud before 10 all the people and the garrison of the citadel, who were filled with apprehension 11 when they heard that the king had given Jonathan authority to raise 12 an army. They surrendered the hostages 13 to him, and he restored them to their parents.

Jonathan took up his quarters in 10 Jerusalem and began to repair and rebuild the city. He gave orders to 11 those engaged on the work to build the walls and surround Mount Zion with a fortification of squared stones, 12 and this was done. The foreigners in the strongholds which Bacchides had built 13 made their escape, each man leaving his post and returning to his own country; 14 however, in Bethsura there were still left some of those who had abandoned the law and ordinances, and had found asylum there.

King Alexander heard of the promises which Demetrius had sent to

<sup>u</sup> That is 152 B.C.

Tekoa, about three miles north and slightly east of the latter. 66: *Odomera and the Phasirites* were presumably allies of Bacchides whom Jonathan surprised at night before they could join the siege at Bethbasi. 68–69: Conditions elsewhere in the empire must have brought about the recall of Bacchides and forced him to make a treaty with the unruly Jonathan. See, similarly, 6.55–61. 70: *The return of the Jewish prisoners* did not include the hostages in the citadel (9.53; 10.6). 73: From *Michmash*, eight miles northeast of Jerusalem, the emboldened Jonathan continued the purge of his enemies.

10.1–12.53: Jonathan is appointed high priest and wields both political and religious authority. Demetrius makes overtures.

10.1–21: Jonathan is courted by rival kings. 1: *Alexander Balas* (150–145 B.C.) also called *Epiphanes* (because he claimed Antiochus IV was his father) took possession of Ptolemais by treason, according to Josephus (*Ant.* XIII.2.1). 2: Alexander lost this first battle. 6–14: Jonathan took full advantage of Demetrius' situation and promises, even though he was going over to Alexander. 9: *The hostages*: see 9.50–53 n. 10: *Rebuild the city*: see 1.31; 4.60. 12: *The foreigners* may have gone to help Demetrius. 14: *Bethsura*, Gazara (11.41; 13.43) and the citadel at



Jonathan, and was told of the battles and heroic deeds of Jonathan and his brothers, and the hardships they had endured. 'Where shall we ever find another man like this?' he exclaimed. 'Let us make him our friend and ally.' He therefore wrote a letter to Jonathan to this effect:

King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greeting.

We have heard about you, what a valiant man you are and how fit to be our friend. Now therefore we do appoint you this day to be High Priest of your nation with the title of King's Friend, to support our cause and to keep friendship with us.

He sent him a purple robe and a gold crown.

Jonathan assumed the vestments of the high priest in the seventh month of the year 160<sup>v</sup> at the Feast of Tabernacles, and he gathered an army together and prepared a large supply of arms.

When this news reached Demetrius he was mortified. 'How did we come to let Alexander forestall us', he asked, 'in gaining the friendship and support of the Jews? I too will send them cordial messages and offer honours and gifts to keep them on my side.' So he sent a message to the Jews to this effect:

King Demetrius to the Jewish nation, greeting.

We have heard with great pleasure that you have kept your agreements and remained in friendship with us and have not gone over to our enemies. Continue, then, to keep faith with us, and we shall reward you well for all that you do in our cause, both by granting you numerous

exemptions and making you gifts.

I hereby release and exempt you and all Jews whatsoever from tribute, from the tax on salt, and from the crown-money. From today and hereafter I release you from the one-third of the grain-harvest and the half of the fruit-harvest due to me. From today and for all time, I will no longer exact them from Judaea or from the three administrative districts, formerly part of Samaria and Galilee, which I now attach to Judaea. Jerusalem and its environs, with its tithes and tolls, shall be sacred and tax free. I also surrender authority over the citadel in Jerusalem and grant the High Priest the right to garrison it with men of his own choice. All Jewish prisoners of war taken from Judaea into any part of my kingdom, I set at liberty without ransom. No man shall exact any levy whatsoever on the cattle of the Jews. All their festivals, sabbaths, new moons, and appointed days, and three days preceding and following each festival, shall be days of exemption and release for all the Jews in my kingdom; no one shall have authority to impose any exaction or burden on a Jew in any respect.

Jews shall be enlisted in the forces of the King to the number of thirty thousand men; they shall receive the usual army pay. Some of them shall be stationed in the great royal fortresses, others put in positions of trust in the kingdom. Their commanders and officers shall be of their own race, and they shall follow their own customs, just as the King has ordered for Judaea.

The three districts added to Judaea from the territory of Samaria shall be attached to Judaea so as to be

<sup>v</sup> That is 152 B.C.

Jerusalem (*Ant.* XIII.21.1) received the renegade Jews. 20: Jonathan already belonged to a priestly family (2.1). The purple robe and gold crown symbolized the high priesthood. The purple robe also identified Jonathan as a *King's Friend* (see 2.18 n.). 21: For the *Feast of Tabernacles*, see Lev.23.33-36. By officiating, Jonathan implicitly declared himself for Alexander.

10.22-50: Demetrius appeals to the Jewish nation as a whole. 30: The three . . . districts (11.34) are Apherema (= Ephraim; Jn.11.54), Lydda, and Ramathaim (= Aramathea, Mk.15.43). 31: Being sacred, Jerusalem could pay its taxes to God (via the Temple) instead of to the king. 32: Demetrius recognized the status of *High Priest* conferred on Jonathan by Alexander! 36: Jewish soldiers would be paid as *usual*, but at the king's expense and not, as

under one authority, and subject to the High Priest alone.

39 Ptolemais and the lands belonging to it I make over to the temple in  
 40 Jerusalem, to meet the expenses proper to it. I give fifteen thousand silver shekels annually, charged on my own royal accounts, to be drawn from such places as may prove convenient.  
 41 And the arrears of the subsidy, in so far as it has not been paid by the revenue officials, as it formerly was, shall henceforth be paid in for the needs of the temple. In addition, the five thousand silver shekels which used to be taken from the annual income of the temple are also released, because they belong to the ministering priests. Whoever shall take sanctuary in the temple of Jerusalem, or in any part of its precincts, because of a debt to the crown or any other debt, shall be free from distraint on his person or on his property within my kingdom.  
 44 The cost of the rebuilding and repair of the temple shall be borne by the royal revenue; also the repair of the walls of Jerusalem and its surrounding fortification, as well as of the fortresses in Judaea, shall be at the expense of the royal revenue.

46 When Jonathan and the people heard these proposals, they did not believe or accept them, for they recalled the terrible calamity the king had brought upon Israel, and his harsh oppression. They favoured Alexander, because it was he who had been the initiator of peaceful overtures; so they remained his allies to the end.

48 King Alexander mustered powerful forces and took up position against Demetrius, and the two kings joined battle. The army of Alexander took to flight, and Demetrius pursued him and got the better of them. He fought hard till sunset, but on that day Demetrius fell.

51 Thereupon Alexander sent ambassadors to Ptolemy king of Egypt,

with a message to this effect: 'I have returned to my kingdom and sit on the throne of my ancestors. I have assumed the government, defeated Demetrius, and made myself master of our country; for I gave him battle, and he and his army were crushed by us, and we sit on the throne of his kingdom. Let us now form an alliance; make me your son-in-law by giving me your daughter in marriage, and I will give presents to you and her worthy of your royal state.'

King Ptolemy replied: 'It was a happy day when you returned to the land of your ancestors and ascended the throne of their realm. I will now do as you ask; only come to Ptolemais so that we may meet, and I will become your father-in-law as you propose.'

In the year 162,<sup>w</sup> Ptolemy set out from Egypt, with his daughter Cleopatra, and arrived at Ptolemais, where King Alexander met him, and Ptolemy gave him his daughter in marriage. The wedding was celebrated in royal style, with great pomp.

King Alexander wrote to Jonathan to come and meet him. Jonathan went in state to Ptolemais, where he met the two kings; he gave them silver and gold, and also made many gifts to their Friends; and so he won their favour.

There were some scoundrelly Jewish renegades who conspired to lodge complaints against Jonathan. The king, however, paid no attention to them, but gave orders for Jonathan to be divested of the garment he wore and robed in purple, and this was done. The king made him sit at his side, and told his officers to go with Jonathan into the centre of the city and proclaim that no one should bring any complaint against him or make trouble for him for any reason whatsoever. When this proclamation was made and those who planned to lodge complaints saw Jonathan's splendour, and the purple robe he wore, they all made off. Thus the king honoured him, enrolling him in the first class of the order of King's

<sup>w</sup> That is 150 B.C.

was customary, at Judea's. 39: Demetrius gave away *Ptolemais*, which Alexander held (10.1).

10.51-66: Jonathan at Alexander's wedding. Alexander married Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 B.C.). 65: *First . . . King's Friends*: see 2.18 n. *Governor*: presumably of Judea.

66 Friends, and making him a general and a provincial governor. Jonathan returned to Jerusalem well pleased with his success.

67 IN THE YEAR 165,<sup>x</sup> DEMETRIUS, THE SON of King Demetrius, arrived in the land of his fathers from Crete. King Alexander was greatly upset by this news, and returned to Antioch. Demetrius appointed as his commander Apollonius the governor of Coele-syria, who raised a powerful force and encamped at Jamnia. From there he sent this message to Jonathan the high priest:

70 'You are all alone in resisting us, and you are making me look ridiculous and absurd. Why do you defy us up there in the hills? If you have confidence in your forces, come down to meet us on the plain, and let us try conclusions with each other there, for I have the power of cities behind me.

72 Make inquiries; find out who I am and who are our allies; you will be told that you cannot stand your ground against us, for your predecessors have twice

73 been routed in their own territory, and now you will not be able to resist my cavalry, and such a force as mine, on the plain, where there is not so much as a stone or a pebble to give you cover, or any place to which you can escape.'

74 Jonathan was provoked by this message from Apollonius. He took ten thousand men and marched out from Jerusalem, and was joined by his brother Simon with reinforcements.

75 He laid siege to Joppa, whose gates the citizens had closed against him because

76 Apollonius had a garrison there. But when fighting started, the citizens took fright and opened the gates; thus Jonathan became master of Joppa. When

77 Apollonius heard of it he took three thousand cavalry and a large force of infantry, and marched to Azotus as if to pass through it, but at the same time,

relying on his numerous cavalry, he advanced into the plain. Jonathan went in pursuit as far as Azotus, where the armies joined battle. But Apollonius had left a thousand cavalry in hiding in their rear, and Jonathan discovered that there was an ambush behind him. The enemy surrounded his army, showering arrows on our people from dawn till dusk. But they stood fast as Jonathan had ordered them, and the enemy cavalry grew weary. At that point Simon led out his troops and joined battle with the enemy phalanx, now that the cavalry was exhausted. They were routed by him and took to flight.

The horsemen scattered across the plain and took refuge in Azotus, where they sought asylum in the temple of Dagon their idol. But Jonathan set fire to Azotus and its surrounding villages, and plundered them; the temple of Dagon, and those who had taken refuge there, he destroyed with fire. The numbers of those who fell by the sword, together with those who lost their lives in the fire, reached eight thousand. Jonathan marched away from Azotus, and encamped at Ascalon, where the citizens came out to meet him with great pomp. Then he and his men returned to Jerusalem loaded with spoil.

When King Alexander heard of all this, he did Jonathan still greater honour, sending him the gold clasp which it is the custom to give to the King's Kinsmen. He also presented him with Accaron and all its districts.

The king of Egypt collected a huge army, countless as the sand on the sea-shore, and a great fleet of ships, meaning to make himself master of Alexander's kingdom by treachery and add it to his own. He set out for Syria with professions of peace, and the people of the towns proceeded to open their gates to him and went to meet

*x That is 147 B.C.*

10.67-89: Jonathan defeats Apollonius. *Demetrius II* (145-139 and 129-125 B.C.), son of *Demetrius I* (161-150 B.C.), arrived in Cilicia to claim the Seleucid throne. 69: This *Apollonius* had helped *Demetrius I* to escape from Rome. 71-73: On the plains, the Jews often proved to be no match for the superior armaments—chariots, cavalry, elephants—of their enemies. 74-76: Jonathan's capture of *Joppa* cut *Apollonius'* line of communications. 77-87: Pretending to retreat even further southward, *Apollonius* lured Jonathan into the plain. Trapped, Jonathan won anyway, with the help of Simon's fresh reserves. 89: *The gold clasp* signifying Jonathan's new promotion fastened the recipient's purple cloak at the shoulder.

11.1-19: *Alexander and Ptolemy fall out*. 3: The garrisons indicate *Ptolemy's* treacherous

him; King Alexander had ordered them to do this, because Ptolemy was his father-in-law.

3 As he went on his progress from town to town, Ptolemy left a detachment of troops in each of them as a  
4 garrison. When he reached Azotus, he was shown the burnt-out temple of Dagon, the city itself and its ruined suburbs strewn with corpses, and, piled up along his way, the bodies of those who had been burned in the course  
5 of the fighting. They told the king that it was Jonathan's doing, hoping that he would reprimand him; but the king  
6 said nothing. Jonathan met him in state at Joppa, where they exchanged greet-  
7 ings and passed the night. Jonathan accompanied the king as far as the river Eleutherus and then returned to  
8 Jerusalem. King Ptolemy made himself master of the coast towns as far as Seleucia-by-the-sea. He was harbouring malicious designs against Alexander.

9 He sent ambassadors to King Demetrius with the following message: 'I propose that you and I should make a pact: I will give you my daughter, now Alexander's wife, and you shall reign  
10 over the kingdom of your father. I now regret having given my daughter to him, for he has tried to kill me.'

11 He maligned Alexander in this way because he coveted his kingdom, and he took his daughter away and gave her to Demetrius. This led to a breach between him and Alexander, and to open enmity.

13 Ptolemy now entered Antioch, where he assumed the crown of Asia; thus he wore two crowns, that of Egypt and that of Asia.

14 King Alexander was at this time in Cilicia, because the inhabitants of that region were in revolt. But when he heard the news he marched against Ptolemy, who came to meet him with a powerful  
15 army and routed him. Alexander fled to Arabia for protection, and King

Ptolemy was triumphant. Zabdiel the  
17 Arab chieftain cut off Alexander's head and sent it to Ptolemy. But two  
18 days later King Ptolemy died, and his garrisons in the fortresses were killed by the inhabitants. So in the year 167<sup>y</sup>  
19 Demetrius became king.

At this time Jonathan gathered  
20 together the Judaeans to assault the citadel in Jerusalem, and they brought up many siege-engines against it. But  
21 a number of renegades, enemies of their own people, went to the king and reported that Jonathan was besieging the citadel. The king was furious at the  
22 news and immediately moved his quarters to Ptolemais. He wrote to Jonathan ordering him to raise the siege, and to meet him for conference at Ptolemais with all speed.

When Jonathan received this letter,  
23 he gave orders for the siege to be continued. Then, selecting elders of Israel and priests to accompany him, he set out on his dangerous mission. He took with him silver and gold,  
24 and robes, and many other gifts, and went to meet the king at Ptolemais.

He won the favour of Demetrius, although some renegade Jews tried to lodge  
25 complaints against him. But the king treated him just as his predecessors had done, honouring him in the presence of  
26 all his Friends. He confirmed him in the high-priesthood and in all his former  
27 dignities, and appointed him head of the first class of the King's Friends.

Jonathan requested the king to  
28 exempt Judaea and the three Samaritan districts<sup>z</sup> from tribute, promising him in return three hundred talents. King  
29 Demetrius consented, writing to Jonathan on all these affairs as follows:

King Demetrius to his brother  
Jonathan, and to the Jewish nation,  
greeting.

<sup>y</sup> That is 145 B.C.  
<sup>z</sup> three . . . districts: probable reading; Gk. three districts and Samaria.

intent. 6-7: Apparently, Ptolemy deceived Jonathan. The *Eleutherus* river is the Nahr el-Kebir, nineteen miles north of Tripolis. 13: Ptolemy did not want all of Asia (i.e. the Seleucid empire; see 8.6) but only Palestine. He left the rest for Demetrius. 18: Ptolemy died of wounds received in battle with Alexander at the Oenoparas river near Antioch. 19: The sixteen-year-old Demetrius now began to call himself Nicator, "Conquerer," because of his success over Alexander.

11.20-53: Jonathan serves Demetrius. 20-27: Jonathan wins over the new king as he had Alexander (10.59-66). 30: Jonathan was brother or kinsman to Demetrius as he had once been

31 This is a copy of our letter written to our kinsman Lasthenes about you, which we have had made for your information:

32 'King Demetrius to his respected kinsman Lasthenes, greeting.

33 'Because our friends the Jewish nation show us goodwill, and observe their obligations to us, we are resolved to become their benefactor. We have therefore settled on them the lands of Judaea and the three districts, Apherema, Lydda, and Ramathaim, which are now transferred from Samaria to Judaea, together with all the lands adjacent thereto, for the benefit of the priesthood at Jerusalem. This is a transfer of the annual dues which the King formerly received from these territories, from the produce of the soil and of the orchards. Other of our revenues, the tithes and tolls now pertaining to us, the salt-pans, and the crown-money, all these we shall cede to them. These provisions are irrevocable from now for all future time. See to it then that you make a copy of them to be given to Jonathan and set by him in a conspicuous position on the holy mountain.'

38 When King Demetrius saw that the country was quiet under his rule and resistance was at an end, he disbanded all his forces, sending every man home, with the exception of the foreign mercenaries he had hired from the islands of the Gentiles. Then all the troops enlisted under his predecessors turned against the king. A certain Trypho, formerly of the party of Alexander, aware of the disaffection of all the forces towards Demetrius, went to Imalcue, the Arab chieftain, who had charge of the child Antiochus, Alex-

ander's son, and kept pressing him to hand the boy over to him to be made king in succession to his father. He also informed Imalcue of all the measures Demetrius was taking and of his unpopularity with his troops. There he remained for some time.

Meanwhile Jonathan sent to King Demetrius requesting him to withdraw from the citadel in Jerusalem and from the fortresses, the garrisons which were constantly harassing Israel. Demetrius sent Jonathan this reply: 'I will not only meet your request, but when opportunity arises I will do you and your people the highest honour. And now be so good as to send men to support me, for all my troops are in revolt.'

Jonathan dispatched three thousand fighting men to Antioch, and the king was much relieved at their arrival. The citizens poured into the centre of the city, a hundred and twenty thousand strong, bent on killing the king. He took refuge in the palace, while the citizens seized control of the streets and fighting broke out. King Demetrius called the Jews to his assistance, and they rallied to him at once. They then dispersed all over the city and slaughtered that day as many as a hundred thousand, setting the city on fire and taking much booty. And thus they saved the king's life.

When the citizens saw that the Jews had the city completely at their mercy, their courage failed them and they clamoured to the king to accept their surrender and to stop the Jews fighting against them and the city. They threw down their arms and made peace; and the Jews, now in high repute with the king and all his subjects, returned to Jerusalem loaded with booty. But when King Demetrius was secure upon his throne, with the country quiet under him, he went back on all his promises

to Alexander (10.89). 31: *Lasthenes* was leader of the Cretan mercenaries (10.67) and chief minister to the king. 32-37: Many of the privileges promised by Demetrius I (10.25-45) were confirmed by his son, but nothing is said of the citadel. Demetrius also confirmed Jonathan in the dignities conferred by Alexander (10.20,65). 38: The *King* kept his Cretan *mercenaries* (see 10.67), but he dismissed his regular army without its normal peacetime pay. 39: Diodotus *Trypho* changed sides frequently, having served Demetrius I, Alexander, Ptolemy, Demetrius II, and now Antiochus. 41: Demetrius I had not kept his promise (10.32) to give *the citadel* to the high priest. The other *garrisons* are Bethsura (10.14) and Gazara (13.43). 43: Trypho had sparked a *revolt*. 44-50: Actually, the Cretan mercenaries put down the revolt, according to the ancient historians Diodorus and Josephus, but Jewish aid turned the tide in the king's favor. 53: *Severe pressure*: the demand for tribute (according to Josephus, *Ant.* XIII.5.3).

and broke off relations with Jonathan; instead of repaying the benefits he had received, he put severe pressure upon him.

54 After this, Trypho returned, and with him Antiochus, a mere lad.  
55 Antiochus was crowned, and all the forces Demetrius had so contemptuously discharged rallied to the king. These fought against Demetrius, and  
56 he was utterly routed. Trypho brought up his elephants and made himself  
57 master of Antioch. The young Antiochus wrote to Jonathan confirming him in the high-priesthood, with authority over the four districts, and making him  
58 one of the King's Friends. He also sent him a service of gold plate, and gave him the right to drink from a gold cup, to be robed in purple, and to wear the gold clasp. He appointed Jonathan's brother Simon as officer commanding the area from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt.  
60 Jonathan made a tour through the country on the far side of the river and the towns there; and all the forces of Syria gathered to his support.

He went to Ascalon, where he was received with great honour by the citizens. From there he went on to Gaza, but the inhabitants closed the gates against him; so he blockaded the city, set fire to its suburbs, and plundered  
62 them. The citizens of Gaza then sought peace, and he made terms with them, taking the sons of their magistrates as hostages and sending them off to Jerusalem; he himself continued his progress through the country in the direction of Damascus.

63 Jonathan heard that Demetrius's officers had arrived at Kedesh-in-Galilee with a large force to prevent  
64 him from reaching his objective. He went to meet them, leaving his brother  
65 Simon in Judaea. Simon took up position against Bethsura and, after

prolonged fighting, blockaded it. Finally the citizens sued for terms of peace and Simon consented; he evicted them, took over the town, and installed a garrison there.

Jonathan, who had encamped with his army by the Lake of Gennesaret, marched out early in the morning into the plain of Asor. There in the plain the gentile army was advancing to meet him; they had set an ambush for him in the hills, while they themselves confronted him. When the men from the ambush emerged and joined in the fighting, all Jonathan's men took to flight; not one remained except Mattathias son of Absalom, and Judas son of Chalphi, officers in the army. Jonathan tore his clothes, put dust upon his head, and prayed. Then he turned upon the enemy and routed them in headlong flight. When the fugitives of Jonathan's army saw this, they rallied to him and joined in the pursuit as far as the enemy base at Kedesh; there they encamped. That day about three thousand of the Gentiles fell. Jonathan then returned to Jerusalem.

JONATHAN NOW SAW HIS OPPORTUNITY and sent picked men on a mission to Rome to confirm and renew the treaty of friendship with that city. He sent letters to the same effect to Sparta and to other places. The envoys travelled to Rome and went to the Senate House to deliver their message: 'Jonathan the High Priest and the Jewish people have sent us to renew their former pact of friendship and alliance.' The Romans gave them letters requiring the authorities in each place to give them safe conduct to Judaea.

Here follows a transcript of the letter which Jonathan wrote to the Spartans:

Jonathan the High Priest, the Senate of the Jews, the priests, and

11.54-74: Jonathan goes over to Antiochus. 54: Antiochus VI Epiphanes Dionysius was a mere lad dominated by his minister Trypho. 57: The four districts probably included those of 10.30 n., 38; 11.34. 59: The Ladder of Tyre, a series of mountainous ascents, lies north of Ptolemais. 61: Gaza and other coastal cities were still in Demetrius' control. 63: Kedesh was only twenty-two miles southeast of Tyre. 67: The plain of Asor (Hazor) is just west of the Jordan above the Sea of Galilee. 68: Demetrius' generals Sarpedon and Palamedes set the ambush. 70: Josephus says about fifty remained with Mattathias and Judas (Ant. XIII.5.7). 71: Tore his clothes . . . dust: signs of distress.

12.1-23: The treaties with Sparta and Rome. 2: The defeat of the Achaean League by the

the rest of the Jewish people, to our brothers of Sparta, greeting.

7 On a previous occasion a letter was sent to Onias the High Priest from Arius your king, acknowledging our kinship; a copy is given below.

8 Onias welcomed your envoy with full honours and received the letter in which the terms of the alliance and friendship were set forth. We do not regard ourselves as needing such alliances, since our support is the holy books in our possession. Nevertheless, we now venture to send and renew our pact of brotherhood and friendship with you, so that we may not become estranged, for it is many years since you wrote to us. We never lose any opportunity, on festal and other appropriate days, of remembering you at our sacrifices and in our prayers, as it is right and proper to remember kinsmen; and we rejoice at your fame. We ourselves have been under the pressure of hostile attacks on every side; all the surrounding kings have made war upon us. In the course of these wars we had no wish to trouble you or the rest of our allies and friends: we have the aid of Heaven to support us, and so we have been saved from our enemies, and they have been humbled. Accordingly, we chose Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, and have sent them to the Romans to renew our former friendship and alliance with them.

17 We instructed them to go to you also with our greetings, and to deliver this letter about the renewal of our pact of brotherhood. And now we pray you to send us a reply to this letter.

19 This is a copy of the letter sent by the Spartans to Onias:

20 Arius, King of Sparta, to Onias the High Priest, greeting.

A document has come to light which shows that Spartans and Jews are kinsmen, descended alike from Abraham. Now that we have learnt this, we beg you to write and tell us how your affairs prosper. The message we return to you is, 'What is yours, your cattle and every kind of property, is ours, and what is ours is yours', and we have therefore instructed our envoys to report to you in these terms.

Jonathan heard that Demetrius's generals had returned to attack him with larger forces than before. He marched from Jerusalem and met them in the region of Hamath, giving them no chance to set foot in his territory. He sent spies to their camp, who on their return reported that preparations were being made for a night attack. At sunset Jonathan gave orders to his men to stay awake and stand to arms all night, ready for battle; and he stationed outposts all round the camp. When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his men were ready for battle, they were alarmed; their courage failed, and they withdrew, first lighting watch-fires in their camp. Jonathan and his men, seeing the watch-fires burning, did not realize what had happened until morning. Then Jonathan set out in pursuit, but failed to overtake them, for they had crossed the river Eleutherus. So Jonathan turned aside against the Arabs called Zabadaeans, and he dealt them a severe blow and plundered them. He struck camp and came to Damascus, and then made a march through the whole country.

Simon set out and marched as far as Ascalon and the neighbouring fortresses. He then turned towards Joppa; he had heard that the citizens intended to hand it over to the supporters of Demetrius, but before they could do so, he occupied the town and placed a garrison there to defend it.

Romans in 146 B.C. brought *Sparta* to new prominence in Greece. 6: The *Senate (gerousia)* was the forerunner of the Sanhedrin. 7: *Onias I* (about 300 B.C.) received the letter of *Arius I* (309–265 B.C.). 10: A *pact of brotherhood* in the ancient world often resulted in the diplomatic fiction of a common ancestry (see v. 21). 16: Possibly the *Jason* of 8.17.

12.24–38: Further military activity. 25: *The region* of the "entrance to *Hamath*" lay between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges. 30: *Eleutherus*: see 11.6–7 n. 36: The defenses razed

35 When Jonathan returned he convened the senate. With their agreement he decided to build fortresses in  
36 Judaea, to heighten the walls of Jerusalem, and to erect a high barrier to separate the citadel from the city and so to isolate it that the garrison could  
37 not buy or sell. They assembled to rebuild the city, for the wall along the ravine to the east had partly collapsed, and he repaired the section of the wall  
38 called Chaphenatha. Simon also rebuilt and fortified Adida in the Shephelah, erecting gates and bars.

39 Trypho now aspired to be king of Asia; he meant to rebel against King Antiochus and assume the crown  
40 himself. But he was afraid that Jonathan would fight to prevent this, so he cast about for some means of capturing and killing him. He set off and reached  
41 Bethshan. Jonathan marched out to meet him with forty thousand picked troops, and he also reached Bethshan.  
42 Trypho, seeing that Jonathan had a large force with him, was afraid to  
43 attack. So he received him honourably and commended him to all his Friends, gave him presents, and ordered his Friends and his troops to obey Jonathan as they would himself.  
44 He said to Jonathan: 'Why have you put all these men to so much trouble,  
45 when we are not at war? Send them home now and choose a few to accompany you, and come with me to Ptolemais. I will hand it over to you with all the other fortresses, the rest of the troops, and all the officials, and then I will leave the country. This is the only  
46 purpose of my coming.' Jonathan took him at his word and did as he said: he dismissed his forces and they returned to Judaea. He kept back three  
47 thousand men, of whom he left two thousand in Galilee, while a thousand

accompanied him. But when Jonathan 48 entered Ptolemais, the citizens closed the gates, seized him, and put to the sword all who had entered with him.

Trypho sent a force of infantry and 49 cavalry into Galilee to the great plain, to wipe out all Jonathan's men. They 50 now learnt that Jonathan had been seized and was lost, along with his escort, but they put heart into one another and marched in close formation, ready for battle. When their pursuers saw that they would fight to the death, they turned back. So all came 52 safely home to Judaea, mourning for Jonathan and his followers, and filled with alarm. All Israel was plunged in grief. The surrounding Gentiles were 53 now bent on destroying them root and branch, saying to themselves, 'The Jews have no leader or champion, so now is the time to attack, and we shall blot out all memory of them among men.'

#### *The high-priesthood of Simon*

THE NEWS REACHED SIMON THAT TRYPHO 13 had mustered a large force for the invasion and destruction of Judaea, and it threw the people into a state of 2 panic. When Simon saw this, he went up to Jerusalem, called an assembly, and encouraged them in these words: 3 'I need not remind you of all that my brothers and I and my father's house have done for the laws and the holy place, what battles we have fought, what hardships we have endured. My 4 brothers have all fallen in this cause, fighting for Israel, and I am the only one left. Now Heaven forbid that I 5 should grudge my own life in any moment of danger, for I am not worth more than my brothers. No! I will take 6

by Antiochus IV (1.31) and Antiochus V (6.62) were only partially rebuilt (10.10). *The citadel* was to be starved out. 37: *Chapfenatha* is thought to have been in the new or "second quarter" of Jerusalem, northwest of the Temple. 38: *Adida*, northeast of Lydda, lay in the *Shephelah*, the foothills east of the coastal plain.

12.39-53: Jonathan is captured by Trypho. 41: Trypho's armed presence must have made Jonathan wary enough to bring troops. 43: *Friends*: see 2.18 n. 49: *The great plain*: Esdraelon. 52: Their mourning was premature; Jonathan died later (13.23).

13.1-16.24: The high-priesthood of Simon. Simon's victories and relatively peaceful reign led the people to make his rule hereditary.

13.1-30: Simon becomes leader and frustrates Trypho. 3: *The holy place*: the Temple. 4: Eventually, all five brothers died violently (6.46; 9.18,36-38; 13.23; 16.16). 11: *The inhabitants*



up the cause of my nation and the holy place, of your wives and children, since all the Gentiles in their hatred have gathered to destroy us.' At these words the people plucked up courage, and they shouted in answer: 'You shall be our leader in place of Judas and your brother Jonathan. Fight our battles, and we will do whatever you tell us.' So Simon mustered all the fighting men and hurried on the completion of the walls of Jerusalem until it was fortified on all sides. He sent Jonathan son of Absalom with a considerable force to Joppa; he expelled its inhabitants and remained in possession of the town.

Trypho marched out from Ptolemais with a large force to invade Judaea, taking Jonathan with him as a prisoner. Simon encamped at Adida on the edge of the plain. When Trypho learnt that Simon had come forward to take the place of his brother Jonathan, and that he was about to join battle with him, he sent envoys to Simon with the following message: 'We are detaining your brother Jonathan because of certain monies which he owed to the royal treasury in connection with the offices he held. To ensure that he will not again revolt if we release him, send one hundred talents of silver and two of his sons as hostages, and we will let him go.' Simon himself realized that this was a trick, but he had the money and the children brought to him, fearing that otherwise he might arouse deep animosity among the people, who would say, 'It was because you did not send the money and the children that Jonathan lost his life.' So he sent the children and the hundred talents, but Trypho broke his word and did not release Jonathan.

After this, Trypho set out to invade the country and ravage it, taking a roundabout way through Adora. Simon and his army marched parallel with him everywhere he went. Meanwhile the

garrison of the citadel were sending emissaries to Trypho, urging him to come to them by way of the desert, and to send them provisions. Trypho prepared to send all his cavalry, but that night there was a severe snow-storm, which prevented their arrival; so he withdrew into Gilead. When he reached Bascama, he had Jonathan put to death, and there he was buried. Trypho then turned and went back to his own country.

Simon had the body of his brother Jonathan brought to Modin, and buried in the town of their fathers; and all Israel made a great lamentation and mourned him for many days. Simon built a high monument over the tomb of his father and his brothers, visible at a great distance, faced back and front with polished stone. He erected seven pyramids, those for his father and mother and his four brothers arranged in pairs. For the pyramids he contrived an elaborate setting: he surrounded them with great columns surmounted with trophies of armour for a perpetual memorial, and between the trophies carved ships, plainly visible to all at sea. This mausoleum which he made at Modin stands to this day.

Trypho now plotted against the young King Antiochus and murdered him. He usurped his throne and assumed the crown of Asia. This was a disaster for the country.

Simon rebuilt the fortresses of Judaea, furnishing them with high towers and great walls with gates and bars; he also provisioned the fortresses. He sent representatives to King Demetrius to negotiate a remission of taxes for the country, on the ground that all Trypho's exactions had been exorbitant. Demetrius replied favourably to this request and wrote him a letter in the following terms:

King Demetrius to Simon the High Priest and friend of kings, and

of Joppa were politically unreliable (12.33-34); see, similarly, 11.66. 16: The (ransom) money was in payment for the alleged debts, and the *hostages* were to assure Jonathan's compliance. 20: Adora (Dura): five miles southwest of Hebron. 21: The *garrison* needed *provisions* because of the siege (12.36). *By way of the desert* may have been via the Transjordan. 23: *Bascama* was located northeast of the Sea of Galilee. "Gilead" in v. 22 is the Greek text's error for "Galilee."

13.31-42: Simon supports Demetrius II again. 31: Actually, Trypho arranged for Antiochus VI's doctors to kill him during an operation in 139 B.C., some four years after he had deposed him. *The crown of Asia* was that of the Seleucid empire (8.6). 36: The letter repeats much of

to the Senate and nation of the Jews, greeting.

37 We have received the golden crown and the palm branch which you sent, and we are ready to make a lasting peace with you and to instruct the revenue officers to grant you immunities. All our agreements with you stand, and the strongholds which you built shall remain yours. 38 We give a free pardon for any errors of omission or commission, to take effect from the date of this letter. We remit the crown-money which you owed us, and every other tax formerly exacted in Jerusalem is henceforth cancelled. All those of 40 you who are suitable for enrolment in our retinue shall be so enrolled. Let there be peace between us.

41 In the year 170,<sup>a</sup> Israel was released 42 from the gentile yoke. The people began to write on their contracts and agreements, 'In the first year of Simon, the great high priest, general and leader of the Jews'.

43 Then Simon invested Gazara,<sup>b</sup> and surrounded it with his forces. He constructed a siege-engine and brought it up to the town, made a breach in 44 one of the towers and captured it. The men on the siege-engine leapt out of it into the town, and there was a great 45 commotion. The townspeople and their wives and children climbed up on to the city wall with their garments torn, clamouring to Simon to offer 46 them terms. 'Do not treat us as our wickedness deserves,' they cried, 'but 47 as your mercy prompts you.' Simon came to terms with them, and brought the war to an end. But he expelled them

from the town, and after purifying the houses in which the idols stood, he made his entry with songs of thanksgiving and praise. He removed every 48 pollution from it and settled men in it who would keep the law. He strengthened its fortifications and built a residence there for himself.

The men in the citadel in Jerusalem 49 were prevented from going in and out to buy and sell in the country; famine set in and many of them died of starvation. They clamoured to Simon to 50 accept their surrender, and he agreed: he expelled them from the citadel and cleansed it from its pollutions. It was 51 on the twenty-third day of the second month in the year 171<sup>c</sup> that he made his entry, with a chorus of praise and the waving of palm branches, with lutes, cymbals, and zithers, with hymns and songs, to celebrate Israel's final riddance of a formidable enemy. Simon decreed that this day should be 52 observed as an annual festival. He fortified the temple hill opposite the citadel, and he and his men took up residence there. When Simon saw that 53 his son John had become a man, he made him commander of all the forces, with Gazara as his headquarters.

In the year 172,<sup>d</sup> King Demetrius 14 mustered his army and went into Media to recruit additional forces for his war against Trypho. When Arsakes 2 king of Persia and Media heard that Demetrius had entered his territories, he sent one of his generals to capture him alive. The general marched out and 3

<sup>a</sup> That is 142 B.C.  
<sup>b</sup> Probable reading; Gk. Gaza.  
<sup>c</sup> That is 141 B.C.  
<sup>d</sup> That is 140 B.C.

11.33–37 (see 10.25–45). 37: *The golden crown and the palm branch* signify homage and allegiance. 39: These *errors* included support of Trypho. Remission of the *crown-money* (tribute), in effect, meant liberation (see v. 41). 40: Demetrius thought well of Jewish soldiers (11.41–51). 42: This *first year* was that of Simon's high priesthood and not the beginning of a new era, as the author thought.

13.43–53: *Simon takes Gazara and the citadel*. While Demetrius and Trypho were occupied with each other, Simon decided to remove the last hostile strongholds in Judea: Gazara (vv. 43–48) and the citadel (vv. 49–53). 44: The *siege-engine* was a tower as high as the city walls. 49: The siege may have lasted three years; see 12.36; 13.21. 50: The *pollutions* were pagan shrines; see 1.54. 51: This *enemy* had plagued Israel for over twenty-five years (1.33–36). 53: *John Hyrcanus* (134–104 B.C.) succeeded Simon as high priest.

14.1–3: *The Parthian capture of Demetrius*. Demetrius II (reigned 145–139 B.C. and 129–125 B.C.) went east to dislodge the Parthian King Mithridates I (also known dynastically as Arsakes VI, 171–138 B.C.) from captured Seleucid territories, as well as to gain troops. Captured by treachery, Demetrius was a Parthian prisoner until released in 129 B.C. He was murdered in 125 B.C.

defeated Demetrius, captured him and brought him to Arsakes, who put him in prison.

- 4 As long as Simon lived, Judaea was at peace. He promoted his people's welfare, and they lived happily all through the glorious days of his reign.
- 5 Among other notable achievements he captured the port of Joppa to secure his communications overseas. He extended his nation's territories and made himself master of the whole land.
- 6 He repatriated a large number of prisoners of war. Without meeting any resistance he gained control over Gazara and Bethsura and over the citadel, and removed their pollution.
- 7 They farmed their land in peace, and the land produced its crops, and the trees in the plains their fruit. Old men sat in the streets, talking together of their blessings; and the young men dressed themselves in splendid military style. Simon supplied the towns with food in plenty and equipped them with weapons for defence. His renown reached the ends of the earth. He restored peace to the land, and there were great rejoicings throughout Israel.
- 8 Each man sat under his own vine and fig-tree, and they had no one to fear.
- 9 Those were days when every enemy vanished from the land and every hostile king was crushed. Simon gave his protection to the poor among the people; he paid close attention to the law and rid the country of lawless and wicked men. He gave new splendour to the temple and furnished it with a wealth of sacred vessels.
- 10 THE REPORT OF JONATHAN'S DEATH reached Rome, and Sparta too, and they were deeply grieved. When they heard, however, that his brother Simon had become high priest in his place,

and was in firm control of the country and the towns in it, they inscribed on bronze tablets a renewal of the treaty of friendship and alliance which they had established with his brothers Judas and Jonathan. This was read before the assembly in Jerusalem. The following is a copy of the letter from Sparta:

The rulers and city of Sparta to the High Priest Simon, to the Senate, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people, our brothers, greeting.

The envoys you sent to our people have told us about your fame and honour; their visit has given us great pleasure. We have entered a transcript of the message they brought in the minutes of the public assembly: 'Numenius son of Antiochus, and Antipater son of Jason, envoys of the Jews, visited us to renew their treaty of friendship with us. It was resolved by the public assembly to receive these men with honour and to place a copy of their address in the public archives, so that the Spartans might have it on permanent record. A copy of this document has been made for Simon the High Priest.'

After this, Simon sent Numenius to Rome with a large gold shield, worth a thousand minas, to confirm the alliance with the Romans.

When the people heard of these events they asked themselves how they could show their gratitude to Simon and his sons. For he, with his brothers and his father's family, had stood firm, fought off the enemies of Israel, and ensured his nation's freedom. So an inscription was engraved on tablets of bronze and placed on a monument on Mount Zion. A copy of the inscription follows:

14.4-15: Simon's achievements. 6: Simon *extended the nation's territories* by the addition of Joppa, Gazara, and Bethsura. Josephus adds Jamnia (*Ant.* XIII.6.7). 7: Simon *repatriated Galilean Jews* (5.23). 8-15: Simon's reign has the *blessings* promised for observance of the Law. See Lev.26.3-4; Zech.3.10; 8.4. 12: That *each man enjoy his own vine and fig-tree* is an ancient expression for universal peace and contentment; see 1 Kgs.4.25; Isa.36.16; Mic.4.4.

14.16-24: *Renewal of alliances with Rome and Sparta*. In antiquity, when leadership changed, treaties were renewable. 17-19: The more important treaty with the Romans is placed first and summarized. 22: These were also Jonathan's envoys (12.16). 24: *After this* visit to Sparta, the envoys continued on to Rome.

14.25-49: *The edict honoring Simon*. The decree honors Simon in the way that Greek cities honored their benefactors. 27: *Tablets of bronze* preserved important documents (8.22 n.);

On the eighteenth day of the month Elul, in the year 172,<sup>e</sup> the third year of Simon's high-priesthood, at Asaramel, in a large assembly of priests, people, rulers of the nation, and elders of the land, the following facts were placed on record. Whereas our land had been subject to frequent wars, Simon son of Mattathias, a priest of the Joarib family, and his brothers, risked their lives in resisting the enemies of their people, in order that the temple and law might be preserved, and they brought great glory to their nation. Jonathan rallied the nation, became their high priest, and then was gathered to his fathers. Their enemies resolved to invade their land and destroy it, and to attack the temple. Then Simon came forward and fought for his nation. He spent large sums of his own money to arm the soldiers of his nation and to provide their pay. He fortified the towns of Judaea, and Bethsura on the boundaries of Judaea, formerly an enemy arsenal, and stationed a garrison of Jews there. He fortified Joppa by the sea, and Gazara near Azotus, formerly occupied by the enemy. There he settled Jews, and provided these towns with everything needful for their welfare. When the people saw Simon's patriotism and his resolution to win fame for his nation, they made him their leader and high priest, in recognition of all that he had done, of his just conduct, his loyalty to his nation, and his constant efforts to enhance its renown. His leadership was crowned with success, and the Gentiles were expelled from the land, as were also the troops in Jerusalem who had built themselves a citadel in the city of David, from which they sallied forth to bring defilement upon the whole precinct of the temple and do violence to its purity. He settled Jews in it and fortified it for the security of

the land and of the city, and he raised the height of the walls of Jerusalem. King Demetrius confirmed him in the office of high priest, made him one of his Friends, and granted him the highest honours; for he had heard that the Romans were naming the Jews friends, allies, and brothers, and had gone in state to meet Simon's envoys.

The Jews and their priests confirmed Simon as their leader and high priest in perpetuity until a true prophet should appear. He was to be their general, and to have full charge of the temple; and in addition to this the supervision of their labour, of the country, and of the arms and fortifications was to be entrusted to him. He was to be obeyed by all; all contracts in the country were to be drawn up in his name. He was to wear the purple robe and the gold clasp.

None of the people or the priests shall have authority to abrogate any of these decrees, to oppose commands issued by Simon or convene any assembly in the land without his consent, to be robed in purple, or to wear the gold clasp. Whoever shall contravene these provisions or neglect any of them shall be liable to punishment. It is the unanimous decision of the people that Simon shall officiate in the ways here laid down. Simon has agreed and consented to be high priest, general and ethnarch of the Jews and the priests, and to be the protector of them all.

This inscription, it was declared, should be engraved on bronze tablets and set up within the precincts of the temple in a conspicuous position, and copies should be placed in the treasury, in the keeping of Simon and his sons.

<sup>e</sup> That is 140 B.C.

14.18). 28: The Heb. phrase for *at Asaramel* means "as prince of the people of God." 32: Simon's payment of soldiers with *his own money* indicated his princely status, since it followed royal custom. 41: The titles of *leader* and *high priest* were now made hereditary in Simon's family. For lack of prophecy see also 4.46; 9.27 n. 49: As successors of Simon, *his sons* received copies of the decree.

15 Antiochus son of King Demetrius sent a letter from overseas to Simon the high priest and ethnarch of the  
2 Jews, and to the whole nation. The contents were as follows:

King Antiochus to Simon, High Priest and Ethnarch, and to the Jewish nation, greeting.

3 Whereas certain traitors have seized my ancestral kingdom, I have now decided to assert my claim to it, so that I may restore it to its former condition. I have raised a large body of mercenaries and fitted out ships of  
4 war. I intend to land in my country and to attack those who have ravaged my kingdom and destroyed many of  
5 its cities. Now therefore I confirm all the tax remissions which my royal predecessors granted you, and all their other remissions of  
6 tribute. I permit you to mint your own coinage as currency for your country. Jerusalem and the temple  
7 shall be free. All the arms you have prepared, and the fortifications which you have built and now hold, shall  
8 remain yours. All debts now owing to the royal treasury and all future liabilities thereto shall be cancelled  
9 from this time on for ever. When we have re-established our kingdom, we shall confer the highest honours upon you, your nation and temple, to make your country's greatness apparent to the whole world.

10 In the year 174,<sup>f</sup> Antiochus marched into his ancestral domain, and all the armed forces came over to him, leaving  
11 very few with Trypho. Antiochus pursued him, and Trypho came as a fugitive to Dor by the sea. He knew  
12 that his position was desperate now

that all his troops had deserted. Antiochus, at the head of a hundred and twenty thousand trained soldiers and eight thousand horsemen, laid siege to Dor. He encircled the town, and his  
14 ships joined in the blockade from the sea. He thus exerted heavy pressure on it from both land and sea, and prevented anyone from leaving or entering.

NUMENIUS AND HIS PARTY ARRIVED 15 from Rome with a letter to the various kings and countries, which read as follows:

Lucius, Consul of the Romans, to 16 King Ptolemy, greeting.

Envoys have come to us from our 17 friends and allies the Jews, sent by Simon the High Priest and the Jewish people, to renew their original treaty of friendship and alliance. They brought a gold shield worth a 18 thousand minas. We have decided, 19 therefore, to write to the kings and countries, requiring them to do no harm to the Jews, nor make war on them or their cities or their country, nor ally themselves with those who so make war. And we have decided 20 to accept the shield from them. If 21 therefore any traitors have escaped from their country to you, hand them over to Simon the High Priest to be punished by him according to the law of the Jews.

The same message was sent to King 22 Demetrius, to Attalus, Ariarathes, Arsakes, Sampsakes, and the Spartans, 23 and also to the following places: Delos, Myndos, Sicyon, Caria, Samos, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Rhodes, Phaselis, Cos, Sidé, Aradus, Gortyna,  
<sup>f</sup> That is 138 B.C.

15.1-14: Antiochus VII seeks Simon's support in his struggles with Trypho for the throne of Demetrius II. 1: Antiochus VII Sidetes (138-129 B.C.) was the son of Demetrius I (161-150 B.C.) and brother of the captured Demetrius II (145-139, 129-125 B.C.). 6: Although Antiochus added to previous fiscal concessions the right to coin money (see 10.26-35; 13.37-39), Simon seems never to have used it. The right was soon revoked (15.27). 10-14: Antiochus married Cleopatra, the wife of his brother Demetrius. Trypho's troops deserted to her, and she transferred them to Antiochus' command. Dor lay fifteen miles south of Mount Carmel.

15.15-24: Return of the envoys. 16: Lucius Caecilius Metullus Calvus, who was Consul in 142 B.C., wrote (v. 16) to Ptolemy VIII (Euergetes II Physcon) of Egypt (145-116 B.C.). 22: Copies of the message went to Demetrius II of Asia (145-139 and 129-125 B.C.), Attalus II of Pergamum (159-138 B.C.), Ariarathes V of Cappadocia (162-131 B.C.), Arsakes VI (Mithridates I, 171-138 B.C.) of Parthia, and to various free city-states.

24 Cnidus, Cyprus, and Cyrene. A copy was sent to Simon the high priest.

25 KING ANTIOCHUS LAID SIEGE TO DOR for the second time,<sup>g</sup> and launched repeated attacks against it; he had siege-engines constructed, and blockaded Trypho, preventing all movement in or out of the town.

26 Simon sent Antiochus two thousand picked men to assist him, with silver 27 and gold and much equipment; but he refused the offer. He repudiated all his previous agreements with Simon and 28 broke off relations. He sent Athenobius, one of the Friends, to parley with him. This was his message: 'You are occupying Joppa and Gazara and the citadel in Jerusalem, cities that belong to my 29 kingdom. You have laid waste their territories, and done great damage to the country, and have made yourselves masters of many places in my kingdom. 30 I demand the return of the cities you have captured and the surrender of the tribute exacted from places beyond the frontiers of Judaea over which you 31 have assumed control. Otherwise, you must pay five hundred talents of silver on their account, and another five hundred as compensation for the destruction you have caused and for the loss of tribute from the cities. Failing this, we shall go to war with you.'

32 Athenobius, the King's Friend, came to Jerusalem, and when he saw the splendour of Simon's establishment, the gold and silver vessels on his sideboard, and his display of wealth, he was amazed. He delivered the king's 33 message, to which Simon replied: 'We have not occupied other people's land or taken other people's property, but only the inheritance of our ancestors, unjustly seized for a time by 34 our enemies. We have grasped our opportunity and have claimed our 35 patrimony. With regard to Joppa and Gazara, which you demand, these

towns were doing a great deal of damage among our people and in our land. For these we offer one hundred talents.'

Athenobius answered not a word, but went off in a rage to the king; he 36 reported what Simon had said, and described Simon's splendour and all the things he had seen. The king was furious.

Meanwhile Trypho boarded a ship 37 and made good his escape to Orthosia. The king appointed Kendebaeus as 38 commander-in-chief of the coastal zone, and gave him infantry and cavalry. He instructed him to blockade Judaea, 39 to rebuild Kedron and strengthen its gates, and to make war on our people, while he himself continued the pursuit of Trypho. Kendebaeus arrived 40 in Jamnia and began to harass our people by invading Judaea, and by capturing and killing the inhabitants. He rebuilt Kedron, stationing cavalry 41 and troops there to sally out and patrol the roads of Judaea, in accordance with the king's instructions.

John came from Gazara and re- 16 ported to his father Simon the results of Kendebaeus's campaign. Simon 2 summoned his two eldest sons Judas and John, and said to them: 'My brothers and I and my father's family have fought Israel's battles from our youth until this day, and many a time we have been successful in rescuing Israel. Now I am old, but mercifully 3 you are in the prime of life. Take my place and my brother's and go out and fight for our nation. And may help from on high be with you.'

He then levied from the country 4 twenty thousand picked warriors and cavalry, and they marched against Kendebaeus. After passing the night at Modin they rose early and proceeded 5 to the plain, where a large force of infantry and cavalry stood ready to meet them on the far side of a gully. When his army had taken up a position 6

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read on the second day.

15.25-36: Antiochus VII alienates Simon. 26-27: Josephus says the king accepted this aid (*Ant.* XIII.7.2). 30: The places beyond the frontiers probably include those of 11.34. 32: *King's Friends*: see 2.18 n.

15.37-16.10: John Hyrcanus defeats Kendebaeus. 37: From *Orthosia*, north of Tripolis, Trypho went to Apamea where Antiochus captured and killed him. 38: Simon held this post under Antiochus VI (11.59). 39: *Kedron* lay three miles southeast of Jamnia. 16.3: Simon was about sixty years old. 4: This is the first mention of Maccabean *cavalry*. 6: John's crossing recalls Judas's (5.40,43).

opposite, John saw that his men were afraid to cross the gully. So he crossed first himself; his men saw him and followed. John drew up his army with the cavalry in the centre of the infantry, for the enemy cavalry were very numerous. The trumpets were sounded, and Kendebaeus and his army were routed; many of them fell, and the remainder took refuge in the fortress. It was in this engagement that John's brother Judas was wounded. John kept up the pursuit until Kendebaeus reached Kedron, which he had rebuilt. The enemy took refuge in the towers in the open country round Azotus, whereupon John set fire to Azotus. Some two thousand of the enemy fell in the fighting, and John returned to Judaea in safety.

11 Now Ptolemaeus son of Abubus had been appointed commander for the plain of Jericho. He had great wealth, 12 for he was the high priest's son-in-law. 13 But he became over-ambitious; he proposed to make himself master of the country and plotted to put Simon and his sons out of the way. In the course of a tour to inspect the towns in that region and to attend to their needs, Simon came to Jericho with his sons Mattathias and Judas in the year 177,<sup>h</sup> in the eleventh month, the month of Shebat. The son of Abubus, with treachery in his heart, received them at the small fort called Dok which he had built, and entertained them lavish-

ly. But he had men in concealment there, and when Simon and his sons had drunk freely, Ptolemaeus and his accomplices jumped up, seized their weapons, and rushed in to the banquet. They attacked Simon and killed him, along with his two sons and some of his servants. It was an act of base treachery in which evil was returned for good.

Ptolemaeus sent news of this in a dispatch to the king, asking him to send troops to his assistance and to give him authority over the country and its towns. He sent some of his men to Gazara to kill John, and wrote to the army officers urging them to join him, and offering them silver and gold and presents. Other troops he sent to take Jerusalem and the temple hill. But someone ran ahead and reported to John at Gazara that his father and brothers had been murdered, and that Ptolemaeus had sent men to kill him as well. When John heard this he was beside himself; he arrested the men who came to kill him, and put them to death, because he had discovered their plot against his life.

The rest of the story of John, his wars and the deeds of valour he performed, the walls he built, and his exploits, are written in the annals of his high-priesthood from the time when he succeeded his father.

<sup>h</sup> That is 134 B.C.

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16.11–24: John Hyrcanus succeeds his murdered father. 15: The hill fortress of Dok lay five miles northwest of Jericho. 16: Josephus says the sons were killed later (*Ant.* XIII.8.1). 18: Ptolemaeus appealed to Antiochus VII. 22: Eventually, Ptolemaeus fled to Philadelphia (Amman). 23–24: The wording recalls that used of the kings of Israel (1 Kgs.14.19,29). The annals have been lost.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

2 Maccabees is a shortened version of a five-volume historical work, now lost, by Jason of Cyrene (2 Macc.2.19–32). To this shortened version the “abbreviator” prefixed two letters (1.1–10a; 1.10b–2.18) which Palestinian Jews addressed to their Egyptian brethren, urging them to observe the feast celebrating the Temple’s rededication in 164 B.C. The abridgment of Jason’s work exemplifies “pathetic history,” a genre of writing which seeks not only to tell the story, but to arouse the reader’s sympathetic emotions and give him pleasure. With invented dialogue, exaggerated numbers, apparitions and miracles, the “abbreviator,” or Epitomist, as he is technically called, traces the decline of the high priesthood (3.1–4.50), Antiochus Epiphanes’ attempt to impose Hellenism upon the Jews (5.1–7.42), and Judas Maccabeus’ successful resistance, culminating in his triumphal cleansing of the Temple (8.1–10.8), and his subsequent struggles (10.9–15.39).

2 Maccabees was written in Greek in Egypt about 124 B.C. It covers the period approximately 180–160 B.C., and parallels the events narrated in 1 Macc.1.10–7.50.

## *Foreword: letters to the Jews in Egypt*

1 **T**O THEIR JEWISH KINSMEN IN EGYPT, the Jews who are in Jerusalem and those in the country of Judaea send brotherly greeting.

2 May God give you peace and prosperity and remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his faithful  
3 servants. May he give to you all a will to worship him, to fulfil his purposes  
4 eagerly with heart and soul. May he give you a mind open to his law and  
5 precepts. May he make peace and answer your prayers, and be reconciled to you and not forsake you in an evil  
6 hour. Here and now we are praying for you.

7 In the reign of Demetrius, in the year 169,<sup>a</sup> we the Jews wrote to you during the persecution and the crisis that came upon us in those years since the time

when Jason and his partisans revolted from the holy land and the kingdom. They set the porch of the temple on fire 8 and shed innocent blood. Then we prayed to the Lord and were answered. We offered a sacrifice and fine flour, we lit the lamps, and set out the Bread of the Presence. And now, you are to 9 observe the celebration of a Feast of Tabernacles in the month Kislev.

Written in the year 188.<sup>b</sup> 10

FROM THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM AND Judaea, from the Senate, and from Judas, to Aristobulus, the teacher of King Ptolemy and a member of the high-priestly family, and to the Jews in Egypt, greeting and good health.

We have been saved by God from 11 great dangers, and give him all thanks, as men standing ready to resist the king.

*a That is 143 B.C.*

*b That is 124 B.C.*

**1.1–10a: The first letter.** The Palestinian Jews urge those in Egypt to observe the feast (v. 9) which celebrates the rededication of the Temple. This letter, written in 124 B.C. (= 188 in the Seleucid calendar) refers to an earlier letter of 143 B.C. (= 169 in the Seleucid calendar), which described the events from Jason’s apostasy (4.7–5.10) to the Temple’s dedication (10.1–8; 1 Macc.4.36–61) and probably informed the Egyptian Jews of Jonathan’s death (1 Macc.12.39–53; 13.23). **1–2:** The two-fold salutation includes the Hellenistic *greeting* and the Hebrew *peace*. **7–8a:** Jason slaughtered his own people (5.5–7) in the *holy land* (Zech.2.12), thus also revolting against the Seleucid kingdom. **8b:** After purifying the Temple, Judas and his men offered a sacrifice there (10.3; 1 Macc.4.50–51). **9:** A feast is now to take place in *Kislev* (December); it came to be called Hanukkah. The biblical *Feast of Tabernacles*, which Hanukkah resembles at least in length (eight days), was in Tishri (September–October).

**1.10b–2.18: The second letter.** Written earlier, in 164 B.C., this letter urges Egyptian Jews to celebrate the dedication of the newly purified Temple (10.1–8; 1 Macc.4.36–59) even though not prescribed in the Pentateuch, since Judas’ victory was God’s salvation for all Jews (2.17). **10: Aristobulus** was a Jewish “philosopher” of Alexandria, who “taught” Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 B.C.) by dedicating a book to him which “proved” that the Greeks derived their wisdom and philosophy from the Law and the Prophets. **11: The king** is Antiochus IV Epiphanes



12 It was God who drove out the enemy force in the holy city.

13 For when the king went into Persia with an army that seemed invincible, they were cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea through a stratagem employed by Nanaea's priests. Antiochus, along with his Companions, arrived at the temple to marry the goddess, in order to secure the considerable treasure by way of dowry. After this had been laid out by the priests, he went into the temple precinct with a small retinue. When Antiochus entered, the priests shut the sanctuary, opened a secret door in the panelling, and hurled stones at them. The king fell, as if struck by a thunderbolt. They hacked off limbs and heads and threw them to those outside.

17 Blessed in all things be our God, who handed over the evil-doers to death!

18 We are about to celebrate the purification of the temple on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, and think it right to inform you, so that you also for your part may celebrate a Feast of Tabernacles, in honour of the fire which appeared when Nehemiah offered sacrifices, after he had built the temple and the altar. When our fathers were carried off to Persia, the pious priests of those days secretly took fire from the altar and concealed it in a dry well. It proved a safe hiding-place and remained undiscovered. After many years had passed, in God's good time, Nehemiah was sent back by the king of Persia. He then dispatched the descendants of the priests who had hidden it to get the fire, and they informed our people that they found, not fire, but a thick liquid. Nehemiah ordered them to draw some out and bring it to him. When the materials of the sacrifice had been presented, he ordered the priests to sprinkle this liquid over the wood

and the things laid upon it, and this was done. Some time passed; then the sun, which earlier had been hidden by clouds, shone out and the altar burst into a great blaze, so that everyone marvelled. As the sacrifice was burning, the priests offered prayer, they and all those present: Jonathan began and the rest responded, led by Nehemiah.

The prayer was in this style: 'O Lord God, creator of all things, thou the terrible, the mighty, the just, and the merciful, the only King, the only gracious one, the only giver, the only just, omnipotent, and everlasting one, who dost deliver Israel from every evil, who didst choose the patriarchs and set them apart: accept this sacrifice on behalf of thy whole people Israel; they are thy own, watch over them and sanctify them. Gather the dispersed, free those who are in slavery among the heathen, look favourably on the despised and detested; let the heathen know that thou art our God. Punish our oppressors for their insolent brutality and make them suffer torment; but plant thy people in thy holy place, as Moses said.'

Then the priests chanted the hymns. After the materials of the sacrifice had been consumed, Nehemiah further ordered what remained of the liquid to be poured over some great stones.<sup>c</sup> At this a flame shot up, but burnt itself out as soon as the fire on the altar outshone it.<sup>d</sup>

These events became widely known. The king of Persia was told that, in the place where the priests who were deported had hidden the fire, a liquid had appeared, and that Nehemiah and

<sup>c</sup> what remained . . . stones: so some witnesses; others read that great stones should enclose what remained of the liquid.

<sup>d</sup> Or but hardly had the light been reflected from the altar, when it burnt itself out.

(175–164 B.C.). 13: The Elamite goddess *Nanaea* (Anaitis) was identified with the Greek goddess Artemis in Hellenistic times. 16–17: Actually, Antiochus was driven off, not killed (9.2). The letter writer's sources may have confused the king's representative with the king himself. 18: Lighting candles, *fire*, is a special feature of the present feast of Hanukkah. The temple was built long before Nehemiah's time; see Ezra 3.1–2; 6.6–16. The fire at the time of Nehemiah's sacrifices is not found in the Book of Nehemiah but apparently comes from the apocryphal memoirs of Nehemiah (2.13), now lost. The purpose of the allusion is to emphasize the privileges of the Temple and the continuity and orthodoxy of its worship. The many difficulties in the story that follows show its fictional character. 19: The Exile (587 B.C.); see 2 Kgs. 25.11–12) was to Babylon, which later became part of the Persian empire. 20: The king who sent Nehemiah to govern Palestine was Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464–424 B.C.). The thick liquid was naphtha,

his companions had used it to burn up  
 34 the materials of the sacrifice. When he  
 had verified the fact, the king enclosed  
 35 the site and made it sacred. The  
 custodians he appointed received a  
 share of the very substantial revenue  
 36 that the king derived from it. Nehemiah  
 and his companions called the liquid  
 'nephtar', which means 'purification';  
 but most people call it 'naphtha'.

2 The records show that it was the  
 prophet Jeremiah who ordered the  
 exiles to hide the fire, as has been  
 2 mentioned; also that, having given  
 them the law, he charged them not to  
 neglect the ordinances of the Lord, or  
 be led astray by the sight of images of  
 3 gold and silver with all their finery. In  
 similar words he appealed to them not  
 to abandon the law.

4 Further, this document records that,  
 prompted by a divine message, the  
 prophet gave orders that the Tent of  
 Meeting and the ark should go with  
 him. Then he went away to the moun-  
 tain from the top of which Moses saw  
 5 God's promised land. When he reached  
 the mountain, Jeremiah found a cave-  
 dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark,  
 and the incense-altar into it, then  
 6 blocked up the entrance. Some of his  
 companions came to mark out the way,  
 7 but were unable to find it. When  
 Jeremiah learnt of this he reprimanded  
 them. 'The place shall remain un-  
 known', he said, 'until God finally  
 gathers his people together and shows  
 8 mercy to them. Then the Lord will  
 bring these things to light again, and  
 the glory of the Lord will appear with  
 the cloud, as it was seen both in the  
 time of Moses and when Solomon  
 prayed that the shrine might be  
 worthily consecrated.'

9 It was also related that Solomon,  
 having the gift of wisdom, offered the

dedication sacrifice at the completion  
 of the temple; and that, just as Moses 10  
 prayed to the Lord and fire came down  
 from heaven and burnt up the sacri-  
 ficial offerings, so Solomon prayed and  
 the fire came down and consumed the  
 whole-offerings. (Moses said: 'The sin- 11  
 offering was burnt up in the same way  
 because it was not eaten.') Solomon 12  
 celebrated the feast for eight days.

These same facts are set out in the 13  
 official records and in the memoirs of  
 Nehemiah. Just as Nehemiah collected  
 the chronicles of the kings, the writings  
 of prophets, the works of David, and  
 royal letters about sacred offerings, to  
 find his library, so Judas also has 14  
 collected all the books that had been  
 scattered as a result of our recent  
 conflict. These are in our possession,  
 and if you need any of them, send 15  
 messengers for them.

As, then, we are about to celebrate 16  
 the purification of the temple, we are  
 writing to impress upon you the duty  
 of celebrating this festival. God has 17  
 saved his whole people and granted to  
 all of us the holy land, the kingship, the  
 priesthood, and the consecration, as 18  
 he promised by the law; and in him we  
 have confidence that he will soon be  
 merciful to us and gather us from every  
 part of the world to the holy temple.  
 For he has delivered us from great evils  
 and purified the temple.

#### *Preface to this abridgement*

IN FIVE BOOKS JASON OF CYRENE HAS 19  
 set out the history of Judas Maccabaeus  
 and his brothers, the purification of the  
 great temple, and the dedication of the  
 altar. He has described the battles with 20  
 Antiochus Epiphanes and with his son  
 Eupator, and the apparitions from 21

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or petroleum (v. 36). 36: The Persian word for the liquid is *neft*. *Nephtar* involves a play on this word and on the Heb. root *thr*, "purify." 2.4-8: This story is improbable, too; see Jer.3.16. Moses' mountain was Nebo (Deut.32.49). 9-10: On the theme of fire . . . from heaven, see Lev.9.24; Judg.6.21; 1 Kgs.18.38; 2 Chr.7.1. 11: The meaning of this verse is not clear but see Lev.10.16-20. 13: The inclusion of the *royal letters* of Persian kings shows this collection was not limited to sacred books. For Nehemiah's memoirs see 1.18 n.

2.19-32: A summary of the five books. The abbreviator leaves responsibility for accuracy to Jason, while attempting to make one readable, memorable, pleasurable, and profitable book out of Jason's five. 19: *Jason* is otherwise unknown. *Cyrene* (now in Libya) was culturally one with Egypt. 21: This is the first appearance of the term *Judaism* (see also 8.1; 14.38; Gal.1.14) to describe a way of life; it is contrasted to Hellenism (4.13).

heaven which appeared to those who vied with one another in fighting manfully for Judaism. Few though they were, they ravaged the whole country and routed the foreign hordes; they restored the world-renowned temple, freed the city of Jerusalem, and reaffirmed the laws which were in danger of being abolished. All this they achieved because the Lord was merciful and gracious to them.

These five books of Jason I shall try to summarize in a single work; for I was struck by the mass of statistics and the difficulty which the bulk of the material causes to those wishing to grasp the narratives of this history. I have tried to provide for the entertainment of those who read for pleasure, the convenience of students who must commit the facts to memory, and the profit of even the casual reader. The task which I have taken upon myself in making this summary is no easy one. It means toil and late nights, just as it is no light task for the man who plans a dinner-party and aims to satisfy his guests. Nevertheless, I will gladly undergo this hard labour for the benefit of readers in general. I shall leave to the original author the minute discussion of every detail, and concentrate on the main points of my outline. As the architect of a new house must concern himself with the whole of the structure, while the man who paints in encaustic on the walls needs to discover only what is necessary for the ornamentation, so, I judge, it is with me also. It is the province of the original author of a history to take possession of the field, to spread himself in discussion, and to inquire closely into particular questions. The man who makes a paraphrase must be allowed to aim at conciseness of

expression and to omit a full treatment of the subject-matter.

Here, then, without adding anything further, I begin my narrative. It would be absurd to make a lengthy introduction to the history and cut short the history itself.

### *Syrian oppression of the Jews*

DURING THE RULE OF THE HIGH PRIEST Onias, the holy city enjoyed complete peace and prosperity, and the laws were still observed most scrupulously, because he was a pious man and hated wickedness. The kings themselves held the sanctuary in honour and used to embellish the temple with the most splendid gifts; even Seleucus, king of Asia, bore all the expenses of the sacrificial worship from his own revenues.

But a certain Simon, of the clan Bilgah,<sup>f</sup> who had been appointed administrator of the temple, quarrelled with the high priest about the regulation of the city market. Unable to get the better of Onias, he went to Apollonius son of Thrasaeus, then governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, and alleged that the treasury at Jerusalem was full of untold riches—indeed the total of the accumulated balances was incalculable and did not correspond with the account for the sacrifices; he suggested that these balances might be brought under the control of the king. When Apollonius met the king, he reported what he had been told about the riches. The king selected Heliodorus, his chief minister, and sent him with orders to remove these treasures.

<sup>e</sup> for . . . of: so some witnesses; others read to win the gratitude of . . .

<sup>f</sup> So some witnesses (compare Nehemiah 12.5, 18); others read Benjamin.

**3.1-4.50: The decline of the priesthood.** After the defeat of Magnesia (190 B.C.) and the consequent loss of most of Asia Minor, the Seleucid kings needed money badly to pay the indemnities forced on them by the treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.). Seleucus saw a chance to rob the rich treasury of Jerusalem's Temple. The priesthood moves from Onias (3.1), to the usurper Jason (4.7), and then to Menelaus (4.23).

**3.1-4.6: The story of Heliodorus and its aftermath.** 1: Onias III, son of Simon II (Ecclus.50.1-21), was a descendant, through Jedaiah (Ezra 2.36), of Joshua, the high priest of the postexilic community (Hag.1.1). 3: Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.) was *king of Asia*, i.e. of lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean. 4: Bilgah is one of the twenty-four divisions for priestly service listed in 1 Chr.24.1-19. 5: Apollonius was son of Menestheus (4.4,21). Coele-syria: southern Syria including Palestine. 7: Heliodorus, chancellor to Seleucus, later murdered the

8 Heliodorus set off at once, ostensibly to make a tour of inspection of the cities of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, but in fact to carry out the purpose of the  
9 king. When he arrived at Jerusalem and had been courteously received by the high priest and the citizens, he explained why he had come: he told them about the allegations and asked  
10 if they were in fact true. The high priest intimated that the deposits were held in trust for widows and orphans, apart from what belonged to Hyrcanus son of Tobias, a man of very high standing; the matter was being misrepresented by the impious Simon. In all there were  
12 hundred of gold. It was unthinkable, he said, that wrong should be done to those who had relied on the sanctity of the place, on the dignity and inviolability of the world-famous temple. But Heliodorus, in virtue of the king's orders, replied that these deposits must without question be handed over to the royal treasury.

14 He fixed a day and went into the temple to make an inventory. At this there was great distress throughout the whole city. The priests, prostrating themselves in their vestments before the altar, prayed to Heaven, to the Lawgiver who had made deposits sacred, to keep them intact for their  
16 rightful owners. The high priest's looks pierced every beholder to the heart, for his face and its changing colour betrayed the anguish of his soul. Alarm and shuddering gripped him, and the pain he felt was clearly apparent to the  
18 onlookers. The people rushed pell-mell from their houses to join together in supplication because of the dishonour which threatened the holy place.  
19 Women in sackcloth, their breasts bare, filled the streets; unmarried girls who were kept in seclusion ran to the gates or walls of their houses, while others leaned out from the windows; all with  
20 outstretched hands made solemn entreaty to Heaven. It was pitiful to see

the crowd all lying prostrate in utter confusion, and the high priest in an agony of apprehension.

While the people were calling upon  
22 the Lord Almighty to keep the deposits intact and safe for those who had deposited them, Heliodorus proceeded  
23 to carry out his decision. But at the very moment when he arrived with his  
24 bodyguard at the treasury, the Ruler of spirits and of all powers produced a mighty apparition, so that all who had the audacity to accompany Heliodorus were faint with terror, stricken with  
25 panic at the power of God. They saw a horse, splendidly caparisoned, with a rider of terrible aspect; it rushed fiercely at Heliodorus and, rearing up, attacked him with its hooves. The rider was wearing golden armour. There also  
26 appeared to Heliodorus two young men of surpassing strength and glorious beauty, splendidly dressed. They stood on either side of him and scourged him, raining ceaseless blows upon him. He  
27 fell suddenly to the ground, overwhelmed by a great darkness, and his men snatched him up and put him on a litter. This man, who so recently had  
28 entered the treasury with a great throng and his whole bodyguard, was now borne off by them quite helpless, publicly compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of God.<sup>g</sup>

While he lay speechless, deprived by  
29 this divine act of all hope of recovery, the Jews were praising the Lord for the  
30 miracle he had performed in his own house. The temple, which a short time before was full of alarm and confusion, now overflowed with joy and festivity, because the Lord Almighty had appeared.

Some of Heliodorus's companions  
31 hastily begged Onias to pray to the Most High, and so to spare the life of their master now lying at his very last gasp. The high priest, fearing that the  
32 king might suspect that Heliodorus had

<sup>g</sup> was now . . . of God: so some witnesses; others read they, recognizing the sovereignty of God, now bore off quite helpless.

king in an unsuccessful bid to assume the regency. 11: The Temple's treasure was today's equivalent of several million dollars. 12: Onias pleads a form of "sanctuary" or *inviolability* for the money (see, similarly, 1 Macc.10.43). 22-36: Miraculous apparitions are a feature of "pathetic" history. Some suggest Onias saved the treasure by conspiring with Heliodorus against Seleucus (see 4.2). 26: *Two young men*: angels.

met with foul play at the hands of the Jews, brought a sacrifice for the man's recovery. As the high priest was making the expiation, the same young men, dressed as before, again appeared to Heliodorus. They stood over him and said: 'Be very grateful to Onias the high priest; for his sake the Lord has spared your life. You have been scourged by God; now tell all men of his mighty power.' When they had said this, they vanished.

Heliodorus offered a sacrifice and made lavish vows to the Lord who had spared his life; then, after taking friendly leave of Onias, he led his troops back to the king. He bore witness to everyone of the miracles of the supreme God which he had seen with his own eyes.

When the king asked him what sort of man would be suitable to send to Jerusalem another time, Heliodorus replied: 'If you have an enemy or someone plotting against your government, that is the place to send him; you will receive him back soundly flogged, if he survives at all, for beyond doubt there is a divine power surrounding the temple. He whose habitation is in heaven watches over it himself and gives it his aid; those who approach the place with evil intent he strikes and destroys.'

So runs the story of Heliodorus and the preservation of the treasury.

**4** BUT THE SIMON MENTIONED EARLIER, the man who had made allegations against his country about the money, slandered Onias, alleging that he had attacked Heliodorus and had been the author of these troubles. He had the effrontery to accuse him of conspiracy against the government—this benefactor of the holy city, this protector of his fellow-Jews, this zealot for the laws. The enmity grew so great that one of Simon's trusted followers even resorted to murder. Onias, realizing that Simon's

rivalry was dangerous and that Apollonius son of Menestheus, governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, was encouraging his evil ways, paid a visit to the king. He did not appear as an accuser of his fellow-citizens, but as concerned for the interests of all the Jews, both as a nation and as individuals. For he saw that unless the king intervened there could not possibly be peace in public affairs, nor could Simon be stopped in his mad course.

But when Seleucus was dead and had been succeeded by Antiochus, known as Epiphanes, Jason, Onias's brother, obtained the high-priesthood by corrupt means. He petitioned the king and promised him three hundred and sixty talents in silver coin immediately, and eighty talents from future revenue. In addition he undertook to pay another hundred and fifty talents for the authority to institute a sports-stadium, to arrange for the education of young men there, and to enrol in Jerusalem a group to be known as the 'Antiochenes'.<sup>h</sup> The king agreed, and, as soon as he had seized the high-priesthood, Jason made the Jews conform to the Greek way of life.

He set aside the royal privileges established for the Jews through the agency of John, the father of that Eupolemus who negotiated a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Romans. He abolished the lawful way of life and introduced practices which were against the law. He lost no time in establishing a sports-stadium at the foot of the citadel itself, and he made the most outstanding of the young men assume the Greek athlete's hat. So Hellenism reached a high point with the introduction of foreign customs through the boundless wickedness of the impious Jason, no true high priest. As a result, the priests no longer had any enthusiasm for their duties at the

<sup>h</sup> Or enrol the inhabitants of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch.

4.7-22: Jason as high priest introduces Hellenism. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) sought to unify his disparate subjects by imposing Hellenistic culture and religion on them. 7: Seleucus was dead, assassinated by Heliodorus. 9: The sports-stadium gave youth an education in cultural, physical, and premilitary affairs. The Antiochenes, honorary citizens of Antioch, the Seleucid capital, were a corporation of Hellenized Jews who had certain political and commercial privileges. 11: See 1 Macc.8.17. 12: Athlete's hat: the traditional wide-brimmed hat

altar, but despised the temple and neglected the sacrifices; and in defiance of the law they eagerly contributed to the expenses of the wrestling-school whenever the opening gong called them. They placed no value on their hereditary dignities, but cared above everything for Hellenic honours. Because of this, grievous misfortunes beset them, and the very men whose way of life they strove after, and tried so hard to imitate, turned out to be their vindictive enemies. To act profanely against God's laws is no light matter, as will become clear in due time.

When the quinquennial games were being held at Tyre in the presence of the king, the blackguard Jason sent, as envoys to represent Jerusalem, Antiochenes carrying three hundred drachmas in cash for the sacrifice to Hercules. Even the bearers thought it improper that this money should be used for a sacrifice, and considered that it should be spent otherwise. So, thanks to the bearers, the money designed by the sender for the sacrifice to Hercules went to fit out the triremes.

When Apollonius son of Menestheus was sent to Egypt for the enthronement of King Philometor, Antiochus learnt that Philometor was now hostile to his state, and became anxious for his own security. So he went to Joppa, and then on to Jerusalem, where he was lavishly welcomed by Jason and the city and received with torch-light and ovations. After this, he quartered his army in Phoenicia.

Three years later, Jason sent Menelaus, brother of the Simon mentioned above, to convey money to the king and to carry out his directions about urgent business. But Menelaus established his position with the king by acting as if he were a person of great authority, outbid Jason by three hundred talents in silver, and so diverted

the high-priesthood to himself. He arrived back with the royal mandate, but with nothing else to make him worthy of the high-priesthood; he still had the temper of a cruel tyrant and the fury of a savage beast. Jason, who had supplanted his own brother, was now supplanted in his turn and forced to flee to Ammonite territory. As for Menelaus, he continued to hold the high-priesthood but without ever paying any of the money he had promised the king, although it was demanded by Sostratus, the commander of the citadel, who was responsible for collecting the revenues. In consequence they were both summoned by the king. As their deputies, Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus, and Sostratus left Crates, the commander of the Cypriots.

It was at this point that the inhabitants of Tarsus and Mallus revolted, because their cities had been handed over as a gift to the king's concubine Antiochis. The king hastened off to restore order, leaving as regent Andronicus, one of his ministers. Menelaus, thinking he had obtained a favourable opportunity, made a present to Andronicus of some of the gold plate belonging to the temple which he had appropriated. He had already sold some of it to Tyre and to the neighbouring cities. When Onias heard this on good authority, he withdrew to sanctuary at Daphne near Antioch and denounced him. As a result, Menelaus approached Andronicus privately and urged him to kill Onias. The regent went to Onias bent on treachery; he greeted him, gave him assurances on oath, and persuaded him, though still suspicious, to leave the sanctuary. Then at once, with no respect for justice, he made away with him.

His murder filled not only Jews, but many from other nations as well, with alarm and anger. So when the king returned from Cilicia, the Jews of

of Hermes, god of gymnastic skill. 19: The Tyrian god Melqart was, in Hellenistic fashion, assimilated to Heracles, the Roman *Hercules*. 20: *Triremes* were warships with three banks of oars. 21-22: Ptolemy VI *Philometor* (180-145 B.C.) planned to regain Palestine for Egypt; Epiphanes prepared for the invasion by stationing troops in *Joppa* and other Phoenician ports.

4.23-50: *Menelaus as high priest*. Corruption marks the reign of Menelaus, who succeeded in driving out his rivals. 23: *Three years later*: 171 B.C. *Simon*: see 3.4 n. 26: *Jason fled east of the Jordan*. 30: *Tarsus and Mallus*, which lay in Cilicia (on the southeast coast of Turkey), objected for reasons of revenue, not morality. 33: *Onias* took refuge in the temple of Apollo(!)

Antioch sent him a petition about the senseless killing of Onias, the Gentiles sharing in their detestation of the crime. Antiochus was deeply grieved, and was moved to pity and tears as he thought of the prudence and disciplined habits of the dead man. In a burning fury, he immediately stripped Andronicus of the purple, tore off his clothes, led him round the whole city to that very place where he had committed sacrilege against Onias, and there disposed of the murderer. Thus the Lord repaid him with the retribution he deserved.

Lysimachus committed many acts of sacrilegious plunder in Jerusalem with the connivance of Menelaus. When the news of them became public and the people heard that much of the gold plate had been disposed of, they banded together against Lysimachus. Since the crowds were seething with rage and getting out of hand, Lysimachus armed some three thousand men and began to launch a vicious attack, led by a certain Auranus, a man advanced in years and no less in folly. Realizing that the attack came from Lysimachus, some of the crowd seized stones and others blocks of wood, while others again took handfuls of the ashes that were lying round, and there was complete confusion as they all hurled them at Lysimachus and his men. As a result, they wounded many, killed some, and routed them all; the sacrilegious man himself they dispatched near the treasury.

An action was brought against Menelaus in connection with this incident. When the king came to Tyre, the three men sent by the Jewish senate pleaded the case before him. Menelaus's cause was as good as lost; but he promised a large sum of money to Ptolemaeus son of Dorymenes to win over the king. So Ptolemaeus led the king aside into a colonnade, as if to take the air, and persuaded him to

change his mind. The king acquitted Menelaus, the cause of all the mischief, dismissed the charges brought against him, and condemned his unfortunate accusers to death, men who would have been discharged as entirely innocent had they appeared even before Scythians. Without more ado those who had pleaded for their city, their people, and their sacred vessels, suffered the unjust penalty. At this, even some of the Tyrians showed their detestation of the crime by providing a splendid funeral for the victims. Menelaus, thanks to the greed of those in power, remained in office. He went from bad to worse, this arch-plotter against his own fellow-citizens.

About this time Antiochus undertook his second invasion of Egypt. Apparitions were seen in the sky all over Jerusalem for nearly forty days: galloping horsemen in golden armour, companies of spearmen standing to arms, swords unsheathed, cavalry divisions in battle order. Charges and countercharges were made on each side, shields were shaken, spears massed and javelins hurled; breastplates and golden ornaments of every kind shone brightly. All men prayed that this apparition might portend good.

Upon a false report of Antiochus's death, Jason collected no less than a thousand men and made a surprise attack on Jerusalem. The defenders on the wall were driven back and the city was finally taken; Menelaus took refuge in the citadel, and Jason continued to massacre his fellow-citizens without pity. He little knew that success against one's own kindred is the greatest of failures, and he imagined that the trophies he raised marked the defeat of enemies, not of fellow-countrymen. He did not, however, gain control of the government; he gained only dishonour as the result of his plot, and returned again as a fugitive to Ammonite territory. His career came

at *Daphne*, five miles southwest of Antioch. 45: *Ptolemaeus*, the governor of the region, later opposed the Maccabean resistance (8.8; 1 Macc.3.38). 47: The *Scythians*, who lived just north of the Black Sea, were notorious for their cruelty.

5.1-14: **Jason's attack upon Jerusalem and its aftermath.** 1: 168 B.C. 2-4: The Jewish historian Josephus describes similar celestial portents preceding the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. (B.J. VI.5.3). 8: The charge brought before *Aretas* (Harith I, king of the Nabataeans), Jason's

to a miserable end; for, after being imprisoned by Aretas the ruler of the Arabs, he fled from city to city, hunted by all, hated as a rebel against the laws, and detested as the executioner of his country and his fellow-citizens, and finally was driven to take refuge in 9 Egypt. In the end the man who had banished so many from their native land himself died in exile after setting sail for Sparta, where he had hoped to obtain shelter because of the Spartans' 10 kinship with the Jews. He who had cast out many to lie unburied was himself unmourned; he had no funeral of any kind, no resting-place in the grave of his ancestors.

11 When news of this reached the king, it became clear to him that Judaea was in a state of rebellion. So he set out from Egypt in savage mood, took 12 Jerusalem by storm, and ordered his troops to cut down without mercy everyone they met and to slaughter those who took refuge in the houses. 13 Young and old were murdered, women and children massacred, girls and 14 infants butchered. At the end of three days their losses had amounted to eighty thousand: forty thousand killed in action, and as many sold into slavery.

15 Not satisfied with this, the king had the audacity to enter the holiest temple on earth, guided by Menelaus, who had turned traitor both to his religion 16 and his country. He laid impious hands on the sacred vessels; his desecrating hands swept together the votive offerings which other kings had set up to enhance the splendour and fame of the shrine.

17 The pride of Antiochus passed all bounds. He did not understand that the sins of the people of Jerusalem had angered the Lord for a short time, and that this was why he left the temple to 18 its fate. If they had not already been

guilty of many sinful acts, Antiochus would have fared like Heliodorus who was sent by King Seleucus to inspect the treasury; like him he would have been scourged and his insolent plan 19 foiled at once. But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the sanctuary; he chose the sanctuary for the sake of the nation. Therefore even 20 the sanctuary itself first had its part in the misfortunes that overtook the nation, and afterwards shared its good fortune. It was abandoned when the Lord Almighty was angry, but restored again in all its splendour when he became reconciled.

Antiochus, then, carried off eighteen 21 hundred talents from the temple and hastened back to Antioch. In his arrogance he was rash enough to think that he could make ships sail on dry land and men walk over the sea. He 22 left commissioners behind to oppress the Hebrews: in Jerusalem Philip, by race a Phrygian, by disposition more barbarous than his master, and in 23 Mount Gerizim, Andronicus, to say nothing of Menelaus, who was more brutally overbearing to the citizens than the others. Such was the king's hostility towards the Jews that he sent 24 Apollonius, the general of the Mysian mercenaries, with an army of twenty-two thousand men, and ordered him to kill all the adult males and to sell the women and boys into slavery. 25 When Apollonius arrived at Jerusalem, he posed as a man of peace; he waited until the holy sabbath day and, finding the Jews abstaining from work, he ordered a review of his troops. All who 26 came out to see the parade he put to the sword; then, charging into the city with his soldiers, he killed a great number of people.

BUT JUDAS, ALSO CALLED MACCABAEUS, 27 with about nine others, escaped into

former protector, is not known. 9: For this fictional *kinship*, see 1 Macc.12.1–23, especially v. 10 n. 11: Forced out of Egypt by the Romans, Antiochus was already in a *savage mood*.

5.15–23a: Antiochus robs the Temple. This misplaced incident belongs after Antiochus' first Egyptian campaign in 169 b.c. (1 Macc.1.20–24). 16: Other kings included Seleucus IV (3.3). 21: The amount seems excessive. 22: Philip appears again in 6.11; 8.8. He is not the Philip of 9.29; 1 Macc.6.14,55–63. 23a: Andronicus is not the murderer of 4.31–38.

5.23b–27: Apollonius attacks Jerusalem; Judas flees. Epiphanes punished the revolt led by Jason and fortified Jerusalem. See 1 Macc.1.29–36. Later, Judas defeated and killed Apollonius (1 Macc.3.10–12). 27: The story of Mattathias is omitted (1 Macc. ch. 2; especially v. 28).



the desert, where he and his companions lived in the mountains, fending for themselves like the wild animals. They remained there living on what vegetation they found, so as to have no share in the pollution.

6 Shortly afterwards King Antiochus sent an elderly Athenian to force the Jews to abandon their ancestral customs and no longer regulate their lives according to the laws of God. He was also commissioned to pollute the temple at Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus, and to dedicate the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim to Zeus God of Hospitality, following the practice of the local inhabitants.

3 This evil hit them hard and was a severe trial. The Gentiles filled the temple with licentious revelry: they took their pleasure with prostitutes and had intercourse with women in the sacred precincts. They also brought forbidden things inside, and heaped the altar with impure offerings prohibited by the law. 5 It was forbidden either to observe the sabbath or to keep the traditional festivals, or to admit to being a Jew at all. On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, the Jews were driven by brute force to eat the entrails of the sacrificial victims; and on the feast of Dionysus they were forced to wear ivy-wreaths and join the procession in his honour. At the instigation of the inhabitants of Ptolemais<sup>i</sup> an order was published in the neighbouring Greek cities to the effect that they should adopt the same policy of compelling the Jews to eat the entrails and should kill those who refused to change over to Greek ways.

10 Their miserable fate was there for all to see. For instance, two women were brought to trial for having had their children circumcised. They were paraded through the city, with their babies hanging at their breasts, and

then flung down from the fortifications. Other Jews had assembled in caves near Jerusalem to keep the sabbath in secret; they were denounced to Philip and were burnt alive, since they scrupled to defend themselves out of regard for the holiness of the day.

Now I beg my readers not to be disheartened by these calamities, but to reflect that such penalties were inflicted for the discipline of our race and not for its destruction. It is a sign of great kindness that acts of impiety should not be let alone for long but meet their due recompense at once. The Lord did not see fit to deal with us as he does with the other nations: with them he patiently holds his hand until they have reached the full extent of their sins, but upon us he inflicted retribution before our sins reached their height. So he never withdraws his mercy from us; though he disciplines his people by calamity, he never deserts them. Let it be enough for me to have recalled this truth; after this short digression, I must continue with my story.

There was Eleazar, one of the leading teachers of the law, a man of great age and distinguished bearing. He was being forced to open his mouth and eat pork, but preferring an honourable death to an unclean life, he spat it out and voluntarily submitted to the flogging, as indeed men should act who have the courage to refuse to eat forbidden food even for love of life. For old acquaintance' sake, the officials in charge of this sacrilegious feast had a word with Eleazar in private; they urged him to bring meat which he was permitted to eat and had himself prepared, and only pretend to be eating the sacrificial meat as the king had ordered. In that way he would escape death and take advantage of the clemency which their long-standing

*i Some witnesses read At the instigation of Ptolemaeus ...*

6.1-17: The imposition of Hellenism. The author describes the religious persecution. See 1 Macc.1.41-64. 2: The Syrian deity, *ba'al šamēm*, "Lord of Heaven," was identified with the supreme Greek divinity, *Zeus*. Erection of an altar to him on the Temple's altar of holocausts constituted the "abomination" of 1 Macc.1.54; Dan.11.31. Josephus says the rival Samaritan temple on *Mount Gerizim* was dedicated to *Zeus Hellenios* (*Ant.* XII.5.5). 5: The *impure offerings* included swine; see v. 18; 7.1; Lev.11.7; 1 Macc.1.47. 7: *Dionysus*: god of revelry, identified with Roman *Bacchus*; *ivy* was his symbol. 11: See 1 Macc.2.29-41.

6.18-7.42: Examples of martyrdom. Old men, women, and children willingly die for the *law*. The stories are typical "Acts of Martyrs," a literary form to encourage others under persecution.

23 friendship merited. But Eleazar made an honourable decision, one worthy of his years and the authority of old age, worthy of the grey hairs he had attained to and wore with such distinction, worthy of his perfect conduct from childhood up, but above all, worthy of the holy and God-given law. So he answered at once: 'Send me quickly to my grave. If I went through with this pretence at my time of life, many of the young might believe that at the age of ninety Eleazar had turned apostate. If I practised deceit for the sake of a brief moment of life, I should lead them astray and bring stain and pollution on my old age. I might for the present avoid man's punishment, but, alive or dead, I shall never escape from the hand of the Almighty. So if I now die bravely, I shall show that I have deserved my long life and leave the young a fine example, to teach them how to die a good death, gladly and nobly, for our revered and holy laws.'

When he had finished speaking, he was immediately dragged away to be flogged. Those who a little while before had shown him friendship now became his enemies because, in their view, what he had said was madness. When he was almost dead from the blows, Eleazar sighed deeply and said: 'To the Lord belongs all holy knowledge. He knows what terrible agony I endure in my body from this flogging, though I could have escaped death; yet he knows also that in my soul I suffer gladly, because I stand in awe of him.'

31 So he died; and by his death he left a heroic example and a glorious memory, not only for the young but also for the great body of the nation.

7 Again, seven brothers with their mother had been arrested, and were being tortured by the king with whips and thongs to force them to eat pork, when one of them, speaking for all, said: 'What do you expect to learn by interrogating us? We are ready to die rather than break the laws of our fathers.' The king was enraged and

ordered great pans and cauldrons to be heated up, and this was done at once. 4 Then he gave orders that the spokesman's tongue should be cut out and that he should be scalped and mutilated before the eyes of his mother and his six brothers. This wreck of a man the 5 king ordered to be taken, still breathing, to the fire and roasted in one of the pans. As the smoke from it streamed out far and wide, the mother and her sons encouraged each other to die nobly. 'The Lord God is watching', 6 they said, 'and without doubt has compassion on us. Did not Moses tell Israel to their faces in the song denouncing apostasy: "He will have compassion on his servants"?' 7

After the first brother had died in this way, the second was subjected to the same brutality. The skin and hair of his head were torn off, and he was asked: 'Will you eat, before we tear you limb from limb?' He replied in his 8 native language, 'Never!', and so he in turn underwent the torture. With his 9 last breath, he said: 'Fiend though you are, you are setting us free from this present life, and, since we die for his laws, the King of the universe will raise us up to a life everlastingly made new.'

After him the third was tortured. 10 When the question was put to him, he at once showed his tongue, boldly held out his hands, and said courageously: 11 'The God of heaven gave me these. His laws mean far more to me than they do, and it is from him that I trust to receive them back.' When they heard 12 this, the king and his followers were amazed at the young man's spirit and his utter disregard for suffering.

When he too was dead, they tortured 13 the fourth in the same cruel way. At the point of death, he said to the king: 'Better to be killed by men and cherish God's promise to raise us again. There will be no resurrection to life for you!'

Then the fifth was dragged forward 15 for torture. Looking at the king, he said: 'You have authority over men, mortal as you are, and can do as you

26: This verse hints at the sinner's punishment after death, an advance on earlier OT ideas (see also Dan.12.2). 7.1: In this contrived story, the chief persecutor, *king* Antiochus, appears himself. 6: See Deut.32.36. 8: The martyrs refuse to speak Greek (vv. 21,27; 12.37; 15.29). 9-14: The *resurrection* of the just appears throughout this story (see Dan.12.1-3); universal

17 please. But do not imagine that God has abandoned our race. Wait and see how his great power will torment you and your descendants.'

18 Next the sixth was brought and said with his dying breath: 'Do not delude yourself. It is our own fault that we suffer these things; we have sinned against our God and brought these appalling disasters upon ourselves. 19 But do not suppose you will escape the consequences of trying to fight against God.'

20 The mother was the most remarkable of all, and deserves to be remembered with special honour. She watched her seven sons all die in the space of a single day, yet she bore it bravely because she put her trust in the Lord. 21 She encouraged each in turn in her native language. Filled with noble resolution, her woman's thoughts fired by a manly spirit, she said to them: 22 'You appeared in my womb, I know not how; it was not I who gave you life and breath and set in order your bodily frames. It is the Creator of the universe who moulds man at his birth and plans the origin of all things. Therefore he, in his mercy, will give you back life and breath again, since now you put his laws above all thought of self.'

24 Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt and suspected an insult in her words. The youngest brother was still left, and the king, not content with appealing to him, even assured him on oath that the moment he abandoned his ancestral customs he would make him rich and prosperous, by enrolling him as a King's Friend and entrusting him with high office. Since the young man paid no attention to him, the king summoned the mother and urged her to advise the lad to save his life. After much urging from the king, she agreed to persuade her son. 27 She leaned towards him, and flouting the cruel tyrant, she said in their native language: 'My son, take pity on me. I carried you nine months in the womb, suckled you three years, reared you and brought you up to your

28 present age. I beg you, child, look at the sky and the earth; see all that is in them and realize that God made them out of nothing, and that man comes into being in the same way. Do not be 29 afraid of this butcher; accept death and prove yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may receive you back again along with them.'

She had barely finished when the 30 young man spoke out: 'What are you all waiting for? I will not submit to the king's command; I obey the command of the law given by Moses to our ancestors. And you, King Antiochus, 31 who have devised all kinds of harm for the Hebrews, you will not escape God's hand. We are suffering for our own 32 sins, and though to correct and discipline us our living Lord is angry for a short time, yet he will again be reconciled to his servants. But you, 34 impious man, foulest of the human race, do not indulge vain hopes or be carried away by delusions of greatness, you who lay hands on God's servants. You are not yet safe from the judge- 35 ment of the almighty all-seeing God. My brothers have now fallen in loyalty 36 to God's covenant, after brief pain leading to eternal life;<sup>j</sup> but you will pay the just penalty of your insolence by the verdict of God. I, like my brothers, 37 surrender my body and my life for the laws of our fathers. I appeal to God to show mercy speedily to his people and by whips and scourges to bring you to admit that he alone is God. With me 38 and my brothers may the Almighty's anger, which has justly fallen on all our race, be ended!'

The king, exasperated by these 39 scornful words, was beside himself with rage. So he treated him worse than the others, and the young man died, 40 putting his whole trust in the Lord, without having incurred defilement. Then finally, after her sons, the mother 41 died.

<sup>j</sup> in loyalty . . . life: or after a brief time of pain, in loyalty to God's covenant of everlasting life.

resurrection is not explicitly taught. 17: The *descendants* are the king's successors. 24: *Friend*: see 1 Macc.2.18 n. 28: This is the first biblical mention of creation from nothingness; see Gen.1.1 n. 33: See 5.17. 38: See vicarious suffering also in Isa.52.13-53.12.

42 This, then, must conclude our account of the eating of the entrails and the monstrous outrages that accompanied it.

*The revolt of Judas Maccabaeus*

8 MEANWHILE JUDAS, ALSO CALLED MACCABAEUS, and his companions were making their way into the villages unobserved. They summoned their kinsmen and enlisted others who had remained faithful to Judaism, until they had collected about six thousand men. They invoked the Lord to look down and help his people, whom all were trampling under foot, to take pity on the temple profaned by impious men, and to have mercy on Jerusalem, which was being destroyed and would soon be levelled to the ground. They prayed him also to give ear to the blood that cried to him for vengeance, to remember the infamous massacre of innocent children and the deeds of blasphemy against his name, and to show his hatred of wickedness.

5 Once his band of partisans was organized, Maccabaeus proved invincible to the Gentiles, for the Lord's anger had changed to mercy. He came on towns and villages without warning and burnt them; he occupied the key positions, and inflicted many severe reverses on the enemy, choosing the night-time as being especially favourable for these attacks. His heroism<sup>b</sup> was talked about everywhere. When Philip realized that the small gains made by Judas were occurring with growing frequency, he wrote to Ptolemaeus, the governor of Coele-syria and Phoenicia, asking for his help in pro-

tecting the royal interests. Ptolemaeus 9 immediately selected Nicanor, son of Patroclus, a member of the highest order of King's Friends, and sent him at the head of at least twenty thousand troops of various nationalities to exterminate the entire Jewish race. With him Ptolemaeus associated Gorgias, a general of wide experience. Nicanor determined to pay off the two 10 thousand talents due from the king as tribute to the Romans, by the sale of the Jews he would take prisoner; and 11 he at once made an offer of Jewish slaves to the coastal towns, undertaking to deliver them at the price of ninety to the talent. But he did not expect the vengeance of the Almighty, which was soon to be at his heels.

Word of Nicanor's advance reached 12 Judas, and he informed his men that the enemy was at hand. The cowards 13 who doubted God's justice took themselves off and fled. But the rest disposed 14 of their remaining possessions, and they prayed together to the Lord to save them from the impious Nicanor, who had sold them even before they met in battle; and if they could not ask this 15 for their own merits, they did so on the ground of the covenants God had made with their ancestors, and of his holy and majestic Name which they bore. Maccabaeus assembled his fol- 16 lowers, six thousand in number, and appealed to them not to flee in panic before the enemy nor to be afraid of the great host which was attacking them without just cause. Rather they 17 should fight nobly, having before their eyes the wicked crimes of the Gentiles against the temple, their callous outrage upon Jerusalem, and, further, their

*k* Or His numerous force.

8.1-10.8: Judas Maccabaeus succeeds in purifying the Temple. The Lord's anger (6.12-17) is appeased and turns to mercy (8.5), enabling Judas and his guerrillas to rededicate the Temple.

8.1-36: Judas' initial successes. See 1 Macc.2.42-48. 2-3: The guerrillas pray, then fight. 2 Macc. emphasizes the role of prayer in the victories. For similar descriptions of the evils faced, see 1 Macc.1.24-28,36-40; 2.7-12; 3.45,50-53. 8-29,34-36: See 1 Macc.3.38-4.27. 8: Philip: see 5.22; 6.11. Ptolemaeus: see 4.45; 1 Macc.3.38. In Hellenistic times, Coele-syria designated first the region between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains, then also Palestine generally. 9: Victory for Nicanor (vv. 14-15; 1 Macc.3.38; 7.26-50), one of the King's Friends (see 1 Macc.2.18 n.), would exterminate the entire Jewish race by destroying defenders of its distinctiveness and assimilating the survivors to Hellenism. 10: The tribute may be arrears from the money owed by the treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.). 11: Nicanor's offer was half the average price per slave in Greece. 13: 1 Macc.3.56 gives the reasons of Deut.20.5-8 for their departure. 14: They disposed of their . . . possessions lest Nicanor confiscate them anyway.

suppression of the traditional Jewish  
 18 way of life. 'They rely on their weapons  
 and their audacity,' he said, 'but we  
 rely on God Almighty, who is able to  
 overthrow with a nod our present  
 assailants and, if need be, the whole  
 19 world.' He went on to recount to them  
 the occasions when God had helped  
 their ancestors: how, in Sennacherib's  
 time, one hundred and eighty-five thou-  
 20 sand of the enemy had perished, and  
 also how, on the occasion of the battle  
 against the Galatians in Babylonia, all  
 the Jews engaged in the combat had  
 numbered no more than eight thou-  
 sand, with four thousand Macedo-  
 nians, yet, when the Macedonians were  
 hard pressed, the eight thousand  
 through heaven's aid had destroyed  
 one hundred and twenty thousand and  
 taken much booty.

21 His words put them in good heart  
 and made them ready to die for their  
 laws and for their country. He then  
 22 divided the army into four and gave  
 each of his brothers, Simon, Josephus,  
 and Jonathan, command of a division  
 23 of fifteen hundred men. Besides this, he  
 appointed Eleazar to read the holy  
 book aloud<sup>l</sup>, and giving the signal for  
 battle with the cry 'God is our help',  
 and taking command of the leading  
 division in person, he engaged Nicanor.  
 24 The Almighty fought on their side, and  
 they slaughtered over nine thousand  
 of the enemy, wounded and disabled  
 the greater part of Nicanor's forces,  
 25 and routed them completely. They  
 seized the money of those who had  
 come to buy them as slaves. After  
 chasing the enemy a considerable  
 distance, they were forced to break off  
 26 because it was late; for it was the day  
 before the sabbath, and for that reason  
 27 they called off the pursuit. When they  
 had collected the enemy's weapons and  
 stripped the dead, they turned to keep  
 the sabbath. They offered thanks and  
 praises loud and long to the Lord who  
 had kept the first drops of his mercy to  
 28 shed on them that day.<sup>m</sup> After the

sabbath was over, they distributed  
 some of the spoils among the victims  
 of persecution and the widows and  
 orphans; the remainder they divided  
 among themselves. This done, all  
 29 together made supplication to the  
 merciful Lord, praying him to be fully  
 reconciled with his servants.

The Jews now engaged the forces of  
 30 Timotheus and Bacchides and killed  
 over twenty thousand of them. They  
 gained complete control of some high  
 strongholds, and divided the immense  
 booty, giving shares equal to their own  
 to the victims of persecution, to the  
 widows and orphans, and to the old  
 men as well. They carefully collected  
 31 all the enemy's weapons and stored  
 them at strategic points; the remainder  
 of the spoils they brought into Jerusa-  
 lem. They killed the officer command-  
 32 ing the forces of Timotheus, an utterly  
 godless man who had caused the Jews  
 great suffering. During the victory  
 33 celebrations in their capital, they  
 burnt alive the men who had set fire to  
 the sacred gates, including Callisthenes,  
 who had taken refuge in a small house;  
 he thus received the due reward of his  
 impiety.

Thus, by the Lord's help, Nicanor,  
 34-35 that double-dyed villain who had  
 brought the thousand merchants to  
 buy the Jewish captives, was humiliated  
 by the very people whom he despised  
 above all others. He threw off his  
 magnificent uniform, and all alone like  
 a runaway slave made his escape  
 through the interior, and was, indeed,  
 very lucky to reach Antioch after losing  
 his whole army. So the man who had  
 36 undertaken to secure tribute for the  
 Romans by taking prisoner the in-  
 habitants of Jerusalem showed the  
 world that the Jews had a champion  
 and were therefore invulnerable, be-  
 cause they kept the laws he had given  
 them.

<sup>l</sup> Besides . . . aloud: *probable reading; Gk. obscure.*  
<sup>m</sup> kept . . . day: *so some witnesses; others read brought*  
 them safely to that day and had appointed it as the  
 beginning of mercy for them.

19: *Sennacherib's time*: see 2 Kgs.19.35. 20: This incident is otherwise unknown. 30-33: See 1 Macc.5.6-13,24-54. 30: For *Timotheus* see 1 Macc.5.6-8,37-44; 2 Macc.12.10-25, and for *Bacchides*, see 1 Macc.7.8-20. 33: *Callisthenes* is otherwise unknown. The fire may be that of 1 Macc.1.31. 36: *Champion*: God.

9 It so happened that, about this time, Antiochus had returned in disorder from Persia. He had entered the city of Persepolis and attempted to plunder its temples and assume control. But the populace rose and rushed to arms in their defence, with the result that Antiochus was routed by civilians and forced to beat a humiliating retreat. 10  
 2 When he was near Ecbatana, news reached him of what had happened to Nicanor and the forces of Timotheus. 11  
 4 Transported with fury, he conceived the idea of making the Jews pay for the injury inflicted by those who had put him to flight, and so he ordered his charioteer to drive without stopping until the journey was finished.

But riding with him was the divine judgement! For in his arrogance he said: 'When I reach Jerusalem, I will make it a common graveyard for the Jews.' But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him a fatal and invisible blow. As soon as he had said the words, he was seized with incurable pain in his bowels and with sharp internal torments—a punishment entirely fitting for one who had inflicted many unheard-of torments on the bowels of others. Still he did not in the least abate his insolence; more arrogant than ever, he breathed fiery threats against the Jews. After he had given orders to speed up the journey, it happened that he fell out of his chariot as it hurtled along, and so violent was his fall that every joint in his body was dislocated. He, who in his pretension to be more than man had just been thinking that he could command the waves of the sea and weigh high mountains on the scales, was brought to the ground and had to be carried in a litter, thus making God's power<sup>n</sup> manifest to all. Worms swarmed even from the eyes of this godless man and, while he was still alive and in agony, his flesh rotted off, and the whole army was disgusted by the stench of

his decay. It was so unbearably offensive that nobody could escort the man who only a short time before had seemed to touch the stars in the sky.

In this broken state, Antiochus began to abate his great arrogance. Under God's lash, and racked with continual pain, he began to see things in their true light. He could not endure his own stench and said, 'It is right to submit oneself to God and, being mortal, not to think oneself equal to him.' Then the villain made a solemn promise to the Lord, who had no intention of sparing him any longer, and it was to this effect: Jerusalem the holy city, which he had been hurrying to level to the ground and to transform into a graveyard, he would now declare a free city; to all the Jews, whom he had not considered worthy of burial but only fit to be thrown out with their children as prey for birds and beasts, he would give privileges equal to those enjoyed by the citizens of Athens. The holy temple which he had earlier plundered he would adorn with the most splendid gifts; he would replace all the sacred utensils on a much more lavish scale; he would meet the cost of the sacrifices from his own revenues. In addition to all this, he would even turn Jew and visit every inhabited place to proclaim God's might.

When his pains in no way abated, because the just judgement of God had fallen on him, he was in despair and, as a kind of olive branch, wrote to the Jews the letter here copied:

To my worthy citizens, the Jews, warm greetings and good wishes for their health and prosperity from Antiochus, King and Chief Magistrate.

May you and your children flourish and your affairs go as you wish. Having my hope in heaven, I keep an

<sup>n</sup> Some witnesses read *litter*. God made his power . . .

9.1–29: The death of the persecutor. The false god Epiphanes, "(Zeus) manifest," falls by the manifest power of the true God. See 1 Macc.6.1–17. 8: See v. 12; 5.21. 9–17: Theology, rather than history, seems to be the object of the description of the king's last illness. The allusions are to Isa.14.11; 66.24; Ecclus.7.17; 19.3. For similar descriptions of the deaths of the impious, see Josephus on Herod the Great (*Ant.* XVII.6.5) and Acts 12.23 on Herod Agrippa. 18–27: The letter is sent to Hellenized Jews or Antiochenes. Jews faithful to the Law would not re-

affectionate remembrance of your regards and goodwill.

As I was returning from Persia, I suffered a tiresome illness, and so I have judged it necessary to provide for the general safety of you all. Not that I despair of my condition—on the contrary I have good hopes of recovery—but I observed that my father, whenever he made an expedition east of the Euphrates, appointed a successor, so that, if anything unexpected should happen or if some tiresome report should spread, his subjects would not be disturbed, since they would know to whom the empire had been left. Further, I know well that the neighbouring princes on the frontiers of my kingdom are watching for an opportunity and waiting on events. So I have designated as king my son Antiochus, whom I frequently entrusted and recommended to most of you during my regular visits to the satrapies beyond the Euphrates. I have written to him what is here copied. Wherefore I pray and entreat each one of you to maintain your existing goodwill towards myself and my son, remembering the services I have rendered to you both as a community and as individuals. For I am sure my son will follow my own policy of moderation and benevolence and will accommodate himself to your wishes.

Thus this murderer and blasphemer, suffering the worst of agonies, such as he had made others suffer, met a pitiable end in the mountains of a foreign land. His body was brought back by Philip, his intimate friend; but he was afraid of Antiochus's son and went

over to Ptolemy Philometor in Egypt.

Maccabaeus with his men, led by the Lord, recovered the temple and city of Jerusalem. He demolished the altars erected by the heathen in the public square, and their sacred precincts as well. When they had purified the sanctuary, they constructed another altar; then, striking fire from flints, they offered a sacrifice for the first time for two whole years, and restored the incense, the lights, and the Bread of the Presence. This done, they prostrated themselves and prayed the Lord not to let them fall any more into such disasters, but, should they ever happen to sin, to discipline them himself with clemency and not hand them over to blasphemous and barbarous Gentiles. The sanctuary was purified on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the same day of the same month as that on which foreigners had profaned it. The joyful celebration lasted for eight days; it was like the Feast of Tabernacles, for they recalled how, only a short time before, they had kept that feast while they were living like wild animals in the mountains and caves; and so they carried garlanded wands and branches with their fruits, as well as palm-fronds, and they chanted hymns to the One who had so triumphantly achieved the purification of his own temple. A measure was passed by the public assembly to the effect that the entire Jewish race should keep these days every year.

#### *The campaign against Eupator*

WE HAVE ALREADY RECOUNTED THE end of Antiochus called Epiphanes. Now we will describe what happened

member Antiochus' services (v. 26) kindly. 23: Antiochus III had appointed Seleucus IV to succeed him. 29: *Philip*: see 1 Macc.6.14-15.

10.1-8: *Judas purifies the Temple*. See 1 Macc.4.36-61. 2: See 1 Macc.1.47. 3: The interval of *two years* is three in 1 Macc.1.54; 4.52. For the *incense, lights, and Bread*, see Exod.30.7-8; 25.30. 5: December 17, 164 B.C. 6: Unable to celebrate the *Feast of Tabernacles* properly while on the run (5.27; 6.6), Judas and his men now celebrate the Temple's purification and rededication as a Feast of Tabernacles in Kislev (1.9 n.). 7: *Palm-fronds*: symbols of independence found on Jewish coins of the period and later; see 1 Macc.13.51. 8: This explains the letters of 1.1-10a; 1.10b-2.18.

10.9-13.26: *The defeat of Lysias and others*. Since Antiochus V Eupator was only about seven years old when his father died, the main actors are Lysias and various generals.

10.9-12.1: *Battles with Seleucid generals*. The events leading up to the treaty with Lysias are

under that godless man's son, Antiochus Eupator, in a brief summary of the principal evils brought about by his wars. At his accession, Eupator appointed as vicegerent a man called Lysias who had succeeded Ptolemaeus Macron as governor-general of Coele-syria and Phoenicia. For Ptolemaeus had taken the lead in reversing the former unjust treatment of the Jews and had attempted to maintain peaceful relations with them, and as a result he was denounced by the King's Friends to Eupator. On every side he was called traitor, because he had already abandoned Cyprus, entrusted to him by Philometor, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. He still enjoyed power, but no longer respect, and in despair he ended his life by poison.

When Gorgias became governor, he engaged mercenaries and took every opportunity of attacking the Jews. At the same time the Idumaeans, who were in control of strategic fortresses, were also harassing them; they harboured the fugitives from Jerusalem and tried to carry on the war. Maccabaeus and his men made public supplication and prayed God to fight on their side. They made an assault on the Idumaean fortresses, pressed the attack vigorously, and captured them; they drove off all who were manning the walls, and killed all they met, to the number of at least twenty thousand.

Nine thousand or more of the enemy took refuge in two towers, very strongly fortified and fully equipped against a siege. Maccabaeus himself set out for the places which were being hard pressed, but left Simon and Josephus behind, with Zacchaeus and his men, enough to prosecute the siege. But Simon's men were too fond of money, and when they were bribed with seventy thousand drachmas by

some of those in the towers, they let them slip through their lines. When Maccabaeus was informed of this, he assembled the leaders of the army and denounced these men for having sold their brothers for money by letting their enemies escape. Then he executed the men who had turned traitor, and immediately the two towers fell to him. His military operations were completely successful; in the two fortresses he destroyed over twenty thousand of the enemy.

After his previous defeat by the Jews, Timotheus collected a huge force of mercenaries and Asian cavalry, and advanced to take Judaea by storm. As he approached, Maccabaeus and his men made their prayer to God. They sprinkled dust on their heads and put sackcloth round their waists; they prostrated themselves on the altar-step and begged God to favour them, 'to be an enemy of their enemies and an opponent of their opponents', as the law clearly states.

When they had finished their prayer, they took up their weapons, advanced a good distance from Jerusalem, and halted near the enemy. At first light the two armies joined battle. For the Jews, success and victory were guaranteed not only because of their bravery but even more because the Lord was their refuge, whereas the Gentiles had only their own fury to lead them into battle. As the fighting grew hot, the enemy saw in the sky five magnificent figures riding horses with golden bridles, who placed themselves at the head of the Jews, formed a circle round Maccabaeus, and kept him invulnerable under the protection of their armour. They launched arrows and thunderbolts at the enemy, who, confused and blinded, broke up in complete disorder. Twenty thousand five hundred of the

described. 11: Although *Lysias* was regent and guardian of Antiochus V Eupator (164–161 B.C.), he had to struggle with Philip to maintain this post (1 Macc.3.33; 6.14,55–63). 12–13: *Ptolemaeus* had governed *Cyprus* for the Egyptian king Ptolemy VI *Philometor* (180–145 B.C.), but deserted to *Epiphanes* when that Seleucid king's fleet approached *Cyprus*. 14–23: See 1 Macc.5.3–5. 14: *Gorgias* was governor of *Idumea* (12.32). 17: The *twenty thousand* here, "nine thousand" in v. 18, and "seventy thousand" in v. 20 all seem excessive. The author tends to inflate numbers. 22: Once the evil is removed, God, who fights with Judas (v. 16), immediately allows success. The author never loses sight of the source of victory. 24–38: This incident, unparalleled in 1 Macc., belongs chronologically after 12.10–31; 1 Macc.5.9–13,24–54. 26: See Exod.23.22. 29–31: Fighting for the Law, Judas gets help from heaven, i.e., he receives supernatural



infantry, as well as six hundred cavalry, were slaughtered.

32 Timotheus himself fled to a fortress called Gazara, commanded by Chaereas and strongly garrisoned. Maccabaeus and his men welcomed this, and for four days they laid siege to the place. The garrison, confident in the strength of their position, hurled horrible and impious blasphemies at them, until, at dawn on the fifth day, twenty young men from the force of Maccabaeus, burning with rage at the blasphemy, courageously stormed the wall and in savage anger cut down all they met. Under cover of this distraction others got up the same way, attacked the defenders, set light to the towers, and started fires on which they burnt the blasphemers alive. Others broke down the gates and let in the rest of the army, and thus the city was occupied. Timotheus had hidden himself in a cistern, but he was killed along with his brother Chaereas and Apollphanes. To celebrate their achievement, the Jews praised with hymns and thanksgivings the Lord who showers blessings on Israel and gives them the victory.

11 Very shortly afterwards, Lysias the vicegerent, the king's guardian and relative, angered by these events, collected about eighty thousand troops, in addition to his entire cavalry, and advanced on the Jews. He reckoned on making Jerusalem a settlement for Gentiles, subjecting the temple to taxation like all gentile shrines, and putting up the high-priesthood for sale annually. He reckoned not at all with the might of God, but was elated with his myriads of infantry, his thousands of cavalry, his eighty elephants. Penetrating into Judaea, he approached Bethsura, a fortified place about twenty miles from Jerusalem, and closely invested it.

6 When Maccabaeus and his men learnt that Lysias was besieging their fortresses, they and all the people, wailing and weeping, prayed the Lord

to send a good angel to deliver Israel. Maccabaeus was the first to arm himself, and he urged the rest to share his danger and come to the help of their brothers. One and all, they set out eagerly. They were still in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem when there appeared at their head a horseman arrayed in white, brandishing his golden weapons. Then with one voice they praised their merciful God and felt so strong in spirit that they could have attacked not only men but also the most savage animals, and even walls of iron. They came on fully armed, with their heavenly ally, under the mercy of the Lord. They hurled themselves like lions against the enemy, cut down eleven thousand of them, as well as sixteen hundred cavalry, and put all the rest to flight. Most of those who escaped lost their weapons and were wounded, and Lysias saved his life only by running away.

Lysias was no fool, and as he took stock of the defeat he had suffered he realized that the Hebrews were invincible, because the mighty God fought on their side. So he proposed a settlement on terms entirely acceptable, promising also to win the king over by putting pressure on him to show friendship to the Jews. Maccabaeus agreed to all the proposals of Lysias out of regard for the general welfare, for the king had accepted all the proposals from the Jewish side which Maccabaeus had forwarded to Lysias in writing.

The letter of Lysias to the Jews ran as follows:

Lysias to the Jewish community, greeting.

Your representatives John and Absalom have handed to me the document here copied and have asked me to ratify what is contained in it. Whatever needed to be brought to the king's knowledge, I have communicated to him, and what was within my own competence, I have

protection and truly miraculous military assistance. 11.1-15: See 1 Macc.4.28-35. This event preceded the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. 11: 1 Macc.4.34 gives much lower numbers. 13: The reason is the author's, not that of Lysias. 16-30: The letters, except for vv. 22-26, belong to the peace negotiations. 17: *John* may be Mattathias' son (1 Macc.2.2). 18: The king

19 granted. If, therefore, you maintain  
your goodwill towards the empire, I  
for my part will endeavour to pro-  
mote your welfare for the future.  
20 I have ordered your representatives  
and mine to confer with you about  
the details. Farewell.

The twenty-fourth of Dioscorus  
in the year 148.<sup>o</sup>

22 The king's letter ran as follows:

King Antiochus to his brother  
Lysias, greeting.

23 Now that our royal father has  
gone to join the gods, we desire that  
our subjects be undisturbed in the  
conduct of their own affairs. We have  
24 learnt that the Jews do not consent  
to adopt Greek ways, as our father  
wished, but prefer their own mode  
of life and request that they be  
allowed to observe their own laws.  
25 We choose, therefore, that this  
nation like the rest should be left  
undisturbed, and decree that their  
temple be restored to them and that  
they shall regulate their lives in  
accordance with their ancestral cus-  
26 toms. Have the goodness, therefore,  
to inform them of this and ratify it,  
so that, knowing what our intentions  
are, they may settle down confi-  
dently and quietly to manage their  
own affairs.

27 To the people the king's letter ran  
thus:

King Antiochus to the Jewish  
Senate and people, greeting.

28 We hope that you prosper. We too  
29 are in good health. Menelaus has  
informed us of your desire to return  
30 to your own homes. Therefore we

declare an amnesty for all who  
return before the thirtieth of Xanthi-  
cus. The Jews may follow their 31  
own food-laws as heretofore, and  
none of them shall be charged with  
any previous infringement. I am 32  
sending Menelaus to reassure you.  
Farewell. 33

The fifteenth of Xanthicus in the  
year 148.<sup>o</sup>

The Romans also sent the Jews the 34  
following letter:

Quintus Memmius and Titus  
Manius, Roman legates, to the  
Jewish people, greeting.

We give our assent to all that 35  
Lysias, the king's relative, has  
granted you. But examine carefully 36  
the questions which he reserved for  
reference to the king; then send  
someone immediately, so that we  
may make suitable proposals, for  
we are proceeding to Antioch. Send 37  
messengers therefore without delay,  
so that we also may know what  
your opinion is. Farewell. 38

The fifteenth of Xanthicus in the  
year 148.<sup>o</sup>

When these agreements had been 12  
concluded, Lysias went off to the king,  
and the Jews returned to their farming.  
But some of the governors in the re- 2  
gion, Timotheus and Apollonius son of  
Gennaesus and also Hieronymus and  
Demophon, and in addition Nicanor,  
chief of the Cypriot mercenaries, would  
not allow them to enjoy security and  
live in quiet.

I MUST NOW DESCRIBE AN ATROCITY 3  
committed by the inhabitants of Joppa.

<sup>o</sup> That is 164 B.C.

here is Epiphanes, not Eupator. 21: This is March 164 B.C. 22-26: This misplaced letter belongs to the peace negotiations following Lysias' second campaign against Judas (13.1-26; 1 Macc. 6.28-63). It confirms religious freedom for the Jews. Here the *king* is *Antiochus V* Eupator. The terms were forced on Lysias by political necessity (1 Macc.6.55-63). 23: The dynasty was considered to draw its origin from the gods; its rulers were given divine honors during their lifetime and so went to *join the gods* after death. 27-33: *Antiochus* retracts the hated edicts regarding food (6.7-8). *Xanthicus*: March-April. 34-38: The *questions* referred to the king (see v. 18) are not known. *Quintus Memmius* is otherwise unknown. *Titus Manius* is actually two men, *Titus Manilius* and *Manius Sergius*, both well-known Roman diplomats active in the east at this time.

12.2-45: **Battles with neighboring peoples.** See 1 Macc.5.1-68. Harassment by neighboring peoples led to a series of Jewish punitive raids. 2: For *Timotheus*, see 8.30-33; 10.24-38;

They invited the Jews living in the town to embark with their wives and children in boats which they provided, with no indication of any ill will towards them.

4 As it was a public decision by the whole town, and because they wished to live in peace and suspected nothing, they accepted; but when they were out at sea, the people of Joppa sank the boats, drowning no fewer than two

5 hundred of them. When Judas learnt of this brutal treatment of his fellow-countrymen, he alerted his troops, invoked God, the just judge, and fell upon their murderers. He set the harbour of Joppa on fire by night, burnt the shipping, and put to the sword those who had taken refuge

7 there. But finding the town gates closed, he withdrew, meaning however to return and root out the entire

8 community. When he learnt that the people of Jamnia intended to do the same to the Jews who lived among

9 them, he attacked Jamnia by night and set fire to its harbour and fleet; the light of the flames was visible in Jerusalem thirty miles away.

10 When they had marched more than a mile further in their advance against Timotheus, they were set upon by not less than five thousand Arabs, with

11 five hundred cavalry. A violent combat ensued, in which by divine help Judas and his men were victorious. The defeated nomads begged Judas to make an alliance with them, and promised to supply him with cattle and to give the

12 Jews every other kind of help. Judas realized that they could indeed be useful in many ways; so he agreed to make peace with them, and, after receiving assurances from him, they went back to their tents.

13 Judas also attacked Caspin, a walled town, strongly fortified and inhabited

14 by a motley crew of Gentiles. Confident in the strength of their walls and in their store of provisions, the

defenders behaved provocatively towards Judas and his men, abusing them and also uttering the most wicked blasphemies. But they invoked the

15 world's great Sovereign who in the days of Joshua threw down the walls of Jericho without battering-rams or siege-engines. They attacked the wall fiercely and, by the will of God, captured the town. The carnage was

16 indescribable; the adjacent lake, a quarter of a mile wide, appeared to be overflowing with blood.

Advancing about ninety-five miles

17 from there, they reached Charax, which is inhabited by the Tubian Jews, as they are called. They did not find Timotheus there; he had by that time left the district, having had no success, but in one place he had left behind an extremely strong garrison. Dositheus

19 and Sosipater, Maccabaeus's generals, set out and destroyed the garrison, which consisted of over ten thousand men. Maccabaeus for his part grouped

20 his army in several divisions, appointed commanders for them,<sup>p</sup> and hurried after Timotheus, whose forces numbered a hundred and twenty thousand infantry and two thousand five hundred cavalry. When he learnt of Judas's

21 approach, Timotheus sent off the women and children with all the baggage to a town called Carnaim, this being an inaccessible place, hard to storm because all the approaches to it were narrow. But when Judas's first

22 division appeared, terror and panic seized the enemy at the manifestation of the all-seeing One. In their flight they rushed headlong in every direction, so that frequently they were injured by their comrades and were run through by the points of their swords. Judas pressed the pursuit vigorously

23 and put thirty thousand of these criminals to the sword. Timotheus him-

24

<sup>p</sup> Probable meaning, based on one *Vs.*: *Gk.* appointed them to command the divisions.

12.10-31; 1 Macc.5.24-54. The other *governors* are otherwise unknown. 10: This *mile further* is not measured from Joppa or Jamnia but from some unspecified point in Gilead. The verse abruptly introduces a sizeable fragment (vv. 10-31) from a narrative of Judas' battles with Timotheus (see v. 2) which seems to have become disarranged at some point in its transmission. 13: *Caspin* is the Casphor of 1 Macc.5.26,36. 15: *Walls of Jericho*: see Josh.6.1-21. 17: *Charax* is literally a fortified camp. These *Tubian Jews* lived in the region of Tubias, i.e. in Gilead (1 Macc.5.13). 21-26: For the battle near, and at, *Carnaim*, see 1 Macc.5.37-44. *Atargatis* was

self was taken prisoner by the troops of Dositheus and Sosipater. With much cunning, he begged them to let him go in safety, pointing out that most of them had parents, and some of them brothers, who were in his hands, and might never be heard of again. He pledged himself over and over again to restore these hostages safe and sound; and so they let him go in order to save their relatives.

Judas moved on Carnaim and the sanctuary of Atargatis, and killed twenty-five thousand people there. After this victory and destruction he next marched on Ephron, a fortified town inhabited by a mixed population.<sup>q</sup> Stalwart young men took up their position in front of the walls and fought vigorously, while inside there was a great supply of engines of war and ammunition. But the Jews invoked the Sovereign whose might shatters all the strength of the enemy. They made themselves masters of the town and killed twenty-five thousand of the defenders. Leaving that place, they advanced to Scythopolis, some seventy-five miles from Jerusalem. The Jews who lived there testified to the goodwill shown them by the people of Scythopolis and the kindness with which they had treated them in their bad times; so Judas and his men thanked them, and charged them to be equally friendly to the Jewish race for the future. They returned to Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Weeks.

After celebrating Pentecost, as it is called, they advanced to attack Gorgias, the general in charge of Idumaea, who met them with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. When the ranks joined battle, a small number of the Jews fell. But a cavalryman of great strength called Dositheus, one of the Tubian Jews, had hold of Gorgias by his cloak and was dragging the villain

off by main force, with the object of taking him alive, when a Thracian horseman bore down on him and chopped off his arm; so Gorgias escaped to Marisa.

Esdrias and his men had been fighting for a long time and were exhausted. But Judas invoked the Lord to show himself their ally and leader in battle. Striking up hymns in his native language as a battle-cry, he put the forces of Gorgias to flight by a surprise attack.

Regrouping his forces, he led them to the town of Adullam. The seventh day was coming on, so they purified themselves, as custom dictated, and kept the sabbath there. Next day they went, as had by now become necessary, to collect the bodies of the fallen in order to bury them with their relatives in the ancestral graves. But on every one of the dead, they found, under the tunic, amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, objects which the law forbids to Jews. It was evident to all that here was the reason why these men had fallen. Therefore they praised the work of the Lord, the just judge, who reveals what is hidden; and, turning to prayer, they asked that this sin might be entirely blotted out. The noble Judas called on the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened to the fallen because of their sin. He levied a contribution from each man, and sent the total of two thousand silver drachmas to Jerusalem for a sin-offering—a fit and proper act in which he took due account of the resurrection. For if he had not been expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been foolish and superfluous to pray for the dead. But since he had in view the wonderful reward reserved for those who die a godly death, his purpose

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses add where Lysias had his headquarters.

the famed Syrian goddess. 27–28: Judas took *Ephron* because it refused him passage (1 Macc. 5.46–51). 29: *Scythopolis* is the Bethshan of 1 Macc. 5.52. 31: For the *Feast of Weeks*, or Pentecost, see Exod. 34.22; Deut. 16.9–12. 32–45: See 1 Macc. 5.55–62, according to which Judas went to the relief of the defeated Josephus and Azarias (*Esdrias*, v. 36). 40: 1 Macc. 5.61 gives a different reason for the defeat. Deut. 7.25–26 forbade taking these idol *amulets*. 42–44: Judas, by *prayer* and *sin-offering*, hoped to avoid guilt by association (Josh. ch. 7) for the living. The author sees this as Judas' prayer for the dead. Thus, those who had died piously in battling for God's Law (v. 45) needed to be cleansed of this sin before the resurrection of the just (vv. 43–44). Later, Christian theologians would see here the essence of their doctrine of Purgatory.

was a holy and pious one. And this was why he offered an atoning sacrifice to free the dead from their sin.

- 13 In the year 149,<sup>r</sup> information reached Judas and his men that Antiochus Eupator was advancing on Judaea  
2 with a large army; he was accompanied by Lysias, his guardian and vicegerent, bringing in addition a Greek force, consisting of one hundred and ten thousand infantry, five thousand three hundred cavalry, twenty-two elephants, and three hundred chariots armed with scythes.
- 3 Menelaus also joined them and urged Antiochus on; this he did most disingenuously, not for his country's good, but because he believed he  
4 would be maintained in office. However, the King of kings aroused the rage of Antiochus against Menelaus: Lysias produced evidence that this criminal was responsible for all Antiochus's troubles, and so the king ordered him to be taken to Beroea and there to be executed in the manner  
5 customary at that place. Now in Beroea there is a tower some seventy-five feet<sup>s</sup> high, filled with ashes; it has a circular device sloping sheer on all  
6 sides into the ashes. This is where the citizens take anyone guilty of sacrilege or any other notorious crime, and  
7 thrust him to his doom; and such was the fate of the law-breaker Menelaus, who was not even allowed burial—a  
8 fate he richly deserved. Many a time he had desecrated the hallowed ashes of the altar-fire, and by ashes he met his death.
- 9 So the king came on with the barbarous intention of inflicting on the Jews suffering far worse than his  
10 father had inflicted. When Judas heard this he ordered the people to invoke the Lord day and night and pray that now more than ever he would come

to their aid, since they were on the point of losing law, country, and temple; and that he would not allow  
11 them, just when they had begun to breathe again, to fall into the hands of blaspheming Gentiles. They all obeyed  
12 his orders: for three days without respite they prayed to their merciful Lord, they wailed, they fasted, they prostrated themselves. Then Judas urged them to action and called upon them to stand by him.

After holding a council of war with  
13 the elders, he decided not to wait until the royal army invaded Judaea and took Jerusalem, but to march out and with God's help to bring things to a decision. He entrusted the outcome to  
14 the Creator of the world; his troops he charged to fight bravely to the death for the law, for the temple and for Jerusalem, for their country and their way of life. He pitched camp near Modin, and giving his men the signal  
15 for battle with the cry 'God's victory!', he made a night attack on the royal pavilion with a picked force of the bravest young men. He killed as many as two thousand in the enemy camp, and his men stabbed to death<sup>t</sup> the leading elephant and its driver. In the  
16 end they reduced the whole camp to panic and confusion, and withdrew victorious. It was all over by daybreak,  
17 through the help and protection which Judas had received from the Lord.

Now that he had had a taste of  
18 Jewish daring, the king tried stratagems in attacking their strong-points. He advanced on Bethsura, one of their powerful forts; he was repulsed; he  
19 attacked, he was beaten. Judas sent in supplies to the garrison, but a soldier  
20 in the Jewish ranks, Rhodocus by name, betrayed their secrets to the

<sup>r</sup> That is 163 B.C.

<sup>s</sup> some . . . feet: Gk. fifty cubits.

<sup>t</sup> stabbed to death: probable reading, based on one Vs.

13.1–26: Lysias' second campaign against Judas. See 1 Macc. 6.28–63. While 2 Macc. speaks of victories and notes the eventual success of Judas, 1 Macc. points out more realistically how close to disaster the Jews came. Only the threat of Philip's coup at Antioch (v. 23; 1 Macc. 6.55–63) brought Lysias to the terms of the letter in 2 Macc. 11.22–26. 2: The figures here and in 1 Macc. 6.30 are inflated. 3: Antiochus V Eupator was a minor; Lysias as regent made the decisions. 4: Beroea is the name given to Aleppo by Seleucus I Nicator (305–281 B.C.). Menelaus' execution may have resulted from Lysias' frustration over Judas' subsequent victory, or it may have been due to Menelaus' failure to pay what he promised (4.27–28). 5–8: The method of execution was Persian. 15: See 8.23. Judas' brother Eleazar killed the elephant (1 Macc. 6.43–46). 18–23: See 1 Macc. 6.31, 49–50, 55–63.

enemy. However, he was tracked down,  
 22 arrested, and put away. The king  
 parleyed for the second time with the  
 inhabitants of Bethsura, and, when he  
 had given and received guarantees, he  
 withdrew; he then attacked Judas and  
 23 his men, but had the worst of it. He  
 now received news that Philip, whom  
 he had left in charge of state affairs in  
 Antioch, had gone out of his mind. In  
 dismay he summoned the Jews, agreed  
 to their terms, took an oath to respect  
 all their rights, and, after this settle-  
 24 ment, offered a sacrifice, paid honour  
 to the sanctuary and its precincts, and  
 received Maccabaeus graciously. He  
 left behind Hegemonides as governor  
 of the region from Ptolemais to Gerra,  
 25 and went himself to Ptolemais. Its  
 inhabitants were furious at the treaty  
 he had made, and in their alarm wanted  
 26 to repudiate it. Lysias mounted the  
 rostrum, made the best defence he  
 could, won the people over, calmed  
 them down, and, having thus gained  
 their support, left for Antioch.

Such was the course of the king's  
 offensive and retreat.

*The victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor*

14 AFTER AN INTERVAL OF THREE YEARS,  
 information reached Judas and his  
 men that Demetrius son of Seleucus  
 had sailed into the harbour of Tripolis  
 2 with a powerful army and fleet, and,  
 after disposing of Antiochus and his  
 guardian Lysias, had taken possession  
 of the country.

3 There was a man called Alcimus,  
 who had formerly been high priest but  
 had submitted voluntarily to pollutions  
 at the time of the secession. This man,  
 realizing that there was not now the  
 slightest guarantee of his safety, or any  
 possibility of access to the holy altar,  
 4 came to King Demetrius, about the  
 year 151,<sup>u</sup> and presented him with a

gold crown and palm, and also some  
 of the customary olive branches from  
 the temple. On that particular occasion  
 he kept quiet; but he found a chance  
 5 of forwarding his own mad scheme  
 when Demetrius summoned him to his  
 council and questioned him about the  
 attitude and plans of the Jews. He  
 replied: 'Those of the Jews who are  
 6 called Hasidaeans and are led by Judas  
 Maccabaeus are keeping the war alive  
 and fomenting sedition, refusing to  
 leave the kingdom in peace. Thus, 7  
 although I have been deprived of my  
 hereditary dignity—I mean the high-  
 priesthood—I am here today for two  
 8 motives: first, a genuine concern for  
 the king's rights; and secondly, a regard  
 for my fellow-citizens, since our whole  
 race is suffering considerable hardship  
 as a result of the folly of the people I  
 have just mentioned. I would advise 9  
 your majesty to acquaint yourself with  
 every one of these matters and then  
 make provision for our country and  
 our beleaguered nation, as befits your  
 universal kindness and goodwill. For 10  
 the empire will enjoy no peace so long  
 as Judas remains alive.'

When he had spoken to this effect, 11  
 the other Friends, who were hostile to  
 Judas, immediately inflamed Demetrius  
 still more. The king at once selected 12  
 Nicanor, commander of the elephant  
 corps, gave him command of Judaea,  
 and sent him off with a commission to 13  
 dispose of Judas himself and disperse  
 his forces, and to install Alcimus as  
 high priest of the great temple. The 14  
 gentile population of Judaea, refugees  
 from the attacks of Judas, now flocked  
 to Nicanor, thinking that defeat and  
 misfortune for the Jews would mean  
 prosperity for themselves.

When they learnt of Nicanor's 15  
 offensive and the gentile attack, the  
 Jews sprinkled dust over themselves  
 and prayed to the One who established

<sup>u</sup> That is 161 B.C.

14.1–15.37: The victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor. 2 Macc. details the final major victory of Judas. See 1 Macc. ch. 7. 1: Demetrius I Soter (161–150 B.C.) was the oldest surviving son of Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.) and considered Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) and his son Antiochus V Eupator (164–161 B.C.) as usurpers. 3: The author barely alludes to Bacchides' earlier expedition and its resultant establishment of Alcimus as high priest (1 Macc.7.8–25). The secession or separation is probably the persecution of Epiphanes, which divided the Jews. 6: The Hasidaeans (1 Macc.2.42–43; 7.12–18) were forerunners of the parties of the Pharisees and the Essenes. 11: Friends: See 1 Macc. 2.18 n. 12: Nicanor: see 8.8–29; 1 Macc.3.38–4.25;

his people for ever, who never fails to manifest himself when his chosen are  
 16 in need of help. At their leader's command, they immediately struck camp and joined battle with the enemy  
 17 at the village of Adasa.<sup>v</sup> Simon, the brother of Judas, had fought an engagement with Nicanor, but, because the enemy came up<sup>w</sup> unexpectedly, he  
 18 had suffered a slight reverse. In spite of this, when Nicanor learnt how brave Judas and his troops were and how courageously they fought for their country, he shrank from deciding the  
 19 issue in battle. So he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to negotiate a settlement.

20 After a lengthy consideration of the proposals, Judas informed his men of them; they were unanimous in agreeing  
 21 to make peace. A day was fixed for a private meeting of the leaders. A chariot advanced from each of the two lines, and seats were placed for them;  
 22 but Judas posted armed men at strategic points ready to deal with any unforeseen treachery on the enemy's part. The discussion between the two  
 23 leaders was harmonious. Nicanor stayed some time in Jerusalem and behaved correctly; he dismissed the crowds that had flocked round him,  
 24 and kept Judas always close to himself. He had acquired a real affection for  
 25 him, and urged him to marry and start a family. So Judas married and settled down to the quiet life of an ordinary citizen.

26 Alcimus noticed their friendliness and got hold of a copy of the agreement they had concluded. He went to Demetrius and said that Nicanor was pursuing a policy detrimental to the interests of the empire, by appointing that traitor Judas King's Friend designate.  
 27 The king was furious and was provoked by these villainous slanders to write to Nicanor expressing his dissatisfaction with the agreement and ordering him to arrest Maccabaeus  
 28 and send him at once to Antioch. This message filled Nicanor with dismay; he took it hard that he should have to

break his agreement although the man had committed no offence, but  
 29 since there was no going against the king, he watched for a favourable opportunity of carrying out the order by means of some stratagem. Mac-  
 30 cabaeus, however, observed that Nicanor had become less friendly towards him and no longer showed him the same civility. He realized that this unfriendliness boded no good, so he collected a large number of his followers and went into hiding from Nicanor.

When Nicanor recognized that he  
 31 had been outmanoeuvred by the resolute action of Judas, he went to the great and holy temple at the time when the priests were offering the regular sacrifices, and ordered them to surrender Judas to him. The priests declared  
 32 on oath that they did not know the whereabouts of the wanted man. But  
 33 Nicanor stretched out his right hand towards the shrine and swore this oath: 'Unless you surrender Judas into my custody, I will raze God's sanctuary to the ground, I will destroy the altar, and on this spot I will build a temple to Dionysus for all the world to see.'  
 34 With these words he left; but the  
 35 priests with outstretched hands prayed to Heaven, the constant champion of our race: 'Lord, thou hast no need of  
 36 anything in the world, yet it was thy pleasure that among us there should be a shrine for thy dwelling-place. Now, Lord, who alone art holy, keep this house, so newly purified, for ever free from defilement.'

A man called Razis, a member of  
 37 the Jerusalem senate, was denounced to Nicanor. He was very highly spoken of, a patriot who for his loyalty was known as 'Father of the Jews'. In the  
 38 early days of the secession he had stood his trial for practising Judaism, and with the utmost eagerness had risked life and limb for that cause. Nicanor  
 39 wished to give clear proof of his hostility towards the Jews, and sent

<sup>v</sup> Adasa: probable reading; compare 1 Macc. 7. 40.

<sup>w</sup> came up: probable reading, based on one Vs.

7.26-50. 16-30: The preliminary skirmishes (vv. 15-19) and the friendship of Nicanor for Judas are summarized in 1 Macc. 7.27-30. 31-36: See 1 Macc. 7.33-38. 38: *Secession*: see v. 3 n.

more than five hundred soldiers to  
 40 arrest Razis; he reckoned that his  
 arrest would be a severe blow to the  
 41 Jews. The troops were on the point of  
 capturing the tower where Razis was,  
 and were trying to force the outer door.  
 Then an order was given to set the door  
 on fire, and Razis, hemmed in on all  
 42 sides, turned his sword on himself. He  
 preferred to die nobly rather than fall  
 into the hands of criminals and be  
 43 subjected to gross humiliation. In his  
 haste and anxiety he misjudged the  
 blow, and with the troops pouring  
 through the doors he ran without  
 hesitation on to the wall and heroically  
 threw himself down into the crowd.  
 44 The crowd hurriedly gave way and he  
 45 fell in the space they left. He was still  
 breathing, still on fire with courage;  
 so, streaming with blood and severely  
 wounded, he picked himself up and  
 dashed through the crowd. Finally,  
 46 standing on a sheer rock, and now  
 completely drained of blood, he took  
 his entrails in both hands and flung  
 them at the crowd. And thus, invoking  
 the Lord of life and breath to give  
 these entrails back to him again, he  
 died.

15 Nicanor received information that  
 Judas and his men were in the region  
 of Samaria, and he determined to  
 attack them on their day of rest, when  
 it could be done without any danger.  
 2 Those Jews who were forced to  
 accompany his army said, 'Do not  
 carry out such a savage and barbarous  
 massacre, but respect the day singled  
 out and made holy by the all-seeing  
 3 One.' The double-dyed villain retorted,  
 'Is there a ruler in the sky who has  
 ordered the sabbath day to be ob-  
 4 served?' The Jews declared, 'The living  
 Lord himself is ruler in the sky, and he  
 ordered the seventh day to be kept  
 5 holy.' 'But I', replied Nicanor, 'am a  
 ruler on earth, and I order you to take  
 your arms and do your duty to the  
 king.' However, he did not succeed in  
 carrying out his cruel plan.

Now Nicanor, in his pretentious 6  
 and extravagant conceit, had resolved  
 upon erecting a public trophy from the  
 spoils of Judas's forces. But Mac- 7  
 cabaeus's confidence never wavered,  
 and he had not the least doubt that he  
 would obtain help from the Lord. He 8  
 urged his men not to be afraid of the  
 gentile attack, but to bear in mind the  
 aid they had received from heaven in  
 the past and so look to the Almighty  
 for the victory which he would send  
 this time also. He drew encouragement 9  
 for them from the law and the prophets  
 and, by reminding them of the struggles  
 they had already come through, filled  
 them with a fresh enthusiasm. When 10  
 he had roused their courage, he gave  
 them their orders, reminding them at  
 the same time of the Gentiles' broken  
 faith and perjury. He armed each one 11  
 of them, not so much with the security  
 of shield and spear, as with the  
 encouragement that brave words bring;  
 and he also told them of a trustworthy  
 dream he had had, a sort of waking  
 vision, which put them all in good  
 heart.

What he had seen was this: the 12  
 former high priest Onias appeared to  
 him, that great gentleman of modest  
 bearing and mild disposition, apt  
 speaker, and exponent from childhood  
 of the good life. With outstretched  
 hands he was praying earnestly for  
 the whole Jewish community. Next 13  
 there appeared in the same attitude a  
 figure of great age and dignity, whose  
 wonderful air of authority marked him  
 as a man of the utmost distinction.  
 Then Onias said, 'This is God's prophet 14  
 Jeremiah, who loves his fellow-Jews  
 and offers many prayers for our people  
 and for the holy city.' Jeremiah 15  
 extended his right hand and delivered to  
 Judas a golden sword, saying as he did  
 so, 'Take this holy sword, the gift of 16  
 God, and with it crush your enemies.'

The eloquent words of Judas had the 17  
 power of stimulating everyone to  
 bravery and making men out of boys.

46: Razis, too, believes in the resurrection of the just. 15.1-5: Despite Nicanor's plan, Judas would fight on the Sabbath if attacked (1 Macc.2.41). 10: The Gentiles had perjured themselves with the Hasidaeans (1 Macc.7.12-18). Judas warned his men what to expect if they surrendered. 12-16: The vision of Onias III (3.1; 4.34) and Jeremiah represented the support of the Law (through the Temple's priesthood) and the Prophets for Judas' cause. The author notes the



Encouraged by them, the Jews made up their minds not to remain in camp, but to take the offensive manfully and fight hand to hand with all their strength until the issue was decided. This they did because Jerusalem, their religion, and their temple were in danger. Their fear was not chiefly for their wives and children, not to mention brothers and relatives, but first and foremost for the sacred shrine. The distress of those shut up in Jerusalem was no less, for they were anxious at the prospect of a battle on open ground.

All were waiting for the decisive struggle which lay ahead. The enemy had already concentrated his forces; his army was drawn up in order of battle, the elephants stationed in a favourable position and the cavalry ranged on the flank. When Maccabaeus observed the deployment of the troops, the variety of their equipment, and the ferocity of the elephants, with hands upraised he invoked the Lord, the worker of miracles; for he knew that God grants victory to those who deserve it, not because of their military strength but as he himself decides. This was his prayer: 'Master, thou didst send thy angel in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and he killed as many as a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in Sennacherib's camp. Now, Ruler of heaven, send once again a good angel to go in front of us spreading fear and panic. May they be struck down by thy strong arm, these blasphemers who are coming to attack thy holy people!' Thus he ended.

Nicanor and his forces advanced with trumpets and war-songs, but Judas and his men joined battle with invocations and prayers. Fighting with their hands and praying to God in their hearts, they killed no fewer than thirty-five thousand men, and were greatly cheered by the divine intervention.

The action was over, and they were joyfully disbanding, when they recog-

nized Nicanor lying dead in his armour. Then with tumultuous shouts they praised their Master in their native language. Judas their leader, who always fought body and soul on behalf of his fellow-Jews, never losing his youthful patriotism, now ordered Nicanor's head to be cut off, also his hand and arm, and taken to Jerusalem. On arrival there he summoned all the people and stationed the priests before the altar. Then he sent for the men in the citadel, and showed them the head of the blackguardly Nicanor and the hand which this bragging blasphemer had extended against the Almighty's holy temple. He cut out the tongue of the impious Nicanor, and said he would give it to the birds bit by bit; and he gave orders that the evidence of what Nicanor's folly had brought upon him should be hung up opposite the shrine. They all made the sky ring with the praises of the Lord who had shown his power: 'Praise to him who has preserved his own sanctuary from defilement!' Judas hung Nicanor's head from the citadel, a clear proof of the Lord's help, for all to see. It was unanimously decreed that this day should never pass unnoticed but be regularly celebrated. It is the thirteenth of the twelfth month, called Adar in Aramaic, the day before Mordecai's Day. Such, then, was the fate of Nicanor, and from that time Jerusalem has remained in the possession of the Hebrews.

AT THIS POINT I WILL BRING MY WORK to an end. If it is found well written and aptly composed, that is what I myself hoped for; if cheap and mediocre, I could only do my best. For, just as it is disagreeable to drink wine alone or water alone, whereas the mixing of the two gives a pleasant and delightful taste, so too variety of style in a literary work charms the ear of the reader. Let this then be my final word.

intercessory prayer of the saints (vv. 12,14). 22: Judas refers to the angelic slaughter (probably by plague) of *Sennacherib's* army as it besieged Jerusalem (2 Kgs.19.35; Isa.37.36; 1 Macc.7.41). 33: Instead of having a public trophy or monument to Judas' defeat (v. 6), *Nicanor* became one to his own. 36: The feast of Nicanor was struck from the Jewish calendar after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. For *Mordecai's Day*, see Esther 3.7; 9.20-23.

15.38-39: The Epitomist ends his version before the story of Judas's death (1 Macc.9.1-22).



THE NEW  
ENGLISH BIBLE

THE NEW TESTAMENT  
OXFORD STUDY EDITION

# CONTENTS

Introduction to the New Testament	iii
Marginal Numbers	vi
The Gospel According to Matthew	3
The Gospel According to Mark	42
The Gospel According to Luke	67
The Gospel According to John	108
Acts of the Apostles	141
The Letter of Paul to the Romans	183
The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	201
The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians	218
The Letter of Paul to the Galatians	230
The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians	237
The Letter of Paul to the Philippians	243
The Letter of Paul to the Colossians	249
The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	254
The Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians	258
The First Letter of Paul to Timothy	261
The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy	267
The Letter of Paul to Titus	271
The Letter of Paul to Philemon	274
A Letter to Hebrews	276
A Letter of James	289
The First Letter of Peter	294
The Second Letter of Peter	299
The First Letter of John	302
The Second Letter of John	307
The Third Letter of John	308
A Letter of Jude	309
The Revelation of John	313

# INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

This translation of the New Testament was undertaken with the object of providing English readers, whether familiar with the Bible or not, with a faithful rendering of the best available Greek text into the current speech of our own time, and a rendering which should harvest the gains of recent biblical scholarship.

It is now some three centuries and a half since King James's men put out what we have come to know as the Authorized Version. Two hundred and seventy years later the New Testament was revised. The Revised Version of the New Testament, which appeared in 1881, marked a new departure especially in that it abandoned the so-called Received Text, which had reigned ever since printed editions of the New Testament began, but which the advance of textual criticism had antiquated. The Revisers no longer followed (as their predecessors had done) the text of the majority of manuscripts, which, being for the most part of late date, had been exposed not only to the accidental corruptions of long-continued copying, but also in part to deliberate correction and 'improvement'. Instead, they followed a very small group of manuscripts, the earliest, and in their judgement the best, of those which had survived. During the years which have passed since their time, textual criticism has not stood still. Manuscripts have been discovered of substantially earlier date than any which the Revisers knew. Other important sources of evidence have been either freshly discovered or made more fully available. Meanwhile the methods of textual criticism have themselves been refined and estimates of the value of particular manuscripts have sometimes been reconsidered. The problem of restoring a form of text as near as possible to the vanished autographs now appears less simple than it did to our predecessors. There is not at the present time any critical text which would command the same degree of general acceptance as the Revisers' text did in its day. Nor has the time come, in the judgement of most scholars, to construct such a text, since new material constantly comes to light, and the debate continues. The present translators therefore could do no other than consider variant readings on their merits, and, having weighed the evidence for themselves, select for translation in each passage the reading which to the best of their judgement seemed most likely to represent what the author wrote. Where other readings seemed to deserve serious consideration they have been recorded in footnotes. In assessing the evidence, the translators have taken into account (*a*) ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, (*b*) manuscripts of early translations into other languages, and (*c*) quotations from the New Testament by early Christian writers. These three sources of evidence are collectively referred to as 'witnesses'. A large number of variants, however, are such as could make no appreciable difference to the meaning so far as it could be represented in translation, and these have been passed over in silence. The translators are well aware

that their judgement is at best provisional, but they believe the text they have followed to be an improvement on that underlying the earlier translations. This text can now be read in *The Greek New Testament*, edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1964).

So much for the text. The next step was the effort to understand the original as accurately as possible, as a preliminary to turning it into English. The Revisers of 1881 believed that a better knowledge of the Greek language made it possible to correct a number of mistranslations in the older version, though in doing so they were somewhat limited by the instruction 'to introduce as few alterations as possible . . . consistently with faithfulness'. Since their time the study of the Greek language has no more stood still than has textual criticism. In particular, our knowledge of the kind of Greek used by most of the New Testament writers has been greatly enriched since 1881 by the discovery of many thousands of papyrus documents in popular or non-literary Greek of about the same period as the New Testament. It would be wrong to suggest that they lead to any far-reaching change in our understanding of the Greek of the New Testament period, but they have often made possible a better appreciation of the finer shades of idiom, which sometimes clarifies the meaning of passages in the New Testament. Its language is indeed in many respects more flexible and easy-going than the Revisers were ready to allow, and invites the translator to use a larger freedom.

Our task, however, differed in an important respect from that of the Revisers of 1881. They were instructed not only to introduce as few alterations as possible, but also 'to limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the Authorised and earlier English Versions'. The present translators were subject to no such limitation. In accordance with the original decision of the Joint Committee they were to make the attempt to use consistently the idiom of contemporary English to convey the meaning of the Greek.

The older translators, on the whole, considered that fidelity to the original demanded that they should reproduce, as far as possible, characteristic features of the language in which it was written, such as the syntactical order of words, the structure and division of sentences, and even such irregularities of grammar as were indeed natural enough to authors writing in the easy idiom of popular Hellenistic Greek, but less natural when turned into English. The present translators were enjoined to replace Greek constructions and idioms by those of contemporary English.

This meant a different theory and practice of translation, and one which laid a heavier burden on the translators. Fidelity in translation was not to mean keeping the general framework of the original intact while replacing Greek words by English words more or less equivalent. A word, indeed, in one language is seldom the exact equivalent of a word in a different language. Each word is the centre of a whole cluster of meanings and associations, and in different languages these clusters overlap but do not often coincide. The place of a word in the clause or sentence, or even in a larger unit of thought, will determine what aspect of its total meaning is in the foreground. The translator can hardly hope to convey in another language every shade of meaning that attaches to the word in the original, but if he is free to exploit a wide range of English words covering

a similar area of meaning and association he may hope to carry over the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Thus we have not felt obliged (as did the Revisers of 1881) to make an effort to render the same Greek word everywhere by the same English word. We have in this respect returned to the wholesome practice of King James's men, who (as they expressly state in their preface) recognized no such obligation.

We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the original as precisely as we could (using all available aids), and then saying again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his. We have found that in practice this frequently compelled us to make decisions where the older method of translation allowed a comfortable ambiguity. In such places we have been aware that we take a risk, but we have thought it our duty to take the risk rather than remain on the fence.

In doing our work, we have constantly striven to follow our instructions and render the Greek, as we understood it, into the English of the present day, that is, into the natural vocabulary, constructions, and rhythms of contemporary speech. We have sought to avoid archaism, jargon, and all that is either stilted or slipshod.

It should be said that our intention has been to offer a translation in the strict sense, and not a paraphrase, and we have not wished to encroach on the field of the commentator. But if the best commentary is a good translation, it is also true that every intelligent translation is in a sense a paraphrase. The line between translation and paraphrase is a fine one. But we have had recourse to deliberate paraphrase with great caution, and only in a few passages where without it we could see no way to attain our aim of making the meaning as clear as it could be made. Taken as a whole, our version claims to be a translation, free, it may be, rather than literal, but a faithful translation nevertheless, so far as we could compass it.

For this edition, the translation of the New Testament has been given a careful revision, in which account has been taken of numerous criticisms and suggestions which have come in from various quarters. It is hoped that the modifications introduced, mostly in minor details and seldom reflecting any substantial change of view about the meaning of a passage, will be found to be in the direction of improvement.

In the course of revision, consideration has been given to passages from the Old Testament quoted in the New. These have now been harmonized with the present version of the Old Testament, where this seemed desirable, and practicable. But the quotations are in Greek, and the Greek is by no means always an exact equivalent of the Hebrew. Where it is not, we have deemed it our duty to render the Greek as it lay before us, and not to attempt to reproduce the underlying Hebrew. On this point there has been consultation between representatives of the Old and the New Testament panels.

The translators are as conscious as anyone can be of the limitations and imperfections of their work. No one who has not tried it can know how impossible an art translation is. Only those who have meditated long upon the Greek original are aware of the richness and subtlety of meaning that may lie even within the most apparently simple sentence, or know the despair that attends all

efforts to bring it out through the medium of a different language. Yet we may hope that we have been able to convey to our readers something at least of what the New Testament has said to us during these years of work, and trust that under the providence of Almighty God this translation may open the truth of the Scriptures to many who have been hindered in their approach to it by barriers of language.

C. H. D.

## Marginal Numbers

The conventional verse divisions in the New Testament date only from 1551 and have no basis in the manuscripts. Any system of division into numbered verses is foreign to the spirit of this translation, which is intended to convey the meaning in continuous natural English rather than to correspond sentence by sentence with the Greek.

For purposes of reference, and of comparison with other translations, verse numbers are placed in the margin opposite the line in which the first word belonging to the verse in question appears. Sometimes, however, successive verses are combined in a continuous English sentence, so that the precise point where a new verse begins cannot be fixed; occasionally in the interests of clarity the order of successive verses is reversed (e.g. at John 4.7,8).



# THE GOSPEL



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

The Gospel of Matthew has long been regarded as the most Jewish of the Gospels: the author's preference for the term kingdom of Heaven (see 3.2 n.), his description of Peter's commission in scribal categories (16.19 n.), and his interest in the Law (5.17-19 nn.) are traits which point in this direction. Yet, he shows an anti-Pharisaic bias (e.g. ch. 23), probably intends 23.37-24.2 to imply the repudiation of Israel, and concludes his book with a scene which directs the disciples out into the Gentile mission (28.16-20). With good reason (see 16.18 n.; 18.1-19.1 nn.), this has also been called an "ecclesiastical" Gospel; on almost every page the author's concern for the life of the Church may be detected.

The feature of the book which attracts immediate attention is the organization of the teaching tradition into five great discourses (chs. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25). A narrative section precedes each discourse. This scheme is prefaced by chs. 1-2, which introduce the Messiah-Son of David, and is climaxed by the concluding report of the crucifixion and resurrection in chs. 26-28.

The book was probably written about 90 A.D.

## *The coming of Christ*

1 **A**TABLE OF THE DESCENT OF JESUS Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac of Jacob, Jacob of Judah and his 3 brothers, Judah of Perez and Zarah (their mother was Tamar), Perez of 4 Hezron, Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, Amminadab of Nahshon, 5 Nahshon of Salma, Salma of Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Boaz of Obed (his 6 mother was Ruth), Obed of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (his mother had been the wife of 7 Uriah), Solomon of Rehoboam, Rehoboam of Abijah, Abijah of Asa, Asa of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat of Joram, 9 Joram of Azariah, Azariah of Jotham, Jotham of Ahaz, Ahaz of Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah of Manasseh, Manasseh of Amon, Amon of Josiah; and Josiah 11 was the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 After the deportation Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel of 13 Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel of Abiud,

Abiud of Eliakim, Eliakim of Azor, Azor of Zadok, Zadok of Achim, Achim 14 of Eliud, Eliud of Eleazar, Eleazar of Matthan, Matthan of Jacob, Jacob of Joseph, the husband of Mary, who gave 15 birth to<sup>a</sup> Jesus called Messiah.

There were thus fourteen generations 17 in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David until the deportation to Babylon, and fourteen from the deportation until the Messiah.

THIS IS THE STORY OF THE BIRTH OF 18 the Messiah. Mary his mother was betrothed to Joseph; before their marriage she found that she was with 19 child by the Holy Spirit. Being a man of principle, and at the same time wanting to save her from exposure, Joseph desired to have the marriage 20 contract set aside quietly. He had resolved on this, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. 'Joseph son of David,' said the angel, 'do not be afraid to take Mary home with you as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child.

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary, a virgin, who gave birth to . . . ; one witness has Joseph, and Joseph, to whom Mary, a virgin, was betrothed, was the father of . . .

1.1-17: **Genealogy of the Messiah** (compare Lk.3.23-38). 1: Lit. *Christ* (or *Messiah*, v. 17) means "anointed one" and was frequently used of the royal figure whose rule would bring about the final age of righteousness and justice. The genealogy presents Jesus as this ruler, descended from *King David* (vv. 1,6) through the royal line (vv. 6-11). 2-11: These names are drawn from Ruth 4.18-22; 1 Chr.2.1-3.19. 17: *Fourteen generations*: perhaps reflecting the numerical value of *David* in Heb.;  $d(4) + v(6) + d(4) = 14$ . *Messiah*: see v. 1 n.

1.18-25: **The birth of Jesus** (compare Lk.1.26-38; 2.1-7). The theme of the miraculous birth pervades the passage (vv. 18,20,23,25). 20: Both the *angel* ("messenger") and the *dream* are

21 She will bear a son; and you shall give him the name Jesus (Saviour), for he will save his people from their sins.'  
 22 All this happened in order to fulfil what the Lord declared through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel', a name which means 'God is with us'.  
 24 Rising from sleep Joseph did as the angel had directed him; he took Mary home to be his wife, but had no intercourse with her until her son was born. And he named the child Jesus.

**2 JESUS WAS BORN AT BETHLEHEM IN** Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews?'<sup>b</sup> We observed the rising of his star, and we have come to pay him homage.' King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this; and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the chief priests and lawyers of the Jewish people, and put before them the question: 'Where is it that the Messiah is to be born?' 'At Bethlehem in Judaea', they replied; and they referred him to the prophecy which reads: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are far from least in the eyes of<sup>c</sup> the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a leader to be the shepherd of my people Israel.'  
 7 Herod next called the astrologers to meet him in private, and ascertained from them the time when the star had appeared. He then sent them on to Bethlehem, and said, 'Go and make a careful inquiry for the child. When you have found him, report to me, so that I may go myself and pay him homage.'  
 9 They set out at the king's bidding; and the star which they had seen at its

rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay. At the sight of the star they were overjoyed. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and bowed to the ground in homage to him; then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned home another way.

After they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said to him, 'Rise up, take the child and his mother and escape with them to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to do away with him.' So Joseph rose from sleep, and taking mother and child by night he went away with them to Egypt, and there he stayed till Herod's death. This was to fulfil what the Lord had declared through the prophet: 'I called my son out of Egypt.'

When Herod saw how the astrologers had tricked him he fell into a passion, and gave orders for the massacre of all children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, of the age of two years or less, corresponding with the time he had ascertained from the astrologers. So the words spoken through Jeremiah the prophet were fulfilled: 'A voice was heard in Rama, wailing and loud laments; it was Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing all consolation, because they were no more.'

The time came that Herod died; and an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said to him, 'Rise up, take the child and his mother, and go with them to the land of Israel, for the men who threatened

<sup>b</sup> Or Where is the king of the Jews who has just been born?  
<sup>c</sup> Or least among.

customary devices for reporting revelations (see 2.12-13,22). **21,23:** The chief significance of the account for Mt. lies in the pointedly explained names, *Jesus* and *Emmanuel*. **22-23:** See Isa.7.14 n. Mt. frequently introduces OT quotations with a phrase like *to fulfil what the Lord declared through the prophets* (e.g. 2.15; 8.17; 27.9-10).

**2.1-12: The infant Jesus in Bethlehem.** **1:** *Bethlehem*, the city of David, was the expected birthplace of the Messiah (vv. 4-6). *Reign of Herod:* 37 B.C.-4 B.C. **4:** *Lawyers:* interpreters of Scripture, especially of the Law of Moses. **6:** Mic.5.2. In the OT *shepherd* frequently means "ruler."

**2.13-23: Escape and return.** The story of the flight to Egypt is told only by Mt. **15:** Hos.11.1. **16:** The *massacre* is not reported elsewhere, but Herod's barbarity was notorious. **18:** Jer.31.15.

- 21 the child's life are dead.' So he rose, took mother and child with him, and came to the land of Israel. Hearing, however, that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judaea, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee; there he settled in a town called Nazareth. This was to fulfil the words spoken through the prophets: 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'
- 3 ABOUT THAT TIME JOHN THE BAPTIST appeared as a preacher in the Judaean wilderness; his theme was: 'Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is upon you!' It is of him that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'A voice crying aloud in the wilderness, "Prepare a way for the Lord; clear a straight path for him."'
- 4 John's clothing was a rough coat of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. They flocked to him from Jerusalem, from all Judaea, and the whole Jordan valley, and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.
- 7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them: 'You vipers' brood! Who warned you to escape from the coming retribution? Then prove your repentance by the fruit it bears; and do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father." I tell you that God can make children for Abraham out of these stones here. Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptize you with water, for repentance; but the one who comes after me is mightier than I. I am not fit to take off his shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His shovel is ready in his hand and he will winnow his threshing-floor; the wheat he will gather into his granary, but he will burn the chaff on a fire that can never go out.'
- Then Jesus arrived at the Jordan from Galilee, and came to John to be baptized by him. John tried to dissuade him. 'Do you come to me?' he said; 'I need rather to be baptized by you.' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so for the present; we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires.' John then allowed him to come. After baptism Jesus came up out of the water at once, and at that moment heaven opened; he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove to alight upon him; and a voice from heaven was heard saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved,<sup>d</sup> on whom my favour rests.'
- d Or This is my only Son.*

22: Archelaus ruled from 4 B.C. to 6 A.D. 23: Probably Isa.11.1 (which contains a Heb. word, *nezer*, translated "branch," similar to *Nazareth*) is the intended reference.

3.1-12: The work of the Baptist (Mk.1.1-8; Lk.3.1-18; Jn.1.6,15,19-28). 1: *Wilderness*: the arid Judean territory southeast of Jerusalem, including the lower Jordan valley (v. 6). 2: *Repent*: to change one's mind (Gk.), to return, to turn around (Heb.). *Kingdom*: see Mk.1.15 n. In Jewish piety, *Heaven* was an ordinary manner of referring to God. 3: Isa.40.3. 4: 2 Kgs.1.8 attributes similar clothing to Elijah. 7: *Baptism*, dipping in water, was an important ritual in the Dead Sea community and was also administered to Gentile converts to Judaism. The *Pharisees* were a predominantly lay Jewish movement marked by an elastic interpretation of the Law, though in terms of a special, inherited tradition; they accepted as authoritative not only the "books of Moses," but also other literature including the prophets and other writings; they believed in such "new" doctrines as the resurrection; after the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), they were the dominant force in Judaism. The *Sadducees*, who interpreted Scripture literally, were a priestly-oriented party who enjoyed considerable civil power in Roman times and were theologically conservative (e.g. they did not believe in the resurrection). There were other distinctive Jewish groups, including the Essenes (of whose literature and practices the Dead Sea Scrolls provide rich information); about these, the NT is silent. 9: *Abraham for our father*: see Lk.3.8n. 11: *Holy Spirit and fire*: see Lk.3.16 n.

3.13-17: The baptism of Jesus (Mk.1.9-11 n.; Lk.3.21-22; Jn.1.32-34). 14-15: Jesus' baptism by John presented several problems to the early church. These verses show, first, that John was subordinate to Jesus (v. 14) and second, that Jesus' submission to baptism was not evidence of his sinfulness (vv. 6,15). 16: The origin of the *Spirit-dove* imagery is unknown; the Spirit's "hovering" over the deep in Gen.1.2 is a frequently conjectured source. The descent of the *Spirit* appears to have marked Jesus' installation as Son in the primitive tradition. 17: *On Son, Beloved*, see Mk.1.11 n.

4 JESUS WAS THEN LED AWAY BY THE Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil.  
 2 For forty days and nights he fasted, and at the end of them he was famished.  
 3 The tempter approached him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell 4 these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'Scripture says, "Man cannot live on bread alone; he lives on every word that God utters."  
 5 The devil then took him to the Holy City and set him on the parapet of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for Scripture says, "He will put his angels in charge of you, and they will support you in their arms, for fear you should strike your foot against a stone."  
 7 Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says again, "You are not to put the Lord your God to the test."  
 8 Once again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory. 'All these', he said, 'I will give you, if you will only fall down and do me homage.' But Jesus said, 'Begone, Satan! Scripture says, "You shall do homage to the Lord your God and worship him alone."  
 11 Then the devil left him; and angels appeared and waited on him.  
 12 When he heard that John had been arrested, Jesus withdrew to Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and settled at Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, in the district of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfil the passage 15 in the prophet Isaiah which tells of 'the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, the land beyond Jordan, heathen Galilee', and says:

'The people that lived in darkness 16 saw a great light; light dawned on the dwellers in the land of death's dark shadow.'

From that day Jesus began to proclaim 17 the message: 'Repent; for<sup>e</sup> the kingdom of Heaven is upon you.'

JESUS WAS WALKING BY THE SEA OF 18 Galilee when he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the lake; for they were fishermen. Jesus said to 19 them, 'Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men.' And at once they 20 left their nets and followed him.

He went on, and saw another pair of 21 brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in the boat with their father Zebedee, overhauling their nets. He called them, and at once 22 they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

He went round the whole of Galilee, 23 teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and curing whatever illness or infirmity there was among the people. His fame reached 24 the whole of Syria; and sufferers from every kind of illness, racked with pain, possessed by devils, epileptic, or paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. Great crowds also 25 followed him, from Galilee and the Ten Towns,<sup>f</sup> from Jerusalem and Judaea, and from Transjordan.

### The Sermon on the Mount

WHEN HE SAW THE CROWDS HE WENT 5

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses omit Repent; for. <sup>f</sup> Greek Decapolis.

4.1-11: The temptation (Mk.1.12-13; Lk.4.1-13). 1: The *devil*, or *Satan*, (v. 10) is properly defined as the *tempter* in v. 3; he is a personification of the evil force which opposes God. 2: *Forty days and nights* is reminiscent of fasts of Moses (Exod.34.28; Deut.9.9,18) and Elijah (1 Kgs.19.8). 3,6: The issue at stake in the incident is: *if you are the Son of God*, what is the meaning of true sonship? 4: Deut.8.3. 5: *Holy City*: Jerusalem. 6: Ps.91.11-12. 7: Deut.6.16. 8-9: The world is conceived as under Satan's power until God's kingdom is realized (v. 17). 10: Deut.6.13.

4.12-25: The beginning of Jesus' ministry (Mk.1.14-20; Lk.4.14-15; 5.1-11; Jn.1.35-51). 15-16: Isa.9.1-2. 17: On *kingdom of Heaven*, see 3.2 n. and Mk.1.15 n. 18-22: See Mk.1.16-20 n. 18: *Simon called Peter*: compare 16.18; Jn.1.42. 24: *Devils*: demons, spirits acting as agents of Satan to work evil. 25: *Ten Towns*: Decapolis, in Gk.; a confederation of ten independent cities, most of which were southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

5.1-7.29: The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five great discourses in Mt. (see Introduction). Mt. has organized traditions from various sources to develop the theme of the "higher righteousness" (v. 20 n.). 1: *Hill*: mountains are frequently associated with revelation (compare

- up the hill. There he took his seat, and when his disciples had gathered round him he began to address them. And this is the teaching he gave:
- 3 'How blest are these who know their need of God;  
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- 4 How blest are the sorrowful;  
they shall find consolation.
- 5 How blest are those of a gentle spirit;  
they shall have the earth for their possession.
- 6 How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail;<sup>g</sup>  
they shall be satisfied.
- 7 How blest are those who show mercy;  
mercy shall be shown to them.
- 8 How blest are those whose hearts are pure;  
they shall see God.
- 9 How blest are the peacemakers;  
God shall call them his sons.
- 10 How blest are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of right;  
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- 11 'How blest you are, when you suffer insults and persecution and every kind of calumny for my sake. Accept it with gladness and exultation, for you have a rich reward in heaven; in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

'You are salt to the world. And if salt becomes tasteless, how is its saltness to be restored? It is now good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden underfoot.

'You are light for all the world. A town that stands on a hill cannot be hidden. When a lamp is lit, it is not put under the meal-tub, but on the lamp-stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. And you, like the lamp, must shed light among your fellows, so that, when they see the good you do, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

'DO NOT SUPPOSE THAT I HAVE COME to abolish the Law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete. I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened.<sup>h</sup> If any man therefore sets aside even the least of the Law's demands, and teaches others to do the same, he will have the lowest place in the kingdom of Heaven, whereas anyone who keeps the Law, and teaches others so, will stand high in the kingdom of Heaven. I tell you, unless you show yourselves far better men than the Pharisees and the

<sup>g</sup> Or to do what is right.

<sup>h</sup> Or before all that it stands for is achieved.

17.1; 28.16); contrast Lk.6.17. The Jewish teacher customarily sat when delivering instruction. 2: *His disciples* seems to limit the audience (but see 7.28).

5.3–10: **The Beatitudes** (Lk.6.20–23). 3: *How blest* (or "blessed") introduces a form, popularly called a beatitude, which in the OT and Apoc. commends a type of behavior or attitude for which this worldly happiness is the promised reward (Ps.1.1–2; Prov.8.32–34; Ecclus.25.7–10). In vv. 3–10 (compare Rev.1.3) the promise is eschatological; i.e. the rewards are related to God's coming kingdom and the beatitudes become conditions for admission to the kingdom. *Know their need of God* (for the familiar "poor in spirit") catches the religious dimension of a form of Jewish piety for which "poverty" and "utter dependence on God" were synonymous. 6: The text, to *see right prevail*, implies "to witness the final vindication of right"; Tfn. *g*, to *do what is right*, reflects the meaning the Gk. word *dikaiosisyne* usually has for Mt.

5.11–16: **The task of the disciples.** 11–12: The disciples are to expect suffering, which is their lot as *prophets*; compare Lk.6.22–23. 13–14: Both *salt* and *light* are metaphors for the learning of the wise and should perhaps be regarded as "names" (see 16.18 n.); see Mk.4.21; 9.50; Lk.8.16; 11.33; 14.34–35. 13: The word translated *becomes tasteless* can also mean "becomes foolish."

5.17–20: **The permanence of the Law.** 17: The *Law* (the "Five Books of Moses") and the writings of the *prophets* are regarded as one body of Scripture (compare 11.13). The section strongly affirms the abiding validity of the Law. 18: *Stroke*: Lk.16.17 n. 19: A scribe who *sets aside* (interprets too freely) the *demands* may, in effect, nullify both letter and spirit of the Law. 20: *Show yourselves far better men* calls for a "higher righteousness" which the remainder of the Sermon describes. *Pharisees*: see 3.7 n. *Doctors of the law* (scribes): interpreters of the Law; although there must have been Sadducean and other interpreters, Mt. probably refers here to legal specialists among the Pharisees. *Enter the kingdom*: participate in the salvation accompanying God's rule (see Mk.1.15 n.).

doctors of the law, you can never enter the kingdom of Heaven.

21 'You have learned that our forefathers were told, "Do not commit murder; anyone who commits murder must be brought to judgement." But what I tell you is this: Anyone who nurses anger against his brother<sup>i</sup> must be brought to judgement. If he abuses his brother he must answer for it to the court; if he sneers at him he will have to answer for it in the fires of hell.

23 'If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift.

25 'If someone sues you, come to terms with him promptly while you are both on your way to court; otherwise he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the constable, and you will be put in jail. I tell you, once you are there you will not be let out till you have paid the last farthing.

27 'You have learned that they were told, "Do not commit adultery." But what I tell you is this: If a man looks on a woman with a lustful eye, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 'If your right eye is your undoing, tear it out and fling it away; it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of it to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand is your undoing, cut it off and fling it away; it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of it to go to hell.

'They were told, "A man who divorces his wife must give her a note of dismissal." But what I tell you is this: If a man divorces his wife for any cause other than unchastity he involves her in adultery; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

'Again, you have learned that our forefathers were told, "Do not break your oath", and, "Oaths sworn to the Lord must be kept." But what I tell you is this: You are not to swear at all—not by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by earth, for it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King, nor by your own head, because you cannot turn one hair of it white or black. Plain "Yes" or "No" is all you need to say; anything beyond that comes from the devil.

'You have learned that they were told, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." But what I tell you is this: Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. If a man in authority makes you go one mile, go with him two. Give when you are asked to give; and do not turn your back on a man who wants to borrow.

'You have learned that they were told, "Love your neighbour, hate your enemy." But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies<sup>j</sup> and pray for your

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses insert without good cause.

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses insert bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you.

**5.21-48: The meaning of the Law.** A series of six statements characterized by the formula, *You have learned... but what I tell you*, gives the Law a more radical (usually, an inward) dimension **21-26: On murder and anger.** **21:** Exod.20.13; Deut.5.17, with some addition from the Jewish interpretative tradition. **23-24:** A restored relationship with God (through *altar* sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple) requires prior reconciliation with the *brother* (compare 6.14-15). **27-30: On adultery and lust.** **27:** Exod.20.14; Deut.5.18. **29-30:** Compare 18.7-9 n.; Mk.9.43-48. **31-32: On divorce.** Deut.24.1-4; first-century legal interpretation sometimes allowed men to divorce their wives for trivial reasons (see Mk.10.12 n.). **32:** *Other than unchastity* (see also 19.9): omitted in Mk.10.11; Lk.16.18; 1 Cor.7.10-11. Matthew's form agrees with a strict type of Pharisaic interpretation. **33-37: On oath taking.** **33:** Lev.19.12; Num.30.2 **34-36:** Compare 23.16-22. **35:** *The great King:* God. **37:** This radical rule on oaths is carefully stated in Jas.5.12. **38-42: On retaliation** (Lk.6.29-30). **38:** Exod.21.23-24, Lev.24.19-20; Deut.19.21. **43-48: On enemies** (Lk.6.27-28,32-36). **43:** *Love your neighbour* (Lev.19.18) was central to Jewish, as well as Christian, ethical concern in the first century. *Hate your enemy* is not found in the OT or Pharisaic, Rabbinic Judaism; some other source must be assumed. The positive teaching radicalizes the obligation to love, not only by including



45 persecutors;<sup>k</sup> only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest  
46 and the dishonest. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Surely the tax-gatherers  
47 do as much as that. And if you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen  
48 do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.

6 'BE CAREFUL NOT TO MAKE A SHOW OF your religion before men; if you do, no reward awaits you in your Father's house in heaven.

2 'Thus, when you do some act of charity, do not announce it with a flourish of trumpets, as the hypocrites do in synagogue and in the streets to win admiration from men. I tell you this: they have their reward already.  
3 No; when you do some act of charity, do not let your left hand know what  
4 your right is doing; your good deed must be secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.<sup>l</sup>

5 'Again, when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners, for everyone to see them. I tell you this: they have  
6 their reward already. But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you.<sup>l</sup>

7 'In your prayers do not go babbling on like the heathen, who imagine that the more they say the more likely they  
8 are to be heard. Do not imitate them.

Your Father knows what your needs are before you ask him.

'This is how you should pray: 9

"Our Father in heaven,  
thy name be hallowed;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.<sup>m</sup> 10

Forgive us the wrong we have done,  
as we have forgiven those who have wronged us.

And do not bring us to the test,  
but save us from the evil one."<sup>n o</sup> 13

For if you forgive others the wrongs 14 they have done, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not 15 forgive others, then the wrongs you have done will not be forgiven by your Father.

'So too when you fast, do not look 16 gloomy like the hypocrites: they make their faces unsightly so that other people may see that they are fasting. I tell you this: they have their reward already. But when you fast, anoint 17 your head and wash your face, so that 18 men may not see that you are fasting, but only your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will give you your reward.

'DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES 19 treasure on earth, where it grows rusty and moth-eaten, and thieves break in to steal it. Store up treasure in heaven, 20 where there is no moth and no rust to spoil it, no thieves to break in and

*k* Some witnesses insert and those who treat you spitefully.

*l* Some witnesses add openly.

*m* Or our bread for the morrow.

*n* Or from evil.

*o* Some witnesses add For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.

enemies (v. 44), but by appealing to God's impartial dealing with all men (v. 45). 45: *Sons*: see Lk.6.35 n. 46-47: See 5.20. 48: See Lev.19.2. The verse summarizes vv. 21-48; only an unrestricted obedience, which measures itself by God's goodness, is true righteousness.

6.1-18: *Sincere piety* seeks to serve God unostentatiously, without the fanfare of the *hypocrites* (lit. "playactors," vv. 2,5,16). 2: *Almsgiving (act of charity)* was a special virtue in Judaism. *Synagogue*: see Lk.4.16 n. 9-13: The Lord's Prayer (compare the shorter form in Lk.11.2-4) centers in the hope for the *kingdom* of God (Mk.1.15 n.). 9: Rom.8.15 is an example of the importance early Christians attached to addressing God as *Father*. 11: The Gk. word translated *daily* (Tin. *m*: *for the morrow*) does not appear elsewhere and its meaning is uncertain; in context, the petition must be a statement of trust in the One whose rule is coming. 12,14-15: On forgiveness of others, see 18.21-35.

6.19-34: *Trust in God and material possessions compared* (Lk.11.34-36; 12.22-31,33-34).

- 21 steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- 22 'The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eyes are sound, you will have
- 23 light for your whole body; if the eyes are bad, your whole body will be in darkness. If then the only light you have is darkness, the darkness is doubly dark.
- 24 'No servant can be the slave of two masters; for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and think nothing of the second. You cannot serve God and Money.
- 25 'Therefore I bid you put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive, and clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes.
- 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow and reap and store in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
- 27 You are worth more than the birds! Is there a man of you who by anxious thought can add a foot to his height?<sup>p</sup>
- 28 And why be anxious about clothes? Consider how the lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin;<sup>q</sup> and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendour was not attired like one of these. But if that is how God clothes the grass in the fields, which is there today, and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, will he not all the more clothe you? How little faith you have!
- 31 No, do not ask anxiously, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? What shall we wear?" All these are things for the heathen to run after, not for you, because your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well. So do not be anxious about tomorrow; tomorrow will look after itself. Each day has troubles enough of its own.
- 'PASS NO JUDGEMENT, AND YOU WILL 7 not be judged. For as you judge others, 2 so you will yourselves be judged, and whatever measure you deal out to others will be dealt back to you. Why 3 do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, with never a thought for the great plank in your own? Or how can you say to your 4 brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", when all the time there is that plank in your own? You hypocrite! 5 First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's.
- 'Do not give dogs what is holy; do 6 not throw your pearls to the pigs: they will only trample on them, and turn and tear you to pieces.
- 'Ask, and you will receive; seek, and 7 you will find; knock, and the door will be opened. For everyone who 8 asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
- 'Is there a man among you who will 9 offer his son a stone when he asks for bread, or a snake when he asks for 10 fish? If you, then, bad as you are, 11 know how to give your children what is good for them, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him!
- 'Always treat others as you would 12 like them to treat you: that is the Law and the prophets.
- 'Enter by the narrow gate. The gate 13 is wide that leads to perdition, there is plenty of room on the road,<sup>r</sup> and many go that way; but the gate that leads to 14 life is small and the road is narrow,<sup>s</sup> and those who find it are few.
- 'Beware of false prophets, men who 15

<sup>p</sup> Or a day to his life.

<sup>q</sup> *One witness reads* Consider the lilies: they neither card nor spin, nor labour.

<sup>r</sup> *Some witnesses read* The road that leads to perdition is wide with plenty of room.

<sup>s</sup> *Some witnesses read* but the road that leads to life is small and narrow.

**22:** *Sound and bad eyes* probably contrast "generosity" and "stinginess." Generosity in acts of charity (v. 2 n.) is a way of storing up *treasure in heaven* (v. 20). **24:** Lk.16.13. **25-34:** God can be trusted from day to day (vv. 26,30,32); the man of faith (v. 30) is free to put *God's kingdom* first (v. 33).

**7.1-14: General instructions.** 1-5: Lk.6.37-38,41-42. 2: Mk.4.24. 7-11: Lk.11.9-13. **12:** The Golden Rule (Lk.6.31) is a widespread principle in ancient ethical literature, including that of Judaism. A related summary of *the Law and the prophets* is found in 22.34-40 (compare Mk.12.28-34; Lk.10.25-28 n.). **13-14:** Lk.13.23-24.

**7.15-23: Warnings against false leaders** (Lk.6.43-46). Since the *false prophets* appear as

## Teaching and healing

come to you dressed up as sheep while underneath they are savage wolves.  
 16 You will recognize them by the fruits they bear. Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a good tree always yields good fruit, and a poor tree bad fruit.  
 17 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit. And when a tree does not yield good fruit it is cut down and burnt. That is why I say you will recognize them by their fruits.  
 21 "Not everyone who calls me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father. When that day comes, many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out devils in your name, and in your name perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them to their face, "I never knew you; out of my sight, you and your wicked ways!"  
 24 "What then of the man who hears these words of mine and acts upon them? He is like a man who had the sense to build his house on rock. The rain came down, the floods rose, the wind blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, because its foundations were on rock. But what of the man who hears these words of mine and does not act upon them? He is like a man who was foolish enough to build his house on sand. The rain came down, the floods rose, the wind blew, and beat upon that house; down it fell with a great crash."  
 28 When Jesus had finished this discourse the people were astounded at his teaching; unlike their own teachers he taught with a note of authority.

AFTER HE HAD COME DOWN FROM THE 8 hill he was followed by a great crowd. And now a leper<sup>1</sup> approached him, 2 bowed low, and said, "Sir, if only you will, you can cleanse me." Jesus 3 stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "Indeed I will; be clean again." And his leprosy was cured immediately. Then Jesus said to him, 4 "Be sure you tell nobody; but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering laid down by Moses for your cleansing; that will certify the cure."

When he had entered Capernaum a 5 centurion came up to ask his help. "Sir," he said, 'a boy of mine lies at home paralysed and racked with pain.' Jesus said, 'I will come and cure him.'<sup>u</sup> 7 But the centurion replied, 'Sir, who am 8 I to have you under my roof? You need only say the word and the boy will be cured. I know, for I am myself 9 under orders, with soldiers under me. I say to one, "Go", and he goes; to another, "Come here", and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this", and he does it.' Jesus heard him with astonish- 10 ment, and said to the people who were following him, 'I tell you this: nowhere, even in Israel, have I found such faith.

'Many, I tell you, will come from east 11 and west to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven. But those who were born to the king- 12 dom will be driven out into the dark, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth.'

Then Jesus said to the centurion, 13 'Go home now; because of your faith,

<sup>1</sup> The words leper, leprosy, as used in this translation, refer to some disfiguring skin disease which entailed ceremonial defilement. It is different from what is now called leprosy.

<sup>u</sup> Or Am I to come and cure him?

sheep (although in disguise, v. 15) and confess Jesus as *Lord* (vv. 21–22), they represent a danger within the Church. 17–18: 12.33–35. 19: Compare 3.10; Lk.3.9. 23: Lk.13.27; Ps.6.8.

7.24–29: **The wise and foolish builders** (Lk.6.47–49) concludes the Sermon, warning the faithful to hear and act on Jesus' words. Of the five discourses in Mt. (see Introduction), only that in ch. 10 fails to close with a parable. 28: A phrase like *when Jesus had finished this discourse* marks the end of the four other collections in the book (11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1).

8.1–9.38: **Jesus' teaching and healing**. While teaching is interspersed between narratives, this section is comprised primarily of a collection of ten miracles. 1–4: **A leper healed** (Mk.1.40–45; Lk.5.12–16). 2: A *leper* was the victim of a skin ailment (not Hansen's disease) which required his isolation from society; the rules are given in Lev. ch. 13. **Cleanse**: the leper asks to be rendered ritually pure as well as healed. 5–13: **The centurion's servant** (Lk.7.1–10; compare Jn.4.46–53). 5: *Centurion*: a commander of a unit of about one hundred infantry in the Roman army. *Boy*: the Gk. may mean "son" or "servant." 11–12: In Jewish thought, an eschatological banquet (*feast*) is a theme frequently connected with God's final rule; Lk.13.28–30. 11: Compare Ps.107.2–3. 13: A phrase like *because of your faith* is frequently associated with healing in the

so let it be.' At that moment the boy recovered.

14 Jesus then went to Peter's house and found Peter's mother-in-law in bed with fever. So he took her by the hand; the fever left her, and she got up and waited on him.

16 When evening fell, they brought to him many who were possessed by devils; and he drove the spirits out with a word and healed all who were sick, to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah: 'He took away our illnesses and lifted our diseases from us.'<sup>v</sup>

18 AT THE SIGHT OF THE CROWDS SURROUNDING him Jesus gave word to cross to the other shore. A doctor of the law came up, and said, 'Master, I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have their holes, the birds their roosts; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Another man, one of his disciples, said to him, 'Lord, let me go and bury my father first.' Jesus replied, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.' Jesus then got into the boat, and his disciples followed. All at once a great storm arose on the lake, till the waves were breaking right over the boat; but he went on sleeping. So they came and woke him up, crying: 'Save us, Lord; we are sinking!' 'Why are you such cowards?' he said; 'how little faith you have!' Then he stood up and rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a dead calm. The men were astonished at what had happened, and exclaimed, 'What sort of man is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

28 When he reached the other side, in the country of the Gadarenes, he was met by two men who came out from the tombs; they were possessed by devils, and so violent that no one dared pass that way. 'You son of God,' they shouted, 'what do you want with us? Have you come here to

torment us before our time?' In the distance a large herd of pigs was feeding; and the devils begged him: 'If you drive us out, send us into that herd of pigs.' 'Begone!' he said. Then they came out and went into the pigs; the whole herd rushed over the edge into the lake, and perished in the water.

The men in charge of them took to their heels, and made for the town, where they told the whole story, and what had happened to the madmen. Thereupon all the town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him they begged him to leave the district and go. So he got into the boat and crossed over, and came to his own town.

And now some men brought him a paralysed man lying on a bed. Seeing their faith Jesus said to the man, 'Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.' At this some of the lawyers said to themselves, 'This is blasphemous talk.' Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, 'Why do you harbour these evil thoughts? Is it easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say, "Stand up and walk"? But to convince you that the Son of Man has the right on earth to forgive sins—he turned to the paralysed man—'stand up, take your bed, and go home.' Thereupon the man got up, and went off home. The people were filled with awe at the sight, and praised God for granting such authority to men.

AS HE PASSED ON FROM THERE JESUS saw a man named Matthew at his seat in the custom-house, and said to him, 'Follow me'; and Matthew rose and followed him.

When Jesus was at table in the house, many bad characters—tax-gatherers and others—were seated with him and his disciples. The Pharisees noticed this, and said to his disciples, 'Why is it that

<sup>v</sup> Or and bore the burden of our diseases.

Gospels; usually, this *faith* seems to be simple confidence in Jesus' power to cure. 14–17: Peter's mother-in-law (Mk.1.29–34; Lk.4.38–41). 17: Isa.53.4. 18: Mk.4.35. 19–22: Lk.9.57–60. 20: Son of Man: see Mk.2.10 n. 23–27: Rebuke of a storm (Mk.4.35–41; Lk.8.22–25). 28–34: The Gadarene demoniacs (Mk.5.1–20; Lk.8.26–39). 28–29: The devils (see Mk.1.23 n.) recognize the son of God (see 16.16 n.; Mk.1.24 n.). 28: Gadarene: see Mk.5.1 n. Two men: Mk. and Lk. have one man. 30: Pigs are unclean animals in Mosaic law (Lev.11.7; Deut.14.8). 9.1–8: A paralytic; see Mk.2.1–12 nn.; Lk.5.17–20. 9: Matthew: called Levi in Mk.2.14; Lk.5.27. 10–13: Tax-gatherers and sinners. Mk.2.15–17; Lk.5.29–32. 10: Tax-gatherers: see Lk.3.12 n.

your master eats with tax-gatherers and sinners?" Jesus heard it and said, 'It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn what that text means, "I require mercy, not sacrifice." I did not come to invite virtuous people, but sinners.'

Then John's disciples came to him with the question: 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?' Jesus replied, 'Can you expect the bridegroom's friends to go mourning while the bridegroom is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; that will be the time for them to fast.'

'No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on to an old coat; for then the patch tears away from the coat, and leaves a bigger hole. Neither do you put new wine into old wineskins; if you do, the skins burst, and then the wine runs out and the skins are spoilt. No, you put new wine into fresh skins; then both are preserved.'

EVEN AS HE SPOKE, THERE CAME A president of the synagogue, who bowed low before him and said, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.' Jesus rose and went with him, and so did his disciples.

Then a woman who had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years came up from behind, and touched the edge of his cloak; for she said to herself, 'If I can only touch his cloak, I shall be cured.' But Jesus turned and saw her, and said, 'Take heart, my daughter; your faith has cured you.' And from that moment she recovered.

When Jesus arrived at the president's house and saw the flute-players and the general commotion, he said, 'Be off! The girl is not dead: she is asleep';

and they only laughed at him. But, when everyone had been turned out, he went into the room and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. This story became the talk of all the country round.

As he passed on Jesus was followed by two blind men, who cried out, 'Son of David, have pity on us!' And when he had gone indoors they came to him. Jesus asked, 'Do you believe that I have the power to do what you want?' 'Yes, sir', they said. Then he touched their eyes, and said, 'As you have believed, so let it be'; and their sight was restored. Jesus said to them sternly, 'See that no one hears about this.' But as soon as they had gone out they talked about him all over the country-side.

They were on their way out when a man was brought to him, who was dumb and possessed by a devil; the devil was cast out and the patient recovered his speech. Filled with amazement the onlookers said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'<sup>w</sup>

SO JESUS WENT ROUND ALL THE TOWNS and villages teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the Kingdom, and curing every kind of ailment and disease. The sight of the people moved him to pity: they were like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless; and he said to his disciples, 'The crop is heavy, but labourers are scarce; you must therefore beg the owner to send labourers to harvest his crop.'

Then he called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to cure every kind of ailment and disease.

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses add (34) But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out devils by the prince of devils.'

13: Hos.6.6; quoted again in 12.7. 14-17: Fasting (Mk.2.18-22; Lk.5.33-39). 14: John's disciples: see Mk.2.18 n. 16-17: See Mk. 2.21-22 n. 18-26: Jairus' daughter and a woman with a chronic ailment (Mk.5.21-43; Lk.8.40-56). See Mk.5.21-43 n. 18: A president of the synagogue: by name, Jairus in Mk.5.22; Lk.8.41. 22: Cured: see Lk.7.50 n. 23: Flute-players provided accompaniment to the customary wailing of mourners. 27-31: Two blind men (20.29-34; Mk.10.46-52; Lk.18.35-43). 32-33: A dumb man. Tfn. <sup>w</sup> may be borrowed from the story in 12.22-24.

9.35-38: A transition from the miracles of chs. 8-9 to the "missionary discourse" of ch. 10; compare 4.23-25. 36: Mk.6.34; Num.27.17; 1 Kgs.22.17.

10.1-11.1: The (second) missionary discourse. 1: Mk.3.14-15; 6.7; Lk.9.1. 2-4: Mk.3.16-19;

- 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, also called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax-gatherer, James son of Alphaeus, Lebbeaus,<sup>x</sup> Simon, a member of the Zealot party, and Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed him.
- 3 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not take the road to gentile lands, and do not enter any Samaritan town; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go proclaim the message: "The kingdom of Heaven is upon you." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out devils. You received without cost; give without charge.
- 4 'Provide no gold, silver, or copper to fill your purse, no pack for the road, no second coat, no shoes, no stick; the worker earns his keep.
- 5 'When you come to any town or village, look for some worthy person in it, and make your home there until you leave. Wish the house peace as you enter it, so that, if it is worthy, your peace may descend on it; if it is not worthy, your peace can come back to you. If anyone will not receive you or listen to what you say, then as you leave that house or that town shake the dust of it off your feet. I tell you this: on the day of judgement it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.
- 6 'Look, I send you out like sheep among wolves; be wary as serpents, innocent as doves.
- 7 'And be on your guard, for men will hand you over to their courts, they will flog you in the synagogues, and you will be brought before governors and kings, for my sake, to testify before them and the heathen. But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say; when the time comes, the words you need will be given you; for it is not you who will be speaking: it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking in you.
- 8 'Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child; children will turn against their parents and send them to their death. All will hate you for your allegiance to me; but the man who holds out to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one town, take refuge in another; I tell you this: before you have gone through all the towns of Israel the Son of Man will have come.
- 9 'A pupil does not rank above his teacher, or a servant above his master. The pupil should be content to share his teacher's lot, the servant to share his master's. If the master has been called Beelzebub, how much more his household!
- 10 'So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, nothing hidden that will not be made known. What I say to you in the dark you must repeat in broad daylight; what you hear whispered you must shout from the house-tops. Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Fear him rather who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- 11 'Are not sparrows two a penny? Yet without your Father's leave not one of them can fall to the ground. As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So have no fear; you are worth more than any number of sparrows.
- 12 'Whoever then will acknowledge me before men, I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

*x Some witnesses read Thaddaeus.*

Lk.6.14-16. 2: *Apostles*: commissioned representatives; this designation appears in Mt. only in this verse. 3: *Lebbeaus*: Mk.3.18, as well as many MSS. of Mt., has "Thaddaeus"; Lk.6.16 and Acts 1.13 have "Judas the son of James." 4: *Zealot*: see Mk.3.18 n. 5-6: Contrast the instruction in 28.19. 7-15: Mk.6.8-11; Lk.9.2-5; 10.3-12. 7: Compare the Baptist's (3.2) and Jesus' (4.17) messages. 8: On the close relation of healing and the kingdom, consider 12.28; Lk.10.9; 11.20; the Gospels present the career of Jesus as the proclamation of the kingdom joined with healing activity. 15: *Sodom and Gomorrah* (Gen. ch. 29) were the epitome of evil. 17-25: 24.9-13; Mk.13.9-13; Lk.12.11-12; 21.12-17,19. Persecution in both Jewish (v. 17) and Roman (v. 18) settings is assumed. 21: See vv. 35-36. 24-25: Lk.6.40; Jn.13.16. 25: *Beelzebub*: Satan (see 9.34; 12.22; Mk.3.22; Lk.11.15). 26-33: Lk.12.2-9. 26-27: Compare Mk.4.22, 24-25 n.; Lk.8.17; 12.2-3 n. 28: See Lk.12.4-5 n. 29-32: *God's providence*: 6.26-33; Lk.12.6-8.

33 before my Father in heaven; and whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.  
 34 'You must not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a  
 35 sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a son's wife against her mother-in-law; and a man will find his enemies under his own roof.  
 37 'No man is worthy of me who cares more for father or mother than for me; no man is worthy of me who cares for son or daughter; no man is worthy of me who does not take up his cross and  
 39 walk in my footsteps. By gaining his life a man will lose it; by losing his life for my sake, he will gain it.

40 'To receive you is to receive me, and to receive me is to receive the One who  
 41 sent me. Whoever receives a prophet as a prophet will be given a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a good man because he is a good man will be  
 42 given a good man's reward. And if anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is a disciple of mine, I tell you this: that man will assuredly not go unrewarded.'

11 When Jesus had finished giving his twelve disciples their instructions, he left that place and went to teach and preach in the neighbouring towns.

2 JOHN, WHO WAS IN PRISON, HEARD what Christ was doing, and sent his own disciples to him with this message: 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect some other?' Jesus answered, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the  
 6 good news—and happy is the man who

does not find me a stumbling-block.'

When the messengers were on their way back, Jesus began to speak to the people about John: 'What was the spectacle that drew you to the wilderness? A reed-bed swept by the wind? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed in silks and satins? Surely you must look in palaces for that. But why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes indeed, and far more than a prophet. He is the man of whom  
 10 Scripture says,

"Here is my herald, whom I send on ahead of you,  
 and he will prepare your way before you."

I tell you this: never has there appeared on earth a mother's son greater than John the Baptist, and yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

'Ever since the coming of John the Baptist the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and violent men<sup>y</sup> are seizing it. For all the prophets and the Law foretold things to come until John appeared, and John is the destined Elijah, if you will but accept it. If you have ears, then hear.

'How can I describe this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-place and shouting at each other,

"We piped for you and you would not dance."

"We wept and wailed, and you would not mourn."

For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed." The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look at him! a glutton and a drinker, a friend

<sup>y</sup> Or has been forcing its way forward, and men of force . . .

34–36: Lk.12.51,53; the proclamation of the kingdom calls for a decision which draws lines of separation. 37–39: Compare Lk.14.26–27. 38–39: *Cross* and *losing life* sayings are also connected in 16.24–25; Mk.8.34–35; Lk.9.23–24; *life* and *follow me* sayings, in Jn.12.25–26. The associated ideas would be particularly meaningful in situations involving mission or persecution. 39: Lk.17.33. 40–42: Jesus affirms his identification with his disciples. 11.1: See 7.28 n.

11.2–12.50: *Claims and conflict*. 11.2–19: *Jesus and John the Baptist*: see Lk.7.18–35 nn. 2: *In prison*: 14.3–4; Mk.6.17–18. 5: Isa.29.18–19; 35.5–6; 61.1. 10: Mal.3.1. 12–15: John's career marks the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promises; compare Lk.16.16 n. 14: *John* fulfills the prophecy on *Elijah*; Mal.4.5; see Lk.1.17. 19: *Its results*: lit. "her deeds"; compare Lk.7.25 n.

of tax-gatherers and sinners!" And yet God's wisdom is proved right by its results.'

- 20 THEN HE SPOKE OF THE TOWNS IN which most of his miracles had been performed, and denounced them for their impenitence. 'Alas for you, Chorazin!' he said; 'alas for you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable, I tell you, for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgement than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to the skies? No, brought down to the depths! For if the miracles had been performed in Sodom which were performed in you, Sodom would be standing to this day. But it will be more bearable, I tell you, for the land of Sodom on the day of judgement than for you.'
- 25 At that time Jesus spoke these words: 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple. Yes, Father, such<sup>z</sup> was thy choice. Everything is entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son may choose to reveal him.
- 28 'Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light.'

### Controversy

- 12 ONCE ABOUT THAT TIME JESUS WENT through the cornfields on the Sabbath;

and his disciples, feeling hungry, began to pluck some ears of corn and eat them. The Pharisees noticed this, and said to him, 'Look, your disciples are doing something which is forbidden on the Sabbath.' He answered, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his men were hungry? He went into the House of God and ate the sacred bread, though neither he nor his men had a right to eat it, but only the priests. Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and it is not held against them? I tell you, there is something greater than the temple here. If you had known what that text means, "I require mercy, not sacrifice", you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is sovereign over the Sabbath.'

He went on to another place, and entered their synagogue. A man was there with a withered arm, and they asked Jesus, 'Is it permitted to heal on the Sabbath?' (They wanted to frame a charge against him.) But he said to them, 'Suppose you had one sheep, which fell into a ditch on the Sabbath; is there one of you who would not catch hold of it and lift it out? And surely a man is worth far more than a sheep! It is therefore permitted to do good on the Sabbath.' Turning to the man he said, 'Stretch out your arm.' He stretched it out, and it was made sound again like the other. But the Pharisees, on leaving the synagogue, laid a plot to do away with him.

Jesus was aware of it and withdrew. Many followed, and he cured all who were ill; and he gave strict injunctions that they were not to make him known. This was to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy:

'Here is my servant, whom I have chosen,

<sup>z</sup> Or Yes, I thank thee, Father, that such . . .

20-24: Judgment of Galilean cities (Lk.10.13-15). 21: Tyre and Sidon: Gentile (Phoenician) cities condemned by the prophets (Jer.47.4). Sackcloth and ashes: symbols of mourning. Sodom: see 10.15 n. 25-27: Thanksgiving for revelation. See Lk.10.21-22 n. 28-30: An invitation modeled on those extended by the heavenly Wisdom (Lk.7.35 n.); see Prov.8.1-21 and Eccles. 6.18-31. 12.1-14: Sabbath controversy (Mk.2.23-3.6 nn.; Lk.6.1-11). 1: Deut.23.25. 2: Exod. 20.10; Deut.5.14. 3: 1 Sam.21.1-7. 4: Lev.24.7-9. 5: Num.28.9-10. 7: Hos.6.6; compare 9.13. 9-14: See Mk.3.1-6 n. 11: Lk.14.5. 15-21: Healing the sick. 18-21: Isa.42.1-4. 22-29: Jesus and



- my beloved, on whom my favour rests;  
I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim judgement among the nations.
- 19 He will not strive, he will not shout, nor will his voice be heard in the streets.
- 20 He will not snap off the broken reed, nor snuff out the smouldering wick, until he leads justice on to victory.
- 21 In him the nations shall place their hope.'
- 22 THEN THEY BROUGHT HIM A MAN WHO was possessed; he was blind and dumb; and Jesus cured him, restoring both speech and sight. The bystanders were all amazed, and the word went round:
- 24 'Can this be the Son of David?' But when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'It is only by Beelzebub prince of devils that this man drives the devils out.'
- 25 He knew what was in their minds; so he said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself goes to ruin; and no town, no household, that is divided against itself can stand. And if it is Satan who casts out Satan, Satan is divided against himself; how then can his kingdom stand? And if it is by Beelzebub that I cast out devils, by whom do your own people drive them out? If this is your argument, they themselves will refute you. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out the devils, then be sure the kingdom of God has already come upon you.'
- 29 'Or again, how can anyone break into a strong man's house and make off with his goods, unless he has first tied the strong man up before ransacking the house?
- 30 'He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.
- 31 'And so I tell you this: no sin, no slander, is beyond forgiveness for men,
- except slander spoken against the Spirit, and that will not be forgiven. Any man who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but if anyone speaks against the Holy Spirit, for him there is no forgiveness, either in this age or in the age to come.
- 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; you can tell a tree by its fruit. You vipers' brood! How can your words be good when you yourselves are evil? For the words that the mouth utters come from the overflowing of the heart. A good man produces good from the store of good within himself; and an evil man from evil within produces evil.
- 'I tell you this: there is not a thoughtless word that comes from men's lips but they will have to account for it on the day of judgement. For out of your own mouth you will be acquitted; out of your own mouth you will be condemned.'
- At this some of the doctors of the law and the Pharisees said, 'Master, we should like you to show us a sign.' He answered: 'It is a wicked, godless generation that asks for a sign; and the only sign that will be given it is the sign of the prophet Jonah. Jonah was in the sea-monster's belly for three days and three nights, and in the same way the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth. At the Judgement, when this generation is on trial, the men of Nineveh will appear against it<sup>a</sup> and ensure its condemnation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and what is here is greater than Jonah. The Queen of the South will appear at the Judgement when this generation is on trial,<sup>b</sup> and ensure its condemnation, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon;
- <sup>a</sup> Or will rise again together with it.  
<sup>b</sup> Or At the Judgement the Queen of the South will be raised to life together with this generation.

Satan (Mk.3.22-27; Lk.11.14-22). 23: *Son of David*: the Messiah (1.1 n.). 24-28: *Beelzebub*: Satan (v. 26). 27: *Your own people* (lit. "your sons") ascribes the effective practice of exorcism to others. 30: Lk.11.23; contrast Mk.9.39-40 n. 31-32: See Mk.3. 29n.; Lk.12.10. Mt. may intend the saying to distinguish between slander of the earthly Jesus and slander of the risen Lord. 33-37: 7.16-20; Lk.6.43-45. 38-42: The request for a *sign* (Lk.11.29-32) is perhaps regarded as evil because its intent is to "test" (compare 4.7). 39-41: Jonah 1.17; 3.5. The *sign of the prophet Jonah* for Mt. is interpreted by v. 40; compare Lk.11.29 n. *Queen of the South*:

and what is here is greater than Solomon.

- 43 'When an unclean spirit comes out of a man it wanders over the deserts seeking a resting-place, and finds none.  
44 Then it says, "I will go back to the home I left." So it returns and finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and tidy. Off it goes and collects seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they all come in and settle down; and in the end the man's plight is worse than before. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.'  
46 He was still speaking to the crowd when his mother and brothers appeared; they stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone said, 'Your mother and your brothers are here outside; they want to speak to you.'  
48 Jesus turned to the man who brought the message, and said, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?'; and pointing to the disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers.  
50 Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, my sister, my mother.'

- 13** THAT SAME DAY JESUS WENT OUT AND  
2 sat by the lake-side, where so many people gathered round him that he had to get into a boat. He sat there, and  
3 all the people stood on the shore. He spoke to them in parables, at some length.  
4 He said: 'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the footpath; and the birds came and  
5 ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil, and it sprouted quickly because it had no  
6 depth of earth; but when the sun rose the young corn was scorched, and as  
7 it had no root it withered away. Some seed fell among thistles; and the thistles shot up, and choked the corn.  
8 And some of the seed fell into good

soil, where it bore fruit, yielding a hundredfold or, it might be, sixtyfold or thirtyfold. If you have ears, then 9 hear.'

The disciples went up to him and 10 asked, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' He replied, 'It has been 11 granted to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven; but to those others it has not been granted. For the 12 man who has will be given more, till he has enough and to spare; and the man who has not will forfeit even what he has. That is why I speak to them in 13 parables; for they look without seeing, and listen without hearing or understanding. There is a prophecy of Isaiah 14 which is being fulfilled for them: "You may hear and hear, but you will never understand; you may look and look, but you will never see. For this people's 15 mind has become gross; their ears are dulled, and their eyes are closed. Otherwise, their eyes might see, their ears hear, and their mind understand, and then they might turn again, and I would heal them."

'But happy are your eyes because 16 they see, and your ears because they hear! Many prophets and saints, I tell 17 you, desired to see what you now see, yet never saw it; to hear what you hear, yet never heard it.

'You, then, may hear the parable of 18 the sower. When a man hears the word 19 that tells of the Kingdom but fails to understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what has been sown in his heart. There you have the seed sown 20 along the footpath. The seed sown on rocky ground stands for the man who, on hearing the word, accepts it at once with joy; but as it strikes no root in 21 him he has no staying-power, and when there is trouble or persecution on account of the word he falls away at once. The seed sown among thistles 22 represents the man who hears the word,

1 Kgs.10.1-10. 43-45: Lk.11.24-26. 43: *Deserts* were often associated with demons. 46-50: Mk.3.31-35; Lk.8.19-21.

13.1-53a: **The third discourse** (see Introduction) is comprised of parables of the kingdom (Mk. ch. 4; Lk.8.4-18; 10.23-24; 13.18-21). 2: On *parables*, see Mk.4.2 n. 3-9: **The sower** (Mk.4.1-9; Lk.8.4-8). 3-8: See Mk.4.3-8 n. 8: See Mk.4.8 n. 10-17: **The use of parables** (Mk.4.10-12; Lk.8.9-10; 10.23-24). See Mk.4.11 n., 13-20 n. 13: In Mt. the use of parables is a consequence of the failure to "see" or "hear"; contrast Mk.4.12 n. 14-16: Isa.6.9-10. 16-17: Lk.10.23-24. 18-23: An interpretation of the sower. See Mk.4.13-20 n. 19: The term *understand* here and in v. 23 is used to serve the view of Mt. that the disciples are men of insight

but worldly cares and the false glamour of wealth choke it, and it proves barren. But the seed that fell into good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it, who accordingly bears fruit, and yields a hundredfold or, it may be, sixtyfold or thirtyfold.'

24 Here is another parable that he put before them: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like this. A man sowed his field with good seed; but while everyone was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel among the wheat, and made off. When the corn sprouted and began to fill out, the darnel could be seen among it. The farmer's men went to their master and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? Then where has the darnel come from?" "This is an enemy's doing", he replied. "Well then," they said, "shall we go and gather the darnel?" "No," he answered; "in gathering it you might pull up the wheat at the same time. Let them both grow together till harvest; and at harvest-time I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the darnel first, and tie it in bundles for burning; then collect the wheat into my barn.'"

31 And this is another parable that he put before them: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. As a seed, mustard is smaller than any other; but when it has grown it is bigger than any garden-plant; it becomes a tree, big enough for the birds to come and roost among its branches.'

33 He told them also this parable: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed with half a hundredweight of flour till it was all leavened.'

34 In all this teaching to the crowds Jesus spoke in parables; in fact he never spoke to them without a parable. This was to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah:<sup>c</sup>

'I will open my mouth in parables;  
I will utter things kept secret since  
the world was made.'

He then dismissed the people, and went into the house, where his disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the darnel in the field.' And this was his answer: 'The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed stands for the children of the Kingdom, the darnel for the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed the darnel is the devil. The harvest is the end of time. The reapers are angels. As the darnel, then, is gathered up and burnt, so at the end of time the Son of Man will send out his angels, who will gather out of his kingdom whatever makes men stumble, and all whose deeds are evil, and these will be thrown into the blazing furnace, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth. And then the righteous will shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. If you have ears, then hear.'

'The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure lying buried in a field. The man who found it, buried it again; and for sheer joy went and sold everything he had, and bought that field.'

'Here is another picture of the kingdom of Heaven. A merchant looking out for fine pearls found one of very special value; so he went and sold everything he had, and bought it.'

'Again the kingdom of Heaven is like a net let down into the sea, where fish of every kind were caught in it. When it was full, it was dragged ashore. Then the men sat down and collected the good fish into pails and threw the worthless away. That is how it will be at the end of time. The angels will go forth, and they will

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses omit of Isaiah.

(contrast the tone of Mk.4.13). 24-30: The weeds in the field. 25: Darnel: a weed similar in appearance to wheat. 31-32: The mustard seed (see Mk.4.26-32 nn.; Lk.13.18-19). 33: Yeast (Lk.13.20-21). Although a fermenting agent (yeast) is regularly a symbol for evil influence elsewhere (e.g. 16.6,11; Gal.5.8-9); here the metaphor suggests the idea of the irreversible power of the kingdom. Half a hundredweight: fifty pounds. 35: Ps.78.2 is quoted; therefore, Isa. is not mentioned in some MSS. (TIn. c). 36-43: An interpretation of the parable of the weeds. 38: The evil one: the devil. 43: Dan.12.3. 44-46: The treasure and the pearls parables speak either (a) of the cost of the kingdom or (b) of its value which makes even that cost a joy. 47-50: The net. The proclamation of the kingdom attracts both good and bad; their separation must

50 separate the wicked from the good, and throw them into the blazing furnace, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth.  
 51 'Have you understood all this?' he asked; and they answered, 'Yes.' He said to them, 'When, therefore, a teacher of the law has become a learner in the kingdom of Heaven, he is like a householder who can produce from his store both the new and the old.'

53 WHEN HE HAD FINISHED THESE PARABLES  
 54 Jesus left that place, and came to his home town, where he taught the people in their synagogue. In amazement they asked, 'Where does he get this wisdom from, and these miraculous powers? Is he not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And are not all his sisters here with us? Where then has he got all this from?' So they fell foul of him, and this led him to say, 'A prophet will always be held in honour, except in his home town, and in his own family.'  
 58 And he did not work many miracles there: such was their want of faith.

14 It was at that time that reports about Jesus reached the ears of Prince Herod. 'This is John the Baptist,' he said to his attendants; 'John has been raised to life, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.'

3 NOW HEROD HAD ARRESTED JOHN, PUT him in chains, and thrown him into prison, on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for John had told him: 'You have no right to her.'  
 5 Herod would have liked to put him to death, but he was afraid of the people, in whose eyes John was a prophet.  
 6 But at his birthday celebrations the daughter of Herodias danced before the guests, and Herod was so delighted  
 7 that he took an oath to give her

anything she cared to ask. Prompted 8 by her mother, she said, 'Give me here on a dish the head of John the Baptist.' The king was distressed when he heard 9 it; but out of regard for his oath and for his guests, he ordered the request to be granted, and had John beheaded in 10 prison. The head was brought in on a dish and given to the girl; and she 11 carried it to her mother. Then John's disciples came and took away the body, and buried it; and they went and told 12 Jesus.

WHEN HE HEARD WHAT HAD HAPPENED 13 Jesus withdrew privately by boat to a lonely place; but people heard of it, and came after him in crowds by land from the towns. When he came ashore, 14 he saw a great crowd; his heart went out to them, and he cured those of them who were sick. When it grew late 15 the disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the day has gone; send the people off to the villages to buy themselves food.' He 16 answered, 'There is no need for them to go; give them something to eat yourselves.' 'All we have here', they 17 said, 'is five loaves and two fishes.' 'Let me have them', he replied. So he 18, 19 told the people to sit down on the grass; then, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples; and the disciples gave them to the people. They 20 all ate to their hearts' content; and the scraps left over, which they picked up, were enough to fill twelve great baskets. Some five thousand men shared in this 21 meal, to say nothing of women and children.

Then he made the disciples embark 22 and go on ahead to the other side, while he sent the people away; after 23 doing that, he went up the hill-side to pray alone. It grew late, and he was there by himself. The boat was already 24

wait for the final judgment. 51–52: The disciple's resources now include both the *new* message of the kingdom and the *old* tradition based on the law and the prophets. See 7.24–29 n. 53a: See 7.28 n.

13.53b–58: Jesus in Nazareth (Mk.6.1–6; compare Lk.4.16–30). 54: *Home town*: Nazareth. 57: *Fell foul*: were offended.

14.1–12: Herod and John (Mk.6.14–29; Lk.3.19–20; 9.7–9). 1: *Herod*: Antipas (Lk.3.1 n.).

14.13–21: Feeding of five thousand (Mk.6.30–44; Lk.9.10–17; Jn.6.1–13). See Mk.6.30–44 nn.

14.22–36: Walking on the sea (Mk.6.45–56 and note; Jn.6.16–21). The attempt of *Peter* to walk

some furlongs from the shore,<sup>d</sup> battling with a head-wind and a rough sea. 25 Between three and six in the morning he came to them, walking over the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were so shaken that they cried out in terror: 27 'It is a ghost!' But at once he spoke to them: 'Take heart! It is I; do not be afraid.'

28 Peter called to him: 'Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you over the water.' 'Come', said Jesus. Peter stepped down from the boat, and walked over the water towards Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strength of the gale he was seized with fear; and beginning to sink, he cried, 'Save me, Lord.' Jesus at once reached out and caught hold of him, and said, 'Why did you hesitate? How little faith you have!' They then climbed into the boat; 33 and the wind dropped. And the men in the boat fell at his feet, exclaiming, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

34 So they finished the crossing and 35 came to land at Gennesaret. There Jesus was recognized by the people of the place, who sent out word to all the country round. And all who were ill 36 were brought to him, and he was begged to allow them simply to touch the edge of his cloak. And everyone who touched it was completely cured.

15 THEN JESUS WAS APPROACHED BY A group of Pharisees and lawyers from 2 Jerusalem, with the question: 'Why do your disciples break the ancient tradition? They do not wash their hands 3 before meals.' He answered them: 'And what of you? Why do you break God's commandment in the interest of your 4 tradition? For God said, "Honour your father and mother", and, "The man who curses his father or mother 5 must suffer death." But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Anything of mine which might have

been used for your benefit is set apart 6 for God', then he must not honour his father or his mother." You have made God's law null and void out of respect for your tradition. What hypocrisy! 7 Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: "This people pays me 8 lip-service, but their heart is far from me; their worship of me is in vain, for 9 they teach as doctrines the commandments of men."

He called the crowd and said to 10 them, 'Listen to me, and understand this: a man is not defiled by what goes 11 into his mouth, but by what comes out of it.'

Then the disciples came to him and 12 said, 'Do you know that the Pharisees have taken great offence at what you have been saying?' His answer was: 13 'Any plant that is not of my heavenly Father's planting will be rooted up. Leave them alone; they are blind 14 guides,<sup>e</sup> and if one blind man guides another they will both fall into the ditch.'

Then Peter said, 'Tell us what that 15 parable means.' Jesus answered, 'Are 16 you still as dull as the rest? Do you 17 not see that whatever goes in by the mouth passes into the stomach and so is discharged into the drain? But what 18 comes out of the mouth has its origins in the heart; and that is what defiles a man. Wicked thoughts, murder, adul- 19 tery, fornication, theft, perjury, slander —these all proceed from the heart; and 20 these are the things that defile a man; but to eat without first washing his hands, that cannot defile him.'

### *Jesus and his disciples*

JESUS THEN LEFT THAT PLACE AND 21 withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from 22

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read already well out on the water.  
<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses insert of blind men.

on the water, told only in Mt., illustrates both the power of faith and the way fear threatens faith. 33: Unlike the report in Mk.6.52 (see n.), the event awakens a confession of faith in its observers. For Mt., understanding is characteristic of the disciples (see 16.12 n.). A confession (16.16; Mk.8.29) also follows the second account of a feeding and sea crossing in Mt. and Mk. (see Mk.6.30-44 nn.); compare Jn.6.16-21,66-71.

15.1-20: The ancient traditions (Mk.7.1-23). 2: See Mk.7.5 n. 4a: Exod.20.12; Deut.5.16. 4b: Exod.21.17; Lev.20.9. 8-9: Isa.29.13. 11: *Defiled*: made ritually impure.

15.21-31: *Healings* (Mk.7.24-31,36-37). See Mk.7.24-37 n. 22: The story revolves around a

those parts came crying out, 'Sir! have  
 23 pity on me, Son of David; my daughter  
 is tormented by a devil.' But he said not  
 a word in reply. His disciples came and  
 24 urged him: 'Send her away; see how  
 she comes shouting after us.' Jesus  
 replied, 'I was sent to the lost sheep of  
 the house of Israel, and to them alone.'  
 25 But the woman came and fell at his  
 26 feet and cried, 'Help me, sir.' To this  
 Jesus replied, 'It is not right to take  
 the children's bread and throw it to  
 27 the dogs.' 'True, sir,' she answered;  
 'and yet the dogs eat the scraps that  
 28 fall from their masters' table.' Hearing  
 this Jesus replied, 'Woman, what faith  
 you have! Be it as you wish!' And from  
 that moment her daughter was restored  
 to health.

29 After leaving that region Jesus took  
 the road by the Sea of Galilee and  
 went up to the hills. When he was  
 30 seated there, crowds flocked to him,  
 bringing with them the lame, blind,  
 dumb, and crippled, and many other  
 sufferers; they threw them down at his  
 31 feet, and he healed them. Great was  
 the amazement of the people when  
 they saw the dumb speaking, the  
 crippled strong, the lame walking, and  
 sight restored to the blind; and they  
 gave praise to the God of Israel.

32 Jesus called his disciples and said to  
 them, 'I feel sorry for all these people;  
 they have been with me now for three  
 days and have nothing to eat. I do not  
 want to send them away unfed; they  
 33 might turn faint on the way.' The  
 disciples replied, 'Where in this lonely  
 place can we find bread enough to feed  
 34 such a crowd?' 'How many loaves have  
 you?' Jesus asked. 'Seven,' they replied;  
 35 'and there are a few small fishes.' So he  
 ordered the people to sit down on the  
 36 ground; then he took the seven loaves  
 and the fishes, and after giving thanks  
 to God he broke them and gave to the  
 disciples, and the disciples gave to the

people. They all ate to their hearts' 37  
 content; and the scraps left over,  
 which they picked up, were enough to  
 fill seven baskets. Four thousand men 38  
 shared in this meal, to say nothing of  
 women and children. He then dismissed 39  
 the crowds, got into a boat, and went  
 to the neighbourhood of Magadan.

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, 16  
 and to test him they asked him to show  
 them a sign from heaven. His answer 2  
 was: 'It is a wicked generation that 4  
 asks for a sign; and the only sign that  
 will be given it is the sign of Jonah.' So  
 he went off and left them.

In crossing to the other side the 5  
 disciples had forgotten to take bread  
 with them. So, when Jesus said to 6  
 them, 'Beware, be on your guard  
 against the leaven of the Pharisees and  
 Sadducees', they began to say among 7  
 themselves, 'It is because we have  
 brought no bread!' Knowing what was 8  
 in their minds, Jesus said to them:  
 'Why do you talk about bringing no  
 bread? Where is your faith? Do you 9  
 not understand even yet? Do you not  
 remember the five loaves for the five  
 thousand, and how many basketfuls 10  
 you picked up? Or the seven loaves 11  
 for the four thousand, and how many  
 basketfuls you picked up? How can 12  
 you fail to see that I was not speaking  
 about bread? Be on your guard, I said,  
 against the leaven of the Pharisees and  
 Sadducees.' Then they understood: 12  
 they were to be on their guard, not  
 against baker's leaven, but against  
 the teaching of the Pharisees and  
 Sadducees.

WHEN HE CAME TO THE TERRITORY OF 13  
 Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his  
 disciples, 'Who do men say that the

*f. Some witnesses here insert 'In the evening you say, "It will be fine weather, for the sky is red"; (3) and in the morning you say, "It will be stormy today; the sky is red and lowering." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky; can you not interpret the signs of the times?'*

non-Jewish (*Canaanite*) woman and the question of Jesus' mission (v. 24). Mt. thinks of a mission limited to Israel during Jesus' human career (see 10.5-6) but ultimately intended to reach out to all (see 28.19).

15.32-39: Feeding of four thousand (Mk.8.1-10). See Mk.6.30-44 nn. 36: See Mk.8.6.

16.1-12: Sea crossing and discussions (Mk.8.11-21; Lk.11.29; 12.1.54-56). 1: After a boat trip (15.39), the question of a *sign* is again raised. 2-3: (Tfn. *f*). See Lk.12.54-56 n. 4: See 12.38-42 n., 39-41 n. 6: *Leaven*: see Mk.8.15 n. 12: Understanding is characteristic of the disciples in this Gospel; contrast Mk.8.17-18,21 n.

16.13-23: Peter's confession and Jesus' prediction of his suffering (Mk.8.27-33; Lk.9.18-22).

- 14 Son of Man is<sup>g</sup>? They answered, 'Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' 'And you,' he asked, 'who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Then Jesus said: 'Simon son of Jonah, you are favoured indeed! You did not learn that from mortal man; it was revealed to you by my heavenly Father. And I say this to you: You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall never conquer it.<sup>h</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; what you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and what you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven.' He then gave his disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.
- 21 From that time Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem, and there to suffer much from the elders, chief priests, and doctors of the law; to be put to death and to be raised again on the third day. At this Peter took him by the arm and began to rebuke him: 'Heaven forbid!' he said. 'No, Lord, this shall never happen to you.' Then Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Away with you, Satan; you are a stumbling-block to me. You think as men think, not as God thinks.'
- 24 Jesus then said to his disciples, 'If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me.'
- 25 Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be

lost for my sake, he will find his true self. What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? Or what can he give that will buy that self back? For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will give each man the due reward for what he has done. I tell you this: there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

SIX DAYS LATER JESUS TOOK PETER, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone; and in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as the light. And they saw Moses and Elijah appear, conversing with him. Then Peter spoke: 'Lord,' he said, 'how good it is that we are here! If you wish it, I will make three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them, and a voice called from the cloud: 'This is my Son, my Beloved,<sup>i</sup> on whom my favour rests; listen to him.' At the sound of the voice the disciples fell on their faces in terror. Jesus then came up to them, touched them, and said, 'Stand up; do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one, but only Jesus.

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read that I, the Son of Man, am.

<sup>h</sup> Or the gates of death shall never close upon it.

<sup>i</sup> Or This is my only Son.

13: *Son of Man*: see Mk.2.10 n. 14: See Mk.8.28 n. 16: *Messiah*: see 1.1 n. *Son of (the living) God* is a title with a wide range of meanings—from "a person who lives according to God's will" (see Lk.6.35 n.) to "a preexistent being of divine nature" (see Jn.1.14). Although *Son of God* apparently was not a pre-Christian title for the *Messiah*, the OT contains evidence of a "divine kingship" motif which might contribute to the synonymous use of the two terms (see Mk.1.1 n.). 18: Simon is given a new name, *Rock*, and the name is explained (compare Gen.32.28; also Mt.5.13–14 n.). In both Gk. and Aram. the name (*Peter*, "*Rock*") is a play on a common noun meaning "rock." In the Gospels the word *church* appears only here and in 18.17. 19: The *keys* may signify the office of doctor of the law (compare 23.13; Lk.11.52); to *forbid* and to *allow* are functions of legal authorities (2.4 n.; 5.20 n.). 21: *Jesus* must *suffer*: see Mk.8.31 n.; compare 17.22–23; 20.18–19. 23: *Satan*: tempter. *Stumbling-block* may be "stumbling stone" in contrast to v. 18.

16.24–28: Following *Jesus* (Mk.8.34–9.1; Lk.9.23–27). See 10.38–39 n.; Mk.8.34 n.

17.1–8: The *transfiguration* (Mk.9.2–8; Lk.9.28–36). The story is marked by a number of features characteristic of revelation scenes: the mountain (v. 1; see 5.1 n.), the cloud (v. 5; see, e.g. Exod.24.15–18), the heavenly voice (v. 5). 2: *Transfigured*: "changed in appearance," as the following words indicate (compare Lk.9.29). *His face shone*: see Exod.34.29–35. 3: *Moses* and *Elijah*: see Mk.8.28 n. 5: *This is my Son*: see Mk.1.11 n.

9 On their way down the mountain, Jesus enjoined them not to tell anyone of the vision until the Son of Man had been raised from the dead. The disciples put a question to him: 'Why then do our teachers say that Elijah must come first?' He replied, 'Yes, Elijah will come and set everything right. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they failed to recognize him, and worked their will upon him; and in the same way the Son of Man is to suffer at their hands.'  
13 Then the disciples understood that he meant John the Baptist.

14 When they returned to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, fell on his knees before him, and said, 'Have pity, sir, on my son: he is an epileptic and has bad fits, and he keeps falling about, often into the fire, often into water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.' Jesus answered, 'What an unbelieving and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him here to me.' Jesus then spoke sternly to the boy; the devil left him, and from that moment he was cured.

19 Afterwards the disciples came to Jesus and asked him privately, 'Why could not we cast it out?' He answered, 'Your faith is too small. I tell you this: if you have faith no bigger even than a mustard-seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there!", and it will move; nothing will prove impossible for you.'

22 THEY WERE GOING ABOUT TOGETHER IN Galilee when Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is to be given up into the power of men, and they will kill him; then on the third day he will be raised

again.' And they were filled with grief.

On their arrival at Capernaum the collectors of the temple-tax came up to Peter and asked, 'Does your master not pay temple-tax?' 'He does', said Peter. When he went indoors Jesus forestalled him by asking, 'What do you think about this, Simon? From whom do earthly monarchs collect tax or toll? From their own people, or from aliens?' 'From aliens', said Peter. 'Why then,' said Jesus, 'their own people are exempt! But as we do not want to cause offence, go and cast a line in the lake; take the first fish that comes to the hook, open its mouth, and you will find a silver coin; take that and pay it in; it will meet the tax for us both.'

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?' He called a child, set him in front of them, and said, 'I tell you this: unless you turn round and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Let a man humble himself till he is like this child, and he will be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. But if a man is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith in me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung round his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. Alas for the world that such causes of stumbling arise! Come they must, but woe betide the man through whom they come!

'If your hand or your foot is your undoing, cut it off and fling it away; it is better for you to enter into life

*j* Some witnesses add (21) But there is no means of casting out this sort but prayer and fasting.

17.9-13: *Elijah has come.* Verse 13 identifies *Elijah* as *John the Baptist*. See also Mk.9.9-13 nn. 17.14-20: *An epileptic boy* (Mk.9.14-29; Lk.9.37-43a). 20: The importance of *faith* (see Mk.9.23 n.), central to the narrative, is further heightened by the hyperbole of a minute faith which achieves the impossible (compare Lk.17.6).

17.22-23: *The second prediction* (see 16.21) of *suffering* (Mk.9.30-32; Lk.9.43b-45) which in Mk.9.32 meets with bewilderment, arouses *grief* in Mt. (v. 23).

17.24-27: *The temple-tax* was required of every male Jew.

18.1-19.2: *The fourth discourse* (see Introduction) is sometimes described as a "book of church discipline." 1-14: The pastoral responsibility of Christian leaders is the subject of this section, in which *children* (vv. 2-5) and *little ones* (vv. 6,10,14) are terms for simple Christian believers. 1-5: Mk.9.33-37; 10.15; Lk.9.46-48; 18.17. The *greatest* is the one who can accept a position of humility. 6: Mk.9.42; Lk.17.1-2. To cause a *little one to stumble* (compare 5.19) is a heinous wrong. 7-9: Mk.9.43-48. The seriousness of causing sin is expressed in a series



- maimed or lame, than to keep two hands or two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire. If it is your eye that is your undoing, tear it out and fling it away; it is better to enter into life with one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell.
- 9 'Never despise one of these little ones; I tell you, they have their guardian angels in heaven, who look continually on the face of my heavenly Father.<sup>k</sup>
- 10 'What do you think? Suppose a man has a hundred sheep. If one of them strays, does he not leave the other ninety-nine on the hill-side and go in search of the one that strayed? And if he should find it, I tell you this: he is more delighted over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that never strayed.
- 11 In the same way, it is not your heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should be lost.
- 12 'If your brother commits a sin,<sup>l</sup> go and take the matter up with him, strictly between yourselves, and if he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he will not listen, take one or two others with you, so that all facts may be duly established on the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, report the matter to the congregation; and if he will not listen even to the congregation, you must then treat him as you would a pagan or a tax-gatherer.
- 13 'I tell you this: whatever you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven.
- 14 'Again I tell you this: if two of you agree on earth about any request you have to make, that request will be granted by my heavenly Father. For where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them.'
- 15 Then Peter came up and asked him, 'Lord, how often am I to forgive my

brother if he goes on wronging me? As many as seven times?' Jesus replied, 'I do not say seven times; I say seventy times seven.<sup>m</sup>

'The kingdom of Heaven, therefore, 23 should be thought of in this way: There was once a king who decided to settle accounts with the men who served him. At the outset there appeared before 24 him a man whose debt ran into millions.<sup>n</sup> Since he had no means of 25 paying, his master ordered him to be sold to meet the debt, with his wife, his children, and everything he had. The man fell prostrate at his master's feet. "Be patient with me," he said, "and I will pay in full"; and the master was 27 so moved with pity that he let the man go and remitted the debt. But no 28 sooner had the man gone out than he met a fellow-servant who owed him a few pounds;<sup>o</sup> and catching hold of him he gripped him by the throat and said, "Pay me what you owe." The man fell 29 at his fellow-servant's feet, and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you"; but he refused, and had him 30 jailed until he should pay the debt. The other servants were deeply distressed 31 when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and told him the whole story. He accordingly sent 32 for the man. "You scoundrel!" he said to him; "I remitted the whole of your debt when you appealed to me; were 33 you not bound to show your fellow-servant the same pity as I showed you?" And so angry was the master 34 that he condemned the man to torture until he should pay the debt in full. And that is how my heavenly Father 35 will deal with you, unless you each forgive your brother from your hearts.'

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses add (11) For the Son of Man came to save the lost.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses insert against you.

<sup>m</sup> Or seventy-seven times.

<sup>n</sup> Literally who owed 10,000 talents.

<sup>o</sup> Literally owed him 100 denarii.

of effective hyperboles; such exaggerations as *millstones* around the neck (v. 6), amputated hands and feet, torn out eyes are meant seriously, but not literally. 10-14: The parable of the lost sheep illustrates the unrelenting love the church leader is to show for the *little ones* in his flock (contrast Lk.15.3-7 n.). 15-17: This rule regulates relations between fellow Christians; a similar rule was followed in the Dead Sea community. Compare Lk.17.3-4 n. 17: *Congregation*: or, "church"; see 16.18 n. 18: See 16.19 n. 21-22: Lk.17.4. 23-35: See 7.24-29 n. 23: In light of the magnitude of the debt (v. 24) *the men who served* the king would be officials of high rank. 24,28: The contrast between the *millions* of v. 24 and the insignificant amount of v. 28 (*a few pounds*) makes the first man's action in vv. 28-30 intolerable. 35: As in v. 15, the *brother* is

19 WHEN JESUS HAD FINISHED THIS DIS-  
course he left Galilee and came into the  
2 region of Judaea across Jordan. Great  
crowds followed him, and he healed  
them there.

3 Some Pharisees came and tested him  
by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to  
divorce his wife on any and every  
4 ground?'<sup>p</sup> He asked in return, 'Have  
you never read that the Creator made  
them from the beginning male and  
5 female?'; and he added, 'For this  
reason a man shall leave his father and  
mother, and be made one with his  
wife; and the two shall become one  
6 flesh. It follows that they are no longer  
two individuals: they are one flesh.  
What God has joined together, man  
7 must not separate.' 'Why then', they  
objected, 'did Moses lay it down that a  
man might divorce his wife by note of  
8 dismissal?' He answered, 'It was  
because your minds were closed that  
Moses gave you permission to divorce  
your wives; but it was not like that  
9 when all began. I tell you, if a man  
divorces his wife for any cause other  
than unchastity, and marries another,  
he commits adultery.'<sup>q</sup>

10 The disciples said to him, 'If that is  
the position with husband and wife, it  
is better not to marry.' To this he  
replied, 'That is something which not  
everyone can accept, but only those  
12 for whom God has appointed it. For  
while some are incapable of marriage  
because they were born so, or were  
made so by men, there are others who  
have themselves renounced marriage  
for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven.  
Let those accept it who can.'

13 They brought children for him to lay

his hands on them with prayer. The  
disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said  
14 to them, 'Let the children come to me;  
do not try to stop them; for the  
kingdom of Heaven belongs to such  
as these.' And he laid his hands on the  
15 children, and went his way.

And now a man came up and asked  
16 him, 'Master, what good must I do to  
gain eternal life?' 'Good?' said Jesus.  
17 'Why do you ask me about that? One  
alone is good. But if you wish to enter  
into life, keep the commandments.'  
'Which commandments?' he asked.  
18 Jesus answered, 'Do not murder; do  
not commit adultery; do not steal; do  
not give false evidence; honour your  
19 father and mother; and love your  
neighbour as yourself.' The young man  
20 answered, 'I have kept all these.  
Where do I still fall short?' Jesus said  
21 to him, 'If you wish to go the whole  
way, go, sell your possessions, and give  
to the poor, and then you will have  
riches in heaven; and come, follow me.'  
When the young man heard this, he  
22 went away with a heavy heart; for he  
was a man of great wealth.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you  
23 this: a rich man will find it hard to  
enter the kingdom of Heaven. I repeat,  
24 it is easier for a camel to pass through  
the eye of a needle than for a rich man  
to enter the kingdom of God.' The  
25 disciples were amazed to hear this.  
'Then who can be saved?' they asked.  
Jesus looked at them, and said, 'For  
26 men this is impossible; but everything  
is possible for God.'

<sup>p</sup> Or Is there any ground on which it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses add And the man who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.

for Mt. a fellow Christian. 19.1: This is the conclusion to ch. 18, the third discourse. See 7.28 n. 19.3-12: Marriage and divorce (see 5.31-32 n.; Mk.10.2-12; Lk.16.18; 1 Cor.7.10-11). 3: For Pharisees divorce was lawful but they disagreed about the grounds on which it may be allowed; see Mk.10.3 n. 4-6: See Mk.10.6,7-8 nn. 7-8: See Mk.10.4-5 n. 9: See 5.32 n. 10-12: Marriage and celibacy both fall within God's purpose; compare 1 Cor.7.25-28.

19.13-15: Children and the kingdom (Mk.10.13-16; Lk.18.15-17). Compare 18.2-4. 19.16-30: Possessions and the kingdom (Mk.10.17-31; Lk.18.18-30). 16-17: In Mk.10.17-18 and Lk.18.18-19 the opening exchange between Jesus and the young man could be interpreted as implying that Jesus disclaimed being good; Mt., then, might be thought to correct this implication by reformulating these verses. Yet the point is the same in the three Gospels: for life, a man must look to the One (God) who alone is good and who gives the commandments with which the quest for life begins (Lev.18.5). 18-19: Exod.20.12-16; Lev.19.18; Deut.5.16-20; compare 22.39; Rom.13.8-9. 19: Mt. has a special interest in the love commandment, which the parallel accounts omit in this narrative. 21: To go the whole way: lit. to be perfect. The remainder of the challenge (go, sell, give) makes the general counsel on almsgiving elsewhere (e.g. 6.22 n.) thoroughgoing. 22: Only Mt. calls him a young man. 24: Camel... eye of a

27 At this Peter said, 'We here have left everything to become your followers.  
28 What will there be for us?' Jesus replied, 'I tell you this: in the world that is to be, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne in heavenly splendour, you my followers will have thrones of your own, where you will sit as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel. And anyone who has left brothers or sisters, father, mother, or children, land or houses for the sake of my name will be repaid many times over, and gain eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'

20 'The kingdom of Heaven is like this. There was once a landowner who went out early one morning to hire labourers 2 for his vineyard; and after agreeing to pay them the usual day's wage<sup>r</sup> he sent 3 them off to work. Going out three hours later he saw some more men standing idle in the market-place. "Go and join the others in the vineyard," he said, "and I will pay you a fair wage"; 5 so off they went. At midday he went out again, and at three in the afternoon, and made the same arrangement as before. An hour before sunset he went out and found another group standing there; so he said to them, "Why are you standing about like this all day with nothing to do?" "Because no one has hired us", they replied; so he told them, "Go and join the others in the 8 vineyard." When evening fell, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with those who came last and ending with the 9 first." Those who had started work an hour before sunset came forward, and 10 were paid the full day's wage.<sup>s</sup> When it was the turn of the men who had come first, they expected something extra, but were paid the same amount

as the others. As they took it, they 11 grumbled at their employer: "These 12 late-comers have done only one hour's work, yet you have put them on a level with us, who have sweated the whole day long in the blazing sun!" The owner turned to one of them and 13 said, "My friend, I am not being unfair to you. You agreed on the usual wage for the day,<sup>t</sup> did you not? Take your 14 pay and go home. I choose to pay the last man the same as you. Surely I am 15 free to do what I like with my own money. Why be jealous because I am kind?" Thus will the last be first, and 16 the first last.'

### Challenge to Jerusalem

JESUS WAS JOURNEYING TOWARDS JERU- 17 salem, and on the way he took the Twelve aside, and said to them, 'We 18 are now going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be given up to the chief priests and the doctors of the law; they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the foreign 19 power, to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and on the third day he will be raised to life again.'

The mother of Zebedee's sons then 20 came before him, with her sons. She bowed low and begged a favour. 'What 21 is it you wish?' asked Jesus. 'I want you', she said, 'to give orders that in your kingdom my two sons here may sit next to you, one at your right, and the other at your left.' Jesus turned to 22 the brothers and said, 'You do not understand what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am to drink?' 'We can', they replied. Then he said 23 to them, 'You shall indeed share my cup; but to sit at my right or left is not

<sup>r</sup> Literally one denarius for the day.

<sup>s</sup> Literally one denarius each.

<sup>t</sup> Literally You agreed on a denarius.

*needle* is a hyperbole which prepares for v. 26. 27,29: In contrast to the rich man, the disciples have left everything and will . . . gain eternal life. 28: Lk.22.30. 30: 20.16; Mk.10.31; Lk.13.30.

20.1-16: The laborers in the vineyard. The laborers are hired around 6 a.m. (v. 2), 9 a.m. (v. 3), noon (v. 5), 3 p.m. (v. 5), and 5 p.m. (v. 6). Only those hired in v. 2 are promised a specific amount (*the usual day's wage*). The surprise comes in vv. 9-10 when all received the same sum, regardless of their working hours.

20.17-19: The third prediction of suffering (16.21; 17.22-23; Mk.10.32-34 n.; Lk.18.31-34).

20.20-28: Position in the kingdom (Mk.10.35-45; Lk.22.24-27). 20: The mother initiates the request in Mt., the sons in Mk.10.35. 21: Right . . . left: see Mk.10.37 n. 22: Cup: see Mk.10.38 n. 23: See Mk.10.40 n. Some scholars interpret *Kingdom* here to mean the church, rather than the

for me to grant; it is for those to whom it has already been assigned by my Father.'

- 24 When the other ten heard this, they were indignant with the two brothers.  
 25 So Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all—like the Son of Man; he did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give up his life as a ransom for many.'  
 29 As they were leaving Jericho he was followed by a great crowd of people.  
 30 At the roadside sat two blind men. When they heard it said that Jesus was passing they shouted, 'Have pity on us, Son of David.' The people told them sharply to be quiet. But they shouted all the more, 'Sir, have pity on us; have pity on us, Son of David.' Jesus stopped and called the men. 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked.  
 33 'Sir,' they answered, 'we want our sight.'  
 34 Jesus was deeply moved, and touched their eyes. At once their sight came back, and they followed him.

- 21 THEY WERE NOW NEARING JERUSALEM; and when they reached Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples with these instructions: 'Go to the village opposite, where you will at once find a donkey tethered with her foal beside her; untie them, and 3 bring them to me. If anyone speaks to

you, say, "Our Master needs them"; and he will let you take them at once.'<sup>u</sup> This was to fulfil the prophecy which 4 says, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, "Here 5 is your king, who comes to you in gentleness, riding on an ass, riding on the foal of a beast of burden.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus 6 had directed, and brought the donkey 7 and her foal; they laid their cloaks on them and Jesus mounted. Crowds of 8 people carpeted the road with their cloaks, and some cut branches from the trees to spread in his path. Then 9 the crowd that went ahead and the others that came behind raised the shout: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the heavens!'

When he entered Jerusalem the 10 whole city went wild with excitement. 'Who is this?' people asked, and the 11 crowd replied, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Jesus then went into the temple and 12 drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple precincts; he upset the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dealers in pigeons; and said to them, 'Scripture says, "My 13 house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a robbers' cave.'

In the temple blind men and cripples 14 came to him, and he healed them. The 15 chief priests and doctors of the law saw the wonderful things he did, and heard the boys in the temple shouting,

<sup>u</sup> Or "Our Master needs them and will send them back straight away."

world as destined to be reigned over by God. 28: *Ransom for many*: see Mk.10.45 n.; see also 2 Macc.7.37–38.

20.29–34: *Two blind men healed* (Mk.10.46–52; Lk.18.35–43). 30: *Two blind men*: contrast Mk.10.46; Lk.18.35. 31: *Son of David*: see 1.1 n. 34: *Followed*: see Mk.10.52 n.

21.1–25.46: *Jesus in Jerusalem* (Mk.11.1–13.37 n.; Lk.19.28–21.38).

21.1–9: *The entry into Jerusalem* (Mk.11.1–11; Lk.19.28–38; Jn.12.12–19). 1: *The Mount of Olives*: associated with the appearance of the Messiah. The Gospel writers understand the entry as a messianic claim, and the account has been influenced by the picture of the humble king in Zech.9.9 (see v. 5 n.). 2: Mt. speaks of two animals, presumably because of his interpretation of the prophecy he records in v. 5. 5: Isa.62.11 and Zech.9.9 are combined; Jn.12.15 also quotes Zech. 9: Ps.118.25–26. *Hosanna*, lit. means "O, save!" In Jesus' day, it could be simply a shout of praise. *Son of David*: see 1.1 n.

21.10–17: *Cleansing of the Temple* (Mk.11.15–19; Lk.19.45–48). 11: *Prophet*: see 21.26,46; Mk.8.28 n. 12: *The temple* area involved would be the so-called Court of the Gentiles, to which even non-Jews were admitted. *Money-changers* converted ordinary money into the Tyrian half-shekels required at the Temple. *Pigeons*: for inexpensive animal sacrifices. See Mk.11.15–16 n. 13: See Mk.11.17 n.; Isa.56.7; Jer.7.11. 14: Mt. apparently sees this as the Temple's true function. 16: Ps.8.2.

16 'Hosanna to the Son of David!', and they asked him indignantly, 'Do you hear what they are saying?' Jesus answered, 'I do; have you never read that text, "Thou hast made children and babes at the breast sound aloud thy praise"?' Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

18 Next morning on his way to the city he felt hungry; and seeing a fig-tree at the roadside he went up to it, but found nothing on it but leaves. He said to the tree, 'You shall never bear fruit any more!'; and the tree withered away at once. The disciples were amazed at the sight. 'How is it', they asked, 'that the tree has withered so suddenly?' Jesus answered them, 'I tell you this: if only you have faith and have no doubts, you will do what has been done to the fig-tree; and more than that, you need only say to this mountain, "Be lifted from your place and hurled into the sea", and what you say will be done. And whatever you pray for in faith you will receive.'

23 He entered the temple, and the chief priests and elders of the nation came to him with the question: 'By what authority are you acting like this? Who gave you this authority?' Jesus replied, 'I have a question to ask you too; answer it, and I will tell you by what authority I act. The baptism of John: was it from God, or from men?' This set them arguing among themselves: 'If we say, "from God", he will say, "Then why did you not believe him?" But if we say, "from men", we are afraid of the people, for they all take John for a prophet.' So they answered, 'We do not know.' And Jesus said:

'Then neither will I tell you by what authority I act.

'But what do you think about this? 28 A man had two sons. He went to the first, and said, "My boy, go and work today in the vineyard." "I will, sir", 29 the boy replied; but he never went. The father came to the second and 30 said the same. "I will not", he replied, but afterwards he changed his mind and went. Which of these two did as 31 his father wished?" "The second", they said. Then Jesus answered, 'I tell you this: tax-gatherers and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For when John came to show 32 you the right way to live, you did not believe him, but the tax-gatherers and prostitutes did; and even when you had seen that, you did not change your minds and believe him.

'Listen to another parable. There was 33 a landowner who planted a vineyard: he put a wall round it, hewed out a winepress, and built a watch-tower; then he let it out to vine-growers and went abroad. When the vintage season 34 approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect the produce due to him. But they took his servants and 35 thrashed one, killed another, and stoned a third. Again, he sent other 36 servants, this time a larger number; and they did the same to them. At 37 last he sent to them his son. "They will respect my son", he said. But 38 when they saw the son the tenants said to one another, "This is the heir; come on, let us kill him, and get his 39 inheritance." And they took him, flung him out of the vineyard, and 40 killed him. When the owner of the vineyard comes, how do you think he

21.18–22: **The cursing of the fig tree** (Mk.11.12–14,20–25). 19: The narrative is frequently taken as an "acted parable or allegory" of the rejection of Israel or as a development of the parable in Lk.13.6–9. 20–22: The story has attracted sayings about the power of *faith* and *prayer* which are also found elsewhere (17.20; Lk.17.6).

21.23–27: **Jesus' authority challenged** (Mk.11.27–33; Lk.20.1–8). 25: *From God*: lit. "from heaven" (a typical Jewish circumlocution to avoid the careless use of "God"; compare 3.2 n.). 26: *Prophet*: see Mk.8.28 n.

21.28–32: **The parable of the two sons**. 31: That religious outcasts (*tax-gatherers* and *prostitutes*) should have priority over religious leaders is not a popular notion even in modern times. 32: In this context, to *believe him* (John the Baptist) appears to assure entrance into the kingdom.

21.33–46: **The evil tenants** (Mk.12.1–12; Lk.20.9–19). 33: If originally a *parable*, the story as now told has the marks of an allegory; see Mk.4.2 n. The *vineyard* is a conventional symbol for Israel as the chosen people; compare Isa.5.1–7. 34: Early Christian readers would identify the *servants* as the prophets and the *tenants* as the Jewish leaders of the day. 37: *Son*: Jesus.

41 will deal with those tenants?' 'He will bring those bad men to a bad end', they answered, 'and hand the vineyard over to other tenants, who will let him have his share of the crop when the 42 season comes.' Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the main corner-stone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes"?' There- 43 fore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a nation that yields the proper fruit."<sup>v</sup>

45 When the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they saw that he 46 was referring to them; they wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid of the people, who looked on Jesus as a prophet.

22 THEN JESUS SPOKE TO THEM AGAIN IN 2 parables: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like this. There was a king who prepared a feast for his son's wedding; 3 but when he sent his servants to summon the guests he had invited, 4 they would not come. He sent others again, telling them to say to the guests, "See now! I have prepared this feast for you. I have had my bullocks and fatted beasts slaughtered; everything is ready; come to the 5 wedding at once." But they took no notice; one went off to his farm, 6 another to his business, and the others seized the servants, attacked them 7 brutally, and killed them. The king was furious; he sent troops to kill those murderers and set their town on fire. 8 Then he said to his servants, "The wedding-feast is ready; but the guests I invited did not deserve the honour. 9 Go out to the main thoroughfares, and invite everyone you can find to the 10 wedding." The servants went out into

the streets, and collected all they could find, good and bad alike. So the hall was packed with guests.

'When the king came in to see the 11 company at table, he observed one man who was not dressed for a wedding. "My friend," said the king, "how do 12 you come to be here without your wedding clothes?" He had nothing to say. The king then said to his atten- 13 dants, "Bind him hand and foot; turn him out into the dark, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth." For 14 though many are invited, few are chosen.'

THEN THE PHARISEES WENT AWAY AND 15 agreed on a plan to trap him in his own words. Some of their followers were 16 sent to him in company with men of Herod's party. They said, 'Master, you are an honest man, we know; you teach in all honesty the way of life that God requires, truckling to no man, whoever he may be. Give us your ruling 17 on this: are we or are we not permitted to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor?' Jesus was aware of their malicious 18 intention and said to them, 'You hypocrites! Why are you trying to catch me out? Show me the money in 19 which the tax is paid.' They handed him a silver piece. Jesus asked, 'Whose 20 head is this, and whose inscription?' 'Caesar's', they replied. He said to 21 them, 'Then pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God what is due to God.' This answer took them by 22 surprise, and they went away and left him alone.

The same day Sadducees came to 23 him, maintaining that there is no resurrection. Their question was this:

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses add (44) Any man who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; and if it falls on a man he will be crushed by it.

42: *The stone... is wonderful*: Ps.118.22-23; see Mk.12.10-11 n.; Acts 4.11; 1 Pet.2.4,7. 22.1-14: *The wedding feast* (Lk.14.16-24). 2: *Feast*: see Lk.14.15 n. 3: *To summon the guests*: see Lk.14.17 n. 5-6: The feature of the *servants* being *attacked* is peculiar to Mt. (see Lk.14.18-20); the rejection of John and Jesus probably suggested this embellishment. 7: Here the tradition may reflect the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. 11-14: In light of v. 10, the expectation of "correct dress" may indicate that these verses are from a second "feast parable" which Mt. has appended to vv. 2-10.

22.15-22: *Caesar's tax* (Mk.12.13-17; Lk.20.20-26). 17: Advice against paying such *taxes* would amount to treason; advice in favor of paying would be unpopular with Jewish nationalists.

22.23-33: *A resurrection puzzle* (Mk.12.18-27; Lk.20.27-40). 23: On differences between

24 'Master, Moses said, "If a man should die childless, his brother shall marry the widow and carry on his brother's family." Now we knew of seven brothers. The first married and died, and as he was without issue his wife was left to his brother. The same thing happened with the second, and the third, and so on with all seven. Last of all the woman died. At the resurrection, then, whose wife will she be, for they had all married her?' Jesus answered: 'You are mistaken, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. At the resurrection men and women do not marry; they are like angels in heaven.'

31 'But about the resurrection of the dead, have you never read what God himself said to you: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not God of the dead but of the living.' The people heard what he said, and were astounded at his teaching.

34 Hearing that he had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees met together; and one of their number<sup>w</sup> tested him with this question: 'Master, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind." That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Everything in the Law and the prophets hangs on these two commandments.'

Turning to the assembled Pharisees 41 Jesus asked them, 'What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?' 'The son of David', they replied. 'How then is it', he asked, 43 'that David by inspiration calls him "Lord"? For he says, "The Lord said 44 to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."' If David calls him "Lord", 45 how can he be David's son?' Not a man could say a word in reply; and from that day forward no one dared ask him another question.

JESUS THEN ADDRESSED THE PEOPLE AND 23 his disciples in these words: 'The 2 doctors of the law and the Pharisees sit in the chair of Moses; therefore do 3 what they tell you; pay attention to their words. But do not follow their practice; for they say one thing and do another. They make up heavy packs 4 and pile them on men's shoulders, but will not raise a finger to lift the load themselves. Whatever they do is done 5 for show. They go about with broad phylacteries<sup>x</sup> and with large tassels on their robes; they like to have places of 6 honour at feasts and the chief seats in synagogues, to be greeted respectfully 7 in the street, and to be addressed as "rabbi".'

'But you must not be called "rabbi"; 8 for you have one Rabbi, and you are all brothers. Do not call any man on 9

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses insert a lawyer.  
<sup>x</sup> See Deuteronomy 6. 8-9 and Exodus 13. 9.

*Sadducees and Pharisees* (v. 15), see 3.7 n. 24: Deut.25.5-10. 30: *The scriptures*: apparently Exod.3.6, which is quoted in v. 32 as proof of the resurrection.

22.34-40: *The double commandment of love* (Mk.12.28-34; compare Lk.10.25-28). 35: Mt. attributes the motive of testing to the inquirers; compare Mk.12.28; Lk.10.27 n. 37: Deut.6.5. 39: Lev.19.18. 40: Compare 7.12.

22.41-46: *Messiah, son of David* (Mk.12.35-37; Lk.20.41-44). 42: *Messiah . . . the son of David*: see 1.1 n. 44: Ps.110.1 is interpreted to mean "God (*the Lord*) said to the Messiah (*my Lord*)"; compare Acts 2.34-36. 45: While the story may represent a stratum of tradition which rejected a son of David Christology, that cannot have been the intention of the evangelist, in light e.g. of chs. 1-2.

23.1-39: *Alas for lawyers and Pharisees* (compare Lk.11.42-54). 1: It is difficult to decide whether ch. 23 is the climax of the reported controversy of the preceding chs. or the beginning of the final discourse in Mt. The fact that the Pharisees appear as Jesus' chief opponents in the synoptic Gospels—and especially in Mt.—probably reflects the situation after 70 A.D., when Pharisaism was the form of Judaism which the Church normally confronted. In the very old traditions of the passion (beginning with ch. 26 and its parallels), not the Pharisees, but the politically important priestly and Sadducaic elements seem to be most prominent in the fateful final conflict. 3: *On doctors of the law (lawyers, vv. 13,15,23,25,27,29; teachers, v. 34!)*, see 2.4 n.; 5.20 n. *The chair of Moses*: at one time, a place provided in the synagogue for authoritative teaching. 5: *Phylacteries* were small leather containers holding certain passages of Scripture; compare Exod.13.9. 8-10: *Rabbi, father, teacher*: titles for teachers of the Law.

earth "father"; for you have one  
 10 Father, and he is in heaven. Nor must  
 you be called "teacher"; you have one  
 11 Teacher, the Messiah. The greatest  
 12 among you must be your servant. For  
 whoever exalts himself will be humbled;  
 and whoever humbles himself will be  
 exalted.

13 'Alas for you, lawyers and  
 Pharisees, hypocrites that you are!  
 You shut the door of the kingdom of  
 Heaven in men's faces; you do not  
 enter yourselves, and when others are  
 entering, you stop them.<sup>y</sup>

15 'Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees,  
 hypocrites! You travel over sea and  
 land to win one convert; and when you  
 have won him you make him twice as  
 fit for hell as you are yourselves.

16 'Alas for you, blind guides! You say,  
 "If a man swears by the sanctuary,  
 that is nothing; but if he swears by the  
 gold in the sanctuary, he is bound by  
 17 his oath." Blind fools! Which is the  
 more important, the gold, or the  
 sanctuary which sanctifies the gold?

18 Or you say, "If a man swears by the  
 altar, that is nothing; but if he swears  
 by the offering that lies on the altar, he  
 19 is bound by his oath." What blindness!  
 Which is the more important, the  
 offering, or the altar which sanctifies  
 20 it? To swear by the altar, then, is to  
 swear both by the altar and by what-  
 ever lies on it; to swear by the sanctuary  
 is to swear both by the sanctuary and  
 22 by him who dwells there; and to swear  
 by heaven is to swear both by the  
 throne of God and by him who sits  
 upon it.

23 'Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees,  
 hypocrites! You pay tithes of mint and  
 dill and cummin; but you have  
 overlooked the weightier demands of  
 the Law, justice, mercy, and good  
 faith. It is these you should have  
 practised, without neglecting the others.

24 Blind guides! You strain off a midge,  
 yet gulp down a camel!

'Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, 25  
 hypocrites! You clean the outside of  
 cup and dish, which you have filled  
 inside by robbery and self-indulgence!  
 Blind Pharisee! Clean the inside of the 26  
 cup first; then the outside will be clean  
 also.

'Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, 27  
 hypocrites! You are like tombs covered  
 with whitewash; they look well from  
 outside, but inside they are full of dead  
 men's bones and all kinds of filth. So 28  
 it is with you: outside you look like  
 honest men, but inside you are brim-  
 full of hypocrisy and crime.

'Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, 29  
 hypocrites! You build up the tombs  
 of the prophets and embellish the  
 monuments of the saints, and you say, 30  
 "If we had been alive in our fathers'  
 time, we should never have taken part  
 with them in the murder of the  
 prophets." So you acknowledge that 31  
 you are the sons of the men who killed  
 the prophets. Go on then, finish off 32  
 what your fathers began!<sup>z</sup>

'You snakes, you vipers' brood, how 33  
 can you escape being condemned to  
 hell? I send you therefore prophets, 34  
 sages, and teachers; some of them you  
 will kill and crucify, others you will  
 flog in your synagogues and hound  
 from city to city. And so, on you will 35  
 fall the guilt of all the innocent blood  
 spilt on the ground, from innocent  
 Abel to Zechariah son of Berachiah,  
 whom you murdered between the  
 sanctuary and the altar. Believe me, 36  
 this generation will bear the guilt of it  
 all.

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that 37  
 murders the prophets and stones the  
 messengers sent to her! How often have  
 I longed to gather your children, as a  
 hen gathers her brood under her wings;  
 but you would not let me. Look, look! 38

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses add (14) Alas for you, lawyers and  
 Pharisees, hypocrites! You eat up the property of  
 widows, while you say long prayers for appearance'  
 sake. You will receive the severest sentence.

<sup>z</sup> Or You too must come up to your fathers' standards.

13: *Alas for*: see Lk.6.24–26 n. *Shut the door*: compare 16.19 n.; Lk.11.52. 16–22: The purpose  
 of oaths of the type described was to guard against the profaning of the holy sanctuary or altar  
 (and, ultimately, the name of God) by broken oaths; compare 5.33–37. 23: *Tithes* of such  
 produce probably exceed the actual requirements of Deut.14.22–23. *The weightier demands*: see  
 Mic.6.8. 24: *Midge*: or, gnat. 27–32: Compare Lk.11.44–48. 33: 3.7; Lk.3.7. 34–36: See  
 Lk.11.49–51 n. 34: *Teachers*: see 23.3 n. 35: *Abel*: Gen.4.8. *Son of Berachiah* (2 Chr.24.20–22;  
 Zech.1.1) is not found in Lk.11.51 (see n.); probably the identification is mistaken. 37–38: See



there is your temple, forsaken by  
 39 God.<sup>a b</sup> And I tell you, you shall never  
 see me until the time when you say,  
 "Blessings on him who comes in the  
 name of the Lord."

*Prophecies and warnings*

24 JESUS WAS LEAVING THE TEMPLE WHEN  
 his disciples came and pointed to the  
 2 temple buildings. He answered, "Yes,  
 look at it all. I tell you this: not one  
 stone will be left upon another; all will  
 be thrown down."  
 3 When he was sitting on the Mount of  
 Olives the disciples came to speak to  
 him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when  
 will this happen? And what will be the  
 signal for your coming and the end of  
 the age?"  
 4 Jesus replied: "Take care that no one  
 5 misleads you. For many will come  
 claiming my name and saying, "I am  
 the Messiah"; and many will be misled  
 6 by them. The time is coming when you  
 will hear the noise of battle near at  
 hand and the news of battles far away;  
 see that you are not alarmed. Such  
 things are bound to happen; but the  
 7 end is still to come. For nation will  
 make war upon nation, kingdom upon  
 kingdom; there will be famines and  
 8 earthquakes in many places. With all  
 these things the birth-pangs of the new  
 age begin.  
 9 "You will then be handed over for  
 punishment and execution; and men  
 of all nations will hate you for your  
 10 allegiance to me. Many will fall from  
 their faith; they will betray one  
 11 another and hate one another. Many

false prophets will arise, and will  
 12 mislead many; and as lawlessness  
 spreads, men's love for one another  
 will grow cold. But the man who holds  
 13 out to the end will be saved. And this  
 14 gospel of the Kingdom will be pro-  
 claimed throughout the earth as a  
 testimony to all nations; and then the  
 end will come.

"So when you see "the abomination  
 15 of desolation", of which the prophet  
 Daniel spoke, standing in the holy  
 place (let the reader understand), then  
 16 those who are in Judaea must take to  
 the hills. If a man is on the roof, he  
 17 must not come down to fetch his goods  
 from the house; if in the field, he must  
 18 not turn back for his coat. Alas for  
 19 women with child in those days, and  
 for those who have children at the  
 breast! Pray that it may not be winter  
 20 when you have to make your escape,  
 or Sabbath. It will be a time of great  
 21 distress; there has never been such a  
 time from the beginning of the world  
 until now, and will never be again. If  
 22 that time of troubles were not cut  
 short, no living thing could survive;  
 but for the sake of God's chosen it will  
 be cut short.

"Then, if anyone says to you, "Look,  
 23 here is the Messiah", or, "There he is",  
 do not believe it. Impostors will come  
 24 claiming to be messiahs or prophets,  
 and they will produce great signs and  
 wonders to mislead even God's chosen,  
 if such a thing were possible. See, I  
 25 have forewarned you. If they tell you,  
 26 "He is there in the wilderness", do not  
 go out; or if they say, "He is there in

*a* Or Look, your home is desolate.  
*b* Some witnesses add and laid waste.

Lk.13.34-35 n. 39: For Mt., until the time looks forward to the end time; contrast Lk.13.35 n. Blessings . . . Lord: Ps.118.26.

24.1-26.1a: The (fifth) eschatological discourse. See 23.1 n.; 7.28 n. Compare Mk.13.1-37 n. 24.1-2: Temple's destruction predicted (Mk.13.1-4; Lk.21.5-7). Herod the Great instituted the building of a magnificent temple about 20 B.C.; although it was substantially complete, work on it still continued in Jesus' day (see Jn.2.20). Several traditions suggest that Jesus foretold the Temple's destruction (compare Jn.2.19); another form of the prediction had it that Jesus himself would destroy the Temple (compare 26.61; Mk.14.58; 15.29; Acts 6.14). The destruction occurred in 70 A.D. as a consequence of the revolt against Rome.

24.3-41: Signs, false signs, and warnings (Mk.13.3-37; Lk.21.8-36). 3: Mount of Olives: see 21.1 n. 4-5: Compare vv. 23-24; Acts 8.9-11. 8: Birth-pangs: conventional imagery for suffering associated with the dawn of the new age (e.g. 1 Thess.5.3). 13: 10.22. 14: See 28.18-20; Mk.13.10. 15: "The abomination of desolation" (see Dan.9.27; 11.31; 12.11): a symbol of pagan profanation of the holy place. The comment let the reader understand calls attention to the cryptic character of this material. 18: Lk.17.31. 20: Mt. alone shows concern about violating the rule limiting Sabbath travel; compare Mk.13.18. 21: Dan.12.1. 24: Deut.13.1-2. 26-28:

27 the inner room”, do not believe it. Like lightning from the east, flashing as far as the west, will be the coming of the Son of Man.

28 ‘Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

29 ‘As soon as the distress of those days has passed, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light, the stars will fall from the sky, the celestial powers will be shaken.

30 Then will appear in heaven the sign that heralds the Son of Man. All the peoples of the world will make lamentation, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. With a trumpet blast he will send out his angels, and they will gather his chosen from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of heaven on every side.

32 ‘Learn a lesson from the fig-tree. When its tender shoots appear and are breaking into leaf, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things, you may know that the end is near,<sup>c</sup> at the very door. I tell you this: the present generation will live to see it all. Heaven and earth will pass away; my words will never pass away.

36 ‘But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son; only the Father.

37 ‘As things were in Noah’s days, so will they be when the Son of Man comes. In the days before the flood they ate and drank and married, until the day that Noah went into the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken, the other left; two women grinding at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

‘Keep awake, then; for you do not know on what day your Lord is to come. Remember, if the householder had known at what time of night the burglar was coming, he would have kept awake and not have let his house be broken into. Hold yourselves ready, therefore, because the Son of Man will come at the time you least expect him.

‘Who is the trusty servant, the sensible man charged by his master to manage his household staff and issue their rations at the proper time? Happy that servant who is found at his task when his master comes! I tell you this: he will be put in charge of all his master’s property. But if he is a bad servant and says to himself, “The master is a long time coming”, and begins to bully the other servants and to eat and drink with his drunken friends, then the master will arrive on a day that servant does not expect, at a time he does not know, and will cut him in pieces. Thus he will find his place among the hypocrites, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.

‘When that day comes, the kingdom of Heaven will be like this. There were ten girls, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five prudent; when the foolish ones took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the others took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was late in coming they all dozed off to sleep. But at midnight a cry was heard: “Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” With that the girls all got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, “Our lamps are going out; give us some of your oil.” “No,” they said; “there will never be enough for all of us. You had better go to the shop and buy some for

<sup>c</sup> Or that he is near.

Lk.17.23–24,37. 29: The portents described here have OT roots; e.g. Isa.13.10. 30: Dan.7.13. 31: Isa.27.13; 1 Cor.15.52; Deut.30.4. 34: Compare 10.23; 16.28. A late first-century Christian could have understood the saying literally only of the destruction of the Temple, not of the end of the age; see v. 36. 35: 5.18; Lk.16.17. 37–41: Lk.17.26–27,34–35; Gen. chs. 6–7.

24.42–26.1a: Parables of judgment.

24.43–44: The wakeful householder (Lk.12.39–40). The “thief” motif was widespread; e.g. 1 Thess.5.2; Rev.3.3.

24.45–51: The trusty servant (Lk.12.42–46).

25.1–13: The girls at the wedding celebration. The parable uses the wedding customs of the time to urge preparedness for the kingdom. 1: No doubt the early Church thought of Jesus as the

- 10 yourselves." While they were away the  
bridegroom arrived; those who were  
ready went in with him to the wedding;  
11 and the door was shut. And then the  
other five came back. "Sir, sir," they  
cried, "open the door for us." But he  
12 answered, "I declare, I do not know  
you." Keep awake then; for you never  
13 know the day or the hour.
- 14 'It is like a man going abroad, who  
called his servants and put his capital  
15 in their hands; to one he gave five  
bags of gold, to another two, to  
another one, each according to his  
capacity. Then he left the country.  
16 The man who had the five bags went  
at once and employed them in business,  
17 and made a profit of five bags, and the  
man who had the two bags made two.  
18 But the man who had been given one  
bag of gold went off and dug a hole in  
the ground, and hid his master's  
19 money. A long time afterwards their  
master returned, and proceeded to  
20 settle accounts with them. The man  
who had been given the five bags of  
gold came and produced the five he  
had made: "Master," he said, "you  
left five bags with me; look, I have  
21 made five more." "Well done, my  
good and trusty servant!" said the  
master. "You have proved trustworthy  
in a small way; I will now put you in  
charge of something big. Come and  
22 share your master's delight." The man  
with the two bags then came and said,  
"Master, you left two bags with me;  
23 look, I have made two more." "Well  
done, my good and trusty servant!"  
said the master. "You have proved  
trustworthy in a small way; I will now  
put you in charge of something big.  
Come and share your master's delight."  
24 Then the man who had been given one  
bag came and said, "Master, I knew  
you to be a hard man: you reap where  
you have not sown, you gather where  
25 you have not scattered; so I was  
afraid, and I went and hid your gold  
in the ground. Here it is—you have  
what belongs to you." "You lazy  
26 rascal!" said the master. "You knew  
that I reap where I have not sown, and  
gather where I have not scattered?  
Then you ought to have put my  
27 money on deposit, and on my return  
I should have got it back with interest.  
Take the bag of gold from him, and  
28 give it to the one with the ten bags.  
For the man who has will always be  
29 given more, till he has enough and to  
spare; and the man who has not will  
forfeit even what he has. Fling the  
30 useless servant out into the dark, the  
place of wailing and grinding of teeth!"
- 'When the Son of Man comes in his  
31 glory and all the angels with him, he  
will sit in state on his throne, with all  
32 the nations gathered before him. He  
will separate men into two groups, as a  
shepherd separates the sheep from the  
33 goats, and he will place the sheep on  
his right hand and the goats on his left.  
Then the king will say to those on his  
34 right hand, "You have my Father's  
blessing; come, enter and possess the  
kingdom that has been ready for you  
since the world was made. For when I  
35 was hungry, you gave me food; when  
thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was  
a stranger you took me into your home,  
when naked you clothed me; when I  
36 was ill you came to my help, when in  
prison you visited me." Then the  
37 righteous will reply, "Lord, when was  
it that we saw you hungry and fed you,  
or thirsty and gave you drink, or  
38 stranger and took you home, or naked  
and clothed you? When did we see  
39 you ill or in prison, and come to  
visit you?" And the king will answer,  
40 "I tell you this: anything you did for  
one of my brothers here, however  
humble, you did for me." Then he will  
41 say to those on his left hand, "The  
curse is upon you; go from my sight

*bridegroom.* 13: Mt. interprets the parable in this way to carry forward the theme of 24.42–44.

25.14–30: **The parable of the talents.** In contrast to the similar parable in Lk.19.12–27 (see nn. there), immense sums are left in the hands of the servants. (In other, more literal, translations, "talents" appears rather than *bags of gold*: a talent was an ancient measure of money).

25.31–46: **The sheep and the goats.** See 7.24–29 n. The parable begins with familiar images: *the Son of man . . . in his glory* (v. 1; Dan.7.13–15); the assembling of the *nations*—i.e. even Gentiles (v. 2; e.g. Isa.2.2–4); the judging of the flocks (Ezek.34.17). 40: *Brothers* may be a technical term for "Christians"; see 18.35 n. 40,45: 10.42; Mk.9.41. 26.1a: See 7.28 n.

to the eternal fire that is ready for the  
 42 devil and his angels. For when I was  
 hungry you gave me nothing to eat,  
 43 when thirsty nothing to drink; when I  
 was a stranger you gave me no home,  
 when naked you did not clothe me;  
 when I was ill and in prison you did  
 44 not come to my help." And they too  
 will reply, "Lord, when was it that we  
 saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger  
 or naked or ill or in prison, and did  
 45 nothing for you?" And he will answer,  
 "I tell you this: anything you did not  
 do for one of these, however humble,  
 46 you did not do for me." And they will  
 go away to eternal punishment, but the  
 righteous will enter eternal life.'

*The final conflict*

**26** WHEN JESUS HAD FINISHED THIS DIS-  
 2 course he said to his disciples, 'You  
 know that in two days' time it will be  
 Passover, and the Son of Man is to be  
 handed over for crucifixion.'

3 Then the chief priests and the elders  
 4 of the nation met in the palace of the  
 High Priest, Caiaphas; and there they  
 conferred together on a scheme to have  
 Jesus arrested by some trick and put to  
 5 death. 'It must not be during the  
 festival,' they said, 'or there may be  
 rioting among the people.'

6 JESUS WAS AT BETHANY IN THE HOUSE  
 7 of Simon the leper, when a woman  
 came to him with a small bottle of  
 fragrant oil, very costly; and as he sat  
 at table she began to pour it over his  
 8 head. The disciples were indignant  
 when they saw it. 'Why this waste?'  
 9 they said; 'it could have been sold for  
 a good sum and the money given to the

poor.' Jesus was aware of this, and said 10  
 to them, 'Why must you make trouble  
 for the woman? It is a fine thing she has  
 done for me. You have the poor 11  
 among you always; but you will not  
 always have me. When she poured 12  
 this oil on my body it was her way of  
 preparing me for burial. I tell you 13  
 this: wherever in all the world this  
 gospel is proclaimed, what she has done  
 will be told as her memorial.'

THEN ONE OF THE TWELVE, THE MAN 14  
 called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief  
 priests and said, 'What will you give 15  
 me to betray him to you?' They  
 weighed him out<sup>d</sup> thirty silver pieces.  
 From that moment he began to look 16  
 out for an opportunity to betray him.

On the first day of Unleavened 17  
 Bread the disciples came to ask  
 Jesus, 'Where would you like us  
 to prepare for your Passover supper?'  
 He answered, 'Go to a certain man in 18  
 the city, and tell him, "The Master  
 says, 'My appointed time is near; I am  
 to keep Passover with my disciples at  
 your house.'"' The disciples did as 19  
 Jesus directed them and prepared for  
 Passover.

In the evening he sat down with the 20  
 twelve disciples; and during supper he 21  
 said, 'I tell you this: one of you will  
 betray me.' In great distress they 22  
 exclaimed one after the other, 'Can you  
 mean me, Lord?' He answered, 'One 23  
 who has dipped his hand into this bowl  
 with me will betray me. The Son of 24  
 Man is going the way appointed for  
 him in the scriptures; but alas for that  
 man by whom the Son of Man is  
 betrayed! It would be better for that

<sup>d</sup> Or agreed to pay him . . .

**26.1b-27.66:** The final conflict (Mk.14.1-15.47; Lk.22.1-23.56; Jn. chs. 12-19). See Lk.22.1-23.56 n. 2: See Mk.14.1 n. 6-13: Mk.14.3-9 (similar stories in Lk.7.36-50; Jn.12.1-8). 7: Pour: an act of social courtesy (compare Lk.7.44-46 n.). 12: The courtesy (v. 7) is given a significance that reaches beyond the woman's intention. 14-16: Mk.14.10-11; Lk.22.3-6. 15: Thirty silver pieces: compare Zech.11.12-13.

**26.17-19:** Preparation for the Passover (Mk.14.12-16; Lk.22.7-13). In Roman fashion Mt. (and Mk.; Lk.) describes the preparation (Thursday during the day) and the meal (Thursday evening) as taking place within the one day. However, by Jewish reckoning (in which a new day began at sunset), the preparation (vv. 17-19) fell on Nisan 14; evening (v. 20) was viewed as a new day, Nisan 15 (Passover). The crucifixion is thus also dated on Nisan 15 in the synoptic Gospels. Jn. dates the final meal and the crucifixion on Nisan 14 (e.g. Jn.18.28). 18: Jerusalem residents customarily provided visitors to the city with space for observing the Passover meal.

**26.20-29:** The Last Supper (Mk.14.17-25; Lk.22.14-38). 20: Sat down: lit. "reclined," as was the custom at Passover meals. 21-25: See also Jn.13.21-30. 24: The motif of Jesus' death as

25 man if he had never been born.' Then Judas spoke, the one who was to betray him: 'Rabbi, can you mean me?' Jesus replied, 'The words are yours.'<sup>e</sup>

26 During supper Jesus took bread, and having said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples with the words: 'Take this and eat; this is my body.'  
27 Then he took a cup, and having offered thanks to God he gave it to them with the words: 'Drink from it, 28 all of you. For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, shed for many 29 for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, never again shall I drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.'

30 After singing the Passover Hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus said to them, 'Tonight you will all fall from your faith on my account; for it stands written: "I will strike the shepherd down and the sheep of his flock will be scattered."  
32 But after I am raised again, I will go on before you into Galilee.' Peter replied, 'Everyone else may fall away on your account, but I never will.' Jesus said to him, 'I tell you, tonight before the cock crows you will disown me three times.'  
35 Peter said, 'Even if I must die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the disciples said the same.

36 JESUS THEN CAME WITH HIS DISCIPLES to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there to pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. Anguish and dismay came over him, and he said to them, 'My heart is ready to break with grief. Stop here, and stay awake with me.' He went on a little, fell on his face

in prayer, and said, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.'

He came to the disciples and found 40 them asleep; and he said to Peter, 'What! Could none of you stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake, and 41 pray that you may be spared the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

He went away a second time, and 42 prayed: 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass me by without my drinking it, thy will be done.' He came 43 again and found them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. So he left them and 44 went away again; and he prayed the third time, using the same words as before.

Then he came to the disciples and 45 said to them, 'Still sleeping? Still taking your ease? The hour has come! The Son of Man is betrayed to sinful men. Up, let us go forward; the 46 traitor is upon us.'

While he was still speaking, Judas, 47 one of the Twelve, appeared; with him was a great crowd armed with swords and cudgels, sent by the chief priests and the elders of the nation. The 48 traitor gave them this sign: 'The one I kiss is your man; seize him'; and 49 stepping forward at once, he said, 'Hail, Rabbi!', and kissed him. Jesus 50 replied, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.'<sup>f</sup> They then came forward, seized Jesus, and held him fast.

At that moment one of those with 51 Jesus reached for his sword and drew it, and he struck at the High Priest's servant and cut off his ear. But Jesus 52 said to him, 'Put up your sword. All who take the sword die by the sword.

<sup>e</sup> Or It is as you say.

<sup>f</sup> Or Friend, what are you here for?

the fulfillment of the *scriptures* is prominent in the passion narrative of each Gospel. It is to be recognized particularly in the way several OT passages (e.g. Ps.22) are introduced as part of the account (e.g. Mt.27.46). 26–29: See also 1 Cor.11.23–26. 28: The idea of sacrificial *blood* as the seal of a *covenant* relies on Exod.24.8 (Zech.9.11); see Lk.22.17–19 n. *Many*: see Mk.10.45 n.

26.30–46: *Gethsemane* (Mk.14.26–42; Lk.22.39–46). 30: Jn.18.1. *Passover Hymn*: the concluding half of the "Hallel," Pss.115–118. 31: Zech.13.7. 32: 28.7–10,16. 33–35: Lk.22.31–34; Jn.13.36–38 place this prediction prior to the departure from the supper. 36–46: See Lk.22.40–46 n. 38–39: Compare Jn.12.27–28. 38: Ps.42.6. 39: *Cup*: see Mk.10.38 n.; Jn.18.11. 42: 6.10.

26.47–56: *The arrest* (Mk.14.43–52; Lk.22.47–53; Jn.18.2–11). 48: *The kiss* was a disciple's usual greeting of his teacher. 51: Jn.18.10 identifies the *one* as Peter. 52: Jer.15.2; Rev.13.10.

- 53 Do you suppose that I cannot appeal to my Father, who would at once send to my aid more than twelve legions of angels? But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, which say that this must be?'
- 54 At the same time Jesus spoke to the crowd: 'Do you take me for a bandit, that you have come out with swords and cudgels to arrest me? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple, and you did not lay hands on me. But this has all happened to fulfil what the prophets wrote.'
- 55 Then the disciples all deserted him and ran away.
- 57 JESUS WAS LED OFF UNDER ARREST TO the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the lawyers and elders were assembled. Peter followed him at a distance till he came to the High Priest's courtyard, and going in he sat down there among the attendants, meaning to see the end of it all.
- 58 The chief priests and the whole Council tried to find some allegation against Jesus on which a death-sentence could be based; but they failed to find one, though many came forward with false evidence. Finally two men alleged that he had said, 'I can pull down the temple of God, and rebuild it in three days.' At this the High Priest rose and said to him, 'Have you no answer to the charge that these witnesses bring against you?'
- 59 But Jesus kept silence. The High Priest then said, 'By the living God I charge you to tell us: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?' Jesus replied, 'The words are yours.<sup>g</sup> But I tell you this: from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God<sup>h</sup> and coming on the clouds of heaven.'
- 60 At these words the High Priest tore his robes and exclaimed, 'Blasphemy! Need we call further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?' 'He is guilty,' they answered; 'he should die.'
- 61 Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists; and others said, as they beat him, 'Now, Messiah, if you are a prophet, tell us who hit you.'
- 62 Meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when a serving-maid accosted him and said, 'You were there too with Jesus the Galilean.' Peter denied it in face of them all. 'I do not know what you mean', he said. He then went out to the gateway, where another girl, seeing him, said to the people there, 'This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.' Once again he denied it, saying with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' Shortly afterwards the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you are another of them; your accent gives you away!' At this he broke into curses and declared with an oath: 'I do not know the man.' At that moment a cock crew; and Peter remembered how Jesus had said, 'Before the cock crows you will disown me three times.' He went outside, and wept bitterly.
- WHEN MORNING CAME, THE CHIEF priests and the elders of the nation met in conference to plan the death of Jesus. They then put him in chains and led him away, to hand him over to Pilate, the Roman Governor.
- When Judas the traitor saw that Jesus had been condemned, he was seized with remorse, and returned the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests and elders. 'I have sinned,' he said; 'I have brought an innocent man to his death.' But they said, 'What is that to

*g* Or It is as you say. *h* Literally of the Power.

53: *Twelve legions*: a legion was an infantry brigade numbering about five thousand men. 26.57-75: *Before the Jewish authorities* (Mk.14.53-72; Lk.22.54-71; Jn.18.12-27). The Gospel accounts of Jesus' appearance before Jewish officials are not entirely harmonious. Whatever proceedings took place before the native Council (v. 59 n.), the crucial outcome was the charge as transmitted for the Roman trial. 57: *Caiaphas*: see Lk.3.2 n. 59: The *Council* (or Sanhedrin) of Jerusalem was Judea's highest native judicial tribunal. 61: See 24.1-3 n. *Two men*: see Num.35.30; Deut.19.15. 63: *Messiah, the Son of God*: see 16.16 n. 64: Dan.7.13; Ps.110.1. 65-66: The claim to be the *Messiah* would not, in itself, be *blasphemy*; the penalty for *blasphemy* was death by stoning (Lev.24.13-16). 75: Compare v. 34. 27.1-31: *Before Roman authority* (Mk.15.1-20; Lk.23.1-25; Jn.18.28-19.16). 2: *Pilate*: see Lk.3.1 n. 3-10: Compare Acts 1.18-19. 9-10: Jer.32.6-13; Zech.11.12-13. 11: *King*: see

5 us? See to that yourself.' So he threw the money down in the temple and left them, and went and hanged himself.

6 Taking up the money, the chief priests argued: 'This cannot be put into the temple fund; it is blood-  
7 money.' So after conferring they used it to buy the Potter's Field, as a  
8 burial-place for foreigners. This explains the name 'Blood Acre', by which that field has been known ever since;  
9 and in this way fulfilment was given to the prophetic utterance of Jeremiah: 'They took<sup>i</sup> the thirty silver pieces, the price set on a man's head (for that was his price among the Israelites), and gave the money for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.'

11 Jesus was now brought before the Governor; and as he stood there the Governor asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'The words are  
12 yours',<sup>j</sup> said Jesus; and to the charges laid against him by the chief priests and elders he made no reply. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear all this evidence that is brought against  
14 you?'; but he still refused to answer one word, to the Governor's great astonishment.

15 At the festival season it was the Governor's custom to release one prisoner chosen by the people. There was then in custody a man of some notoriety, called Jesus<sup>k</sup> Bar-Abbas.  
17 When they were assembled Pilate said to them, 'Which would you like me to release to you—Jesus<sup>k</sup> Bar-Abbas, or  
18 Jesus called Messiah?' For he knew that it was out of malice that they had brought Jesus before him.

19 While Pilate was sitting in court a message came to him from his wife: 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man; I was much troubled on his account in my dreams last night.'

20 Meanwhile the chief priests and elders had persuaded the crowd to ask for the release of Bar-Abbas and to have Jesus put to death. So when the Governor asked, 'Which of the two do you wish me to release to you?', they

said, 'Bar-Abbas.' 'Then what am I to do with Jesus called Messiah?' asked Pilate; and with one voice they answered, 'Crucify him!' 'Why, what harm has he done?' Pilate asked; but they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'

Pilate could see that nothing was being gained, and a riot was starting; so he took water and washed his hands in full view of the people, saying, 'My hands are clean of this man's blood; see to that yourselves.' And with one voice the people cried, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' He then released Bar-Abbas to them; but he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

PILATE'S SOLDIERS THEN TOOK JESUS into the Governor's headquarters, where they collected the whole company round him. They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet mantle; and plaiting a crown of thorns they placed it on his head, with a cane in his right hand. Falling on their knees before him they jeered at him: 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and used the cane to beat him about the head. When they had finished their mockery, they took off the mantle and dressed him in his own clothes.

Then they led him away to be crucified. On their way out they met a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and pressed him into service to carry his cross.

So they came to a place called Golgotha (which means 'Place of a skull') and there he was offered a draught of wine mixed with gall; but when he had tasted it he would not drink.

After fastening him to the cross they divided his clothes among them by casting lots, and then sat down there to keep watch. Over his head was placed the inscription giving the charge: 'This is Jesus the king of the Jews.'

<sup>i</sup> Or I took.

<sup>j</sup> Or it is as you say.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses omit Jesus.

Lk.23.2 n. 15: The custom is known only from the Gospels. 16: Bar-Abbas: probably, "son of the father." The man was a revolutionary (Mk.15.7; Lk.23.25). 24: Deut.21.6-9.

27.32-66: The crucifixion (Mk.15.21-47; Lk.23.26-54; Jn.19.17-42). 32: Simon: see Mk.15.21 n.; contrast Jn.19.17. 34: Ps.69.21; see Lk.23.36 n. 35: Ps.22.18; see Lk.23.32 n.

- 38 Two bandits were crucified with him, they were filled with awe, and they said, one on his right and the other on his left. 'Truly this man was a son of God.'
- 39 The passers-by hurled abuse at him: A NUMBER OF WOMEN WERE ALSO 55  
40 they wagged their heads and cried, present, watching from a distance; 'You would pull the temple down, they had followed Jesus from Galilee and build it in three days? and waited on him. Among them were 56  
Come down from the cross and save Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of yourself, if you are indeed the Son of James and Joseph, and the mother of 57  
41 God.' So too the chief priests with the of Arimathaea, Joseph by name, and the lawyers and elders mocked at him: 'He was a man of means, and had himself saved others,' they said, 'but he cannot become a disciple of Jesus. He ap- 58  
42 save himself. King of Israel, indeed! proached Pilate, and asked for the Let him come down now from the cross, and then we will believe him. 59  
43 Did he trust in God? Let God rescue the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave orders him, if he wants him—for he said he that he should have it. Joseph took the 59  
44 was God's Son.' Even the bandits who body, wrapped it in a clean linen were crucified with him taunted him in sheet, and laid it in his own unused 60  
45 the same way. tomb, which he had cut out of the rock; he then rolled a large stone 61  
46 From midday a darkness fell over against the entrance, and went away. the whole land, which lasted until Mary of Magdala was there, and the 61  
47 three in the afternoon; and about three other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.  
48 Jesus cried aloud, 'Eli, Eli, lema Next day, the morning after that 62  
*sabachthani*?' which means, 'My God, Friday, the chief priests and the Pharisees came in a body to Pilate.  
49 my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' 'Your Excellency,' they said, 'we recall 63  
47 Some of the bystanders, on hearing how that impostor said while he was 63  
48 this, said, 'He is calling Elijah.' One of still alive, "I am to be raised again after three days." So will you give 64  
49 of them ran at once and fetched a sponge orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day? Otherwise 64  
49 But the others said, 'Let us see if Elijah his disciples may come, steal the body, will come to save him.' and then tell the people that he has 65  
50 Jesus again gave a loud cry, and been raised from the dead; and the 65  
51 breathed his last. At that moment the final deception will be worse than the first.' 'You may have your guard,' said 65  
52 curtain of the temple was torn in two Pilate; 'go and make it secure as best 66  
52 from top to bottom. There was an you can.' So they went and made the 66  
53 earthquake, the rocks split and the grave secure; they sealed the stone, and 66  
53 graves opened, and many of God's left the guard in charge.  
54 saints were raised from sleep; and THE SABBATH WAS OVER, AND IT WAS 28  
54 coming out of their graves after his about daybreak on Sunday, when Mary  
54 resurrection they entered the Holy City, / Or the Son of God.

38: Isa.53.12. 39: Ps.22.7. 40: 24.1-3 n. 43: Ps.22.8. 44: Compare Lk.23.39-43. 46: This is the first verse of Ps.22, the remembrance of which has influenced the crucifixion narrative at several points (e.g. vv. 35,43). 47: The anticipation of *Elijah's* return (see Mk.6.15 n.) lies behind this apparent misunderstanding of the cry. 48: Ps.69.21. 51: The rending of the *curtain* before the Holy of Holies may have signified to early Christians God's accessibility to all men at all times; see Exod.26.31-33; Lev.16.1-2. 54: Whatever a Roman soldier might mean by *a son of God* (perhaps, "divine hero"; see Mk.1.1 n.), the Gospel writer probably understood the words as a Christian confession (see Tfn. I). 59: Deut.21.22-23. 60: The *tomb* was a chamber cut into rock, with the entrance sealed by a wheel-like *stone*. 62-66: Only Mt. has this tradition, which seems intended to counteract claims like that in 28.13.

28.1-15: The empty tomb (Mk.16.1-8; Lk.24.1-11; Jn.20.1-18). 1: See Mk.16.1 n.;



of Magdala and the other Mary came  
 2 to look at the grave. Suddenly there  
 was a violent earthquake; an angel of  
 the Lord descended from heaven; he  
 came to the stone and rolled it away,  
 3 and sat himself down on it. His face  
 shone like lightning; his garments were  
 4 white as snow. At the sight of him the  
 guards shook with fear and lay like the  
 dead.

5 The angel then addressed the women:  
 'You', he said, 'have nothing to fear. I  
 know you are looking for Jesus who  
 6 was crucified. He is not here; he has  
 been raised again, as he said he would  
 be. Come and see the place where he  
 7 was laid, and then go quickly and tell  
 his disciples: "He has been raised  
 from the dead and is going on before  
 you into Galilee; there you will see  
 him." That is what I had to tell you.'

8 They hurried away from the tomb  
 in awe and great joy, and ran to tell  
 9 the disciples. Suddenly Jesus was  
 there in their path. He gave them his  
 greeting, and they came up and  
 clasped his feet, falling prostrate  
 10 before him. Then Jesus said to them,  
 'Do not be afraid. Go and take word  
 to my brothers that they are to leave  
 for Galilee. They will see me there.'

The women had started on their way 11  
 when some of the guard went into the  
 city and reported to the chief priests  
 everything that had happened. After 12  
 meeting with the elders and conferring  
 together, the chief priests offered the  
 soldiers a substantial bribe and told 13  
 them to say, 'His disciples came by  
 night and stole the body while we were  
 asleep.' They added, 'If this should 14  
 reach the Governor's ears, we will put  
 matters right with him and see that  
 you do not suffer.' So they took the 15  
 money and did as they were told. This  
 story became widely known, and is  
 current in Jewish circles to this day.

The eleven disciples made their way 16  
 to Galilee, to the mountain where  
 Jesus had told them to meet him. When 17  
 they saw him, they fell prostrate before  
 him, though some were doubtful.  
 Jesus then came up and spoke to them. 18  
 He said: 'Full authority in heaven and  
 on earth has been committed to me.  
 Go forth therefore and make all 19  
 nations my disciples; baptize men  
 everywhere in the name of the Father  
 and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and 20  
 teach them to observe all that I have  
 commanded you. And be assured, I am  
 with you always, to the end of time.'

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Lk.23.55-56 n. 2: *Stone*: 27.60 n. 4: *Guards*: see 27.62-66. 7-10: 26.32. 8: Contrast Mk.16.8. 11-15: 27.62-66; 28.4. 15: *This day*: i.e. in Mt.'s time the charge of the stolen body was used to counter the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection.

28.16-20: **Appearance and commissioning in Galilee.** 16: *Mountain*: see 5.1 n. 17: *Fell prostrate*: worshiped. 19: The command to go to *all nations* directs the Church into the Gentile mission, beyond the limits of 10.5-6. 20: *All that I have commanded*: compare chs. 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount). *I am with you*: compare 1.23; 18.20.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Probably the oldest of the Gospels, Mark is a collection of traditions about Jesus brought together around 70 A.D. The import of the term "collection" should not mislead one to suppose that the material is presented haphazardly. On the contrary, the author depicts Jesus' early ministry as centered in Galilee, where he proclaims the kingdom of God and performs wonders; at its climax comes Peter's confession of faith and the first announcement of the passion (8.27-33). From that crucial point, the story moves relentlessly toward the cross and resurrection (chs. 14-16). Within this general framework, other "turning points" may also be found: e.g. 1.14; 3.6; 10.1.

Moreover, certain motifs which are of special concern to the evangelist are repeated. Perhaps the most important of these, at least in the Galilean section, is the kingdom's victory over demonic forces through Jesus' healing activity. Other Markan themes include the "secret of the Messiahship" (e.g. 1.34 n.) and the obtuseness even of the disciples (e.g. 8.17; 9.32).

The book's purpose is succinctly expressed: to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1.1; 15.39).

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## *The coming of Christ*

1 **H**ERE BEGINS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS  
Christ the Son of God.<sup>a</sup>

2 In the prophet Isaiah it  
stands written: 'Here is my herald  
whom I send on ahead of you, and he  
3 will prepare your way. A voice crying  
aloud in the wilderness, "Prepare a  
way for the Lord; clear a straight path  
4 for him.'" And so it was that John the  
Baptist appeared in the wilderness  
proclaiming a baptism in token of  
repentance, for the forgiveness of sins;  
5 and they flocked to him from the  
whole Judaeon country-side and the  
city of Jerusalem, and were baptized  
by him in the River Jordan, confessing  
their sins.

6 John was dressed in a rough coat of  
camel's hair, with a leather belt round

his waist, and he fed on locusts and  
wild honey. His proclamation ran: 7  
'After me comes one who is mightier  
than I. I am not fit to unfasten his  
shoes. I have baptized you with water; 8  
he will baptize you with the Holy  
Spirit.'

It happened at this time that Jesus 9  
came from Nazareth in Galilee and was  
baptized in the Jordan by John. At the 10  
moment when he came up out of the  
water, he saw the heavens torn open  
and the Spirit, like a dove, descending  
upon him. And a voice spoke from 11  
heaven: 'Thou art my Son, my Be-  
loved;<sup>b</sup> on thee my favour rests.'

Thereupon the Spirit sent him away 12  
into the wilderness, and there he 13  
remained for forty days tempted by

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<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses omit the Son of God.

<sup>b</sup> Or Thou art my only Son.

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**1.1-8: The work of the Baptist** (Mt.3.1-12; Lk.3.1-20; Jn.1.6,15,19-28). **1:** By *gospel* (i.e. the good news) the author means not the book, but the proclamation of *Jesus Christ*; it begins with the ministry of John the Baptist (compare Acts 1.22). Behind the use of the *Son of God* title in the Markan community are influences as diverse as the Jewish expectation of a royal Messiah (see Mt.1.1 n.) and Hellenistic ideas about wonder-working "divine heroes" and persons of divine nature. **2:** Mal.3.1. **3:** Isa.40.3. **4:** *Wilderness*: Mt.3.1 n. *Baptism*: see Mt.3.7 n. *Repentance*: see Mt.3.2 n. **6:** Elijah is clothed similarly in 2 Kgs.1.8. **7:** The Baptist's role in the Gospel is as the forerunner of Christ; hence, he is sometimes identified with Elijah (see 6.15 n.; 9.11-12; Mt.11.14; 17.10-13). **8:** *Holy Spirit*: see Lk.3.16 n.

**1.9-11: The baptism of Jesus** (Mt.3.13-17; Lk.3.21-22; Jn.1.32-34). In early Christian tradition, the striking account of Jesus' baptism by John serves at least three significant purposes: it narrates his becoming the Son (see Mt.3.16 n.); it explains the origin of the Church's initiatory rite; and it locates in the history of his people the beginning of Jesus' activity. **10-11:** *Spirit, dove*: see Mt.3.16 n. **11:** Ps.2.7 (*Son*) and Isa.42.1 (*Beloved*, meaning "chosen one") are combined.

**1.12-13: The temptation** (Mt.4.1-11; Lk.4.1-13). This brief account introduces a major concern of Mk.—the conflict of the *Spirit*-led Son with *Satan*, the evil one (3.22-30). **13:** *Forty*

Satan. He was among the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

*In Galilee: success and opposition*

14 AFTER JOHN HAD BEEN ARRESTED, JESUS came into Galilee proclaiming the  
15 Gospel of God: 'The time has come; the kingdom of God is upon you; repent, and believe the Gospel.'  
16 Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee when he saw Simon and his brother Andrew on the lake at work with a casting-net; for they were  
17 fishermen. Jesus said to them, 'Come with me, and I will make you fishers  
18 of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed him.  
19 When he had gone a little further he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in the boat  
20 overhauling their nets. He called them; and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, they went off to follow him.  
21 They came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath he went to synagogue and  
22 began to teach. The people were astounded at his teaching, for, unlike the doctors of the law, he taught with  
23 a note of authority. Now there was a man in the synagogue possessed by an  
24 unclean spirit. He shrieked: 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you<sup>c</sup> come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.'  
25 Jesus rebuked him: 'Be silent', he said, 'and come out of him.' And the unclean  
26 spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry left him. They were  
27 all dumbfounded and began to ask one another, 'What is this? A new kind of teaching! He speaks with authority.

When he gives orders, even the unclean spirits submit.' The news spread rapidly, and he was soon spoken of all over the district of Galilee.

On leaving the synagogue they went  
29 straight to the house of Simon and Andrew; and James and John went with them. Simon's mother-in-law was  
30 ill in bed with fever. They told him about her at once. He came forward,  
31 took her by the hand, and helped her to her feet. The fever left her and she waited upon them.

That evening after sunset they  
32 brought to him all who were ill or possessed by devils; and the whole  
33 town was there, gathered at the door. He healed many who suffered from  
34 various diseases, and drove out many devils. He would not let the devils speak, because they knew who he was.

Very early next morning he got up  
35 and went out. He went away to a lonely spot and remained there in prayer. But  
36 Simon and his companions searched him out, found him, and said, 'They  
37 are all looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us move on to the country towns  
38 in the neighbourhood; I have to proclaim my message there also; that is  
39 what I came out to do.' So all through Galilee he went, preaching in the  
40 synagogues and casting out the devils.

Once he was approached by a leper,  
40 who knelt before him begging his help. 'If only you will,' said the man, 'you  
41 can cleanse me.' In warm indignation Jesus stretched out his hand,<sup>d</sup> touched  
42 him, and said, 'Indeed I will; be clean again.' The leprosy left him im-

<sup>c</sup> Or You have.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read Jesus was sorry for him and stretched out his hand; one witness has simply He stretched out his hand.

*days*: see Mt.4.2 n. *Satan*: see Mt.4.1 n. Whether Mk. meant the *beasts* to represent the dangers of the wilderness or the restoration of creation's harmony is not clear.

**1.14-20: The beginning of Jesus' ministry** (Mt.4.12-22; Lk.4.14-15; 5.1-11; Jn.1.35-51). **15:** The time is the long-anticipated dawning of the kingdom of God. The *kingdom of God* signifies God's final victory over evil, when his rule is fully established, as well as the sphere of salvation thus inaugurated. **Repent**: change your ways. **16-20:** The first disciples are called without any indication of prior acquaintance with Jesus. **16:** *Simon*: Peter (compare Mt.4.18). **18:** *Followed*: became his disciples.

**1.21-38: Jesus in Capernaum** (Mt.8.14-17; Lk.4.31-43). **23: Unclean spirit**: a demon, believed to have power to cause illness; see v. 32. Such demons are allied with Satan (see 3.22-23) in opposition to God's will for men. **24:** The demon has knowledge not possessed by men. **24: Sunset**: see Lk.4.40 n. **34:** In Mk., Jesus repeatedly imposes silence about his identity, not only on demons (e.g. 3.12), but also on friends (e.g. 8.30).

**1.40-45: A leper healed** (Mt.8.1-4; Lk.5.12-16). **40: Leper... cleanse me**: see Mt.8.2 n.

43 mediately, and he was clean. Then he dismissed him with this stern warning:  
 44 'Be sure you say nothing to anybody. Go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering laid down by Moses for your cleansing; that will certify the cure.' But the man went out and made the whole story public; he spread it far and wide, until Jesus could no longer show himself in any town, but stayed outside in the open country. Even so, people kept coming to him from all quarters.

2 When after some days he returned to Capernaum, the news went round that he was at home; and such a crowd collected that the space in front of the door was not big enough to hold them. And while he was proclaiming the message to them, a man was brought who was paralysed. Four men were carrying him, but because of the crowd they could not get him near. So they opened up the roof over the place where Jesus was, and when they had broken through they lowered the stretcher on which the paralysed man was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, 'My son, your sins are forgiven.'

6 Now there were some lawyers sitting there and they thought to themselves, 'Why does the fellow talk like that? This is blasphemy! Who but God alone can forgive sins?' Jesus knew in his own mind that this was what they were thinking, and said to them: 'Why do you harbour thoughts like these? Is it easier to say to this paralysed man, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say, "Stand up, take your bed, and walk"?'  
 10 But to convince you that the Son of

Man has the right on earth to forgive sins'—he turned to the paralysed man—'I say to you, stand up, take your bed, and go home.' And he got up, and at once took his stretcher and went out in full view of them all, so that they were astounded and praised God. 'Never before', they said, 'have we seen the like.'

Once more he went away to the lake-side. All the crowd came to him, and he taught them there. As he went along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus at his seat in the custom-house, and said to him, 'Follow me'; and Levi rose and followed him.

When Jesus was at table in his house, many bad characters—tax-gatherers and others—were seated with him and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. Some doctors of the law who were Pharisees noticed him eating in this bad company, and said to his disciples, 'He eats with tax-gatherers and sinners!' Jesus heard it and said to them, 'It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick; I did not come to invite virtuous people, but sinners.'

Once, when John's disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast, some people came to him and said, 'Why is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?' Jesus said to them, 'Can you expect the bridegroom's friends to fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, there can be no fasting. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and on that day they will fast.'

'No one sews a patch of unshrunk

43: See v. 34 n. 44: See Lev.14.1–32. 45: Mt. has no parallel to this verse, while Lk. recasts it, omitting the suggestion that *Jesus could no longer show himself in any town*.

2.1–3.6: Healing and conflict.

2.1–12: A paralytic (Mt.9.1–8; Lk.5.17–26). 4: A roof of mud and branches is meant (contrast Lk.5.19). 5: The account assumes a connection between illness and sin; compare Jn.9.2. Faith: see Mt.8.13 n. 6: Lawyers: see Mt.2.4 n. 10: Son of Man in some NT contexts may be only the equivalent of a Semitic phrase meaning "man." In most places, however, *Son of Man* is a title for an exalted figure who will serve as judge at the end of history (see Dan.7.13–14). The expression is found almost exclusively in sayings attributed to Jesus. In some occurrences, the *Son of Man* is clearly identified with Jesus, even in his earthly humility and suffering.

2.13–17: Jesus, friend of outcasts (Mt.9.9–13; Lk.5.27–32). 15: Eating with *tax-gatherers* (see Lk.3.12 n.) and other outcasts was a practice of Jesus' of which his opponents strongly disapproved.

2.18–22: Fasting (Mt.9.14–17; Lk.5.33–39). 18: *John's disciples* developed into a continuing religious movement; see Acts 19.1–6. 21–22: Such a radical distinction between the *new* and the *old* shows the seriousness of the reported conflict.

cloth on to an old coat; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and leaves a bigger hole. No one puts new wine into old wine-skins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and then wine and skins are both lost. Fresh skins for new wine!

23 One Sabbath he was going through the cornfields; and his disciples, as they went, began to pluck ears of corn. 24 The Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is forbidden on the Sabbath?' He answered, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his men were hungry and had nothing to eat? He went into the House of God, in the time of Abiathar the High Priest, and ate the sacred bread, though no one but a priest is allowed to eat it, and even gave it to his men.'

27 He also said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for the sake of man and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is sovereign even over the Sabbath.'

3 On another occasion when he went to synagogue, there was a man in the congregation who had a withered arm; 2 and they were watching to see whether Jesus would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they could bring a charge 3 against him. He said to the man with the withered arm, 'Come and stand out here.' Then he turned to them: 'Is it permitted to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?' 5 They had nothing to say; and, looking round at them with anger and sorrow at their obstinate stupidity, he said to the man, 'Stretch out your arm.' He stretched it out and his arm was 6 restored. But the Pharisees, on leaving the synagogue, began plotting against him with the partisans of Herod to see how they could make away with him.

JESUS WENT AWAY TO THE LAKE-SIDE 7 with his disciples. Great numbers from Galilee, Judaea and Jerusalem, Idumaea and Transjordan, and the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, heard what he was doing and came to see him. So he told his disciples to have 9 a boat ready for him, to save him from being crushed by the crowd. For he 10 cured so many that sick people of all kinds came crowding in upon him to touch him. The unclean spirits 11 too, when they saw him, would fall at his feet and cry aloud, 'You are the Son of God'; but he insisted that they 12 should not make him known.

He then went up into the hill-country 13 and called the men he wanted; and they went and joined him. He appointed 14 twelve as his companions, whom he would send out to proclaim the Gospel, with a commission to drive 15 out devils. So he appointed the Twelve: 16 to Simon he gave the name Peter; then 17 came the sons of Zebedee, James and his brother John, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, Sons of Thunder; then Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus and Thad-daeus and Simon, a member of the Zealot party, and Judas Iscariot, the 19 man who betrayed him.

He entered a house; and once more 20 such a crowd collected round them that they had no chance to eat. When his 21 family heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; for people were saying that he was out of his mind.<sup>e</sup>

The doctors of the law, too, who had 22 come down from Jerusalem, said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul', and, 'He drives out devils by the prince of devils.' So he called them to come forward, 23

<sup>e</sup> Or of him. 'He is out of his mind', they said.

2.23-3.6: Sabbath controversy (Mt.12.1-14; Lk.6.1-11). Strict Sabbath observance required refraining from all work and was of prime importance for first-century Jewish piety. 23: Deut.23.25. 24: Exod.20.10; Deut.5.14. 26: *Abiathar* is a slip of the memory; Abiathar's father, Ahimelech, was the priest in this instance (1 Sam.21.1-6). On the rule involved, see Lev.24.7-9. 27: Deut.5.12-14. 28: *Son of Man*: see 2.10 n. 3.1-6: While healing in general was prohibited on the Sabbath, Pharisaic interpretation permitted treatment when a life was at stake.

3.7-12: Summary of activity and Jesus' rapport with the common people (Mt.4.24-25; 12.15-16; Lk.6.17-19).

3.13-19: The Twelve appointed (Mt.10.1-4; Lk.6.12-16). 18: The *Zealot party* was a group of violent revolutionaries.

3.20-30: Suspicion and accusation (Mt.12.22-37; Lk.11.14-23; 12.10). 22: *Beelzebul*: Satan.

and spoke to them in parables: 'How  
 24 can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom  
 is divided against itself, that kingdom  
 25 cannot stand; if a household is divided  
 against itself, that house will never  
 26 stand; and if Satan is in rebellion  
 against himself, he is divided and cannot  
 stand; and that is the end of him.

27 'On the other hand, no one can  
 break into a strong man's house and  
 make off with his goods unless he has  
 first tied the strong man up; then he  
 can ransack the house.

28 'I tell you this: no sin, no slander, is  
 29 beyond forgiveness for men; but whoever  
 slanders the Holy Spirit can never  
 be forgiven; he is guilty of eternal sin.'  
 30 He said this because they had declared  
 that he was possessed by an unclean  
 spirit.

31 Then his mother and his brothers  
 arrived, and remaining outside sent in  
 a message asking him to come out to  
 32 them. A crowd was sitting round and  
 word was brought to him: 'Your  
 mother and your brothers are outside  
 33 asking for you.' He replied, 'Who is my  
 34 mother? Who are my brothers?' And  
 looking round at those who were  
 sitting in the circle about him he said,  
 'Here are my mother and my brothers.  
 35 Whoever does the will of God is my  
 brother, my sister, my mother.'

4 ON ANOTHER OCCASION HE BEGAN TO  
 teach by the lake-side. The crowd that  
 gathered round him was so large that  
 he had to get into a boat on the lake,  
 and there he sat, with the whole crowd  
 on the beach right down to the water's  
 2 edge. And he taught them many things  
 by parables.

As he taught he said:

'Listen! A sower went out to sow. 3  
 And it happened that as he sowed, some 4  
 seed fell along the footpath; and the 5  
 birds came and ate it up. Some seed 5  
 fell on rocky ground, where it had little  
 soil, and it sprouted quickly because it  
 had no depth of earth; but when the 6  
 sun rose the young corn was scorched,  
 and as it had no root it withered away.  
 Some seed fell among thistles; and the 7  
 thistles shot up and choked the corn,  
 and it yielded no crop. And some of the 8  
 seed fell into good soil, where it came  
 up and grew, and bore fruit; and the  
 yield was thirtyfold, sixtyfold, even a  
 hundredfold.' He added, 'If you have 9  
 ears to hear, then hear.'

When he was alone, the Twelve and 10  
 others who were round him questioned  
 him about the parables. He replied, 11  
 'To you the secret of the kingdom of  
 God has been given; but to those who  
 are outside everything comes by way of  
 parables, so that (as Scripture says) 12  
 they may look and look, but see  
 nothing; they may hear and hear, but  
 understand nothing; otherwise they  
 might turn to God and be forgiven.'

So he said, 'You do not understand 13  
 this parable? How then are you to  
 understand any parable? The sower 14  
 sows the word. Those along the foot- 15  
 path are people in whom the word is  
 sown, but no sooner have they heard it  
 than Satan comes and carries off the  
 word which has been sown in them.  
 It is the same with those who receive 16  
 the seed on rocky ground; as soon as  
 they hear the word, they accept it with  
 joy, but it strikes no root in them; they 17  
 have no staying-power; then, when

29: A difficult saying (compare Mt.12.31-32 n.; Lk.12.10), which appears in several forms in early Christian literature, is interpreted by Mk. to prohibit *slander* against the power at work in Jesus (v. 30).

3.31-35: Jesus' true family (Mt.12.46-50; Lk.8.19-21). 31: Arrived: see v. 21.

4.1-34: The use of parables (Mt. ch. 13; Lk.8.4-18; 13.18-21). 2: A *parable* is a realistic story or true-to-experience observation which points beyond the everyday situation it describes. The parable is to be contrasted with the allegory, which is a puzzle whose meaning is discovered by unlocking the symbolic significance of each detail in the story. The parable's message is found by letting the metaphor stimulate the imagination to see things (God's kingdom, human relations, life) in a new way. 3-8: The procedure in farming was to sow the seed first and then to plow. Inevitably, some seed would fall on ground with an abundance of subsurface rock. 8: The *yield* exceeds normal expectations. 11: The *secret* probably is that God's kingdom is manifesting itself. Here, *parables* appears to mean "puzzles" and may mistranslate a Semitic word; if so, the translation had fateful consequences (vv. 13-20 n.). 12: See Isa.6.9-10; in Mk. (but see Mt.13.13 n.), the parables are a cause of that hardening of men's hearts which occurs within God's purpose (compare Jn.12.40). 13-20: In line with v. 11 (see n.), the parable is

there is trouble or persecution on account of the word, they fall away at once. Others again receive the seed among thistles; they hear the word, but worldly cares and the false glamour of wealth and all kinds of evil desire come in and choke the word, and it proves barren. And there are those who receive the seed in good soil; they hear the word and welcome it; and they bear fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundred-fold.'

21 He said to them, 'Do you bring in the lamp to put it under the meal-tub, or under the bed? Surely it is brought to be set on the lamp-stand. For nothing is hidden unless it is to be disclosed, and nothing put under cover unless it is to come into the open. If you have ears to hear, then hear.'

24 He also said, 'Take note of what you hear; the measure you give is the measure you will receive, with something more besides. For the man who has will be given more, and the man who has not will forfeit even what he has.'

26 He said, 'The kingdom of God is like this. A man scatters seed on the land; he goes to bed at night and gets up in the morning, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he does not know. The ground produces a crop by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then full-grown corn in the ear; but as soon as the crop is ripe, he plies the sickle, because harvest-time has come.'

30 He said also, 'How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we describe it? It is like the mustard-seed, which is smaller than any seed in the ground at its sowing. But once sown, it springs up and grows taller than any other plant, and forms branches so large that the birds can settle in its shade.'

With many such parables he would give them his message, so far as they were able to receive it. He never spoke to them except in parables; but privately to his disciples he explained everything.

*Miracles of Christ*

THAT DAY, IN THE EVENING, HE SAID TO them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' So they left the crowd and took him with them in the boat where he had been sitting; and there were other boats accompanying him. A heavy squall came on and the waves broke over the boat until it was all but swamped. Now he was in the stern asleep on a cushion; they roused him and said, 'Master, we are sinking! Do you not care?' He awoke, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Hush! Be still!' The wind dropped and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you such cowards? Have you no faith even now?' They were awestruck and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

So they came to the other side of the lake, into the country of the Gerasenes. As he stepped ashore, a man possessed by an unclean spirit came up to him from among the tombs where he had his dwelling. He could no longer be controlled; even chains were useless; he had often been fettered and chained up, but he had snapped his chains and broken the fetters. No one was strong enough to master him. And so, unceasingly, night and day, he would cry aloud among the tombs and on the hill-sides and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran and flung himself down before him,

interpreted as an allegory. 21: Mt.5.15; Lk.8.16. 22: Mt.10.26; Lk.8.17; 12.2. 24-25: Compare Mt.7.2; 13.12; Lk.6.38; 8.18; the use of these sayings at this place (vv. 10-12,33-34) underlines the privileged knowledge of the chosen ones, the secret truth which they will one day make public (v. 22). 26-32: The kingdom is all but invisible, but its consummation is certain. 30: The mustard seed (Mt.13.31-32; Lk.13.18-19) is proverbially, although not literally, the smallest seed. 32: Compare Dan.4.12. 34: See vv. 24-25 n.

4.35-41: Rebuke of a storm (Mt.8.23-27; Lk.8.22-25).

5.1-20: The Gerasene demoniac (Mt.8.28-34; Lk.8.26-39). 1: Country of the Gerasenes would mean Gerasa (Jerash), a city of the Decapolis (Mt.4.25 n.). Mt.8.28 (Gadarene), Lk.8.26 (Gergesene), and manuscripts of all three synoptics show confusion about the location. A place on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee is apparently meant. 2: See 1.23. 6: See Mt.8.28-29 n.

7 shouting loudly, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? In God's name do not torment me.' (For Jesus was already saying to him, 'Out unclean spirit, come out of this man!') Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'My name is Legion,' he said, 'there are so many of us.' And he begged hard that Jesus would not send them out of the country.

11 Now there happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hill-side, and the spirits begged him, 'Send us among the pigs and let us go into them.' He gave them leave; and the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs; and the herd, of about two thousand, rushed over the edge into the lake and were drowned.

14 The men in charge of them took to their heels and carried the news to the town and country-side; and the people came out to see what had happened.

15 They came to Jesus and saw the madman who had been possessed by the legion of devils, sitting there clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. The spectators told them how the madman had been cured and what had happened to the pigs. Then they begged Jesus to leave the district.

18 As he was stepping into the boat, the man who had been possessed begged to go with him. Jesus would not allow it, but said to him, 'Go home to your own folk and tell them what the Lord in his mercy has done for you.' The man went off and spread the news in the Ten Towns<sup>f</sup> of all that Jesus had done for him; and they were all amazed.

21 As soon as Jesus had returned by boat to the other shore, a great crowd once more gathered round him. While he was by the lake-side, the president of one of the synagogues came up, Jairus by name, and, when he saw him, threw himself down at his feet and pleaded with him. 'My little daughter', he said, 'is at death's door. I beg you to come and lay your hands on her to cure her and save her life.'

So Jesus went with him, accompanied by a great crowd which pressed upon him.

Among them was a woman who had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years; and in spite of long treatment by many doctors, on which she had spent all she had, there had been no improvement; on the contrary, she had grown worse. She had heard what people were saying about Jesus, so she came up from behind in the crowd and touched his cloak; for she said to herself, 'If I touch even his clothes, I shall be cured.' And there and then the source of her haemorrhages dried up and she knew in herself that she was cured of her trouble. At the same time Jesus, aware that power had gone out of him, turned round in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' His disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing upon you and yet you ask, "Who touched me?"' Meanwhile he was looking round to see who had done it. And the woman, trembling with fear when she grasped what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'My daughter, your faith has cured you. Go in peace, free for ever from this trouble.'

While he was still speaking, a message came from the president's house, 'Your daughter is dead; why trouble the Rabbi further?' But Jesus, overhearing the message as it was delivered, said to the president of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' After this he allowed no one to accompany him except Peter and James and James's brother John. They came to the president's house, where he found a great commotion, with loud crying and wailing. So he went in and said to them, 'Why this crying and commotion? The child is not dead: she is asleep'; and they only laughed at him. But after turning all the others out, he took the child's father

<sup>f</sup> Greek Decapolis.

9: Power over a person was believed to be gained by knowing his *name*. *Legion*: a Roman army unit of about five thousand men. 11: *Pigs*: see Mt.8.30 n. 20: *Ten Towns*: see Mt.4.25 n.

5.21-43: *Jairus' daughter and a woman with a chronic ailment* (Mt.9.18-26; Lk.8.40-56). Both narratives display the elements common to ancient miracle stories: description, cure, proof of cure (compare 5.1-16). 34: *On cured*, see Lk.7.50 n. 38: The customary noisy mourning practices.



and mother and his own companions  
 and went in where the child was  
 41 lying. Then, taking hold of her hand,  
 he said to her, '*Talitha cum*', which  
 42 means, 'Get up, my child.' Immediately  
 the girl got up and walked about—she  
 was twelve years old. At that they were  
 43 beside themselves with amazement. He  
 gave them strict orders to let no one  
 hear about it, and told them to give her  
 something to eat.  
 6 He left that place and went to his  
 home town accompanied by his disci-  
 2 ples. When the Sabbath came he began  
 to teach in the synagogue; and the large  
 congregation who heard him were  
 amazed and said, 'Where does he get it  
 from?', and, 'What wisdom is this  
 3 that has been given him?', and, 'How  
 does he work such miracles? Is not this  
 the carpenter, the son of Mary,<sup>g</sup> the  
 brother of James and Joseph and Judas  
 and Simon? And are not his sisters  
 here with us?' So they fell foul of him.  
 4 Jesus said to them, 'A prophet will  
 always be held in honour except in his  
 home town, and among his kinsmen  
 5 and family.' He could work no miracle  
 there, except that he put his hands on  
 6 a few sick people and healed them; and  
 he was taken aback by their want of  
 faith.

ON ONE OF HIS TEACHING JOURNEYS  
 7 round the villages he summoned the  
 Twelve and sent them out in pairs on  
 a mission. He gave them authority over  
 8 unclean spirits, and instructed them to  
 take nothing for the journey beyond a  
 stick: no bread, no pack, no money in  
 9 their belts. They might wear sandals,  
 10 but not a second coat. 'When you are  
 admitted to a house', he added, 'stay  
 11 there until you leave those parts. At  
 any place where they will not receive  
 you or listen to you, shake the dust off  
 your feet as you leave, as a warning to  
 12 them.' So they set out and called  
 13 publicly for repentance. They drove

out many devils, and many sick people  
 they anointed with oil and cured.

Now King Herod heard of it, for the  
 14 fame of Jesus had spread; and people  
 were saying,<sup>h</sup> 'John the Baptist has  
 been raised to life, and that is why these  
 miraculous powers are at work in him.'  
 Others said, 'It is Elijah.' Others again,  
 15 'He is a prophet like one of the old  
 prophets.' But Herod, when he heard  
 16 of it, said, 'This is John, whom I  
 beheaded, raised from the dead.'

For this same Herod had sent and  
 17 arrested John and put him in prison on  
 account of his brother Philip's wife,  
 Herodias, whom he had married. John  
 had told Herod, 'You have no right to  
 your brother's wife.' Thus Herodias  
 18 nursed a grudge against him and  
 would willingly have killed him, but  
 she could not; for Herod went in awe  
 20 of John, knowing him to be a good and  
 holy man; so he kept him in custody.  
 He liked to listen to him, although the  
 listening left him greatly perplexed.

Herodias found her opportunity  
 21 when Herod on his birthday gave a  
 banquet to his chief officials and  
 commanders and the leading men of  
 Galilee. Her daughter came in<sup>i</sup> and  
 22 danced, and so delighted Herod and  
 his guests that the king said to the girl,  
 'Ask what you like and I will give it  
 you.' And he swore an oath to her:  
 23 'Whatever you ask I will give you, up  
 to half my kingdom.' She went out and  
 24 said to her mother, 'What shall I ask  
 for?' She replied, 'The head of John the  
 Baptist.' The girl hastened back at once  
 25 to the king with her request: 'I want  
 you to give me here and now, on a dish,  
 the head of John the Baptist.' The king  
 26 was greatly distressed, but out of  
 regard for his oath and for his guests  
 he could not bring himself to refuse her.

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read Is not this the son of the carpenter and Mary ...  
<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses read and he said ...  
<sup>i</sup> Or A festive occasion came when Herod on his birthday gave ... of Galilee. The daughter of Herodias came in ...

41: *Talitha cum* is Aram.; the command is preserved in transliteration, perhaps in the belief that the strange-sounding phrase has special power.

6.1-6: Jesus in Nazareth (Mt.13.53b-58; compare Lk.4.16-30). 1: Home town: Nazareth. 3: Fell foul: were offended.

6.7-13: Mission of the Twelve (Mt.9.35; 10.1,9-11,14; Lk.9.1-6). 7: See Mt.10.8 n. 6.14-29: Herod and John (Mt.14.1-12; Lk.3.19-20; 9.7-9). 14: The Herod meant is Antipas (see Lk.3.1 n.); he was actually a client prince, not a king. 15: Elijah was expected to return to introduce the age of salvation (Mal.4.5-6; Eccclus.48.10).

27 So the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. The soldier went off and beheaded him in the prison, brought the head on a dish, and gave it to the girl; and she gave it to her mother.

29 When John's disciples heard the news, they came and took his body away and laid it in a tomb.

30 The apostles now rejoined Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come with me, by yourselves, to some lonely place where you can rest quietly.' (For they had no leisure even to eat, so many were coming and going.) Accordingly, they set off privately by boat for a lonely place. But many saw them leave and recognized them, and came round by land, hurrying from all the towns towards the place, and arrived there first.

34 When he came ashore, he saw a great crowd; and his heart went out to them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he had much to teach them. As the day wore on, his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late; send the people off to the farms and villages round about, to buy themselves something to eat.' 'Give them something to eat yourselves,' he answered. They replied, 'Are we to go and spend twenty pounds<sup>j</sup> on bread to give them a meal?' 'How many loaves have you?' he asked; 'go and see.' They found out and told him, 'Five, and two fishes also.' He ordered them to make the people sit down in groups on the green grass, and they sat down in rows, a hundred rows of fifty each. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to distribute. He also divided the two fishes among them. 42 They all ate to their hearts' content; 43 and twelve great basketfuls of scraps were picked up, with what was left of

the fish. Those who ate the loaves 44 numbered five thousand men.

As soon as it was over he made his 45 disciples embark and cross to Bethsaida ahead of him, while he himself sent the people away. After taking leave of 46 them, he went up the hill-side to pray. It grew late and the boat was already 47 well out on the water, while he was alone on the land. Somewhere between 48 three and six in the morning, seeing them labouring at the oars against a head-wind, he came towards them, walking on the lake. He was going to pass them by; but when they saw him 49 walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But at once he spoke to them: 'Take heart! It is I; do not be afraid.' Then he climbed into the boat beside them, and the wind 50 dropped. At this they were completely dumbfounded, for they had not understood the incident of the loaves; their 52 minds were closed.

So they finished the crossing and 53 came to land at Gennesaret, where they made fast. When they came ashore, he was immediately recognized; and the 54 people scoured that whole country-side and brought the sick on stretchers to any place where he was reported to be. Wherever he went, to farmsteads, 56 villages, or towns, they laid out the sick in the market-places and begged him to let them simply touch the edge of his cloak; and all who touched him were cured.

### Growing tension

A GROUP OF PHARISEES, WITH SOME 7 doctors of the law who had come from Jerusalem, met him and noticed that 2 some of his disciples were eating their food with 'defiled' hands—in other words, without washing them. (For the 3

*j Literally 200 denarii.*

6.30–44: Feeding of five thousand (Mt.14.13–21; Lk.9.10–17; Jn.6.1–13). Mt.5.32–39 and Mk.8.1–10 both have a second account of the feeding of a multitude (followed by a sea crossing); some believe the two accounts are variant forms of the same report. 30: *Apostles*: see Mt.10.2 n. 37: *Twenty pounds* (Tfn. *j*, 200 denarii): one denarius was about a day's wage. 41: See 8.6 n.

6.45–56: *Walking on the sea* (Mt.14.22–36; Jn.6.15–21). 52: The obtuseness of the disciples here contrasts sharply with the ending of the episode in Mt.14.33 (see n.); in 8.14–21 the obtuseness theme is expanded.

7.1–23: *The ancient traditions* (Mt.15.1–20). 3: *Washing the hands* was an act of ritual

Pharisees and the Jews in general never eat without washing the hands,<sup>k</sup> in obedience to an old-established tradition; and on coming from the marketplace they never eat without first washing. And there are many other points on which they have a traditional rule to maintain, for example, washing of cups and jugs and copper bowls.) Accordingly, these Pharisees and the lawyers asked him, 'Why do your disciples not conform to the ancient tradition, but eat their food with defiled hands?' He answered, 'Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites in these words: "This people pays me lip-service, but their heart is far from me: their worship of me is in vain, for they teach as doctrines the commandments of men." You neglect the commandment of God, in order to maintain the tradition of men.'

He also said to them, 'How well you set aside the commandment of God in order to maintain your tradition! Moses said, "Honour your father and your mother", and, "The man who curses his father or mother must suffer death." But you hold that if a man says to his father or mother, "Anything of mine which might have been used for your benefit is Corban"' (meaning, set apart for God), 'he is no longer permitted to do anything for his father or mother. Thus by your own tradition, handed down among you, you make God's word null and void. And many other things that you do are just like that.'

On another occasion he called the people and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand this: nothing that goes into a man from outside can defile him; no, it is the things that come out of him that defile a man.'

When he had left the people and gone indoors, his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said to them, 'Are you as dull as the rest? Do you

not see that nothing that goes from outside into a man can defile him, because it does not enter into his heart but into his stomach, and so passes out into the drain?' Thus he declared all foods clean. He went on, 'It is what comes out of a man that defiles him. For from inside, out of a man's heart, come evil thoughts, acts of fornication, of theft, murder, adultery, ruthless greed, and malice; fraud, indecency, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly; these evil things all come from inside, and they defile the man.'

Then he left that place and went away into the territory of Tyre. He found a house to stay in, and he would have liked to remain unrecognized, but this was impossible. Almost at once a woman whose young daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit heard of him, came in, and fell at his feet. (She was a Gentile, a Phoenician of Syria by nationality.) She begged him to drive the spirit out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be satisfied first; it is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' 'Sir,' she answered, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps.' He said to her, 'For saying that, you may go home content; the unclean spirit has gone out of your daughter.' And when she returned home, she found the child lying in bed; the spirit had left her.

On his return journey from Tyrian territory he went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee through the territory of the Ten Towns.<sup>n</sup> They brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, with the request that he would lay his hand on him. He took the man aside, away from the crowd, put his fingers into his ears,

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses insert with the fist; others insert frequently, or thoroughly.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read establish.

<sup>m</sup> Some witnesses here add (16) If you have ears to hear, then hear.

<sup>n</sup> Greek Decapolis.

purification. 5: The *ancient tradition* (also, v. 13) was not only the OT but also the oral expansion of the Law accepted by the Pharisees (see Mt.3.7 n.). 6-7: Isa.29.13. 10a: Exod.20.12; Deut.5.16. 10b: Exod.21.17; Lev.20.9. 11: The technicalities of the *Corban* oath are unclear. 15: *Defile*: render ritually impure.

7.24-37: *Healings* (Mt.15.21-28). Jesus now appears in territory that is predominantly Gentile. 24-30: See Mt.15.22 n. 26: *Phoenician*: or, as in Mt.15.22, Canaanite. 31: The itinerary

34 spat, and touched his tongue. Then, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha', which means  
 35 'Be opened.' With that his ears were opened, and at the same time the impediment was removed and he spoke  
 36 plainly. Jesus forbade them to tell anyone; but the more he forbade them, the more they published it. Their astonishment knew no bounds: 'All that he does, he does well,' they said; 'he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

8 THERE WAS ANOTHER OCCASION ABOUT this time when a huge crowd had collected, and, as they had no food, Jesus called his disciples and said to them,  
 2 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me now for three days  
 3 and have nothing to eat. If I send them home unfed, they will turn faint on the way; some of them have come from a  
 4 distance.' The disciples answered, 'How can anyone provide all these people  
 5 with bread in this lonely place?' 'How many loaves have you?' he asked; and  
 6 they answered, 'Seven.' So he ordered the people to sit down on the ground; then he took the seven loaves, and, after giving thanks to God, he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples to distribute; and they served it out to  
 7 the people. They had also a few small fishes, which he blessed and ordered  
 8 them to distribute. They all ate to their hearts' content, and seven baskets were  
 9 filled with the scraps that were left. The people numbered about four thousand.  
 10 Then he dismissed them; and, without delay, got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.<sup>o</sup>  
 11 Then the Pharisees came out and engaged him in discussion. To test him they asked him for a sign from heaven.

He sighed deeply to himself and said, 12  
 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? I tell you this: no sign shall be  
 given to this generation.' With that 13  
 he left them, re-embarked, and went off to the other side of the lake.

Now they had forgotten to take bread 14  
 with them; they had no more than one loaf in the boat. He began to warn 15  
 them: 'Beware,' he said, 'be on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.' They said among themselves, 'It is 16  
 because we have no bread.' Knowing 17  
 what was in their minds, he asked them, 'Why do you talk about having no bread? Have you no inkling yet? Do you still not understand? Are your minds closed? You have eyes: can you 18  
 not see? You have ears: can you not hear? Have you forgotten? When I 19  
 broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many basketfuls of scraps did you pick up?' 'Twelve,' they said. 'And how many when I broke 20  
 the seven loaves among four thousand?' They answered, 'Seven.' He said, 'Do 21  
 you still not understand?'

They arrived at Bethsaida. There the 22  
 people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. He took 23  
 the blind man by the hand and led him away out of the village. Then he spat on his eyes, laid his hands upon him, and asked whether he could see anything. The man's sight began to come 24  
 back, and he said, 'I see men; they look like trees, but they are walking about.' Jesus laid his hands on his eyes 25  
 again; he looked hard, and now he was cured so that he saw everything clearly. Then Jesus sent him home, saying, 26  
 'Do not tell anyone in the village.'<sup>p</sup>

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses give Magedan; others give Magdala.  
<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read Do not go into the village.

described is strange. *Ten Towns*: see Mt.4.25 n. 34: *Ephphatha* is transliterated Aram., compare 5.41 (see n.). 36: See 1.34 n.

8.1-10a: *Feeding of four thousand*. (Mt.15.32-39; compare 6.30-44). 6: The words used are rather reminiscent of eucharistic language; see, e.g. Lk.22.19, but also Acts 27.35.

8.10b-21: *Sea crossing and discussions* (Mt.16.1-12; Lk.11.29; 12.1). 12: *No sign* is stronger than Mt.12.38-42 (see nn.); 16.4; Lk.11.29. 15: *Leaven* is a conventional symbol for an evil influence; compare Mt.13.33 n. 17-18, 21: As in 6.52, the disciples are unable to understand. V. 18 brings to mind the outsiders who could not grasp the parables in 4.11-12 (compare Jer.5.21; Ezek.12.2; Isa.6.9-10; contrast Mt.16.12).

8.22-26: *Healing of a blind man*. Mk. probably intended this to be understood symbolically: the disciples' eyes (v. 18) are also gradually opened, as the following narrative shows (vv. 27-29).

27 JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES SET OUT FOR the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do men say I am?' They answered, 'Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others one of the prophets.' 28 'And you,' he asked, 'who do you say I am?' Peter replied: 'You are the Messiah.' Then he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him; 29 and he began to teach them that the Son of Man had to undergo great sufferings, and to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and doctors of the law; to be put to death, and to rise again 30 three days afterwards. He spoke about it plainly. At this Peter took him by the arm and began to rebuke him. But Jesus turned round, and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter. 'Away with you, Satan,' he said; 'you think as men think, not as God thinks.' 31 Then he called the people to him, as well as his disciples, and said to them, 'Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind; he must take up his cross, and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake and for the Gospel, that man is safe. What does a man gain by winning the whole world at the cost of his true self? What can he give to buy that self back? If anyone is ashamed of me and mine<sup>q</sup> in this wicked and godless age, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels.'<sup>r</sup> 32 He also said, 'I tell you this: there are some of those standing here who will

not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in power.'

Six days later Jesus took Peter, 2 James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain where they were alone; and in their presence he was transfigured; his clothes became dazzling white, with a whiteness no bleacher 3 on earth could equal. They saw Elijah 4 appear, and Moses with him, and there they were, conversing with Jesus. Then 5 Peter spoke: 'Rabbi,' he said, 'how good it is that we are here! Shall we make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?' (For 6 he did not know what to say; they were so terrified.) Then a cloud appeared, casting its shadow over them, 7 and out of the cloud came a voice: 'This is my Son, my Beloved;<sup>s</sup> listen to him.' And now suddenly, when they 8 looked around, there was nobody to be seen but Jesus alone with themselves.

On their way down the mountain, he 9 enjoined them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They seized 10 upon those words, and discussed among themselves what this 'rising from the dead' could mean. And they put a 11 question to him: 'Why do our teachers say that Elijah must come first?' He 12 replied, 'Yes, Elijah does come first to set everything right. Yet how is it<sup>t</sup> that the scriptures say of the Son of Man that he is to endure great sufferings and to be treated with contempt? How- 13

*q* Some witnesses read me and my words.  
*r* Some witnesses read Father with the holy angels.  
*s* Or This is my only Son.  
*t* Or Elijah, you say, comes first to set everything right: then how is it . . .

8.27-33: Peter's confession and Jesus' prediction of his suffering (Mt.16.13-23; Lk.9.18-22). 27: *Caesarea Philippi* locates the event on the edge of Gentile territory. 28: The return of an ancient prophet (see 6.15 n.) or the coming of a prophet like Moses (Deut.18.15) or the appearance of a true prophet (1 Macc.4.46) in connection with the messianic age were popular expectations. 30: *Messiah*: see Mt.1.1 n. 31: This is the first of three (see 9.31-32; 10.33-34) predictions of the suffering of the *Son of Man* (see 2.10 n.). These predictions probably reflect the way in which the cross and resurrection were preached by early missionaries, so that their present form may have been influenced by that preaching. From this point the story of Mk. moves forward with the cross clearly in view. 32: Suffering and death were not a part of the popular program for the Messiah. 33: *Satan*: see Mt.4.1 n.

8.34-9.1: Following Jesus (Mt.16.24-28; Lk.9.23-27). See Mt.10.38-39 n. 34: The expression, *take up his cross*, is more than a metaphor for burden-bearing or even "sacrificial living"; the possibility of actually dying must be among the terms of discipleship.

9.2-8: The transfiguration (Mt.17.1-8; Lk.9.28-36). See notes on Mt.17.1-8.

9.9-13: *Elijah has come* (Mt.17.9-13). 9-10: Since death did not fit the conception held of the *Son of Man* (8.32), it seemed impossible to think of his resurrection. 11-13: On *Elijah* and his identification with the Baptist, see 6.15 n.; 8.28 n.; Lk.1.17 n.

ever, I tell you, Elijah has already come and they have worked their will upon him, as the scriptures say of him.'

14 When they came back to the disciples they saw a large crowd surrounding them and lawyers arguing with them.

15 As soon as they saw Jesus the whole crowd were overcome with awe, and they ran forward to welcome him.

16 He asked them, 'What is this argument about?' A man in the crowd spoke up: 'Master, I brought my son to you. He is possessed by a spirit which makes

18 him speechless. Whenever it attacks him, it dashes him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and goes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they

19 failed.' Jesus answered: 'What an unbelieving and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him to me.' So they brought the boy to him; and as soon as the spirit saw him it threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell on the ground and rolled about

21 foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father, 'How long has he been like this?' 'From childhood,' he replied; 'often it has tried to make an end of him by throwing him into the fire or into water. But if it is at all possible for you, take pity upon us and help us.'

23 'If it is possible!' said Jesus. 'Everything is possible to one who has faith.'

24 'I have faith,' cried the boy's father; 'help me where faith falls short.' Jesus saw then that the crowd was closing in upon them, so he rebuked the unclean spirit. 'Deaf and dumb spirit,' he said, 'I command you, come out of him

26 and never go back!' After crying aloud and racking him fiercely, it came out; and the boy looked like a corpse; in

27 fact, many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus

took his hand and raised him to his feet, and he stood up.

Then Jesus went indoors, and his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could not we cast it out?' He said, 'There is no means of casting out this sort but prayer.'<sup>u</sup>

THEY NOW LEFT THAT DISTRICT AND made a journey through Galilee. Jesus wished it to be kept secret; for he was teaching his disciples, and telling them, 'The Son of Man is now to be given up into the power of men, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he said, and were afraid to ask.

So they came to Capernaum; and when he was indoors, he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' They were silent, because on the way they had been discussing who was the greatest. He sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a child, set him in front of them, and put his arm round him. 'Whoever receives one of these children in my name', he said, 'receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.'

John said to him, 'Master, we saw a man driving out devils in your name, and as he was not one of us, we tried to stop him.' Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; no one who does a work of divine power in my name will be able the next moment to speak evil of me. For he who is not against us is on our side. I tell you this: if anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you are followers

<sup>u</sup> Some witnesses add and fasting.

9.14-29: An epileptic boy (Mt.17.14-20; Lk.9.37-43a). 23: Faith, an important element in early Christian miracle stories, receives special stress in this account; the father's response (v. 24) is that of every man who knows his faith is incomplete. 29: Only prayer succeeds in the difficult situation because only God's power is adequate.

9.30-32: The second prediction (see 8.31 n.) of suffering (Mt.17.22-23; Lk.9.43b-45) is given; as often in Mk., the disciples still do not understand (see 8.17-18,21 n.).

9.33-37: Greatness and servanthood (Mt.18.1-5; Lk.9.46-48). 35: 10.43-44; Mt.20.26-27; 23.11; Lk.22.26. 37: Mt.10.40.

9.38-41: An exorcist who is not a disciple (Lk.9.49-50). 39-40: The saying assumes that the unnamed exorcist is friendly, as v. 41 perhaps shows. Mt.12.30 and Lk.11.23 preserve a similar saying which assumes the opposite, i.e. the one not clearly "with us" is "against us." 41: See Mt.10.42 for a somewhat different version of this verse.

of the Messiah, that man assuredly will not go unrewarded.

42 'As for the man who is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck. If your hand is your undoing, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed than to keep both hands and go to hell and the unquenchable fire.'<sup>v</sup> And if your foot is your undoing, cut it off; it is better to enter into life a cripple than to keep both your feet and be thrown into hell.<sup>w</sup> And if it is your eye, tear it out; it is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to keep both eyes and be thrown into hell, where the devouring worm never dies and the fire is not quenched.

49 'For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is a good thing; but if the salt loses its saltness, what will you season it with?

'Have salt in yourselves; and be<sup>x</sup> at peace with one another.'

**10 ON LEAVING THOSE PARTS HE CAME** into the regions of Judaea and Transjordan; and when a crowd gathered round him once again, he followed his usual practice and taught them. 2 The question was put to him:<sup>y</sup> 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' 3 This was to test him. He asked in return, 'What did Moses command 4 you?' They answered, 'Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife by note of dismissal.' Jesus said to them, 'It was because your minds were closed 6 that he made this rule for you; but in the beginning, at the creation, God 7 made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and

mother, and be made one with his wife;<sup>z</sup> and the two shall become one 8 flesh. It follows that they are no longer two individuals: they are one flesh. What God has joined together, man 9 must not separate.'

When they were indoors again the 10 disciples questioned him about this matter; he said to them, 'Whoever 11 divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her: so too, 12 if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

They brought children for him to 13 touch. The disciples rebuked them, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant, and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you, 15 whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.' And he put his arms round them, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.

As he was starting out on a journey, 17 a stranger ran up, and, kneeling before him, asked, 'Good Master, what must I do to win eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You 19 know the commandments: "Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not give false evidence; do not defraud; honour your father and mother."' 'But, Master,' he replied, 20 'I have kept all these since I was a boy.' Jesus looked straight at him; his heart warmed to him, and he said, 'One thing

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses add (44) where the devouring worm never dies and the fire is not quenched.

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses add (46) where the devouring worm never dies and the fire is not quenched.

<sup>x</sup> Or Have the salt of fellowship and be . . . ; or You have the salt of fellowship between you; then be . . .

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read The Pharisees came forward and asked him the question . . .

<sup>z</sup> Some witnesses omit and be made . . . wife.

9.42-50: On being an example (Mt.18.6-9; Lk.17.1-2). Mk. uses the negative illustration of the cause of stumbling (v. 42) and the positive metaphor of salt which seasons (v. 50) to encourage exemplary living. 42-48: See Mt.18.7-9 n. 50: Compare Mt.5.13; Lk.14.34-35.

10.1-12: Marriage and divorce (Mt.19.1-12; compare Mt.5.31-32 n.; Lk.16.18; 1 Cor.7.10-11). 1: Judaea and Transjordan anticipates v. 32. 3: The question is only a test, since the Law clearly allows divorce. 4-5: The divorce provisions of Deut.24.1-4 were provided to guide men whose minds were closed to the intention of the Creator. 6: Gen.1.27. 7-8: From Gen.2.(21-)24 Jesus argues that in God's purpose marriage establishes an indissoluble unity. 12: Since Jewish women could not divorce their husbands, this verse has been added to meet the needs of a Gentile environment.

10.13-16: Children and the kingdom (Mt.19.13-15; Lk.18.15-17). 15: Like a child: with simple trust; see Mt.18.3.

10.17-31: Possessions and the kingdom (Mt.19.16-30; Lk.18.18-30). 17-19a: No one is good except God: see Mt.19.16-17 n. 19: Exod.20.12-16; Deut.5.16-20. 21: See Mt.19.21 n.

you lack: go, sell everything you have, and give to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me.' At these words his face fell and he went away with a heavy heart; for he was a man of great wealth.

Jesus looked round at his disciples and said to them, 'How hard it will be for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!' They were amazed that he should say this, but Jesus insisted, 'Children, how hard it is<sup>a</sup> to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' They were more astonished than ever, and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'For men it is impossible, but not for God; everything is possible for God.'

At this Peter spoke. 'We here', he said, 'have left everything to become your followers.' Jesus said, 'I tell you this: there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother, father or children, or land, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and land—and persecutions besides; and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last first.'

### Challenge to Jerusalem

THEY WERE ON THE ROAD, GOING UP TO Jerusalem, Jesus leading the way; and the disciples were filled with awe, while those who followed behind were afraid. He took the Twelve aside and began

to tell them what was to happen to him. 'We are now going to Jerusalem,' he said; 'and the Son of Man will be given up to the chief priests and the doctors of the law; they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the foreign power. He will be mocked and spat upon, flogged and killed; and three days afterwards, he will rise again.'

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, 'Master, we should like you to do us a favour.' 'What is it you want me to do?' he asked. They answered, 'Grant us the right to sit in state with you, one at your right and the other at your left.' Jesus said to them, 'You do not understand what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?' 'We can', they answered. Jesus said, 'The cup that I drink you shall drink, and the baptism I am baptized with shall be your baptism; but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant; it is for those to whom it has already been assigned.'<sup>b</sup>

When the other ten heard this, they were indignant with James and John. Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that in the world the recognized rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority. That is not the way with you; among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give up his life as a ransom for many.'

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses insert for those who trust in riches.  
<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses add by my Father.

25–27: *Eye of a needle*: see Mt.19.24 n. 28–30: See Mt.19.27,29 n. 31: Mt.19.30; 20.16; Lk.13.30. 10.32–34: The third prediction (see 8.31 n.) of suffering (Mt.20.17–19; Lk.18.31–34). The story must end in Jerusalem (v. 32) and Mk. has had the end in mind from the beginning. Yet, the geographical notice takes on increased importance through its connection with the third passion prediction (vv. 33–34) and by the subsequent attention to itinerary (v. 46; 11.1). The tension and drama mount as the account moves toward its climax.

10.35–45: Position in the kingdom (Mt.20.20–28; Lk.22.24–27). 35: James and John, along with Peter, are given unusual prominence in the Gospels (e.g. 1.16–20; 9.2). 37: Seats on the right and left hands are reserved for men of great authority. 38: The cup immediately suggests 14.36; but as a metaphor for experiencing trouble, "drinking of a cup" was a familiar manner of speaking (e.g. Ps.75.8; compare Jn.18.11). Unless the phrase about baptism has been added as a way of referring specifically to Christian martyrdom, the saying alludes to the ancient picture of the sufferer as a victim of overwhelming "waves" of tribulation; compare Lk.12.50. 40: Tfn. *b* correctly interprets the verse; see Mt.20.23. 45: Lit. ransom is the sum paid to win freedom for slaves or captives; it is one of several metaphors employed to express the idea



- 46 They came to Jericho; and as he was leaving the town, with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was seated at the roadside. Hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!' Many of the people told him to hold his tongue; but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have pity on me.' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him'; so they called the blind man and said, 'Take heart; stand up; he is calling you.' At that he threw off his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Master,' the blind man answered, 'I want my sight back.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has cured you.' And at once he recovered his sight and followed him on the road.
- 11 THEY WERE NOW APPROACHING JERUSALEM, and when they reached Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples with these instructions: 'Go to the village opposite, and, just as you enter, you will find tethered there a colt which no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, "Why are you doing that?," say, "Our Master<sup>c</sup> needs it, and will send it back here without delay.'" So they went off, and found the colt tethered at a door outside in the street. They were untying it when some of the bystanders asked, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They answered as Jesus had told them, and were then allowed to take it. So they brought the colt to Jesus and spread their cloaks on it, and he mounted. And people carpeted the road with their cloaks, while others spread brushwood which they had cut in the fields; and those who went ahead and the others who came behind shouted, 'Hosanna! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the heavens!'
- He entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, where he looked at the whole scene; but, as it was now late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.
- On the following day, after they had left Bethany, he felt hungry, and, noticing in the distance a fig-tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. But when he came there he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season for figs. He said to the tree, 'May no one ever again eat fruit from you!' And his disciples were listening.
- So they came to Jerusalem, and he went into the temple and began driving out those who bought and sold in the temple. He upset the tables of the money-changers and the seats of the dealers in pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to use the temple court as a thoroughfare for carrying goods.
- <sup>c</sup> Or Its owner.

that Jesus' death effects mankind's salvation. The Heb. term for *many* is equivalent to "all" in some contexts.

10.46-52: **Blind Bartimaeus healed** (Mt.20.29-34; Lk.18.35-43). 46: *Son of Timaeus* simply translates the Aram. name, *Bartimaeus*. 47: *Son of David*: see Mt.1.1 n. 52: *Cured*: see Lk.7.50 n. With Jerusalem and the cross so near, *followed him on the way* implies courageous discipleship.

11.1-13.37: **Jesus in Jerusalem** (Mt.21.1-25.46; Lk.19.28-21.38). From this point, the Gospel narrative becomes increasingly circumstantial with respect to sequence of events, locations (four place names in 11.1!), and time (especially in Mk. where the material is organized carefully, using the scheme of the "days of the last week"). Such attention to detail and the dramatic character of the reported events and controversies signal the approaching climax of the story.

11.1-11: **The entry into Jerusalem** (Mt.21.1-9; Lk.19.28-38; Jn.12.12-19). 1: See Mt.21.1 n. 9-10; Ps.118.25-26. *Hosanna*: see Mt.21.9 n. 11: Nearby *Bethany* seems to have served as Jesus' base for Jerusalem activities; only Mk. delays the cleansing of the Temple to the next day (see Mt.21.12; Lk.19.45).

11.12-14: **The cursing of the fig tree** (Mt.21.18-19). The story is in two parts, with the end in vv. 20-25. In Mt. the two parts are presented as a single unit following the cleansing of the Temple. 14: See Mt.21.19 n.

11.15-19: **Cleansing of the Temple** (Mt.21.10-17; Lk.19.45-48). 15-16: Jesus' objections to the misuse of the Temple agree with Jewish regulations of the time. On *temple, money-changers*,

17 Then he began to teach them, and said, 'Does not Scripture say, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a  
18 robbers' cave.' The chief priests and the doctors of the law heard of this and sought some means of making away with him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spell-  
19 bound by his teaching. And when evening came he went out of the city.  
20 Early next morning, as they passed by, they saw that the fig-tree had  
21 withered from the roots up; and Peter, recalling what had happened, said to him, 'Rabbi, look, the fig-tree which  
22 you cursed has withered.' Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. I tell  
23 you this: if anyone says to this mountain, "Be lifted from your place and hurled into the sea", and has no  
24 inward doubts, but believes that what he says is happening, it will be done  
25 for him. I tell you, then, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.  
26 'And when you stand praying, if you have a grievance against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you the wrongs you have done.'<sup>d</sup>

27 THEY CAME ONCE MORE TO JERUSALEM. And as he was walking in the temple court the chief priests, lawyers, and  
28 elders came to him and said, 'By what authority are you acting like this? Who gave you authority to act in this way?'  
29 Jesus said to them, 'I have a question to ask you too; and if you give me an answer, I will tell you by what authority  
30 I act. The baptism of John: was it from  
31 God, or from men? Answer me.' This set them arguing among themselves: 'What shall we say? If we say, "from  
32 God", he will say, "Then why did you not believe him?" Shall we say, "from men"?'—but they were afraid of the

people, for all held that John was in fact a prophet. So they answered, 'We  
33 do not know.' And Jesus said to them, 'Then neither will I tell you by what authority I act.'

He went on to speak to them in 12 parables: 'A man planted a vineyard and put a wall round it, hewed out a winepress, and built a watch-tower; then he let it out to vine-growers and went abroad. When the season came, 2 he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce. But they took him, thrashed him, and 3 sent him away empty-handed. Again, 4 he sent them another servant, whom they beat about the head and treated outrageously. So he sent another, and 5 that one they killed; and many more besides, of whom they beat some, and killed others. He had now only one 6 left to send, his own dear son.<sup>e</sup> In the end he sent him. "They will respect my son", he said. But the tenants said to 7 one another, "This is the heir; come on, let us kill him, and the property will be ours." So they seized him and 8 killed him, and flung his body out of the vineyard. What will the owner of 9 the vineyard do? He will come and put the tenants to death and give the vineyard to others.

'Can it be that you have never read 10 this text: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the main cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is 11 wonderful in our eyes"?'

Then they began to look for a way to 12 arrest him, for they saw that the parable was aimed at them; but they were afraid of the people, so they left him alone and went away.

A NUMBER OF PHARISEES AND MEN OF 13 Herod's party were sent to trap him with a question. They came and said, 14  
*d* Some witnesses add (26) But if you do not forgive others, then the wrongs you have done will not be forgiven by your Father in heaven. *e* Or his only son.

*pigeons*, see Mt.21.12 n. 17: *For all nations* probably indicates a concern for Gentile worship; see Mt.21.12 n.; Isa.56.7; Jer.7.11; compare Mt.21.13; Lk.19.46.

11.20–25: The lesson of the fig tree. See Mt.21.20–22 n.

11.27–33: Jesus' authority challenged (Mt.21.23–27; Lk.20.1–8). 30: *From God*: see Mt.21.25 n. 32: *Prophet*: see 8.28 n.

12.1–12: The evil tenants (Mt.21.33–46; Lk.20.9–19). 1: *On parables, vineyard*, see Mt.21.33 n. 2: *On servant, tenants*, see Mt.21.34 n. 6: *Son*: Jesus. 10–11: Ps.118.22–23. Early Christians applied this and other OT "stone sayings" to Jesus; compare 1 Pet.2.6–8.

12.13–17: *Caesar's tax* (Mt.22.15–22; Lk.20.20–26). 14: *Taxes*: see Mt.22.17 n.

15 'Master, you are an honest man, we know, and truckle to no one, whoever he may be; you teach in all honesty the way of life that God requires. Are we or are we not permitted to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor? Shall we pay or not?' He saw how crafty their question was, and said, 'Why are you trying to catch me out? Fetch me a silver piece, and let me look at it.' They brought one, and he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose inscription?' 'Caesar's', they replied. Then Jesus said, 'Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay God what is due to God.' And they heard him with astonishment.

18 Next Sadducees came to him. (It is they who say that there is no resurrection.) Their question was this: 'Master, Moses laid it down for us that if there are brothers, and one dies leaving a wife but no child, then the next should marry the widow and carry on his brother's family. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife and died without issue. Then the second married her, and he too died without issue. So did the third. Eventually the seven of them died, all without issue. Finally the woman died. At the resurrection, when they come back to life, whose wife will she be, since all seven had married her?' Jesus said to them, 'You are mistaken, and surely this is the reason: you do not know either the scriptures or the power of God. When they rise from the dead, men and women do not marry; they are like angels in heaven.'

26 'But about the resurrection of the dead, have you never read in the Book of Moses, in the story of the burning bush, how God spoke to him and said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly mistaken.'

28 Then one of the lawyers, who had been listening to these discussions and

had noted how well he answered, came forward and asked him, 'Which commandment is first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is the only Lord; love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' The lawyer said to him, 'Well said, Master. You are right in saying that God is one and beside him there is no other. And to love him with all your heart, all your understanding, and all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself—that is far more than any burnt offerings or sacrifices.' When Jesus saw how sensibly he answered, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'

After that nobody ventured to put any more questions to him; and Jesus went on to say, as he taught in the temple, 'How can the teachers of the law maintain that the Messiah is "Son of David"? David himself said, when inspired by the Holy Spirit, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."' David himself calls him "Lord"; how can he also be David's son?'

There was a great crowd and they listened eagerly.<sup>f</sup> He said as he taught them, 'Beware of the doctors of the law, who love to walk up and down in long robes, receiving respectful greetings in the street; and to have the chief seats in synagogues, and places of honour at feasts. These are the men who eat up the property of widows, while they say long prayers for appearance' sake, and they will receive the severest sentence.'<sup>g</sup>

Once he was standing opposite the 41

<sup>f</sup> Or The mass of the people listened eagerly.

<sup>g</sup> Or As for those who eat up the property of widows, while they say long prayers for appearance' sake, they will have an even sterner judgement to face.

12.18–27: A resurrection puzzle (Mt.22.23–33; Lk.20.27–40). 18: On differences between Sadducees and Pharisees (v. 13), see Mt.3.7 n. 19: Deut.25.5–10. 24: Scriptures: v. 26; see Mt.22.30 n. 26: Exod.3.6.

12.28–34: The double commandment of love (Mt.22.34–40; compare Lk.10.25–28). 30: Deut.6.4–5; the verses comprise the "Jewish creed." 31: Lev.19.18. 32–34: Compare Lk.10.27 n.

12.35–37: Messiah, son of David (Mt.22.41–46; Lk.20.41–44). 35: Messiah . . . son of David: see Mt.1.1 n. 36: Ps.110.1; see Mt.22.44 n. 37: See Mt.22.45 n.

12.38–40: Warning against pride (see Mt.23.6; Lk.11.43; 20.45–47).

- temple treasury, watching as people dropped their money into the chest. Many rich people were giving large sums. Presently there came a poor widow who dropped in two tiny coins, together worth a farthing. He called his disciples to him. 'I tell you this,' he said: 'this poor widow has given more than any of the others; for those others who have given had more than enough, but she, with less than enough, has given all that she had to live on.'
- 13** AS HE WAS LEAVING THE TEMPLE, ONE of his disciples exclaimed, 'Look, Master, what huge stones! What fine buildings!' Jesus said to him, 'You see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.'
- 3** When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing the temple he was questioned privately by Peter, James, John, and Andrew. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when will this happen? What will be the sign when the fulfilment of all this is at hand?'
- 5** Jesus began: 'Take care that no one misleads you. Many will come claiming my name, and saying, "I am he"; and many will be misled by them.'
- 7** 'When you hear the noise of battle near at hand and the news of battles far away, do not be alarmed. Such things are bound to happen; but the end is still to come. For nation will make war upon nation, kingdom upon kingdom; there will be earthquakes in many places; there will be famines. With these things the birth-pangs of the new age begin.'
- 9** 'As for you, be on your guard. You will be handed over to the courts. You will be flogged in synagogues. You will be summoned to appear before governors and kings on my account to testify in their presence. But before the end the Gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. So when you are arrested and taken away, do not worry beforehand about what you will say, but when the time comes say whatever is given you to say; for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child; children will turn against their parents and send them to their death. All will hate you for your allegiance to me; but the man who holds out to the end will be saved.'
- 'But when you see "the abomination of desolation" usurping a place which is not his (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judaea must take to the hills. If a man is on the roof, he must not come down into the house to fetch anything out; if in the field, he must not turn back for his coat. Alas for women with child in those days, and for those who have children at the breast! Pray that it may not come in winter. For those days will bring distress such as never has been until now since the beginning of the world which God created—and will never be again. If the Lord had not cut short that time of troubles, no living thing could survive. However, for the sake of his own, whom he has chosen, he has cut short the time.'
- 'Then, if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Messiah", or, "Look, there he is", do not believe it. Impostors will come claiming to be messiahs or prophets, and they will produce signs and wonders to mislead God's chosen, if such a thing were possible. But you be on your guard; I have forewarned you of it all.'
- 'But in those days, after that distress,

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**12.41–44:** The widow's gift (Lk.21.1–4). **41:** *Chest:* see Lk.21.1 n. **42:** *Coins:* see Lk.21.2 n. **13.1–37:** The eschatological discourse. All three synoptic Gospels introduce at this point (Mt.24.1; Lk.21.5) a collection of sayings, some of which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, some to the end of history. Standing immediately before the passion narrative (chs. 14–15), this chapter, built out of diverse traditions, serves as a solemn final message of judgment and warning.

**13.1–2:** Temple's destruction predicted (Mt.24.1–3 n.; Lk.21.5–7). **13.3–37:** Signs, false signs, and warnings (Mt.24.4–44; Lk.21.8–36). **3:** *Mount of Olives:* Mt.21.1 n. The limiting of the audience to Peter, James, John, and Andrew makes the discourse in Mk. secret teaching. **5–6:** See vv. 21–23. **8:** *Birth-pangs:* see Mt.24.8 n. **9–13:** Mt.10.17–21. **11:** Mt.10.20; Lk.12.11–12. **13:** Mt.10.22. **14:** "The abomination of desolation": see Mt.24.15 n. **16:** Lk.17.31. **19:** Dan.12.1. **22:** Deut.13.1–2. **23:** *Forewarned:* see vv. 5–6. **24–26:** See Mt.24.29 n.

the sun will be darkened, the moon will  
 25 not give her light; the stars will come  
 falling from the sky, the celestial powers  
 26 will be shaken. Then they will see the  
 Son of Man coming in the clouds with  
 27 great power and glory, and he will send  
 out the angels and gather his chosen  
 from the four winds, from the farthest  
 bounds of earth to the farthest bounds  
 of heaven.

28 'Learn a lesson from the fig-tree.  
 When its tender shoots appear and are  
 breaking into leaf, you know that  
 29 summer is near. In the same way,  
 when you see all this happening, you  
 may know that the end is near,<sup>b</sup> at the  
 30 very door. I tell you this: the present  
 generation will live to see it all. Heaven  
 31 and earth will pass away; my words  
 will never pass away.

32 'But about that day or that hour no one  
 knows, not even the angels in heaven,  
 not even the Son; only the Father.

33 'Be alert, be wakeful.<sup>c</sup> You do not  
 34 know when the moment comes. It is  
 like a man away from home: he has  
 left his house and put his servants in  
 charge, each with his own work to do,  
 and he has ordered the door-keeper to  
 35 stay awake. Keep awake, then, for you  
 do not know when the master of the  
 house is coming. Evening or midnight,  
 36 cock-crow or early dawn—if he comes  
 suddenly, he must not find you asleep.  
 37 And what I say to you, I say to every-  
 one: Keep awake.'

### The final conflict

14 NOW THE FESTIVAL OF PASSOVER AND  
 Unleavened Bread was only two days  
 off; and the chief priests and the doctors  
 of the law were trying to devise some  
 cunning plan to seize him and put him  
 2 to death. 'It must not be during the  
 festival,' they said, 'or we should have  
 rioting among the people.'

Jesus was at Bethany, in the house of 3  
 Simon the leper. As he sat at table, a  
 woman came in carrying a small bottle  
 of very costly perfume, pure oil of nard.  
 She broke it open and poured the oil  
 4 over his head. Some of those present  
 said to one another angrily, 'Why this  
 waste? The perfume might have been 5  
 sold for thirty pounds<sup>d</sup> and the money  
 given to the poor'; and they turned  
 upon her with fury. But Jesus said, 6  
 'Let her alone. Why must you make  
 trouble for her? It is a fine thing she has  
 done for me. You have the poor among 7  
 you always, and you can help them  
 whenever you like; but you will not  
 always have me. She has done what lay 8  
 in her power; she is beforehand with  
 anointing my body for burial. I tell 9  
 you this: wherever in all the world the  
 Gospel is proclaimed, what she has  
 done will be told as her memorial.'

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the 10  
 Twelve, went to the chief priests to  
 betray him to them. When they heard 11  
 what he had come for, they were  
 greatly pleased, and promised him  
 money; and he began to look for a  
 good opportunity to betray him.

NOW ON THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED 12  
 Bread, when the Passover lambs were  
 being slaughtered, his disciples said to  
 him, 'Where would you like us to go  
 and prepare for your Passover supper?'  
 So he sent out two of his disciples with 13  
 these instructions: 'Go into the city,  
 and a man will meet you carrying a jar  
 of water. Follow him, and when he 14  
 enters a house give this message to the  
 householder: "The Master says, 'Where  
 is the room reserved for me to eat the  
 Passover with my disciples?'" He will 15  
 show you a large room upstairs, set out  
 in readiness. Make the preparations  
 for us there.' Then the disciples went 16  
<sup>h</sup> Or that he is near. <sup>i</sup> Some witnesses add and pray.  
<sup>j</sup> Literally 300 denarii; some witnesses read more than  
 300 denarii.

26: Dan.7.13. 27: Deut.30.4; Isa.60.4-5. 30: 9.1; see Mt.24.34 n. Compare v. 32. 31: Compare Mt.5.17; Lk.16.17.

14.1-15.47: The final conflict (Mt.26.1-27.66; Lk.22.1-23.56; Jn. chs.12-19). See Lk.22.1-23.56 n. 1: Passover and Unleavened Bread were originally two festivals (see Lev.23.5-6) which had coalesced as a celebration of the deliverance from Egypt (Exod.12.1-20). 3-9: Mt.26.6-13 (similar stories in Lk.7.36-50; Jn.12.1-8). 3: Poured: see Mt.26.7 n. 8: See Mt.26.12 n. 10-11: Mt.26.14-16; Lk.22.3-6.

14.12-16: Preparation for the Passover (Mt.26.17-19; Lk.22.7-13). 12: See Mt.26.17 n. 14-15: See Mt.26.18 n.

off, and when they came into the city they found everything just as he had told them. So they prepared for Passover.

17 In the evening he came to the house  
18 with the Twelve. As they sat at supper  
Jesus said, 'I tell you this: one of you  
will betray me—one who is eating with  
19 me.' At this they were dismayed; and  
one by one they said to him, 'Not I,  
20 surely?' 'It is one of the Twelve', he  
said, 'who is dipping into the same  
21 bowl with me. The Son of Man is going  
the way appointed for him in the scrip-  
tures; but alas for that man by whom  
the Son of Man is betrayed! It would  
be better for that man if he had never  
been born.'

22 During supper he took bread, and  
having said the blessing he broke it and  
gave it to them, with the words: 'Take  
23 this; this is my body.' Then he took a  
cup, and having offered thanks to God  
he gave it to them; and they all drank  
24 from it. And he said, 'This is my blood,  
the blood of the covenant, shed for  
25 many. I tell you this: never again shall  
I drink from the fruit of the vine until  
that day when I drink it new in the  
kingdom of God.'

26 After singing the Passover Hymn,  
they went out to the Mount of Olives.  
27 And Jesus said, 'You will all fall from  
your faith; for it stands written: "I  
will strike the shepherd down and the  
28 sheep will be scattered." Nevertheless,  
after I am raised again I will go on  
29 before you into Galilee.' Peter an-  
swered, 'Everyone else may fall away,  
30 but I will not.' Jesus said, 'I tell you  
this: today, this very night, before the  
cock crows twice, you yourself will  
31 disown me three times.' But he insisted  
and repeated: 'Even if I must die with  
you, I will never disown you.' And they  
all said the same.

32 WHEN THEY REACHED A PLACE CALLED  
Gethsemane, he said to his disciples,

'Sit here while I pray.' And he took 33  
Peter and James and John with him.  
Horror and dismay came over him,  
and he said to them, 'My heart is ready 34  
to break with grief; stop here, and stay  
awake.' Then he went forward a little, 35  
threw himself on the ground, and  
prayed that, if it were possible, this  
hour might pass him by. 'Abba, Father,' 36  
he said, 'all things are possible to thee;  
take this cup away from me. Yet not  
what I will, but what thou wilt.'

He came back and found them 37  
asleep; and he said to Peter, 'Asleep,  
Simon? Were you not able to stay  
awake for one hour? Stay awake, all 38  
of you; and pray that you may be  
spared the test. The spirit is willing,  
but the flesh is weak.' Once more he 39  
went away and prayed.<sup>k</sup> On his return 40  
he found them asleep again, for their  
eyes were heavy; and they did not  
know how to answer him.

The third time he came and said to 41  
them, 'Still sleeping? Still taking your  
ease? Enough!<sup>l</sup> The hour has come.  
The Son of Man is betrayed to sinful  
men. Up, let us go forward! My 42  
betrayer is upon us.'

Suddenly, while he was still speaking, 43  
Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared,  
and with him was a crowd armed with  
swords and cudgels, sent by the chief  
priests, lawyers, and elders. Now the 44  
traitor had agreed with them upon a  
signal: 'The one I kiss is your man;  
seize him and get him safely away.'  
When he reached the spot, he stepped 45  
forward at once and said to Jesus,  
'Rabbi', and kissed him. Then they 46  
seized him and held him fast.

One of the party<sup>m</sup> drew his sword, 47  
and struck at the High Priest's servant,  
cutting off his ear. Then Jesus spoke: 48  
'Do you take me for a bandit, that you  
have come out with swords and cudgels

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses add using the same words.  
<sup>l</sup> The Greek is obscure; a possible meaning is 'The money  
has been paid', 'The account is settled.'  
<sup>m</sup> Or of the bystanders.

14.17-25: The Last Supper (Mt.26.20-29; Lk.22.14-23). 17-21: See also Jn.13.21-30. 18: Ps.41.9. *Sat*: see Mt.26.20 n. 21: *Scriptures*: see Mt.26.24 n. 22-25: See also 1 Cor.11.23-26. 24: *Blood of the covenant*: Mt.26.28 n.; Lk.22.17-19 n. *Many*: see Mk.10.45 n.

14.26-42: Gethsemane (Mt.26.30-46; Lk.22.39-46). 26: Jn.18.1. *Hymn*: see Mt.26.30 n. 27: Zech.13.7. 28: See 16.7. 32-42: See Lk.22.40-46 n. 34-36: Compare Jn.12.27-28. 34: Ps.42.6. 36: *Abba*: Aram. for "Father"; see Rom.8.15; Gal.4.6. *Cup*: see Mk.10.38 n.; Jn.18.11.

14.43-52: The arrest (Mt.26.47-56; Lk.22.47-53; Jn.18.2-12). 44: *Kiss*: see Mt.26.48 n.

49 to arrest me? Day after day I was within your reach as I taught in the temple, and you did not lay hands on me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.'  
50 Then the disciples all deserted him and ran away.

51 Among those following was a young man with nothing on but a linen cloth.  
52 They tried to seize him; but he slipped out of the linen cloth and ran away naked.

53 THEN THEY LED JESUS AWAY TO THE High Priest's house, where the chief priests, elders, and doctors of the law were all assembling. Peter followed him at a distance right into the High Priest's courtyard; and there he remained, sitting among the attendants, warming himself at the fire.

55 The chief priests and the whole Council tried to find some evidence against Jesus to warrant a death-sentence, but failed to find any. Many gave false evidence against him, but their statements did not tally. Some stood up and gave false evidence against him to this effect: 'We heard him say, "I will pull down this temple, made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."' But even on this point their evidence did not agree.

60 Then the High Priest stood up in his place and questioned Jesus: 'Have you no answer to the charges that these witnesses bring against you?' But he kept silence; he made no reply.

Again the High Priest questioned him: 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' Jesus said, 'I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God<sup>n</sup> and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the High Priest tore his robes and said, 'Need we call further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?' Their judgement was unanimous: that he was guilty and should be put to death.

Some began to spit on him, blind-folded him, and struck him with their fists, crying out, 'Prophesy!'<sup>o</sup> And the High Priest's men set upon him with blows.

Meanwhile Peter was still below in the courtyard. One of the High Priest's serving-maids came by and saw him there warming himself. She looked into his face and said, 'You were there too, with this man from Nazareth, this Jesus.' But he denied it: 'I know nothing,' he said; 'I do not understand what you mean.' Then he went outside into the porch;<sup>p</sup> and the maid saw him there again and began to say to the bystanders, 'He is one of them'; and again<sup>q</sup> he denied it.

Again, a little later, the bystanders said to Peter, 'Surely you are one of them. You must be; you are a Galilean.' At this he broke out into curses, and with an oath he said, 'I do not know this man you speak of.' Then the cock crew a second time; and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice you will disown me three times.' And he burst into tears.

AS SOON AS MORNING CAME, THE CHIEF 15 priests, having made their plan with the elders and lawyers in full council, put Jesus in chains; then they led him away and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate 2 asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' He replied, 'The words are yours.'<sup>q</sup> And the chief priests brought 3 many charges against him. Pilate 4 questioned him again: 'Have you nothing to say in your defence? You see how many charges they are bringing against you.' But, to Pilate's astonishment, Jesus made no further reply.

At the festival season the Governor 6 used to release one prisoner at the people's request. As it happened, the 7

<sup>n</sup> Literally of the Power.

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses add Who hit you? as in Matthew and Luke.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses insert and a cock crew.

<sup>q</sup> Or It is as you say.

47: *One*: see Mt.26.51 n. 51: The *young man* appears only in Mk. and his identity is unknown. 14.53-72: *Before the Jewish authorities* (Mt.26.57-75 n.; Lk.22.54-71; Jn.18.13-27). 55: *Council*: See Mt.26.59 n. 57-58; 13.2; 15.29; see Mt.24.1-3 n. 61: *Messiah* . . . *Son*: see Mt.16.16 n. 62: Dan.7.13; Ps.110.1. 63-64: *Blasphemy*: see Mt.26.65-66 n. 72: Compare v. 30.

15.1-20: *Before Roman authority* (Mt.27.1-31; Lk.23.1-25; Jn.18.28-19.16). 1: *Pilate*: see Lk.3.1 n. 2: *King*: see Lk.23.2 n. 6: Mt.27.15 n. 7: *Barabbas*: Mt.27.16 n.

man known as Barabbas was then in custody with the rebels who had committed murder in the rising. When the crowd appeared<sup>r</sup> asking for the usual favour, Pilate replied, 'Do you wish me to release for you the king of the Jews?' For he knew it was out of malice that they had brought Jesus before him. But the chief priests incited the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas rather than Jesus. Pilate spoke to them again: 'Then what shall I do with the man you call king of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' 'Why, what harm has he done?' Pilate asked; but they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, in his desire to satisfy the mob, released Barabbas to them; and he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers took him inside the courtyard (the Governor's headquarters<sup>s</sup>) and called together the whole company. They dressed him in purple, and plaiting a crown of thorns, placed it on his head. Then they began to salute him with, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They beat him about the head with a cane and spat upon him, and then knelt and paid mock homage to him. When they had finished their mockery, they stripped him of the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

THEN THEY TOOK HIM OUT TO CRUCIFY him. A man called Simon, from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they pressed him into service to carry his cross.

They brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means 'Place of a skull'. He was offered drugged wine, but he would not take it. Then they fastened him to the cross. They divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should have.

The hour of the crucifixion was nine in the morning, and the inscription

giving the charge against him read, 'The king of the Jews.' Two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left.<sup>t</sup>

The passers-by hurled abuse at him: 'Aha!' they cried, wagging their heads, 'you would pull the temple down, would you, and build it in three days? Come down from the cross and save yourself!' So too the chief priests and lawyers jested with one another: 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross. If we see that, we shall believe.' Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

At midday a darkness fell over the whole land, which lasted till three in the afternoon; and at three Jesus cried aloud, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?', which means, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'<sup>u</sup> Some of the bystanders, on hearing this, said, 'Hark, he is calling Elijah.' A man ran and soaked a sponge in sour wine and held it to his lips on the end of a cane. 'Let us see', he said, 'if Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and died. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion who was standing opposite him saw how he died,<sup>v</sup> he said, 'Truly this man was a son of God.'<sup>w</sup>

A NUMBER OF WOMEN WERE ALSO present, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome, who had all followed him and waited on him when he was in Galilee, and there were several

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses read shouted.

<sup>s</sup> Greek praetorium.

<sup>t</sup> Some witnesses add (28) That that text of Scripture came true which says, 'He was reckoned among criminals.'

<sup>u</sup> Some witnesses read My God, my God, why hast thou shamed me?

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses read saw that he died with a cry.

<sup>w</sup> Or the Son of God.

15.21-47: The crucifixion (Mt.27.32-66; Lk.23.26-54; Jn.19.17-42). 21: Simon was probably a Jew from Cyrene. The mention of Alexander and Rufus suggests that they may have been known in the church of Mk. Contrast Jn.19.17. 23: Ps.69.21; on wine, see Lk.23.36 n. 24: Ps.22.18. On crucifixion, see Lk.23.32 n. 25: Nine in the morning: contrast Jn.19.14. 29: See 14.57-58 n. 32b: Contrast Lk.23.39-43. 34: See Mt.27.46 n. 35: Elijah: see Mt.27.47 n. 36: Ps.69.21. 38: Curtain: see Mt.27.51 n. 39: Son of God: see Mt.27.54 n. 43: Council: see Mt.26.59 n. 46: Deut.21.22-23.



others who had come up to Jerusalem with him.

42 By this time evening had come; and  
 43 as it was Preparation-day (that is, the  
 day before the Sabbath), Joseph of  
 Arimathaea, a respected member of  
 the Council, a man who looked forward  
 to the kingdom of God, bravely  
 went in to Pilate and asked for the body  
 44 of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear  
 that he was already dead; so he sent  
 for the centurion and asked him  
 45 whether it was long since he died. And  
 when he heard the centurion's report,  
 he gave Joseph leave to take the dead  
 46 body. So Joseph bought a linen sheet,  
 took him down from the cross, and  
 wrapped him in the sheet. Then he laid  
 him in a tomb cut out of the rock, and  
 rolled a stone against the entrance  
 47 And Mary of Magdala and Mary the  
 mother of Joseph were watching and  
 saw where he was laid.

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary  
 of Magdala, Mary the mother of James,  
 and Salome bought<sup>x</sup> aromatic oils in-  
 2 tending to go and anoint him; and very  
 early on the Sunday morning, just after  
 3 sunrise, they came to the tomb. They  
 were wondering among themselves  
 who would roll away the stone for  
 them from the entrance to the tomb,  
 4 when they looked up and saw that the  
 stone, huge as it was, had been rolled  
 5 back already. They went into the tomb,  
 where they saw a youth sitting on the  
 right-hand side, wearing a white robe;  
 6 and they were dumbfounded. But he  
 said to them, 'Fear nothing; you are  
 looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was  
 crucified. He has been raised again;  
 he is not here; look, there is the place  
 7 where they laid him. But go and give  
 this message to his disciples and Peter:  
 "He is going on before you into Galilee;  
 there you will see him, as he told you."  
 8 Then they went out and ran away from  
 the tomb, beside themselves with terror.

They said nothing to anybody, for they  
 were afraid.<sup>y</sup>

When he had risen from the dead 9  
 early on Sunday morning he appeared  
 first to Mary of Magdala, from whom  
 he had formerly cast out seven devils.  
 She went and carried the news to 10  
 mourning and sorrowful followers, but 11  
 when they were told that he was alive  
 and that she had seen him they did not  
 believe it.

Later he appeared in a different guise 12  
 to two of them as they were walking,  
 on their way into the country. These 13  
 also went and took the news to the  
 others, but again no one believed  
 them.

Afterwards while the Eleven were at 14  
 table he appeared to them and re-  
 proached them for their incredulity  
 and dullness, because they had not  
 believed those who had seen him after  
 he was raised from the dead. Then he 15  
 said to them: 'Go forth to every part of  
 the world, and proclaim the Good 16  
 News to the whole creation. Those who  
 believe it and receive baptism will find  
 salvation; those who do not believe 17  
 will be condemned. Faith will bring  
 with it these miracles: believers will  
 cast out devils in my name and speak 18  
 in strange tongues; if they handle  
 snakes or drink any deadly poison, they  
 will come to no harm; and the sick on  
 whom they lay their hands will recover.'

So after talking with them the Lord 19  
 Jesus was taken up into heaven, and he  
 took his seat at the right hand of God;  
 but they went out to make their proc- 20  
 lamation everywhere, and the Lord

*x* Some witnesses omit When the Sabbath ... Salome, reading And they went and bought ...

*y* At this point some of the most ancient witnesses bring the book to a close; others continue with verses 9-20, as printed here, or in some cases expanded with additional matter; yet others insert here the paragraph And they delivered ... eternal salvation (here printed below verse 20), and in one of them this is the conclusion of the book; in the remainder, verses 9-20 follow it.

16.1-20: The empty tomb (Mt.28.1-8; Lk.24.1-9; Jn.20.1-3). 1: The Sabbath ended at sunset on Saturday; compare Lk.23.55-56 n. 3-4: Stone: Mt.27.60 n. 7: See 14.28. Perhaps the verse originally prepared for an account (now lost) of a Galilean appearance; compare Mt.28.16-20; Jn. ch. 21. 8: Textual evidence seems to favor the view that the Gospel ended here (Tfn. y). However, the phrase for they were afraid is more abrupt in Greek than in English, and many scholars believe that there must have been additional material. Vv. 9-20 are found in numerous witnesses. 9-11: Jn.20.11-18; Mt.28.9-10. 12-13: Lk.24.13-35. 14-16: Mt.28.16-20. 19: Lk.24.50-51. 20: However the book may have originally ended (Tfn. y), the Church in which

worked with them and confirmed their words by the miracles that followed.

And they delivered all these instructions briefly to Peter and his com-

panions. Afterwards Jesus himself sent out by them from east to west the sacred and imperishable message of eternal salvation.<sup>z</sup>

*z See note y on page 65.*

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it was cherished was not left in fear (v. 8), but *went out to make their proclamation everywhere*. If Mk. indeed ended at v. 8, the felt need which prompted additions was the absence of a resurrection appearance (found in Mt.28.18, Lk.24.15-27, and Jn.20.14-17) which is foreshadowed in 14.28, but not thereafter directly narrated. The addition, or additions, provide both a resurrection appearance and also (v. 19) the ascension of the risen Christ to heaven (compare Acts 1.9-11).

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

The Gospel of Luke was written about 90 A.D. by a Gentile Christian, one of the first Church writers with a real awareness of himself as a literary figure (see 1.1-4 n). Basic to the design of his work is the place that Luke assigns the career of Jesus in a more comprehensive view of the course of God's dealings with men. Jesus' ministry is the period in terms of which the previous and subsequent history of salvation is given meaning: it is the culmination of ancient Israel's promise and the ground of the Church's hope and life.

After a lengthy introduction (1.1-4.13), Luke describes Jesus' career as a procession that begins in Galilee (4.14-9.50) and moves on the way to Jerusalem (9.51-19.27) where the nature of divine Sonship is fully revealed (19.28-24.53).

But the story of salvation does not end here. It is taken up again in a second volume (Acts of the Apostles) where, in the experience of the Church, the way that once led to Jerusalem now extends to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8).

**1** **T**HE AUTHOR TO THEOPHILUS: MANY writers have undertaken to draw up an account of the events that  
**2** have happened among us, following the traditions handed down to us by the original eyewitnesses and servants  
**3** of the Gospel. And so I in my turn, your Excellency, as one who has gone over the whole course of these events in detail, have decided to write a  
**4** connected narrative for you, so as to give you authentic knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed.

## *The coming of Christ*

**5** IN THE DAYS OF HEROD KING OF JUDAEA there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of the priesthood called after Abijah. His wife also was of priestly descent; her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were upright and devout, blamelessly observing all the commandments and ordinances of the  
**7** Lord. But they had no children, for Elizabeth was barren, and both were well on in years.

Once, when it was the turn of his  
division and he was there to take part in divine service, it fell to his lot, by  
priestly custom, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer the incense; and the whole congregation was at prayer outside. It was the hour of the incense-offering. There appeared to him an  
angel of the Lord standing on the right of the altar of incense. At this sight Zechariah was startled, and fear overcame him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard: your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. Your heart will thrill with joy and many will be glad that he was born; for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He shall never touch wine or strong drink. From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit; and he will bring back many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will go before him as forerunner,<sup>a</sup> possessed by the spirit and power of Elijah, to reconcile father and child, to convert the rebellious to the ways of

<sup>a</sup> Or In his sight he will go forth.

**1.1-4:** The preface follows the form customary in the literature of the period (compare Acts 1.1-5). **1:** Both this Gospel and Acts are dedicated to an unknown *Theophilus* (lit. "friend of God"), perhaps a Roman official (v. 3, *your Excellency*; see Acts 23.26). *Many* perhaps should be understood as "several" writers. **3:** A *connected narrative* may imply logical, rather than strictly chronological, arrangement.

**1.5-80:** Preparation for Jesus' birth.

**1.5-25:** The birth of John the Baptist is promised. **5:** There were twenty-four *divisions of the priesthood*, to whom the privilege of temple service fell by rotation (v. 8). **7:** Compare Gen.17.15-18.15. **9:** To *offer the (morning or evening) incense* was a highly cherished honor. **13:** *John*: see vv. 60,63 n. **15:** There are OT provisions against *wine and strong drink* for priests (Lev.10.8-11) and Nazirites (Num.6.1-21). **17:** The words *spirit and power of Elijah* and allusions

- the righteous, to prepare a people that shall be fit for the Lord.'
- 18 Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years.'
- 19 The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel; I stand in attendance upon God, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. But now listen: you will lose your power of speech, and remain silent until the day when these things happen to you, because you have not believed me, though at their proper time my words will be proved true.'
- 21 Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, surprised that he was staying so long inside. When he did come out he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had had a vision in the sanctuary. He stood there making signs to them, and remained dumb.
- 23 When his period of duty was completed Zechariah returned home.
- 24 After this his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she lived in seclusion, thinking, 'This is the Lord's doing; now at last he has deigned to take away my reproach among men.'
- 26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, with a message for a girl betrothed to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David; the girl's name was Mary. The angel went in and said to her, 'Greetings, most favoured one! The Lord is with you.'
- 29 But she was deeply troubled by what he said and wondered what this greeting might mean. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for God has been gracious to you; you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus. He will be great; he will bear the title "Son of
- the Most High"; the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be king over Israel<sup>b</sup> for ever; his reign shall never end.' 'How can this be?' said Mary; 'I am still a virgin.' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child to be born will be called "Son of God".<sup>c</sup> Moreover your kinswoman Elizabeth has herself conceived a son in her old age; and she who is reputed barren is now in her sixth month, for God's promises can never fail.'<sup>d</sup>
- 37 'Here am I,' said Mary; 'I am the Lord's servant; as you have spoken, so be it.' Then the angel left her.
- About this time Mary set out and went straight to a town in the uplands of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby stirred in her womb. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and cried aloud, 'God's blessing is on you above all women, and his blessing is on the fruit of your womb. Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? I tell you, when your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy. How happy is she who has had faith that the Lord's promise would be fulfilled!'
- And Mary<sup>e</sup> said:
- 'Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord,  
rejoice, rejoice, my spirit, in God my saviour;
- b* Literally the house of Jacob.  
*c* Or the child to be born will be called holy, "Son of God".  
*d* Some witnesses read for with God nothing will prove impossible.  
*e* So the majority of witnesses; some read Elizabeth; the original may have had no name.

to Mal.3.1; 4.5-6 suggest a near identification of the Baptist and Elijah (see Mt.11.14; 17.10-13) not characteristic of Lk. outside this chapter. 19: *Gabriel* (Dan.8.16-17; 9.21-22) was regarded as the angel of highest rank, especially in the noncanonical book of Enoch. 25: *My reproach*: the shame associated with barrenness; see 1 Sam.1.1-20; Ps.113.9.

1.26-38: *Jesus' birth promised* (see Mt.1.18-25). As in Mt., the story speaks of a miraculous birth (vv. 34-35), stresses Joseph's Davidic descent (vv. 27,32), and emphasizes the child's names or titles (vv. 31,32,35). 32: *Son of the Most High*: a title for the royal Messiah (see Mt.1.1 n.) as is shown by the words, *throne of his ancestor David* (1 Chr.17.7-14; Isa.11.1-10). 34: Not physical impregnation by a divine being, but a miraculous generation of life through the Spirit is meant.

1.39-56: *Mary visits Elizabeth*. 43: Lk., as here, frequently uses the title *Lord* for Jesus; but in

48 so tenderly has he looked upon his  
 servant,  
 humble as she is.  
 For, from this day forth,  
 all generations will count me blessed,  
 49 so wonderfully has he dealt with me,  
 the Lord, the Mighty One.

His name is Holy;  
 50 his mercy sure from generation to  
 generation  
 toward those who fear him;  
 51 the deeds his own right arm has done  
 disclose his might:  
 the arrogant of heart and mind he  
 has put to rout,  
 52 he has brought down monarchs from  
 their thrones,  
 but the humble have been lifted  
 high.  
 53 The hungry he has satisfied with  
 good things,  
 the rich sent empty away.

He has ranged himself at the side of  
 Israel his servant;  
 55 firm in his promise to our  
 forefathers,  
 he has not forgotten to show mercy  
 to Abraham  
 and his children's children, for  
 ever.'

56 Mary stayed with her about three  
 months and then returned home.

57 NOW THE TIME CAME FOR ELIZABETH'S  
 child to be born, and she gave birth  
 58 to a son. When her neighbours and  
 relatives heard what great favour the  
 Lord had shown her, they were as  
 59 delighted as she was. Then on the  
 eighth day they came to circumcise the  
 child; and they were going to name  
 60 him Zechariah after his father. But his  
 mother spoke up and said, 'No! he is  
 61 to be called John.' 'But', they said,  
 'there is nobody in your family who

has that name.' They inquired of his 62  
 father by signs what he would like him  
 to be called. He asked for a writing- 63  
 tablet and to the astonishment of all  
 wrote down, 'His name is John.'  
 Immediately his lips and tongue were 64  
 freed and he began to speak, praising  
 God. All the neighbours were struck 65  
 with awe, and everywhere in the  
 uplands of Judaea the whole story  
 became common talk. All who heard 66  
 it were deeply impressed and said,  
 'What will this child become?' For  
 indeed the hand of the Lord was upon  
 him.<sup>f</sup>

And Zechariah his father was filled 67  
 with the Holy Spirit and uttered this  
 prophecy:

'Praise to the God of Israel! 68  
 For he has turned to his people, saved  
 them and set them free,  
 and has raised up a deliverer of 69  
 victorious power  
 from the house of his servant  
 David.

So he promised: age after age he 70  
 proclaimed  
 by the lips of his holy prophets,  
 that he would deliver us from our 71  
 enemies,  
 out of the hands of all who  
 hate us;  
 that he would deal mercifully with 72  
 our fathers,  
 calling to mind his solemn  
 covenant.

Such was the oath he swore to our 73  
 father Abraham,  
 to rescue us from enemy hands, 74  
 and grant us, free from fear, to  
 worship him  
 with a holy worship, with 75  
 uprightness of heart,  
 in his presence our whole life long.

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read 'What will this child become, for indeed the hand of the Lord is upon him?'

vv. 45-46 it refers to God. 46-55: The "Magnificat" reads like a very old hymn celebrating God's goodness to Israel (vv. 54-55); compare 1 Sam.2.1-10. 59: Circumcision on the eighth day was prescribed in the Law (Lev.12.3; Lk.2.21). 60,63: The emphasis shows that the meaning of the name *John* ("God is gracious") is important.

1.67-79: The "*Benedictus*" celebrates the coming of the royal Messiah (v. 69), the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (vv. 73-75), and John's Elijah-like commission (vv. 76-77; Mal.3.1; Isa.40.3; see v. 17 n.).

76 And you, my child, you shall be  
called Prophet of the Highest,  
for you will be the Lord's forerunner  
to prepare his way  
77 and lead his people to salvation  
through knowledge of him,  
by the forgiveness of their sins:  
78 for in the tender compassion of our  
God  
the morning sun from heaven  
will rise<sup>g</sup> upon us,  
79 to shine on those who live in darkness,  
under the cloud of death,  
and to guide our feet into the  
way of peace.<sup>h</sup>

80 As the child grew up he became  
strong in spirit; he lived out in the  
wilds until the day when he appeared  
publicly before Israel.

2 IN THOSE DAYS A DECREE WAS ISSUED BY  
the Emperor Augustus for a registra-  
tion to be made throughout the  
2 Roman world. This was the first  
registration of its kind; it took place  
when Quirinius<sup>h</sup> was governor of  
3 Syria. For this purpose everyone made  
4 his way to his own town; and so  
Joseph went up to Judaea from the  
5 town of Nazareth in Galilee, to  
register at the city of David, called  
Bethlehem, because he was of the  
house of David by descent; and with  
him went Mary who was betrothed to  
6 him. She was expecting a child, and  
while they were there the time came  
7 for her baby to be born, and she gave  
birth to a son, her first-born. She  
wrapped him in his swaddling clothes,  
and laid him in a manger, because  
there was no room for them to lodge  
in the house.

8 Now in this same district there were  
shepherds out in the fields, keeping  
watch through the night over their  
9 flock, when suddenly there stood before  
them an angel of the Lord, and the  
splendour of the Lord shone round

them. They were terror-stricken, but 10  
the angel said, 'Do not be afraid; I  
have good news for you: there is great  
joy coming to the whole people.  
Today in the city of David a deliverer 11  
has been born to you—the Messiah,  
the Lord.<sup>i</sup> And this is your sign: you 12  
will find a baby lying wrapped in his  
swaddling clothes, in a manger.' All at 13  
once there was with the angel a great  
company of the heavenly host, singing  
the praises of God:

'Glory to God in highest heaven, 14  
and on earth his peace for men on  
whom his favour rests.'<sup>j</sup>

After the angels had left them and 15  
gone into heaven the shepherds said to  
one another, 'Come, we must go  
straight to Bethlehem and see this  
thing that has happened, which the 16  
Lord has made known to us.' So they  
went with all speed and found their  
way to Mary and Joseph; and the  
baby was lying in the manger. When 17  
they saw him, they recounted what they  
had been told about this child; and all 18  
who heard were astonished at what the  
shepherds said. But Mary treasured up 19  
all these things and pondered over  
them. Meanwhile the shepherds re- 20  
turned glorifying and praising God for  
what they had heard and seen; it had  
all happened as they had been told.

Eight days later the time came to 21  
circumcise him, and he was given the  
name Jesus, the name given by the  
angel before he was conceived.

Then, after their purification had 22  
been completed in accordance with the  
Law of Moses, they brought him up  
to Jerusalem to present him to the  
Lord (as prescribed in the law of the 23

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read *has risen*.

<sup>h</sup> Or This was the first registration carried out while Quirinius . . .

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses read *to you—the Lord's Messiah*.

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses read *and on earth his peace, his favour towards men*.

2.1–40: The birth of Jesus. 1: Augustus reigned from 30 B.C. to 14 A.D. 2: The registration under Quirinius is dated in 6 or 7 A.D. by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. 7: The first-born belong to God and must be redeemed (Exod.13.1–2,12–13); see vv. 22–24. Swaddling clothes: the cloth strips with which infants were wrapped. A manger (or small feed trough) would serve well as a crib. 11: Deliverer (or, "Savior") may be a play on the name Jesus; compare Mt.1.21. Lord: see 1.43 n. 13: The angel who brings the message is joined by a great company (compare Dan.7.10). 21: Eight days: see 1.59 n. On Jesus, see v. 11 n. 22–24: See v. 7 n.;

Lord: 'Every first-born male shall be deemed to belong to the Lord'), and also to make the offering as stated in the law: 'A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.'

There was at that time in Jerusalem a man called Simeon. This man was upright and devout, one who watched and waited for the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been disclosed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the Law, he took him in his arms, praised God, and said:

'This day, Master, thou givest thy servant his discharge in peace; now thy promise is fulfilled. For I have seen with my own eyes the deliverance which thou hast made ready in full view of all the nations: a light that will be a revelation to the heathen, and glory to thy people Israel.'

The child's father and mother were full of wonder at what was being said about him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'This child is destined to be a sign which men reject; and you too shall be pierced to the heart. Many in Israel will stand or fall<sup>k</sup> because of him, and thus the secret thoughts of many will be laid bare.'

There was also a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was a very old woman, who had lived seven years with her husband after she was first married, and then alone as a widow to the age of eighty-four.<sup>l</sup> She never left the temple, but worshipped day and night,

fasting and praying. Coming up at that very moment, she returned thanks to God; and she talked about the child to all who were looking for the liberation of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything prescribed in the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew big and strong and full of wisdom; and God's favour was upon him.

Now it was the practice of his parents to go to Jerusalem every year for the Passover festival; and when he was twelve, they made the pilgrimage as usual. When the festive season was over and they started for home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know of this; but thinking that he was with the party they journeyed on for a whole day, and only then did they begin looking for him among their friends and relations. As they could not find him they returned to Jerusalem to look for him; and after three days they found him sitting in the temple surrounded by the teachers, listening to them and putting questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his intelligence and the answers he gave. His parents were astonished to see him there, and his mother said to him, 'My son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' 'What made you search?' he said. 'Did you not know that I was bound to be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he meant. Then he went back with them to Nazareth, and continued to be under their authority; his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. As Jesus grew up he advanced in wisdom and in favour with God and men.

<sup>k</sup> Or Many in Israel will fall and rise again . . .

<sup>l</sup> Or widow for another eighty-four years.

Lev.12.1-8. 25-26: The restoration of Israel was expected of the Messiah (see Acts 1.6). 29: Discharge suggests "liberation." 31-32: The Messiah's function beyond Israel is stated in terms of Isa.52.10; 42.6; 49.6. 38: Liberation of Jerusalem: see vv. 25-26 n.

2.41-52: Jesus in the Temple as a boy. 41: Deut.16.16 required Jewish men to be in Jerusalem every year for the Passover festival, which celebrated Israel's escape from Egypt (Exod. ch. 12). 52: Wisdom (also v. 40) is a complex term which includes such meanings as "practical knowledge about life," "knowledge of the Law," and "revealed knowledge."

3 IN THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF THE EMPEROR Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, when Herod was prince of Galilee, his brother Philip prince of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and  
 2 Lysanias prince of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.  
 3 And he went all over the Jordan valley proclaiming a baptism in token of repentance for the forgiveness of  
 4 sins, as it is written in the book of the prophecies of Isaiah:

‘A voice crying aloud in the wilderness,  
 “Prepare a way for the Lord;  
 clear a straight path for him.

5 Every ravine shall be filled in,  
 and every mountain and hill levelled;  
 the corners shall be straightened,  
 and the rugged ways made smooth;  
 6 and all mankind shall see God’s  
 deliverance.”’

7 Crowds of people came out to be baptized by him, and he said to them: ‘You vipers’ brood! Who warned you to escape from the coming retribution?  
 8 Then prove your repentance by the fruit it bears; and do not begin saying to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father.” I tell you that God can make children for Abraham out of  
 9 these stones here. Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.’  
 10 The people asked him, “Then what  
 11 are we to do?” He replied, “The man with two shirts must share with him

who has none, and anyone who has food must do the same.’ Among those  
 12 who came to be baptized were tax-gatherers, and they said to him, ‘Master, what are we to do?’ He told  
 13 them, ‘Exact no more than the assessment.’ Soldiers on service also asked  
 14 him, ‘And what of us?’ To them he said, ‘No bullying; no blackmail; make do with your pay!’

The people were on the tiptoe of  
 15 expectation, all wondering about John, whether perhaps he was the Messiah, but he spoke out and said to them all:  
 16 ‘I baptize you with water; but there is one to come who is mightier than I. I am not fit to unfasten his shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His shovel is ready in his  
 17 hand, to winnow his threshing-floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but he will burn the chaff on a fire that can never go out.’

In this and many other ways he made  
 18 his appeal to the people and announced the good news. But Prince Herod, when  
 19 he was rebuked by him over the affair of his brother’s wife Herodias and for his other misdeeds, crowned them all  
 20 by shutting John up in prison.

DURING A GENERAL BAPTISM OF THE  
 21 people, when Jesus too had been baptized and was praying, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended  
 22 on him in bodily form like a dove; and there came a voice from heaven, ‘Thou art my Son, my Beloved;<sup>m</sup> on thee my favour rests.’<sup>n</sup>

When Jesus began his work he was 23

*m* Or Thou art my only Son.

*n* Some witnesses read My Son art thou; this day I have begotten thee.

3.1–20: The work of the Baptist. (Mt.3.1–12; Mk.1.1–8; Jn.1.6,15,19–28). 1: Tiberius’ fifteenth year: 27 A.D. Roman governors ruled Judaea after 6 A.D.; Pilate’s tenure covered 26–36. Herod Antipas (a son of Herod the Great), who ruled Galilee and Perea, is meant. 2: Annas was an influential former high priest; Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was high priest during Pilate’s governorship. Wilderness: see Mt.3.1 n. 3: Baptism: see Mt.3.7 n. 4–6: Isa.40.3–5. 8: Descendants of Abraham share the promise made to him (Gen.17.4–8; 22.18). 12: Tax-gatherers were private citizens who contracted with the Roman authorities to collect duties in a specific area; Jews who engaged in this “business” were regarded as traitors. 15–16: See Mk.1.7 n. 16: With the Holy Spirit and with fire probably originally meant “with divine power and judgment”; for Lk., fire is symbolically identified with Spirit (see Acts 1.5; 2.1–5). 19: See Mk.6.17–20.

3.21–22: The baptism of Jesus (Mt.3.13–17; Mk.1.9–11 n.; Jn.1.32–34). 21: Jesus’ praying is frequently mentioned by Lk. (e.g. 5.16; 9.18). 22: Spirit, dove: see Mt.3.16 n. Beloved: see Mk.1.11 n.

3.23–38: Genealogy of Jesus (compare Mt.1.1–17). V. 20 formally closes the career of the Baptist; with v. 21 attention turns exclusively to Jesus whose genealogy is given. 23: Thirty



about thirty years old, the son, as people thought, of Joseph, son of Heli,  
 24 son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of  
 25 Melchi, son of Jannai, son of Joseph,  
 26 son of Mattathiah, son of Amos, son  
 27 of Nahum, son of Esli, son of Naggai,  
 28 son of Maath, son of Mattathiah, son  
 29 of Semein, son of Josech, son of Joda,  
 30 son of Johanan, son of Rhesa, son of  
 31 Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, son of  
 32 Neri, son of Melchi, son of Addi, son  
 33 of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Er,  
 34 son of Joshua, son of Eliezer, son of  
 35 Jorim, son of Matthat, son of Levi,  
 36 son of Symeon, son of Judah, son of  
 37 Joseph, son of Jonam, son of Eliakim,  
 38 son of Melea, son of Menna, son of  
 39 Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of  
 40 David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, son  
 41 of Boaz, son of Salmon, son of  
 42 Nahshon, son of Amminadab,<sup>o</sup> son of  
 43 Arni,<sup>p</sup> son of Hezron, son of Perez,  
 44 son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of  
 45 Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Terah,  
 46 son of Nahor, son of Serug, son of  
 47 Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of  
 48 Shelah, son of Cainan, son of Arpach-  
 49 shad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son  
 50 of Lamech, son of Methuselah, son of  
 51 Enoch, son of Jared, son of Mahalaleel,  
 52 son of Cainan, son of Enosh, son of  
 53 Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

4 Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus  
 2 returned from the Jordan, and for  
 3 forty days was led by the Spirit up and  
 4 down the wilderness and tempted by  
 5 the devil.

All that time he had nothing to eat,  
 and at the end of it he was famished.  
 3 The devil said to him, 'If you are the  
 4 Son of God, tell this stone to become  
 5 bread.' Jesus answered, 'Scripture says,  
 "Man cannot live on bread alone."<sup>o</sup>

5 Next the devil led him up and

showed him in a flash all the kingdoms  
 of the world. 'All this dominion will I  
 6 give to you,' he said, 'and the glory  
 that goes with it; for it has been put  
 in my hands and I can give it to  
 anyone I choose. You have only to do  
 7 homage to me and it shall all be  
 yours.' Jesus answered him, 'Scripture  
 8 says, "You shall do homage to the  
 Lord your God and worship him  
 alone."<sup>o</sup>

The devil took him to Jerusalem and  
 9 set him on the parapet of the temple.  
 'If you are the Son of God,' he said,  
 'throw yourself down; for Scripture  
 10 says, "He will give his angels orders to  
 take care of you"; and again, "They  
 11 will support you in their arms for fear  
 you should strike your foot against a  
 stone."<sup>o</sup>' Jesus answered him, 'It has  
 12 been said, "You are not to put the  
 Lord your God to the test."<sup>o</sup>

So, having come to the end of all his  
 13 temptations, the devil departed, biding  
 his time.

#### *In Galilee: success and opposition*

THEN JESUS, ARMED WITH THE POWER  
 14 of the Spirit, returned to Galilee; and  
 reports about him spread through the  
 whole country-side. He taught in their  
 15 synagogues and all men sang his  
 praises.

So he came to Nazareth, where he  
 16 had been brought up, and went to  
 synagogue on the Sabbath day as he  
 regularly did. He stood up to read the  
 lesson and was handed the scroll of the  
 17 prophet Isaiah. He opened the scroll  
 and found the passage which says,

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses add son of Admin.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read Aram; Ruth 4. 19 and 1 Chronicles  
 2. 9 have Ram.

*years old* would mean shortly after 25 A.D., reckoning from Herod's death in 4 B.C. (Mt.2.1-20.)  
 31: While descent from *David* is still important for the Messiah (Mt.1.1 n.), vv. 23-31 do not  
 trace Jesus' ancestry through David's royal progeny (as does Mt.1.6-11). 38: The genealogy  
 extends beyond *Abraham* (i.e. beyond the Jewish limits of Mt.1.1-17) to *Adam, son of God*,  
 perhaps to affirm Jesus' kinship with all mankind.

4.1-13: The temptation (Mt.4.1-11; Mk.1.12-13). Except for a different sequence of tempta-  
 tions, the account closely parallels Mt. 4.1-11 (see notes there). 13: *Biding his time* implies the  
 later renewal of the contest (see 22.3,28,31).

4.14-15: *Jesus appears in Galilee* (Mt.4.12-17; Mk.1.14-15). 14: In Jesus' ministry, the  
*Spirit* is uniquely operative (3.22; 4.1,18-21). The phrase *returned to Galilee*, i.e. home (see  
 2.39), prepares for the scene in vv. 16-30. 15: *Taught in their synagogues*: see Mt.9.35.

4.16-30: *Jesus in Nazareth* (compare Mt.13.54-58; Mk.6.1-6). 16: Only Lk. places the  
*Nazareth* visit at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The *synagogue* was a place for instruction

18 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me  
because he has anointed me;  
he has sent me to announce good  
news to the poor,  
to proclaim release for prisoners and  
recovery of sight for the blind;  
to let the broken victims go free,  
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's  
favour.'

20 He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to  
the attendant, and sat down; and all  
eyes in the synagogue were fixed on  
him.

21 He began to speak: 'Today', he said,  
'in your very hearing this text has come  
22 true.'<sup>q</sup> There was a general stir of  
admiration; they were surprised that  
words of such grace should fall from  
his lips. 'Is not this Joseph's son?' they  
23 asked. Then Jesus said, 'No doubt  
you will quote the proverb to me,  
"Physician, heal yourself!", and say,  
"We have heard of all your doings at  
Capernaum; do the same here in your  
24 own home town." I tell you this,' he  
went on: 'no prophet is recognized in  
25 his own country. There were many  
widows in Israel, you may be sure, in  
Elijah's time, when for three years and  
six months the skies never opened, and  
famine lay hard over the whole country;  
26 yet it was to none of those that Elijah  
was sent, but to a widow at Sarepta in  
the territory of Sidon. Again, in the  
27 time of the prophet Elisha there were  
many lepers in Israel, and not one of  
them was healed, but only Naaman,  
28 the Syrian.' At these words the whole  
29 congregation were infuriated. They  
leapt up, threw him out of the town,  
and took him to the brow of the hill  
on which it was built, meaning to hurl  
30 him over the edge. But he walked  
straight through them all, and went  
away.

31 Coming down to Capernaum, a  
town in Galilee, he taught the people on  
32 the Sabbath, and they were astounded

at his teaching, for what he said had  
the note of authority. Now there was a  
33 man in the synagogue possessed by a  
devil, an unclean spirit. He shrieked at  
the top of his voice, 'What do you  
34 want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have  
you<sup>r</sup> come to destroy us? I know who  
you are—the Holy One of God.' Jesus  
rebuked him: 'Be silent', he said,  
35 'and come out of him.' Then the devil,  
after throwing the man down in front  
of the people, left him without doing  
him any injury. Amazement fell on  
36 them all and they said to one another:  
'What is there in this man's words? He  
gives orders to the unclean spirits with  
authority and power, and out they go.'  
So the news spread, and he was the  
37 talk of the whole district.

On leaving the synagogue he went to  
38 Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law  
was in the grip of a high fever; and they  
asked him to help her. He came and  
39 stood over her and rebuked the fever.  
It left her, and she got up at once and  
waited on them.

At sunset all who had friends  
40 suffering from one disease or another  
brought them to him; and he laid his  
hands on them one by one and cured  
them. Devils also came out of many of  
41 them, shouting, 'You are the Son of  
God.' But he rebuked them and  
forbade them to speak, because they  
knew that he was the Messiah.

When day broke he went out and  
42 made his way to a lonely spot. But the  
people went in search of him, and  
when they came to where he was they  
pressed him not to leave them. But he  
43 said, 'I must give the good news of the  
kingdom of God to the other towns  
also, for that is what I was sent to do.'  
So he proclaimed the Gospel in the  
44 synagogues of Judaea.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>q</sup> Or 'Today', he said, 'this text which you have just heard has come true.'

<sup>r</sup> Or 'You have.'

<sup>s</sup> Or the Jewish synagogues: some witnesses read the synagogues of Galilee.

in the Law and for nonsacrificial worship. *Sabbath* begins at sunset on Friday. 18-19: Isa. 61.1-2; 58.6. 18: *Spirit*: see 4.14 n. 20: *Sat*: see Mt.5.1 n. 25-27: Two OT examples of God's goodness to non-Israelites are cited (1 Kgs. ch. 17; 2 Kgs.5.1-19), thus emphasizing the universal reach of Jesus' mission.

4.31-44: *Jesus in Capernaum* (Mt.8.14-17; Mk.1.21-38). 33: *Devil*: see Mk.1.23 n. 38: *Simon*: Peter (see Mt.4.18). 40: *Sunset* on Saturday marks the end of Sabbath; see v. 16 n. 44: For Lk., *Judaea* sometimes means the entire "Holy Land" (including Galilee).

5 One day as he stood by the Lake of  
 Gennesaret, and the people crowded  
 upon him to listen to the word of God,  
 2 he noticed two boats lying at the  
 water's edge; the fishermen had come  
 ashore and were washing their nets.  
 3 He got into one of the boats, which  
 belonged to Simon, and asked him to  
 put out a little way from the shore;  
 then he went on teaching the crowds  
 4 from his seat in the boat. When he had  
 finished speaking, he said to Simon,  
 'Put out into deep water and let down  
 5 your nets for a catch.' Simon answered,  
 'Master, we were hard at work all  
 night and caught nothing at all; but if  
 you say so, I will let down the nets.'  
 6 They did so and made a big haul of  
 7 fish; and their nets began to split. So  
 they signalled to their partners in the  
 other boat to come and help them.  
 This they did, and loaded both boats  
 8 to the point of sinking. When Simon  
 saw what had happened he fell at  
 Jesus's knees and said, 'Go, Lord,  
 9 leave me, sinner that I am!' For he  
 and all his companions were amazed at  
 the catch they had made; so too were  
 his partners James and John, Zebedee's  
 sons. 'Do not be afraid,' said Jesus to  
 Simon; 'from now on you will be  
 11 catching men.' As soon as they had  
 brought the boats to land, they left  
 everything and followed him.  
 12 He was once in a certain town where  
 there happened to be a man covered  
 with leprosy; seeing Jesus, he bowed  
 to the ground and begged his help.  
 'Sir,' he said, 'if only you will, you can  
 13 cleanse me.' Jesus stretched out his  
 hand, touched him, and said, 'Indeed  
 I will; be clean again.' The leprosy left  
 14 him immediately. Jesus then ordered  
 him not to tell anybody. 'But go,' he  
 said, 'show yourself to the priest, and  
 make the offering laid down by Moses  
 for your cleansing; that will certify the  
 15 cure.' But the talk about him spread  
 all the more; great crowds gathered to

hear him and to be cured of their  
 ailments. And from time to time he  
 would withdraw to lonely places for  
 prayer.

One day he was teaching, and 17  
 Pharisees and teachers of the law were  
 sitting round. People had come from  
 every village of Galilee and from  
 Judaea and Jerusalem,<sup>†</sup> and the power  
 of the Lord was with him to heal the  
 sick. Some men appeared carrying a 18  
 paralysed man on a bed. They tried to  
 bring him in and set him down in  
 front of Jesus, but finding no way to 19  
 do so because of the crowd, they went  
 up on to the roof and let him down  
 through the tiling, bed and all, into the  
 middle of the company in front of  
 Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he 20  
 said, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you.'

The lawyers and the Pharisees began 21  
 saying to themselves, 'Who is this  
 fellow with his blasphemous talk? Who  
 but God alone can forgive sins?' But 22  
 Jesus knew what they were thinking  
 and answered them: 'Why do you  
 harbour thoughts like these? Is it 23  
 easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven  
 you", or to say, "Stand up and walk"?  
 But to convince you that the Son of 24  
 Man has the right on earth to forgive  
 sins—he turned to the paralysed man  
 —'I say to you, stand up, take your  
 bed, and go home.' And at once he 25  
 rose to his feet before their eyes, took  
 up the bed he had been lying on, and  
 went home praising God. They were 26  
 all lost in amazement and praised God;  
 filled with awe they said, 'You would  
 never believe the things we have seen  
 today.'

Later, when he went out, he saw a 27  
 tax-gatherer, Levi by name, at his seat  
 in the custom-house, and said to him,  
 'Follow me'; and he rose to his feet, 28  
 left everything behind, and followed  
 him.

<sup>†</sup> Some witnesses read and Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judaea and Jerusalem, were sitting round.

5.1–11: The first disciples called (compare Mt.4.18–22; Mk.1.16–20; Jn.1.35–51; 21.1–8).  
 1: Lake of Gennesaret: Sea of Galilee.

5.12–16: A leper healed (Mt.8.1–4; Mk.1.40–45). 12: Leprosy, cleanse: see Mt.8.2 n. 14: See Lev.14.1–32. 16: Prayer: see 3.21 n.

5.17–6.11: Healing and conflict.

5.17–26: A paralytic (Mt.9.1–8; Mk.2.1–12). 17: Power may mean "Spirit"; see 4.14 n.  
 19: Tiling: compare Mk.2.4 n. 21: Lawyers: see Mt.2.4 n. 24: Son of Man: see Mk.2.10 n.

5.27–32: Friend of outcasts (Mt.9.9–13; Mk.2.13–17). 27: A tax-gatherer was despised; see 3.12 n.

29 Afterwards Levi held a big reception  
in his house for Jesus; among the  
30 guests was a large party of tax-  
gatherers and others. The Pharisees  
and the lawyers of their sect com-  
31 plained to his disciples: 'Why do you  
eat and drink', they said, 'with tax-  
gatherers and sinners?' Jesus answered  
32 them: 'It is not the healthy that need a  
doctor, but the sick; I have not come  
to invite virtuous people, but to call  
sinners to repentance.'

33 Then they said to him, 'John's  
disciples are much given to fasting and  
the practice of prayer, and so are the  
disciples of the Pharisees; but yours  
34 eat and drink.' Jesus replied, 'Can you  
make the bridegroom's friends fast  
while the bridegroom is with them?  
35 But a time will come: the bridegroom  
will be taken away from them, and  
that will be the time for them to fast.'

36 He told them this parable also: 'No  
one tears a piece from a new cloak to  
37 patch an old one: if he does, he will  
have made a hole in the new cloak, and  
the patch from the new will not match  
the old. Nor does anyone put new  
wine into old wine-skins; if he does,  
the new wine will burst the skins, the  
wine will be wasted, and the skins  
38, 39 ruined. Fresh skins for new wine! And  
no one after drinking old wine wants  
new; for he says, "The old wine is  
good."'

6 One Sabbath he was going through  
the cornfields, and his disciples were  
2 plucking the ears of corn, rubbing them  
in their hands, and eating them. Some  
of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you  
3 doing what is forbidden on the  
Sabbath?' Jesus answered, 'So you  
4 have not read what David did when he  
and his men were hungry? He went  
into the House of God and took the

sacred bread to eat and gave it to his  
men, though priests alone are allowed  
to eat it, and no one else.' He also  
5 said, 'The Son of Man is sovereign  
even over the Sabbath.'

On another Sabbath he had gone to  
6 synagogue and was teaching. There  
happened to be a man in the congrega-  
tion whose right arm was withered; 7  
and the lawyers and the Pharisees were on  
the watch to see whether Jesus would  
cure him on the Sabbath, so that they  
could find a charge to bring against  
him. But he knew what was in their  
8 minds and said to the man with the  
withered arm, 'Get up and stand out  
here.' So he got up and stood there.  
Then Jesus said to them, 'I put the  
9 question to you: is it permitted to do  
good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to  
save life or to destroy it?' He looked  
10 round at them all and then said to the  
man, 'Stretch out your arm.' He did  
so, and his arm was restored. But they  
11 were beside themselves with anger, and  
began to discuss among themselves  
what they could do to Jesus.

During this time he went out one  
12 day into the hills to pray, and spent  
the night in prayer to God. When day  
13 broke he called his disciples to him,  
and from among them he chose twelve  
and named them Apostles: Simon, 14  
to whom he gave the name of Peter, and  
Andrew his brother, James and John,  
Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and  
15 Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and  
Simon who was called the Zealot,  
Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot  
16 who turned traitor.

He came down the hill with them  
17 and took his stand on level ground.  
There was a large concourse of his  
disciples and great numbers of people  
from Jerusalem and Judaea and from

29: *Reception*: only Lk. clearly places the dinner in *Levi's* house (compare Mt.9.10; Mk.2.15).  
5.33-39: *Fasting and prayer* (Mt.9.14-17; Mk.2.18-22). 33: *John's disciples*: see Mk.2.18 n.  
36-38: See Mk.2.21-22 n. 39: This may have been intended as sarcastic comment about the  
preference of Jesus' opponents for the old ways.

6.1-11: *Sabbath controversy* (Mt.12.1-14; Mk.2.23-3.6). See Mk.2.23-3.6 n. 1: Deut.23.25.  
2: Exod.20.10; Deut.5.14. 3: 1 Sam.21.1-7. 4: Lev.24.7-9. 7-11: See Mk.3.1-6 n.

6.12-16: *The Twelve chosen* (Mt.10.1-4; Mk.3.13-19). The choosing of the Twelve is a  
prelude to the sermon which follows; notice again the reference to *prayer* (3.21 n.). 13: *Apostles*:  
see Mt.10.2 n. 15: *Zealot*: Mk.3.18 n.

6.17-49: *Sermon on the Plain*. The Sermon in Lk. includes sayings also found in the Sermon  
on the Mount in Mt. chs. 5-7.

6.17-19: *The setting*. See Mt.4.25; 12.15-21; Mk.3.7-12. 17: Contrast Mt.5.1. Lk. thinks of  
mountains for settings requiring privacy; public teaching tends to take place on *level ground*.

the seaboard of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to listen to him, and to be cured of their diseases. Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured; and everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, because power went out from him and cured them all.

20 THEN TURNING TO HIS DISCIPLES HE began to speak:

'How blest are you who are in need; the kingdom of God is yours.

21 'How blest are you who now go hungry; your hunger shall be satisfied.

'How blest are you who weep now; you shall laugh.

22 'How blest you are when men hate you, when they outlaw you and insult you, and ban your very name as infamous, because of the Son of Man. 23 On that day be glad and dance for joy; for assuredly you have a rich reward in heaven; in just the same way did their fathers treat the prophets.

24 'But alas for you who are rich; you have had your time of happiness.

25 'Alas for you who are well-fed now; you shall go hungry.

'Alas for you who laugh now; you shall mourn and weep.

26 'Alas for you when all speak well of you; just so did their fathers treat the false prophets.

27 'But to you who hear me I say:

'Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who treat you spitefully. When a man hits you on the cheek, offer him the other cheek too; when a man takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you; when a man takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

32 'If you love only those who love you,

what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. Again, if you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do as much. And if you lend only where you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to each other to be repaid in full. But you must love your enemies and do good; and lend without expecting any return;<sup>u</sup> and you will have a rich reward: you will be sons of the Most High, because he himself is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.

'Pass no judgement, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; acquit, and you will be acquitted; give, and gifts will be given you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; for whatever measure you deal out to others will be dealt to you in return.'

He also offered them a parable: 'Can one blind man be guide to another? Will they not both fall into the ditch? A pupil is not superior to his teacher; but everyone, when his training is complete, will reach his teacher's level.

'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, with never a thought for the great plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "My dear brother, let me take the speck out of your eye", when you are blind to the plank in your own? You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's.

'There is no such thing as a good

<sup>u</sup> Or without ever giving up hope; some witnesses read without giving up hope of anyone.

6.20-23: The Beatitudes (Mt.5.3-12). On form, see Mt.5.3 n. Unlike Mt., Lk. reports all these Beatitudes in the second person. Also, Lk. does not "spiritualize" the conditions described as "blest"; see vv. 24-26 n.

6.24-26: The Woes (*Alas for you* . . .) represent a form which warns against qualities of life or types of behavior that have bad consequences; here, the warning has been heightened to eschatological threat. As vv. 20,21,24,25 show, *in need* and *hungry* are understood literally by Lk.; contrast Mt.5.3 n., 6 n.

6.27-36: Love of enemies (Mt.5.39-42,44-48). 31: The Golden Rule; see Mt.7.12 n. 35: Sonship is shown in behavior that conforms to God's dealing with men.

6.37-46: Judging others (Mt.7.1-5). 39: Mt.15.14. 40: Mt.10.24-25; Jn.13.16. 43-46: Proof of goodness (Mt.7.16-21; 12.33-35).

tree producing worthless fruit, nor yet a worthless tree producing good fruit.  
 44 For each tree is known by its own fruit: you do not gather figs from thistles, and you do not pick grapes  
 45 from brambles. A good man produces good from the store of good within himself; and an evil man from evil within produces evil. For the words that the mouth utters come from the overflowing of the heart.  
 46 'Why do you keep calling me "Lord, Lord"—and never do what I tell you?  
 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears what I say, and acts upon it—I will  
 48 show you what he is like. He is like a man who, in building his house, dug deep and laid the foundations on rock. When the flood came, the river burst upon that house, but could not shift it,  
 49 because it had been soundly built. But he who hears and does not act is like a man who built his house on the soil without foundations. As soon as the river burst upon it, the house collapsed, and fell with a great crash.'

7 WHEN HE HAD FINISHED ADDRESSING the people, he went to Capernaum. A centurion there had a servant whom he valued highly; this servant was ill and near to death. Hearing about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders with the request that he would come and save his servant's life. They approached Jesus and pressed their petition earnestly: 'He deserves this favour from you,' they said, 'for he is a friend of our nation and it is he who built us our synagogue.' Jesus went with them; but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends with this message: 'Do not trouble further, sir; it is not for me to have you under my roof, and that is why I did not presume to approach you in person. But say the word and my servant will be cured. I know, for in my position I am myself under orders, with soldiers

under me. I say to one, "Go", and he goes; to another, "Come here", and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this", and he does it.' When Jesus heard this, he admired the man, and, turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, 'I tell you, nowhere, even in Israel, have I found faith like this.' And the messengers returned to the house and found the servant in good health.

Afterwards Jesus went to a town called Nain, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd. As he approached the gate of the town he met a funeral. The dead man was the only son of his widowed mother; and many of the townspeople were there with her. When the Lord saw her his heart went out to her, and he said, 'Weep no more.' With that he stepped forward and laid his hand on the bier; and the bearers halted. Then he spoke: 'Young man, rise up!' The dead man sat up and began to speak; and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Deep awe fell upon them all, and they praised God. 'A great prophet has arisen among us', they said, and again, 'God has shown his care for his people.' The story of what he had done ran through all parts of Judaea and the whole neighbourhood.

John too was informed of all this by his disciples. Summoning two of their number he sent them to the Lord with this message: 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect some other?' The messengers made their way to Jesus and said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you: he asks, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect some other?"' There and then he cured many sufferers from diseases, plagues, and evil spirits; and on many blind people he bestowed sight. Then he gave them his answer: 'Go', he said, 'and tell John what you

v Some witnesses read On the next day.

6.47-49: The wise and foolish builders (Mt.7.24-27).

7.1-10: The centurion's servant (Mt.8.5-13). 2: Centurion: see Mt.8.5 n. In Lk., the sick person is clearly a *servant*; compare Mt.8.5 n.

7.11-17: The widow's son. Compare 1 Kgs.17.17-24; 2 Kgs.4.32-37.

7.18-35: Jesus and John the Baptist (Mt.11.2-19). The passage advances high claims for both Jesus and the Baptist. John's question (v. 19) elicits not only Jesus' testimony about his own works (vv. 22-23), but also his commendation of the Baptist (vv. 24-28). Vv. 22-23 are based on

have seen and heard: how the blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news—and happy is the man who does not find me a stumbling-block.’

24 After John’s messengers had left, Jesus began to speak about him to the crowds: ‘What was the spectacle that drew you to the wilderness? A reed-bed swept by the wind? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed in silks and satins? Surely you must look in palaces for grand clothes and luxury. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes indeed, and far more than a prophet. He is the man of whom Scripture says,

“Here is my herald, whom I send on ahead of you,  
and he will prepare your way before you.”

28 I tell you, there is not a mother’s son greater than John, and yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.’

29 When they heard him, all the people, including the tax-gatherers, praised God, for they had accepted John’s baptism; but the Pharisees and lawyers, who refused his baptism, had rejected<sup>w</sup> God’s purpose for themselves.

31 ‘How can I describe the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the market-place and shouting at each other,

“We piped for you and you would not dance.”

“We wept and wailed, and you would not mourn.”

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, “He is possessed.” The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, “Look at him! a glutton and

a drinker, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!” And yet God’s wisdom is proved right by all who are her children.’

One of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him; he went to the Pharisee’s house and took his place at table. A woman who was living an immoral life in the town had learned that Jesus was at table in the Pharisee’s house and had brought oil of myrrh in a small flask. She took her place behind him, by his feet, weeping. His feet were wetted with her tears and she wiped them with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the myrrh. When his host the Pharisee saw this he said to himself, ‘If this fellow were a real prophet, he would know who this woman is that touches him, and what sort of woman she is, a sinner.’ Jesus took him up and said, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ ‘Speak on, Master’, said he. ‘Two men were in debt to a money-lender: one owed him five hundred silver pieces, the other fifty. As neither had anything to pay with he let them both off. Now, which will love him most?’ Simon replied, ‘I should think the one that was let off most.’ ‘You are right’, said Jesus. Then turning to the woman, he said to Simon, ‘You see this woman? I came to your house: you provided no water for my feet; but this woman has made my feet wet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss; but she has been kissing my feet ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with myrrh. And so, I tell you, her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven; where little has been forgiven, little love is shown.’ Then he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ The other guests began to ask themselves, ‘Who <sup>w</sup> Or . . . greater than he. And all the people, including the tax-gatherers, when they heard him, accepted John’s baptism and acknowledged the righteous dealing of God; but the Pharisees and lawyers, by refusing his baptism, rejected . . .’

Isa.29.18–19; 35.5–6; 61.1. 27: Mal.3.1. 33: *Possessed*, i.e. by a demon, out of his mind. 34: Tax-gatherers: see Lk.3.12 n. 35: *Wisdom* is the personified source of revelation as in Prov.1.20–33; Eccles.24.1–23.

7.36–50: *Dinner with a Pharisee* (compare Mt.26.6–13; Mk.14.3–9; Jn.12.1–8). 37: Custom permitted such intrusions on private parties. *Myrrh*: a fragrant substance. 40: *Simon* was a name in common use. 44–46: Special courtesies which the host might have provided are

50 is this, that he can forgive sins?' But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

8 AFTER THIS HE WENT JOURNEYING FROM town to town and village to village, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. With him were the  
2 Twelve and a number of women who had been set free from evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, known as Mary of Magdala, from whom seven devils had  
3 come out, Joanna, the wife of Chuza a steward of Herod's, Susanna, and many others. These women provided for them out of their own resources.

4 People were now gathering in large numbers, and as they made their way to him from one town after another, he  
5 said in a parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the footpath, where it  
6 was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some seed fell on rock and, after  
7 coming up, withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell in among  
8 thistles, and the thistles grew up with it and choked it. And some of the seed  
9 fell into good soil, and grew, and yielded a hundredfold.' As he said this he called out, 'If you have ears to hear, then hear.'

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant, and he said, 'It has been  
10 granted to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but the others have only parables, so that they may look but see nothing, hear but understand nothing.'

11 'This is what the parable means. The seed is the word of God. Those  
12 along the footpath are the men who hear it, and then the devil comes and carries off the word from their hearts for fear they should believe and be  
13 saved. The seed sown on rock stands for those who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but have no

root; they are believers for a while, but in the time of testing they desert. That which fell among thistles represents those who hear, but their further  
14 growth is choked by cares and wealth and the pleasures of life, and they bring nothing to maturity. But the seed in  
15 good soil represents those who bring a good and honest heart to the hearing of the word, hold it fast, and by their perseverance yield a harvest.

'Nobody lights a lamp and then  
16 covers it with a basin or puts it under the bed. On the contrary, he puts it on a lamp-stand so that those who come in may see the light. For there is  
17 nothing hidden that will not become public, nothing under cover that will not be made known and brought into the open.

'Take care, then, how you listen; for  
18 the man who has will be given more, and the man who has not will forfeit even what he thinks he has.'

His mother and his brothers arrived  
19 but could not get to him for the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and  
20 brothers are standing outside, and they want to see you.' He replied, 'My  
21 mother and my brothers—they are those who hear the word of God and act upon it.'

One day he got into a boat with his  
22 disciples and said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' So they put out; and as they  
23 sailed along he went to sleep. Then a heavy squall struck the lake; they began to ship water and were in grave  
24 danger. They went to him, and roused him, crying, 'Master, Master, we are sinking!' He awoke, and rebuked the  
25 wind and the turbulent waters. The storm subsided and all was calm. 'Where is your faith?' he asked. In fear and  
astonishment they said to one another, 'Who can this be? He gives his orders  
to wind and waves, and they obey him.'

performed instead by the woman. 50: In miracle stories the Gk. words here translated *saved you* mean "cured you" (e.g. 8.48).

8.1-3: Women disciples serve.

8.4-15: The parable of the sower and its meaning (Mt.13.1-23; Mk.4.1-20). 4: On *parables*, see Mk.4.2 n. 6: See Mk.4.3-8 n. 8: See Mk.4.8 n. 9-10: *Look, hear*: see Mk.4.12 n.; Mt.13.13 n. 11-15: See Mk.4.13-20 n.

8.16-21: Miscellaneous sayings. 16-18: See Mk.4.24-25 n. 16: Mt.5.15; Mk.4.21. 17: Mt.10.26; Mk.4.22. 18: 19.26; Mt.13.12; 25.29; Mk.4.25. 19-21: Mt.12.46-50; Mk.3.31-35.

8.22-25: Rebuke of a storm (Mt.8.23-27; Mk.4.35-41).



26 So they landed in the country of the Gergesenes,<sup>x</sup> which is opposite Galilee.  
 27 As he stepped ashore he was met by a man from the town who was possessed by devils. For a long time he had neither worn clothes nor lived in a house, but stayed among the tombs.  
 28 When he saw Jesus he cried out, and fell at his feet shouting, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I implore you, do not torment me.'  
 29 For Jesus was already ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many a time it had seized him, and then, for safety's sake, they would secure him with chains and fetters; but each time he broke loose, and with the devil in charge made off to the solitary places.  
 30 Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Legion', he replied. This was because so many devils had taken possession of him. And they begged him not to banish them to the Abyss.  
 32 There happened to be a large herd of pigs nearby, feeding on the hill; and the spirits begged him to let them go into these pigs. He gave them leave;  
 33 the devils came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed over the edge into the lake and were drowned.  
 34 The men in charge of them saw what had happened, and, taking to their heels, they carried the news to the town and country-side; and the people came out to see for themselves. When they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the devils had gone out sitting at his feet clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid.  
 36 The spectators told them how the madman had been cured. Then the whole population of the Gergesene<sup>y</sup> district asked him to go, for they were in the grip of a great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the devils had gone out begged leave to go with him; but  
 39 Jesus sent him away: 'Go back home,'

he said, 'and tell them everything that God has done for you.' The man went all over the town spreading the news of what Jesus had done for him.

When Jesus returned, the people<sup>40</sup> welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man appeared—<sup>41</sup> Jairus was his name and he was president of the synagogue. Throwing himself down at Jesus's feet he begged him to come to his house, because he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. And while Jesus was on his way he could hardly breathe for the crowds.

Among them was a woman who had<sup>43</sup> suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years; and<sup>42</sup> nobody had been able to cure her. She came up from behind and touched the edge of<sup>a</sup> his cloak, and at once her haemorrhage stopped. Jesus<sup>45</sup> said, 'Who was it that touched me?' All disclaimed it, and Peter and his companions said, 'Master, the crowds are hemming you in and pressing upon you!' But Jesus said, 'Someone did<sup>46</sup> touch me, for I felt that power had gone out from me.' Then the woman,<sup>47</sup> seeing that she was detected, came trembling and fell at his feet. Before all the people she explained why she had touched him and how she had been instantly cured. He said to her, 'My<sup>48</sup> daughter, your faith has cured you. Go in peace.'

While he was still speaking, a man<sup>49</sup> came from the president's house with the message, 'Your daughter is dead; trouble the Rabbi no further.' But Jesus<sup>50</sup> heard, and interposed. 'Do not be afraid,' he said; 'only show faith and she will be well again.' On arrival at<sup>51</sup> the house he allowed no one to go in with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. And all were weeping and lamenting for her. He said, 'Weep no more; she is not dead: she is asleep';  
<sup>x</sup> Some witnesses read Gerasenes; others read Gadarenes.  
<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read Gerasene; others read Gadarene.  
<sup>z</sup> Some witnesses add though she had spent all she had on doctors.  
<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses omit the edge of.

8.26-39: The Gergesene demoniac (Mt.8.28-34; Mk.5.1-20). 26: Gergesenes: see Mk.5.1 n. 28: Son: see Mt.8.28-29 n. 30: On name, Legion, see Mk.5.9 n. 32: Pigs: see Mt.8.30 n. 8.40-56: Jairus' daughter and a woman with a chronic ailment (Mt.9.18-26; Mk.5.21-43). See Mk.5.21-43 n. 48: Cured: see 7.50 n. 50: Rabbi: lit. "my teacher," a respectful form of address to a teacher of the Law.

53 and they only laughed at him, well  
54 knowing that she was dead. But Jesus  
took hold of her hand and called her:  
55 'Get up, my child.' Her spirit returned,  
she stood up immediately, and he told  
56 them to give her something to eat. Her  
parents were astounded; but he forbade  
them to tell anyone what had happened.

9 HE NOW CALLED THE TWELVE TOGETHER  
and gave them power and authority to  
overcome all the devils and to cure  
2 diseases, and sent them to proclaim the  
3 kingdom of God and to heal. 'Take  
nothing for the journey,' he told them,  
'neither stick nor pack, neither bread  
nor money; nor are you each to have a  
4 second coat. When you are admitted  
to a house, stay there, and go on from  
5 there. As for those who will not receive  
you, when you leave their town shake  
the dust off your feet as a warning to  
6 them.' So they set out and travelled  
from village to village, and everywhere  
they told the good news and healed  
the sick.

7 Now Prince Herod heard of all that  
was happening, and did not know  
what to make of it; for some were  
saying that John had been raised from  
8 the dead, others that Elijah had  
appeared, others again that one of the  
old prophets had come back to life.  
9 Herod said, 'As for John, I beheaded  
him myself; but who is this I hear such  
talk about?' And he was anxious to  
see him.

10 On their return the apostles told  
Jesus all they had done; and he took  
them with him and withdrew privately  
11 to a town called Bethsaida. But the  
crowds found out and followed him.  
He welcomed them, and spoke to them  
about the kingdom of God, and cured  
those who were in need of healing.

When evening was drawing on, the 12  
Twelve came up to him and said, 'Send  
these people away; then they can go  
into the villages and farms round about  
to find food and lodging; for we are  
in a lonely place here.' 'Give them 13  
something to eat yourselves', he replied.  
But they said, 'All we have is five loaves  
and two fishes, nothing more—unless  
perhaps we ourselves are to go and buy  
provisions for all this company.' (There 14  
were about five thousand men.) He said  
to his disciples, 'Make them sit down  
in groups of fifty or so.' They did so 15  
and got them all seated. Then, taking 16  
the five loaves and the two fishes, he  
looked up to heaven, said the blessing  
over them, broke them, and gave them  
to the disciples to distribute to the  
people. They all ate to their hearts' 17  
content; and when the scraps they left  
were picked up, they filled twelve great  
baskets.

One day when he was praying alone 18  
in the presence of his disciples, he  
asked them, 'Who do the people say I  
am?' They answered, 'Some say John 19  
the Baptist, others Elijah, others that  
one of the old prophets has come back  
to life.' 'And you,' he said, 'who do 20  
you say I am?' Peter answered, 'God's  
Messiah.' Then he gave them strict 21  
orders not to tell this to anyone. And 22  
he said, 'The Son of Man has to  
undergo great sufferings, and to be  
rejected by the elders, chief priests, and  
doctors of the law, to be put to death  
and to be raised again on the third day.'

And to all he said, 'If anyone wishes 23  
to be a follower of mine, he must leave  
self behind; day after day he must take  
up his cross, and come with me.  
Whoever cares for his own safety is 24  
lost; but if a man will let himself be  
lost for my sake, that man is safe.

9.1-6: Mission of the Twelve (see 10.1 n.; Mt.9.35; 10.1,9-11,14; Mk.6.7-13). 1-2: Cure, proclaim: see Mt.10.8 n.

9.7-9: Herod and Jesus (Mt.14.1-2; Mk.6.14-16). 7: Herod: Antipas (see 3.1 n.). John: the Baptist. 8: Elijah: see Mk.6.15 n.

9.10-17: Feeding of five thousand (Mt.14.13-21; Mk.6.30-44; Jn.6.1-13). See Mk.6.30-44 n.; Lk. has only one account of such a feeding.

9.18-22: Peter's confession and Jesus' prediction of his suffering (Mt.16.13-23; Mk.8.27-33; Jn.6.66-71). 18: Praying alone: see 3.21 n. 19: John, Elijah: see Mk.8.28 n. 20: Messiah: see Mt.1.1 n. 22: 9.44; 18.31-33; see Mk.8.31 n.

9.23-27: Following Jesus (Mt.16.24-28; Mk.8.34-9.1). 23: Cross: see Mt.10.38-39 n. The addition of day after day in Lk. (compare Mt.16.24; Mk.8.34 n.) spiritualizes the meaning of take up his cross.

25 What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? For whoever is ashamed of me and mine,<sup>b</sup> the Son of Man will be ashamed of him, when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels. And I tell you this: there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God.<sup>c</sup>

28 About eight days after this conversation he took Peter, John, and James with him and went up into the hills to pray. And while he was praying the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there were two men talking with him; these were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, the destiny he was to fulfil in Jerusalem. Meanwhile Peter and his companions had been in a deep sleep; but when they awoke, they saw his glory and the two men who stood beside him. And as these were moving away from Jesus, Peter said to him, 'Master, how good it is that we are here! Shall we make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah?'; but he spoke without knowing what he was saying. The words were still on his lips, when there came a cloud which cast a shadow over them; they were afraid as they entered the cloud, and from it came a voice: 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.'<sup>c</sup>

36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was seen to be alone. The disciples kept silence and at that time told nobody anything of what they had seen.

37 Next day when they came down from the hills he was met by a large crowd. All at once there was a shout from a man in the crowd: 'Master, look at my son, I implore you, my only child.'

39 From time to time a spirit seizes him, gives a sudden scream, and throws him into convulsions with foaming at the

mouth, and it keeps on mauling him and will hardly let him go. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' Jesus answered, 'What an unbelieving and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you and endure you all? Bring your son here.' But before the boy could reach him the devil dashed him to the ground and threw him into convulsions. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, cured the boy, and gave him back to his father. And they were all struck with awe at the majesty of God.

Amid the general wonder and admiration at all he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'What I now say is for you: ponder my words. The Son of Man is to be given up into the power of men.' But they did not understand this saying; it had been hidden from them, so that they should not<sup>c</sup> grasp its meaning, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

A dispute arose among them: which of them was the greatest? Jesus knew what was passing in their minds, so he took a child by the hand and stood him at his side, and said, 'Whoever receives this child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me. For the least among you all—he is the greatest.'

'Master,' said John, 'we saw a man driving out devils in your name, but as he is not one of us we tried to stop him.' Jesus said to him, 'Do not stop him, for he who is not against you is on your side.'

### *Journeys and encounters*

AS THE TIME APPROACHED WHEN HE was to be taken up to heaven, he set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem,

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read me and my words.

<sup>c</sup> Or it was so obscure to them that they could not ...

9.28–36: The transfiguration (Mt.17.1–8; Mk.9.2–8). See Mt.17.1–8 nn. 28: *To pray*: see 3.21 n. 31: *Departure* may refer to death or to Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

9.37–43a: An epileptic boy (Mt.17.14–20; Mk.9.14–29). Lk. has greatly abbreviated the story.

9.43b–45: The second prediction (see 9.19) of suffering (Mt.17.22–23; Mk.9.30–32).

9.46–50: The true disciple (Mt.18.1–5; Mk.9.33–41). The true disciple is not embroiled in arguments about rank (v. 46) or privilege (vv. 49–50); rather he knows the joy of humble service (v. 48). 49–50: See Mk.9.39–40 n.

9.51–19.27: The Lukan travel narrative. Perhaps taking his clue from brief but dramatic

52 and sent messengers ahead. They set  
out and went into a Samaritan village  
53 to make arrangements for him; but the  
villagers would not have him because  
54 he was making for Jerusalem. When  
the disciples James and John saw this  
they said, 'Lord, may we call down fire  
55 from heaven to burn them up<sup>d</sup>?' But  
56 he turned and rebuked them,<sup>e</sup> and they  
went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road a  
man said to him, 'I will follow you  
58 wherever you go.' Jesus answered,  
'Foxes have their holes, the birds their  
roosts; but the Son of Man has  
59 nowhere to lay his head.' To another he  
said, 'Follow me', but the man replied,  
'Let me go and bury my father first.'  
60 Jesus said, 'Leave the dead to bury their  
dead; you must go and announce the  
kingdom of God.'

61 Yet another said, 'I will follow you,  
sir; but let me first say good-bye to my  
62 people at home.' To him Jesus said,  
'No one who sets his hand to the  
plough and then keeps looking back<sup>f</sup>  
is fit for the kingdom of God.'

10 After this the Lord appointed a  
further seventy-two<sup>g</sup> and sent them on  
ahead in pairs to every town and place  
2 he was going to visit himself. He said  
to them: 'The crop is heavy, but  
labourers are scarce; you must there-  
fore beg the owner to send labourers to  
3 harvest his crop. Be on your way. And  
look, I am sending you like lambs  
4 among wolves. Carry no purse or pack,  
and travel barefoot. Exchange no  
5 greetings on the road. When you go  
into a house, let your first words be,  
6 "Peace to this house." If there is a man  
of peace there, your peace will rest  
upon him; if not, it will return and  
7 rest upon you. Stay in that one house,

sharing their food and drink; for the  
worker earns his pay. Do not move  
8 from house to house. When you come  
into a town and they make you  
welcome, eat the food provided for  
you; heal the sick there, and say, "The  
9 kingdom of God has come close to  
you." When you enter a town and they  
10 do not make you welcome, go out into  
its streets and say, "The very dust of  
11 your town that clings to our feet we  
wipe off to your shame. Only take note  
of this: the kingdom of God has come  
close." I tell you, it will be more  
12 bearable for Sodom on the great Day  
than for that town.

'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for  
13 you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that  
were performed in you had been  
performed in Tyre and Sidon, they  
would have repented long ago, sitting  
in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be  
14 more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at  
the Judgement than for you. And as  
15 for you, Capernaum, will you be  
exalted to the skies? No, brought down  
to the depths!

'Whoever listens to you listens to  
16 me; whoever rejects you rejects me.  
And whoever rejects me rejects the One  
who sent me.'

The seventy-two<sup>g</sup> came back jubilant.  
17 'In your name, Lord,' they said, 'even  
the devils submit to us.' He replied, 'I  
18 watched how Satan fell, like lightning,  
out of the sky. And now you see that I  
19 have given you the power to tread  
underfoot snakes and scorpions and  
all the forces of the enemy, and

*d* Some witnesses add as Elijah did.

*e* Some witnesses insert 'You do not know', he said, 'to what spirit you belong; (56) for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.'

*f* Some witnesses read 'No one who looks back as he sets hand to the plough ...'

*g* Some witnesses read seventy.

notices in Mk.10.1,32, Lk. has developed the journey to Jerusalem into a narrative which prepares, not only for the death and resurrection in the Holy City (see, e.g. 13.33), but also for the subsequent journey of the church to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8; see, e.g. 9.51-10.24 with notes). For most of this section (see 18.15-17 n.) Lk. does not follow the order of Mk.

9.51-10.24: The mission of the seventy-two. 51: Taken up: see Acts 1.11. 52: The enmity between Jews and Samaritans was ancient and deep, of the sort possible only where there are rival claims to being the true guardians of a common tradition (the Law of Moses). 57-62: Three candidates who wish to follow in Jesus' way are introduced; in each case, the heavy demands of discipleship are presented (compare Mt.8.19-22). 10.1: Lk. has two missions: of the Twelve (9.1-6; perhaps a symbolic mission to Israel) and of the seventy-two (perhaps, symbolically, to the Gentile nations). 2-12: Compare Mt.9.37-38; 10.7-16; Mk.6.7-11. 8-9: Heal, kingdom: see Mt.10.8 n. 12: Sodom: see Mt.10.15 n. 13-15: Tyre, Sidon: see Mt.11.21 n. 16: See Mt.10.40-42 n.; Jn.13.20. 18: I watched how Satan fell may report a vision of God's

20 nothing will ever harm you.<sup>h</sup> Nevertheless, what you should rejoice over is not that the spirits submit to you, but that your names are enrolled in heaven.’

21 At that moment Jesus exulted in the Holy<sup>i</sup> Spirit and said, ‘I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple. Yes, Father, such<sup>j</sup> was thy choice.’ Then turning to his disciples he said,<sup>k</sup> ‘Everything is entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is but the Father, or who the Father is but the Son, and those to whom the Son may choose to reveal him.’

23 Turning to his disciples in private he said, ‘Happy the eyes that see what you are seeing! I tell you, many prophets and kings wished to see what you now see, yet never saw it; to hear what you hear, yet never heard it.’

25 ON ONE OCCASION A LAWYER CAME forward to put this test question to him: ‘Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said, ‘What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?’ He replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ ‘That is the right answer,’ said Jesus; ‘do that and you will live.’

29 But he wanted to vindicate himself, so he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was on his way from Jerusalem down to

Jericho when he fell in with robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down by the same road; but when he saw him, he went past on the other side. So too a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him went past on the other side. But a Samaritan who was making the journey came upon him, and when he saw him was moved to pity. He went up and bandaged his wounds, bathing them with oil and wine. Then he lifted him on to his own beast, brought him to an inn, and looked after him there. Next day he produced two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Look after him; and if you spend any more, I will repay you on my way back.” Which of these three do you think was neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He answered, ‘The one who showed him kindness.’ Jesus said, ‘Go and do as he did.’

While they were on their way Jesus came to a village where a woman named Martha made him welcome in her home. She had a sister, Mary, who seated herself at the Lord’s feet and stayed there listening to his words. Now Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to get on with the work by myself? Tell her to come and lend a hand.’ But the Lord answered, ‘Martha, Martha, you are fretting and

*h* Or and he will have no way at all to harm you.

*i* Some witnesses omit Holy.

*j* Or Yes, I thank thee, Father, that such . . .

*k* Some witnesses omit Then . . . he said.

final victory or interpret the success of the disciples as a sign of that victory. 21–22: Revelation to the humble (*simple*), rather than to the “*wise* of the world” was a familiar theme, common in NT times, but with ancient roots; see, e.g. Isa.29.14; Prov.26.12; 1 Cor.1.19–20. 23–24: Mt.13.16–17.

10.25–28: The double commandment of love (Mt.22.34–40; Mk.12.28–31). 27: The commandments are taken from Deut.6.5; Lev.19.18. It is significant that, even though Lk. regards the question as a *test*, he can credit the lawyer with providing this summary of the Law; similar summaries can be found in Jewish sources of the period, as well as in Paul (Rom.13.9–10; Gal.5.14) and Jas.2.8. 28b: *Do . . . live*: Lev.18.5; the implication is that v. 27 comprehends the whole Law (compare Mt.22.40; Rom.10.5; 13.10).

10.29–37: The good Samaritan. The *priest* (v. 31) and the *Levite* (v. 32), as Temple officials, represent highly visible members of the religious establishment. While their failure to act as neighbors would attract the attention of the hearers of the parable, the hearers would also know that contact with the body beside the road—if it was dead—would render them unfit for Temple service. 33: Among Jews nothing good would be expected of a *Samaritan* (see 9.52 n.), which makes his action all the more notable.

10.38–42: *Mary and Martha*. 38: The words on *their way* pick up the theme of the journey;

42 fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary.<sup>l</sup> The part that Mary has chosen is best; and it shall not be taken away from her.<sup>l</sup>

11 Once, in a certain place, Jesus was at prayer. When he ceased, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, 2 as John taught his disciples.' He answered, 'When you pray, say,

"Father,<sup>m</sup> thy name be hallowed; thy kingdom come."<sup>n</sup>

3 Give us each day our daily bread.<sup>o</sup>

4 And forgive us our sins, for we too forgive all who have done us wrong.

And do not bring us to the test."<sup>p</sup>

5 Then he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend who comes to him in the middle of the night and says,

6 "My friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine on a journey has turned up at my house, and I have 7 nothing to offer him"; and he replies from inside, "Do not bother me. The door is shut for the night; my children and I have gone to bed; and I cannot get up and give you what you want."

8 I tell you that even if he will not provide for him out of friendship, the very shamelessness of the request will make him get up and give him all he 9 needs. And so I say to you, ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be 10 opened. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 'Is there a father among you who will offer his son<sup>q</sup> a snake when he 12 asks for fish, or a scorpion when he 13 asks for an egg? If you, then, bad as you are, know how to give your children what is good for them, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit? to those who ask him!'

HE WAS DRIVING OUT A DEVIL WHICH 14 was dumb; and when the devil had come out, the dumb man began to speak. The people were astonished, but some of them said, 'It is by 15 Beelzebub prince of devils that he drives the devils out.' Others, by way 16 of a test, demanded of him a sign from heaven. But he knew what was in 17 their minds, and said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself goes to ruin, and a divided household falls. Equally if 18 Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?—since, as you would have it, I drive out the devils by Beelzebub that I 19 cast out devils, by whom do your own people drive them out? If this is your argument, they themselves will refute you. But if it is by the finger of God 20 that I drive out the devils, then be sure the kingdom of God has already come upon you.

'When a strong man fully armed is 21 on guard over his castle his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger 22 comes upon him and overpowers him, he carries off the arms and armour on which the man had relied and divides the plunder.

'He who is not with me is against me, 23 and he who does not gather with me scatters.<sup>s</sup>

'When an unclean spirit comes out 24 of a man it wanders over the deserts seeking a resting-place; and if it finds none, it says, "I will go back to the

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read but few things are necessary, or rather, one alone; others omit you are fretting . . . necessary.

<sup>m</sup> Some witnesses read Our Father in heaven.  
<sup>n</sup> One witness reads thy kingdom come upon us; some others have thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us; some insert thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
<sup>o</sup> Or our bread for the morrow.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses add but save us from the evil one (or from evil).

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses insert a stone when he asks for bread, or . . .

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses read a good gift; some others read good things.

<sup>s</sup> Some witness add me.

see 9.51–19.27 n. *Martha and Mary* (vv. 38–39) are presumably the sisters mentioned in Jn. ch. 11.

11.1–13: **On prayer.** 1: The occasion for the Lord's Prayer is reported in this way only by Lk. 2–4: See Mt.6.9–13 n. 2: *Father*: see Mt.6.9 n. 3: *Daily*: see Mt.6.11 n. 9–13: Mt.7.7–11. 13: Emphasis on the *Holy Spirit* is a characteristic of Lk.; Mt.7.11 has "give good things."

11.14–36: **Signs, Beelzebub, Jonah.** 14–23: Mt.12.22–30; Mk.3.22–27. 15: *Beelzebub*: Satan. 16: The demand for a *sign* (see Mt.12.38–42 n.) could not be satisfied by exorcism, since there were other exorcists (v. 19); the observers are challenged to see the *kingdom of God* (v. 20) bursting upon them in the activity of Jesus. 20: *Finger of God* is a lively metaphor which calls to mind Exod.8.19; Mt.12.28 reads instead "Spirit of God." 23: See Mk.9.39–40 n. 24–26:

25 home I left." So it returns and finds  
 26 the house<sup>t</sup> swept clean, and tidy. Off  
 it goes and collects seven other spirits  
 more wicked than itself, and they all  
 come in and settle down; and in the  
 end the man's plight is worse than  
 before.  
 27 While he was speaking thus, a  
 woman in the crowd called out, 'Happy  
 the womb that carried you and the  
 28 breasts that suckled you!' He rejoined,  
 'No, happy are those who hear the  
 word of God and keep it.'  
 29 With the crowds swarming round  
 him he went on to say: 'This is a  
 wicked generation. It demands a sign,  
 and the only sign that will be given it  
 30 is the sign of Jonah. For just as  
 Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so  
 will the Son of Man be to this gener-  
 31 ation. At the Judgement, when the men  
 of this generation are on trial, the  
 Queen of the South will appear  
 against<sup>u</sup> them and ensure their con-  
 demnation, for she came from the ends  
 of the earth to hear the wisdom of  
 Solomon; and what is here is greater  
 32 than Solomon. The men of Nineveh  
 will appear at the Judgement when  
 this generation is on trial, and ensure<sup>v</sup>  
 its condemnation, for they repented at  
 the preaching of Jonah; and what is  
 here is greater than Jonah.  
 33 'No one lights a lamp and puts it in  
 a cellar,<sup>w</sup> but rather on the lamp-stand  
 so that those who enter may see the  
 34 light. The lamp of your body is the eye.  
 When your eyes are sound, you have  
 light for your whole body; but when  
 the eyes are bad, you are in darkness.  
 35 See to it then that the light you have is  
 36 not darkness. If you have light for  
 your whole body with no trace of  
 darkness, it will all be as bright as when  
 a lamp flashes its rays upon you.'

37 WHEN HE HAD FINISHED SPEAKING, A  
 Pharisee invited him to a meal. He

came in and sat down. The Pharisee 38  
 noticed with surprise that he had not  
 begun by washing before the meal. But 39  
 the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees!  
 You clean the outside of cup and  
 plate; but inside you there is nothing  
 but greed and wickedness. You fools! 40  
 Did not he who made the outside make  
 the inside too? But let what is in the 41  
 cup<sup>x</sup> be given in charity, and all is  
 clean.

'Alas for you Pharisees! You pay 42  
 tithes of mint and rue and every  
 garden-herb, but have no care for  
 justice and the love of God. It is these  
 you should have practised, without  
 neglecting the others.<sup>y</sup>

'Alas for you Pharisees! You love 43  
 the seats of honour in synagogues, and  
 salutations in the market-places.

'Alas, alas, you are like unmarked 44  
 graves over which men may walk  
 without knowing it.'

In reply to this one of the lawyers 45  
 said, 'Master, when you say things like  
 this you are insulting us too.' Jesus 46  
 rejoined: 'Yes, you lawyers, it is no  
 better with you! For you load men  
 with intolerable burdens, and will not  
 put a single finger to the load.

'Alas, you build the tombs of the 47  
 prophets whom your fathers murdered,  
 and so testify that you approve of the 48  
 deeds your fathers did; they committed  
 the murders and you provide the  
 tombs.

'This is why the Wisdom of God 49  
 said, "I will send them prophets and  
 messengers; and some of these they  
 will persecute and kill"; so that this 50  
 generation will have to answer for the  
 blood of all the prophets shed since the

<sup>t</sup> Some witnesses insert unoccupied.

<sup>u</sup> Or will be raised to life together with . . .

<sup>v</sup> Or At the Judgement the men of Nineveh will rise again together with this generation and will ensure . . .

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses insert or under the meal-tub.

<sup>x</sup> Or what you can afford.

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses omit It is . . . others.

Mt.12.43-45. 24: *Deserts*: see Mt.12.43 n. 29-32; Mt.12.38-42. 29: *Sign*: see Mt.12.38-42 n. Lk. has nothing like Mt.12.40 and interprets the *sign of Jonah* as the prophet's preaching (v. 32). 33: Mt.5.15. 34-36: *Eyes . . . sound . . . eyes . . . bad*: see Mt.6.22 n. For Lk. the sayings speak of the *light* by which Jesus is seen; sound eyes are organs of spiritual perception.

11.37-54: *Alas for Pharisees and lawyers* (compare Mt. ch. 23). 38: *Washing*: see Mk.7.3 n. 42: Mic.6.8. 43: 20.46; Mk.12.38-39. 44: *Graves* were believed to make a man ritually unclean (see Num.19.16). 49-51: The introductory formula reads as if a document authored by the *Wisdom of God* is being quoted (compare Mk.7.10; 12.36). *Wisdom* (see Lk.7.35 n.) was thought of as sending *prophets* in every generation (vv. 49-50; e.g. Wis.7.27 and chs. 10-11). Mt.23.34

- 51 foundation of the world; from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. I tell you, this generation will have to answer for it all.
- 52 'Alas for you lawyers! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not go in yourselves, and those who were on their way in, you stopped.'
- 53 After he had left the house, the lawyers and Pharisees began to assail him fiercely and to ply him with a host of questions, laying snares to catch him with his own words.
- 12** MEANWHILE, WHEN A CROWD OF MANY thousands had gathered, packed so close that they were treading on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples: 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees; I mean their hypocrisy.
- 2 There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, nothing hidden that will not be made known. You may take it, then, that everything you have said in the dark will be heard in broad daylight, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the house-tops.
- 4 'To you who are my friends I say: Do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more they can do. I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Believe me, he is the one to fear.
- 6 'Are not sparrows five for twopence? And yet not one of them is overlooked by God. More than that, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Have no fear; you are worth more than any number of sparrows.
- 8 'I tell you this: everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.
- 'Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will receive forgiveness; but for him who slanders the Holy Spirit there will be no forgiveness.
- 'When you are brought before synagogues and state authorities, do not begin worrying about how you will conduct your defence or what you will say. For when the time comes the Holy Spirit will instruct you what to say.'
- A man in the crowd said to him, 'Master, tell my brother to divide the family property with me.' He replied, 'My good man, who set me over you to judge or arbitrate?'<sup>z</sup> Then he said to the people, 'Beware! Be on your guard against greed of every kind, for even when a man has more than enough, his wealth does not give him life.' And he told them this parable: 'There was a rich man whose land yielded heavy crops. He debated with himself: "What am I to do? I have not the space to store my produce. This is what I will do," said he: "I will pull down my storehouses and build them bigger. I will collect in them all my corn and other goods, and then say to myself, "Man, you have plenty of good things laid by, enough for many years: take life easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself."'" But God said to him, "You fool, this very night you must surrender your life; you have made your money—who will get it now?" That is how it is with the man who amasses wealth for himself and remains a pauper in the sight of God.<sup>a</sup>
- 'Therefore', he said to his disciples, 'I bid you put away anxious thoughts about food to keep you alive and clothes to cover your body. Life is more than food, the body more than clothes. Think of the ravens: they neither sow nor reap; they have no

<sup>z</sup> Some witnesses omit or arbitrate.

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses omit That . . . God; others add at the end When he said this he cried out, 'If you have ears to hear, then hear.'

attributes the saying to Jesus. 51: *Abel to . . . Zechariah*: from the first prophet to the last. 52: *Key of knowledge*: see Mt.16.19 n.; 23.13.

12.1-59: *Encouragement and warning*. 1-12: Mt.10.26-33. 1: *Leaven*: see Mk.8.15 n. 2-3: 8.17; see Mt.10.26-27; Mk.4.22,24-25 n. Here, the saying promises that *hypocrisy* (v. 1) will be exposed. 5: *Him who . . . has authority*: probably Satan is intended; but see Heb.10.30-31. 8: The saying is ambiguous about the relation of Jesus (*me*) and the *Son of Man* (see Mk.2.10 n.). 10: See Mt.12.31-32 n.; Mk.3.29 n. 11-12: 21.14-15; Mt.10.19-20; Mk.13.11. 13-14: The title *Master* probably indicates identification of Jesus as a rabbi, who as an expert on the Law would be expected to *judge*. 18: *Corn*: grain. 20: Jer.17.11 has a similar saying about a man



storehouse or barn; yet God feeds them. You are worth far more than the birds! Is there a man among you who by anxious thought can add a foot to his height<sup>b</sup>? If, then, you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about the rest?

27 'Think of the lilies: they neither spin nor weave;<sup>c</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendour was not attired like one of these. But if that is how God clothes the grass, which is growing in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, how much more will he clothe you! How little faith you have! And so you are not to set your mind on food and drink; you are not to worry. For all these are things for the heathen to run after; but you have a Father who knows that you need them. No, set your mind upon his kingdom, and all the rest will come to you as well.

32 'Have no fear, little flock; for your Father has chosen to give you the Kingdom. Sell your possessions and give in charity. Provide for yourselves purses that do not wear out, and never-failing treasure in heaven, where no thief can get near it, no moth destroy it. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

35 'Be ready for action, with belts fastened and lamps alight. Be like men who wait for their master's return from a wedding-party, ready to let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.

37 Happy are those servants whom the master finds on the alert when he comes. I tell you this: he will fasten his belt, seat them at table, and come and wait on them. Even if it is the middle of the night or before dawn when he comes, happy they if he finds them alert. And remember, if the householder had known what time the burglar was coming he would not have let his house be broken into. Hold yourselves ready, then, because the

Son of Man will come at the time you least expect him.'

Peter said, 'Lord, do you intend this parable specially for us or is it for everyone?' The Lord said, 'Well, who is the trusty and sensible man whom his master will appoint as his steward, to manage his servants and issue their rations at the proper time? Happy that servant who is found at his task when his master comes! I tell you this: he will be put in charge of all his master's property. But if that servant says to himself, "The master is a long time coming", and begins to bully the menservants and maids, and eat and drink and get drunk; then the master will arrive on a day that servant does not expect, at a time he does not know, and will cut him in pieces. Thus he will find his place among the faithless.

'The servant who knew his master's wishes, yet made no attempt to carry them out, will be flogged severely. But one who did not know them and earned a beating will be flogged less severely. Where a man has been given much, much will be expected of him; and the more a man has had entrusted to him the more he will be required to repay.

'I have come to set fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until the ordeal is over! Do you suppose I came to establish peace on earth? No indeed, I have come to bring division. For from now on, five members of a family will be divided, three against two and two against three; father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother against son's wife and son's wife against her mother-in-law.'

He also said to the people, 'When you see cloud banking up in the west,

<sup>b</sup> Or a day to his life.

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read they grow, they do not toil or spin.

who gets his wealth unjustly. 22-31: See Mt.6.25-34 n. 32: *Little flock*: the community of the Messiah. 33-34: Mt.6.19-21. 35: *With belts fastened*: i.e. with the robe gathered securely at the waist so as to be ready for action. 39-46: Mt.24.43-51. 48: The privilege of special knowledge (compare 8.18) carries the burden of special responsibility. 49-53: Mt.10.34-36. 49: *Fire* is a symbol of judgment (compare 3.16 n.). 50: *Baptism* is a metaphor for martyrdom (compare Mk.10.38). 51: *Peace*, though promised in 2.14, is not to be hoped for apart from decisions which produce *division*. 52-53: See Mic.7.6. 54-56: The *cloud* blows in from the Mediterranean;

you say at once, "It is going to rain",  
 55 and rain it does. And when the wind  
 is from the south, you say, "There will  
 56 be a heat-wave", and there is. What  
 hypocrites you are! You know how to  
 interpret the appearance of earth and  
 sky; how is it you cannot interpret this  
 fateful hour?

57 "And why can you not judge for  
 yourselves what is the right course?  
 58 When you are going with your oppo-  
 nent to court, make an effort to settle  
 with him while you are still on the  
 way; otherwise he may drag you before  
 the judge, and the judge hand you over  
 to the constable, and the constable put  
 59 you in jail. I tell you, you will not come  
 out till you have paid the last farthing.'

13 AT THAT VERY TIME THERE WERE SOME  
 people present who told him about the  
 Galileans whose blood Pilate had  
 2 mixed with their sacrifices. He answered  
 them: 'Do you imagine that, because  
 these Galileans suffered this fate, they  
 must have been greater sinners than  
 3 anyone else in Galilee? I tell you they  
 were not; but unless you repent, you  
 will all of you come to the same end.  
 4 Or the eighteen people who were  
 killed when the tower fell on them at  
 Siloam—do you imagine they were  
 more guilty than all the other people  
 5 living in Jerusalem? I tell you they  
 were not; but unless you repent, you  
 will all of you come to the same end.'

6 He told them this parable: 'A man  
 had a fig-tree growing in his vineyard;  
 and he came looking for fruit on it, but  
 7 found none. So he said to the vine-  
 dresser, "Look here! For the last three  
 years I have come looking for fruit on  
 this fig-tree without finding any. Cut  
 it down. Why should it go on using up  
 8 the soil?" But he replied, "Leave it,  
 sir, this one year while I dig round it

and manure it. And if it bears next 9  
 season, well and good; if not, you shall  
 have it down."

One Sabbath he was teaching in a 10  
 synagogue, and there was a woman 11  
 there possessed by a spirit that had  
 crippled her for eighteen years. She  
 was bent double and quite unable to  
 stand up straight. When Jesus saw her 12  
 he called her and said, 'You are rid of  
 your trouble.' Then he laid his hands 13  
 on her, and at once she straightened up  
 and began to praise God. But the 14  
 president of the synagogue, indignant  
 with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath,  
 intervened and said to the congrega-  
 tion, 'There are six working-days:  
 come and be cured on one of them, and  
 not on the Sabbath.' The Lord gave 15  
 him his answer: 'What hypocrites you  
 are!' he said. 'Is there a single one of  
 you who does not loose his ox or his  
 donkey from the manger and take it  
 out to water on the Sabbath? And 16  
 here is this woman, a daughter of  
 Abraham, who has been kept prisoner  
 by Satan for eighteen long years: was  
 it wrong for her to be freed from her  
 bonds on the Sabbath?' At these words 17  
 all his opponents were covered with  
 confusion, while the mass of the people  
 were delighted at all the wonderful  
 things he was doing.

"What is the kingdom of God like?" 18  
 he continued. 'What shall I compare it  
 with? It is like a mustard-seed which a 19  
 man took and sowed in his garden;  
 and it grew to be a tree and the birds  
 came to roost among its branches.'

Again he said, 'The kingdom of God, 20  
 what shall I compare it with? It is like 21  
 yeast which a woman took and mixed  
 with half a hundredweight of flour till  
 it was all leavened.'

HE CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY THROUGH 22

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the scorching *heat* comes across the desert. Men who know so much about the weather should be able to see the imminence of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry. 57-59: Mt.5.25-26.

13.1-9: The necessity of repentance. 1: *Pilate*: see 3.1 n. The allusion is to an uprising of *Galileans* in Jerusalem which is not reported in other sources. 2: Those who *suffered this fate* might have been regarded as *greater sinners* since such a tragedy could be understood as God's judgment; see v. 4. 3,5: Jesus does not allow the view of v. 2 n. to become the basis for complacency; all are called to *repent*.

13.10-17: A Sabbath story. 13: *Laid his hands on her*: compare 4.40; 5.13. 14-15: Exod.20.9; Deut.5.13. See 14.5 n.; Jn.5.10-12.

13.18-21: The Kingdom of God. See notes on Mk.4.26-32,30,32 and Mt.13.33.

13.22-35: Continuing in the way. These verses are an interlude, during which the reader is

towns and villages, teaching as he made his way towards Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, 'Sir, are only a few to be saved?' His answer was: 24 'Struggle to get in through the narrow door; for I tell you that many will try to enter and not be able. 25 'When once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may stand outside and knock, and say, "Sir, let us in!", but he will only answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will begin to say, "We sat at table with you and you taught in our streets." But he will repeat, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Out of my sight, all of you, you and your wicked ways!" There will be wailing and grinding of teeth there, when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. From east and west people will come, from north and south, for the feast in the kingdom of God. Yes, and some who are now last will be first, and some who are first will be last.' 31 At that time a number of Pharisees came to him and said, 'You should leave this place and go on your way; Herod is out to kill you.' He replied, 'Go and tell that fox, "Listen: today and tomorrow I shall be casting out devils and working cures; on the third day I reach my goal." However, I must be on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it is unthinkable for a prophet to meet his death anywhere but in Jerusalem. 34 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but you would not let me. Look, look! there is your temple, forsaken by God. And I tell you, you shall never see me until the time comes when you

say, "Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!"'

ONE SABBATH HE WENT TO HAVE A MEAL 14 in the house of a leading Pharisee; and they were watching him closely. There, 2 in front of him, was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus asked the lawyers 3 and the Pharisees: 'Is it permitted to cure people on the Sabbath or not?' They said nothing. So he took the man, 4 cured him, and sent him away. Then 5 he turned to them and said, 'If one of you has a donkey<sup>d</sup> or an ox and it falls into a well, will he hesitate to haul it up on the Sabbath day?' To this they 6 could find no reply.

When he noticed how the guests were 7 trying to secure the places of honour, he spoke to them in a parable: 'When 8 you are asked by someone to a wedding-feast, do not sit down in the place of honour. It may be that some person more distinguished than yourself has been invited; and the host will 9 come and say to you, "Give this man your seat." Then you will look foolish as you begin to take the lowest place. 10 No, when you receive an invitation, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he will say, "Come up higher, my friend." Then all your fellow-guests will see the respect in which you are held. For 11 everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.'

Then he said to his host, 'When you 12 are having a party for lunch or supper, do not invite your friends, your brothers or other relations, or your rich neighbours; they will only ask you back again and so you will be repaid. But when you give a party, ask the 13 poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; and so find happiness. For they 14 have no means of repaying you; but

*d Some witnesses read son.*

reminded of the theme of the journey (vv. 22,33); see 9.51–19.27 n. 23–24: Mt.7.13–14. 25–30: Mt.7.22–23; 8.11–12; 19.30; 25.10–12. 27: Ps.6.8. 29: Ps.107.3. On the feast, see 14.15 n. 31: Herod: Antipas (see 3.1 n.). 32–33: Today . . . tomorrow . . . the third day is a conventional manner of speaking of a short period of time. 34–35: This saying is a dirge which may be quoted as a lament of Wisdom (see 7.35 n.). 35: For Lk., until the time comes appears to point to the entry into Jerusalem (see 19.38); compare Mt.23.39 n. Blessings . . . Lord: Ps.118.26.

14.1–14: Jesus, a guest of a Pharisee. See Mk.3.1–6 n. 5: The Dead Sea community prohibited such activity on the Sabbath. 8–10: Compare Prov.25.6–7. 11: See 18.14; Mt.23.12.

you will be repaid on the day when good men rise from the dead.’

- 15 One of the company, after hearing all this, said to him, ‘Happy the man who shall sit at the feast in the kingdom of God!’ Jesus answered, ‘A man was giving a big dinner party and had sent out many invitations. At dinner-time he sent his servant with a message for his guests, “Please come, everything is now ready.” They began one and all to excuse themselves. The first said, “I have bought a piece of land and I must go and look over it; please accept my apologies.” The second said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to try them out; please accept my apologies.” The next said, “I have just got married and for that reason I cannot come.” When the servant came back he reported this to his master. The master of the house was angry and said to him, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring me in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.”
- 22 The servant said, “Sir, your orders have been carried out and there is still room.” The master replied, “Go out on to the highways and along the hedgerows and make them come in; I want my house to be full. I tell you that not one of those who were invited shall taste my banquet.”
- 25 Once when great crowds were accompanying him, he turned to them and said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine. No one who does not carry his cross and come with me can be a disciple of mine. Would any of you think of building a tower without first sitting down and calculating the cost, to see whether he could afford to finish it? Otherwise, if he has laid its founda-

tion and then is not able to complete it, all the onlookers will laugh at him. “There is the man”, they will say, “who started to build and could not finish.” Or what king will march to battle against another king, without first sitting down to consider whether with ten thousand men he can face an enemy coming to meet him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, long before the enemy approaches, he sends envoys, and asks for terms. So also none of you can be a disciple of mine without parting with all his possessions. Salt is a good thing; but if salt itself becomes tasteless, what will you use to season it? It is useless either on the land or on the dung-heap; it can only be thrown away. If you have ears to hear, then hear.’

ANOTHER TIME, THE TAX-GATHERERS 15 and other bad characters were all crowding in to listen to him; and the Pharisees and the doctors of the law began grumbling among themselves: ‘This fellow’, they said, ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ He answered them with this parable: ‘If one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the missing one until he has found it? How delighted he is then! He lifts it on to his shoulders, and home he goes to call his friends and neighbours together. “Rejoice with me!” he cries. “I have found my lost sheep.” In the same way, I tell you, there will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent.

‘Or again, if a woman has ten silver pieces and loses one of them, does she not light the lamp, sweep out the house, and look in every corner till she has

14.15–24: **The Great Supper** (Mt.22.1–10). 15: The *feast* was a frequently used symbol of the joy of the *kingdom*; see 13.28–29. 17: The *message* is a customary courtesy reminder to guests who have been invited previously. 18: The excuses which follow are not frivolous, but the master’s anger (v. 21) is understandable since the guests had had a prior notice. 21,23: Lk. probably means for the two groups to represent (a) sinners among the Jews and (b) Gentiles. 14.25–35: **The cost of discipleship**. 26: *Hate* probably means “love less”; see Mt.10.37. 27: *Carry his cross*: see 9.23 n.; Mk.8.34 n.; Mt.10.38; 16.24. 34–35: Compare Mt.5.13; Mk.9.50.

15.1–32: **Joy over repentant sinners**. 1–2: *Tax-gatherers*: see Mk.2.15 n. 3–7: Lk. doubtless preserves the parable’s original concern for outcasts; Mt.18.10–14 (and n.) applies it differently.

9 found it? And when she has, she calls her friends and neighbours together, and says, "Rejoice with me! I have  
10 found the piece that I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

11 Again he said: 'There was once a man  
12 who had two sons; and the younger said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the property." So he divided  
13 his estate between them. A few days later the younger son turned the whole of his share into cash and left home for a distant country, where he squandered  
14 it in reckless living. He had spent it all, when a severe famine fell upon that country and he began to feel the pinch.  
15 So he went and attached himself to one of the local landowners, who sent him  
16 on to his farm to mind the pigs. He would have been glad to fill his belly with<sup>e</sup> the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.  
17 Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they can eat, and here am I, starving to death!  
18 I will set off and go to my father, and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.'"'  
20 So he set out for his father's house. But while he was still a long way off his father saw him, and his heart went out to him. He ran to meet him, flung his arms round him, and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son."<sup>f</sup> But the father said to his servants, "Quick! fetch a robe, my best one, and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us have a feast to celebrate the day. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was

lost and is found." And the festivities began.

'Now the elder son was out on the 25 farm; and on his way back, as he approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what it meant. The 26 servant told him, "Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound." But he was angry and 28 refused to go in. His father came out and pleaded with him; but he retorted, "You know how I have slaved for you 29 all these years; I never once disobeyed your orders; and you never gave me so much as a kid, for a feast with my friends. But now that this son of yours 30 turns up, after running through your money with his women, you kill the fatted calf for him." "My boy," said 31 the father, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. How 32 could we help celebrating this happy day? Your brother here was dead and has come back to life, was lost and is found."

He said to his disciples, 'There was a 16 rich man who had a steward, and he received complaints that this man was squandering the property. So he sent 2 for him, and said, "What is this that I hear? Produce your accounts, for you cannot be manager here any longer." The steward said to himself, "What 3 am I to do now that my employer is dismissing me? I am not strong enough to dig, and too proud to beg. I know 4 what I must do, to make sure that, when I have to leave, there will be people to give me house and home." He sum- 5 moned his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" He replied, "A 6 thousand gallons of olive oil." He said, "Here is your account. Sit down and

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read to have his fill of . . .

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses add treat me as one of your paid servants.

12: The younger son's share would be one-third; see Deut.21.17. 13: The rate of emigration of Palestinian Jews to the urban centers of the Gentile world was very high. 15-16: Since pigs are unclean animals, everything about the job would have been repugnant. 20-23: Kiss, robe, ring, and fatted calf show that the son is not only forgiven, but received with honor. 31: The elder son is still accepted.

16.1-31: The uses of wealth. Except for vv. 16-18, the traditional units in ch. 16 seem to have been assembled around the theme of wealth. 1-8: This very difficult parable about a dishonest steward (v. 8) commends a scoundrel for having the good sense to act decisively in a

- make it five hundred; and be quick  
 7 about it." Then he said to another,  
 "And you, how much do you owe?"  
 He said, "A thousand bushels of  
 wheat", and was told, "Take your  
 account and make it eight hundred."  
 8 And the master applauded the dis-  
 honest steward for acting so astutely.  
 For the worldly are more astute than  
 the other-worldly in dealing with their  
 own kind.
- 9 'So I say to you, use your worldly  
 wealth to win friends for yourselves, so  
 that when money is a thing of the past  
 you may be received into an eternal  
 home.
- 10 'The man who can be trusted in little  
 things can be trusted also in great; and  
 the man who is dishonest in little things  
 11 is dishonest also in great things. If,  
 then, you have not proved trustworthy  
 with the wealth of this world, who will  
 trust you with the wealth that is real?  
 12 And if you have proved untrustworthy  
 with what belongs to another, who will  
 give you what is your own?
- 13 'No servant can be the slave of two  
 masters; for either he will hate the first  
 and love the second, or he will be  
 devoted to the first and think nothing of  
 the second. You cannot serve God and  
 Money.'
- 14 The Pharisees, who loved money,  
 15 heard all this and scoffed at him. He  
 said to them, 'You are the people who  
 impress your fellow-men with your  
 righteousness; but God sees through  
 you; for what sets itself up to be ad-  
 mired by men is detestable in the sight  
 of God.
- 16 'Until John, it was the Law and the  
 prophets: since then, there is the good  
 news of the kingdom of God, and  
 everyone forces his way in.
- 17 'It is easier for heaven and earth to

come to an end than for one dot or  
 stroke of the Law to lose its force.

'A man who divorces his wife and  
 18 marries another commits adultery; and  
 anyone who marries a woman divorced  
 from her husband commits adultery.

'There was once a rich man, who  
 19 dressed in purple and the finest linen,  
 and feasted in great magnificence every  
 day. At his gate, covered with sores,  
 20 lay a poor man named Lazarus, who  
 21 would have been glad to satisfy his  
 hunger with the scraps from the rich  
 man's table. Even the dogs used to  
 come and lick his sores. One day the  
 22 poor man died and was carried away  
 by the angels to be with Abraham. The  
 rich man also died and was buried, and  
 23 in Hades, where he was in torment, he  
 looked up; and there, far away, was  
 Abraham with Lazarus close beside  
 him. "Abraham, my father," he called  
 24 out, "take pity on me! Send Lazarus to  
 dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool  
 my tongue, for I am in agony in this  
 fire." But Abraham said, "Remember,  
 25 my child, that all the good things fell  
 to you while you were alive, and all the  
 bad to Lazarus; now he has his consol-  
 ation here and it is you who are in agony.  
 But that is not all: there is a great  
 26 chasm fixed between us; no one from  
 our side who wants to reach you can  
 cross it, and none may pass from your  
 side to us." "Then, father," he replied,  
 27 "will you send him to my father's  
 house, where I have five brothers, to  
 28 warn them, so that they too may not  
 come to this place of torment?" But  
 29 Abraham said, "They have Moses and  
 the prophets; let them listen to them."  
 "No, father Abraham," he replied, 30  
 "but if someone from the dead visits  
 them, they will repent." Abraham  
 31 answered, "If they do not listen to

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time of crisis. 8: *Master* (lit. "lord") may refer either to the rich man who discharged his steward or to Jesus. The *other-worldly* are, lit. "the sons of light" (Jn.12.36; 1 Th.5.5; Eph.5.8); the Dead Sea sect used "children of light" as a designation of itself as the community of the elect. 9: The saying perhaps commends dispensing *wealth* in acts of charity. 13: Mt.6.24. 16: *John* (the Baptist) marks the dividing line between the age of anticipation and the age of salvation. It is not clear on which side of the line John himself stands for Lk.; compare Mt.11.12-15 n. 17: *Stroke*: the allusion is to a small mark made in writing Heb. letters. 18: On *divorce*, see notes on Mt.5.31-32. 19-31: The "rich man-poor man" motif is found in similar stories from other sources. The primary theme is the reversal of fortunes in the world to come for the poor (righteous) and the rich (unrighteous). Their fates are seen as a motive for repentance. 29,31: The two ages of v. 16 are suggested by the appeal, on the one hand, to *Moses and the prophets*, and the hint, on the other hand, of one who will *rise from the dead*.

Moses and the prophets they will pay no heed even if someone should rise from the dead.”

17 HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, ‘CAUSES OF stumbling are bound to arise; but woe betide the man through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Keep watch on yourselves.

‘If your brother wrongs you, reprove him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 Even if he wrongs you seven times in a day and comes back to you seven times saying, “I am sorry”, you are to forgive him.’

5 The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith’; and the Lord replied, ‘If you had faith no bigger even than a mustard-seed, you could say to this mulberry-tree, “Be rooted up and replanted in the sea”; and it would at once obey you.

7 ‘Suppose one of you has a servant ploughing or minding sheep. When he comes back from the fields, will the master say, “Come along at once and sit down”? Will he not rather say, “Prepare my supper, fasten your belt, and then wait on me while I have my meal; you can have yours afterwards”?

9 Is he grateful to the servant for carrying out his orders? So with you: when you have carried out all your orders, you should say, “We are servants and deserve no credit; we have only done our duty.”

11 In the course of his journey to Jerusalem he was travelling through the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was entering a village he was met

by ten men with leprosy. They stood some way off and called out to him, 13 ‘Jesus, Master, take pity on us.’ When he saw them he said, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests’; and while they were on their way, they were made clean. One of them, finding himself 15 cured, turned back praising God aloud. He threw himself down at Jesus’s feet 16 and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. At this Jesus said: ‘Were 17 not all ten cleansed? The other nine, where are they? Could none be found 18 to come back and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ And he said to 19 the man, ‘Stand up and go on your way; your faith has cured you.’

THE PHARISEES ASKED HIM, ‘WHEN WILL 20 the kingdom of God come?’ He said, ‘You cannot tell by observation when the kingdom of God comes. There will 21 be no saying, “Look, here it is!” or “there it is!”; for in fact the kingdom of God is among you.’<sup>g</sup>

He said to the disciples, ‘The time 22 will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. They will say to you, 23 “Look! There!” and “Look! Here!” Do not go running off in pursuit. For 24 like the lightning-flash that lights up the earth from end to end, will the Son of Man be when his day comes. But 25 first he must endure much suffering and be repudiated by this generation.

‘As things were in Noah’s days, so 26 will they be in the days of the Son of Man. They ate and drank and married, 27

<sup>g</sup> Or for in fact the kingdom of God is within you, or for in fact the kingdom of God is within your grasp, or for suddenly the kingdom of God will be among you.

17.1–10: **Faithful discipleship.** 1–2: See Mt.18.6 n.,7–9 n.; Mk.9.42. 3–4: Compare Mt.18.15, 21–22. The responsibility for righting a wrong between brothers lies with the one who is wronged (v. 3) and has no limits (v. 4). Lk. does not have the Church discipline provisions of Mt.18.16–17. 5–6: Compare Mt.17.20. The hyperbole of a *faith* which uproots trees corresponds to the hyperbolic challenges of vv. 2,4.

17.11–19: **Ten lepers on the way.** 11: *Journey to Jerusalem:* see 13.22–35 n. *Through the border lands of Samaria and Galilee* is an attempt to translate a Gk. phrase which is grammatically and geographically difficult; Lk. is more interested in the journey than in its precise itinerary. 12: *Leprosy:* see Mt.8.2 n. 16: That a *Samaritan* should be the one to show gratitude is a surprise; see 9.52 n.; 10.33 n.

17.20–37: **The coming of the kingdom.** 21: The verse is sufficiently ambiguous to invite alternative translations (see Tfn. *g*; Mt.24.23). The *when* of the Pharisee’s question (v. 20) provides the unifying thread for vv. 20–37, so that Lk. appears to understand v. 21 in a manner consistent with the futuristic thrust of the remaining verses. 23–24: Compare Mt.24.26–27; Mk.13.21. 24: The coming of the *Son of Man* (see Mk.2.10 n.) will leave no room for guesses

until the day that Noah went into the ark and the flood came and made an end of them all. As things were in Lot's days, also: they ate and drank; they bought and sold; they planted and built; but the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and sulphur from the sky and made an end of them all—it will be like that on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

31 'On that day the man who is on the roof and his belongings in the house must not come down to pick them up; he, too, who is in the fields must not go back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses it will save it, and live.

34 'I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed: one will be taken, the other left. There will be two women together grinding corn: one will be taken, the other left.<sup>h</sup> When they heard this they asked, 'Where, Lord?' He said, 'Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.'

**18 HE SPOKE TO THEM IN A PARABLE TO show that they should keep on praying and never lose heart: 'There was once a judge who cared nothing for God or man, and in the same town there was a widow who constantly came before him demanding justice against her opponent. For a long time he refused; but in the end he said to himself, "True, I care nothing for God or man: but this widow is so great a nuisance that I will see her righted before she wears me out with her persistence."' The Lord said, 'You hear what the unjust judge says; and will not God vindicate his chosen, who cry out to him day and night, while he listens patiently to**

them?' I tell you, he will vindicate them soon enough. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

And here is another parable that he told. It was aimed at those who were sure of their own goodness and looked down on everyone else. 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood up and prayed thus: "I thank thee, O God, that I am not like the rest of men, greedy, dishonest, adulterous; or, for that matter, like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all that I get." But the other kept his distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast, saying, "O God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am." It was this man, I tell you, and not the other, who went home acquitted of his sins. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.'

They even brought babies for him to touch. When the disciples saw them they rebuked them, but Jesus called for the children and said, 'Let the little ones come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you that whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'

A man of the ruling class put this question to him: 'Good Master, what must I do to win eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: "Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses add (36) two men in the fields: one will be taken, the other left.  
<sup>i</sup> Or delays to help them.  
<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses read stood up by himself and prayed thus; others read stood up and prayed thus privately.

(v. 23), but will be self-illuminating. 27: Mt.24.37–39. *Noah*: Gen. chs. 6–7. 28–32: *The days of Lot*: Gen.19.1–29. 31: Mt.24.17–18; Mk.13.15–16. 33: The reference to *Lot's wife* (v. 32) gives the saying about saving and losing life an unusual setting; see Mt.10.38–39 n. 34–35: Mt.24.40–41. 37: Mt.24.28.

**18.1–17: Preparation for the kingdom.** 1: To *keep on praying* is a familiar theme (3.21 n.); *never to lose heart* may indicate that this parable is meant for a time of trouble (perhaps of persecution, vv. 6–7). 6–7: The point is not that God must be worn down like the unjust judge, but rather that the prayers of the *chosen* will surely be heard by the Righteous Judge. Compare 11.11–13. 9: *Pharisee*: Mt.3.7 n. *Tax-gatherer*: Lk.3.12 n. 11–12: For the original hearers, the Pharisee would be a genuinely good man, fasting far beyond the Law's requirements, tithing above the literal commandment (Deut.14.22–29). 14: The *tax-gatherer* is *acquitted* because he knows his sin and repents; see 15.7,10. 15–17: Mt.19.13–15; 18.3; Mk.10.13–16. For the first time since 9.51, Lk. again takes up the content and order of Mk.

**18.18–30: Possessions and the kingdom** (Mt.19.16–30; Mk.10.17–31). 18–20a: See Mt.19.16–17 n. 18: Only Lk. places the man in the *ruling class*. 20: Exod.20.12–16; Deut.5.16–20.



not steal; do not give false evidence; 21 honour your father and mother.” The man answered, ‘I have kept all these 22 since I was a boy.’ On hearing this Jesus said, ‘There is still one thing lacking: sell everything you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow 23 me.’ At these words his heart sank; for 24 he was a very rich man. When Jesus saw it he said, ‘How hard it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ Those 26 who heard asked, ‘Then who can be saved?’ He answered, ‘What is impossible for men is possible for God.’ 28 Peter said, ‘We here have left our belongings to become your followers.’ 29 Jesus said, ‘I tell you this: there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents, or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this age, and in the age to come have eternal life.’

*Challenge to Jerusalem*

31 HE TOOK THE TWELVE ASIDE AND SAID, ‘We are now going up to Jerusalem; and all that was written by the prophets will come true for the Son of Man. He will be handed over to the foreign power. He will be mocked, maltreated, and spat upon. They will flog him and kill him. And on the third day he will rise again.’ But they understood nothing of all this; they did not grasp what he was talking about; its meaning was concealed from them. 35 As he approached Jericho a blind man sat at the roadside begging. 36 Hearing a crowd going past, he asked 37 what was happening. They told him,

‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ Then 38 he shouted out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.’ The people in front 39 told him to hold his tongue; but he called out all the more, ‘Son of David, have pity on me.’ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came up he asked him, ‘What 41 do you want me to do for you?’ ‘Sir, I want my sight back’, he answered. Jesus said to him, ‘Have back your 42 sight; your faith has cured you.’ He 43 recovered his sight instantly; and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all the people gave praise to God for what they had seen.

Entering Jericho he made his way 19 through the city. There was a man 2 there named Zacchaeus; he was superintendent of taxes and very rich. He was eager to see what Jesus looked 3 like; but, being a little man, he could not see him for the crowd. So he ran on 4 ahead and climbed a sycamore-tree in order to see him, for he was to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he 5 looked up and said, ‘Zacchaeus, be quick and come down; I must come and stay with you today.’ He climbed 6 down as fast as he could and welcomed him gladly. At this there was a general 7 murmur of disapproval. ‘He has gone in’, they said, ‘to be the guest of a sinner.’ But Zacchaeus stood there and 8 said to the Lord, ‘Here and now, sir, I give half my possessions to charity; and if I have cheated anyone, I am ready to repay him four times over.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Salvation has come 9 to this house today!—for this man too is a son of Abraham, and the Son of 10 Man has come to seek and save what is lost.’

While they were listening to this, he 11 went on to tell them a parable, because he was now close to Jerusalem and they thought the reign of God might

22: See Mt.19.21 n. 25,27: On camel, needle, see Mt.19.24 n. 28–30: See Mt.19.27,29 n.

18.31–34: The third prediction of suffering. See 9.22,44–45; Mt.20.17–19; Mk.10.32–34 n.

18.35–43: A blind man healed (Mt.20.29–34; Mk.10.46–52). 38: Son of David: see Mt.1.1 n. 42: Cured: see 7.50 n. 43: Followed: see Mk.10.52 n.

19.1–10: Zacchaeus. 2: Superintendent of taxes: see 3.12 n. 7: Guest of a sinner: see Mk.2.15 n. On the restitution of illegal gain, see Lev.6.1–7.

19.11–27: The parable of the pounds (compare Mt.25.14–30). 11: Close to Jerusalem is the last of several notices which serve the “journey theme”; with v. 27 Luke’s special section comes to a close (see 9.51–19.27 n.). Lk. employs the parabolic tradition to prepare for (apparent) defeat rather than (immediate) victory in Jerusalem and to encourage patient and trustworthy

12 dawn at any moment. He said, 'A man  
of noble birth went on a long journey  
abroad, to be appointed king and then  
13 return. But first he called ten of his  
servants and gave them a pound each,  
saying, "Trade with this while I am  
14 away." His fellow-citizens hated him,  
and they sent a delegation on his heels  
to say, "We do not want this man as  
15 our king." However, back he came as  
king, and sent for the servants to whom  
he had given the money, to see what  
16 profit each had made. The first came  
and said, "Your pound, sir, has made  
17 ten more." "Well done," he replied;  
"you are a good servant. You have  
shown yourself trustworthy in a very  
small matter, and you shall have  
18 charge of ten cities." The second came  
and said, "Your pound, sir, has made  
19 five more"; and he also was told, "You  
20 too, take charge of five cities." The third  
came and said, "Here is your pound,  
sir; I kept it put away in a handker-  
21 chief. I was afraid of you, because you  
are a hard man: you draw out what  
you never put in and reap what you did  
22 not sow." "You rascal!" he replied;  
"I will judge you by your own words.  
You knew, did you, that I am a hard  
man, that I draw out what I never put  
23 in, and reap what I did not sow? Then  
why did you not put my money on  
deposit, and I could have claimed it  
with interest when I came back?"  
24 Turning to his attendants he said,  
"Take the pound from him and give it  
25 to the man with ten." "But, sir," they  
26 replied, "he has ten already." "I tell  
you," he went on, "the man who has  
will always be given more; but the man  
who has not will forfeit even what he  
27 has. But as for those enemies of mine

who did not want me for their king,  
bring them here and slaughter them in  
my presence."

WITH THAT JESUS WENT FORWARD AND 28  
began the ascent to Jerusalem. As he 29  
approached Bethphage and Bethany at  
the hill called Olivet, he sent two of the  
disciples with these instructions: 'Go to 30  
the village opposite; as you enter it you  
will find tethered there a colt which no  
one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring  
it here. If anyone asks why you are 31  
untying it, say, "Our Master needs  
it.'" The two went on their errand and 32  
found it as he had told them; and while 33  
they were untying the colt, its owners  
asked, 'Why are you untying that colt?'  
They answered, 'Our Master needs it.' 34  
So they brought the colt to Jesus. 35

Then they threw their cloaks on the  
colt, for Jesus to mount, and they 36  
carpeted the road with them as he went  
on his way. And now, as he approached 37  
the descent from the Mount of Olives,  
the whole company of his disciples in  
their joy began to sing aloud the  
praises of God for all the great things  
they had seen:

'Blessings on him who comes as king 38  
in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven, glory in highest  
heaven!'

Some Pharisees who were in the 39  
crowd said to him, 'Master, reprimand  
your disciples.' He answered, 'I tell you, 40  
if my disciples keep silence the stones  
will shout aloud.'

When he came in sight of the city, he 41  
wept over it and said, 'If only you had 42  
known, on this great day, the way that

service while waiting for the kingdom. 12 (also 15,27): The matter of a man who *journeys abroad, to be appointed king* may be an allusion to some historical incident involving Rome and a member of the Herodian dynasty. However, the rejected *king* (vv. 15,27) of Lk. is intended allegorically as a reference to the Messiah. 13: The *ten servants* introduced here dwindle to three in vv. 16,18,20; Mt.25.14-15 also has only three. *Pound* translates "mina," a modest sum (in contrast to the sizable responsibilities of Mt.25.14-30). 27: See v. 11 n.

19.28-21.38: Jesus in Jerusalem (Mt.21.1-25.46; Mk.11.1-13.37). See Mk.11.1-13.37 n.  
19.28-40: The entry into Jerusalem (Mt.21.1-9; Mk.11.1-11; Jn.12.12-15). 28: The *ascent to Jerusalem* marks the end of the "travel narrative" (see 9.51-19.27 n.) and the beginning of the final stage of Jesus' ministry. In Jerusalem, the Holy City, Jesus' Sonship is fully revealed and the stage is set for the new beginning which Acts reports (see Introduction). 29: *Olivet*: see Mt.21.1 n. 38: Ps.118.26; Lk. has Jesus acclaimed as *king* without mention of David (compare Mt.21.9; Mk.11.10), perhaps to emphasize that Jesus is more than a Davidic ruler (see 20.41-44). *Peace, glory* recall the angelic hymn in 2.14.

19.41-44: Prediction of Jerusalem's destruction. Lk. writes after the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.),

leads to peace! But no; it is hidden  
 43 from your sight. For a time will come  
 upon you, when your enemies will set  
 up siege-works against you; they will  
 encircle you and hem you in at every  
 44 point; they will bring you to the  
 ground, you and your children within  
 your walls, and not leave you one  
 stone standing on another, because you  
 did not recognize God's moment when  
 it came.'

45 Then he went into the temple and  
 46 began driving out the traders, with  
 these words: 'Scripture says, "My  
 house shall be a house of prayer"; but  
 you have made it a robbers' cave.'

47 Day by day he taught in the temple.  
 And the chief priests and lawyers were  
 bent on making an end of him, with the  
 48 support of the leading citizens, but  
 found they were helpless, because the  
 people all hung upon his words.

**20** ONE DAY, AS HE WAS TEACHING THE  
 people in the temple and telling them  
 the good news, the priests and lawyers,  
 and the elders with them, came upon  
 2 him and accosted him. 'Tell us', they  
 said, 'by what authority you are acting  
 like this; who gave you this authority?'  
 3 He answered them, 'I have a question  
 4 to ask you too: tell me, was the  
 baptism of John from God or from  
 5 men?' This set them arguing among  
 themselves: 'If we say, "from God", he  
 will say, "Why did you not believe  
 6 him?" And if we say, "from men", the  
 people will all stone us, for they are  
 convinced that John was a prophet.'  
 7 So they replied that they could not tell.  
 8 And Jesus said to them, 'Then neither  
 will I tell you by what authority I act.'  
 9 He went on to tell the people this  
 parable: 'A man planted a vineyard,  
 let it out to vine-growers, and went  
 10 abroad for a long time. When the

season came, he sent a servant to the  
 tenants to collect from them his share  
 of the produce; but the tenants thrashed  
 him and sent him away empty-handed.  
 He tried again and sent a second ser- 11  
 vant; but he also was thrashed,  
 outrageously treated, and sent away  
 empty-handed. He tried once more with 12  
 a third; this one too they wounded and  
 flung out. Then the owner of the vine-  
 yard said, "What am I to do? I will 13  
 send my own dear son;<sup>k</sup> perhaps they  
 will respect him." But when the tenants 14  
 saw him they talked it over together.  
 "This is the heir," they said; "let us  
 kill him so that the property may come  
 to us." So they flung him out of the 15  
 vineyard and killed him. What then will  
 the owner of the vineyard do to them?  
 He will come and put these tenants to 16  
 death and let the vineyard to others.'

When they heard this, they said,  
 'God forbid!' But he looked straight 17  
 at them and said, 'Then what does this  
 text of Scripture mean: "The stone  
 which the builders rejected has become  
 the main corner-stone"? Any man who 18  
 falls on that stone will be dashed to  
 pieces; and if it falls on a man he will  
 be crushed by it.'

The lawyers and chief priests wanted 19  
 to lay hands on him there and then,  
 for they saw that this parable was aimed  
 at them; but they were afraid of the  
 people. So they watched their opportu- 20  
 nity and sent secret agents in the  
 guise of honest men, to seize upon  
 some word of his as a pretext for hand-  
 ing him over to the authority and  
 jurisdiction of the Governor. They put 21  
 a question to him: 'Master,' they said,  
 'we know that what you speak and  
 teach is sound; you pay deference to  
 no one, but teach in all honesty the  
 way of life that God requires. Are we or 22

<sup>k</sup> Or my only son.

but the language of this oracle is natural to the threatened destruction (compare Ps.137.9; Isa.29.3-4; Jer.6.6-8).

**19.45-48: Cleansing of the Temple** (Mt.21.10-17; Mk.11.15-19; compare Jn.2.12-22). See notes at parallel passages. **47-48:** Although Lk. relates the cleansing episode very briefly, he depicts Jesus as "in control" of the Temple.

**20.1-8: Jesus' authority challenged** (Mt.21.23-27; Mk.11.27-33). **4:** *From God:* see Mt.21.25 n. **6:** *Prophet:* see Mk.8.28 n.

**20.9-18: The evil tenants** (Mt.21.33-43; Mk.12.1-11). **9:** On *parable, vineyard*, see Mt.21.33 n. **10:** On *servant, tenants*, see Mt.21.34 n. **13: Son:** Jesus. **17:** Ps.118.22; see Mk.12.10-11 n. **18:** Isa.8.14-15.

**20.19-26: Caesar's tax** (Mt.22.15-22; Mk.12.13-17). **22: Taxes:** see Mt.22.17 n.

are we not permitted to pay taxes to the  
 23 Roman Emperor? He saw through  
 24 their trick and said, 'Show me a silver  
 piece. Whose head does it bear, and  
 whose inscription?' 'Caesar's', they  
 25 replied. 'Very well then,' he said, 'pay  
 Caesar what is due to Caesar, and pay  
 26 God what is due to God.' Thus their  
 attempt to catch him out in public  
 failed, and, astonished by his reply,  
 they fell silent.

27 Then some Sadducees came forward.  
 They are the people who deny that  
 there is a resurrection. Their question  
 28 was this: 'Master, Moses laid it down  
 for us that if there are brothers, and one  
 dies leaving a wife but no child, then  
 the next should marry the widow and  
 29 carry on his brother's family. Now,  
 there were seven brothers: the first  
 30 took a wife and died childless; then the  
 31 second married her, then the third. In  
 this way the seven of them died leaving  
 32 no children. Afterwards the woman  
 33 also died. At the resurrection whose  
 wife is she to be, since all seven had  
 34 married her?' Jesus said to them, 'The  
 men and women of this world marry;  
 35 but those who have been judged worthy  
 of a place in the other world and of the  
 resurrection from the dead, do not  
 36 marry, for they are not subject to death  
 any longer. They are like angels; they  
 are sons of God, because they share in  
 37 the resurrection. That the dead are  
 raised to life again is shown by Moses  
 himself in the story of the burning  
 bush, when he calls the Lord, "the God  
 38 of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". God is  
 not God of the dead but of the living;  
 for him all are<sup>1</sup> alive.'

39 At this some of the lawyers said,  
 40 'Well spoken, Master.' For there was  
 no further question that they ventured  
 to put to him.

He said to them, 'How can they say 41  
 that the Messiah is son of David? For 42  
 David himself says in the Book of  
 Psalms: "The Lord said to my Lord,  
 'Sit at my right hand until I make your 43  
 enemies your footstool.'" Thus David 44  
 calls him "Lord"; how then can he be  
 David's son?'

In the hearing of all the people Jesus 45  
 said to his disciples: 'Beware of the 46  
 doctors of the law who love to walk up  
 and down in long robes, and have a  
 great liking for respectful greetings in  
 the street, the chief seats in our  
 synagogues, and places of honour at  
 feasts. These are the men who eat up 47  
 the property of widows, while they say  
 long prayers for appearance' sake; and  
 they will receive the severest sentence.'

He looked up and saw the rich 21  
 people dropping their gifts into the  
 chest of the temple treasury; and he 2  
 noticed a poor widow putting in two  
 tiny coins. 'I tell you this,' he said: 3  
 'this poor widow has given more than  
 any of them; for those others who have 4  
 given had more than enough, but she,  
 with less than enough, has given all she  
 had to live on.'

SOME PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE 5  
 temple and the fine stones and votive  
 offerings with which it was adorned.  
 He said, 'These things which you are 6  
 gazing at—the time will come when  
 not one stone of them will be left upon  
 another; all will be thrown down.'  
 'Master,' they asked, 'when will it all 7  
 come about? What will be the sign  
 when it is due to happen?'

He said, 'Take care that you are not 8  
 misled. For many will come claiming  
 my name and saying, "I am he", and,  
 "The Day is upon us." Do not follow

<sup>1</sup> Or they are all.

20.27–40: A resurrection puzzle (Mt.22.23–33; Mk.12.18–27). 27: *Sadducees*: see Mt.3.7 n. 28: Deut.25.5–10. 35–36: The mode of existence in the new age will be completely different than in this age. 36: *Angels* are sometimes called *sons of God* in the OT. 37: Exod.3.6.

20.41–44: *Messiah, son of David* (Mt.22.41–46; Mk.12.35–37). 41: *Messiah . . . son of David*: see Mt.1.1 n. 42–43: Ps.110.1; see Mt.22.44 n. 44: See Mt.22.45 n.

20.45–47: *Warning against pride*. 46: 11.43; Mt.23.6; Mk.12.38–40.

21.1–4: *The widow's gift* (Mk.12.41–44). 1: Several *chests* were located in the section of the Temple open to Jewish women. 2: The value of the *coins* was too small to be meaningfully defined in terms of modern currency.

21.5–38: *The eschatological discourse*. See Mk.13.1–37 n. 5–7: The Temple's destruction: see Mt.24.1–3 n.; Mk.13.1–4.

21.8–36: *Signs, false signs, and warnings* (Mt.24.4–44; Mk.13.5–7). 8: 17.23; see Mt.24.4–5 n.

9 them. And when you hear of wars and  
 insurrections, do not fall into a panic.  
 These things are bound to happen first;  
 10 but the end does not follow immediately.  
 Then he added, 'Nation will make war upon  
 nation, kingdom upon kingdom; there will  
 11 be great earthquakes, and famines and  
 plagues in many places; in the sky terrors  
 and great portents.  
 12 'But before all this happens they will  
 set upon you and persecute you. You will  
 be brought before synagogues and put in  
 prison; you will be haled before kings and  
 13 governors for your allegiance to me. This  
 will be your opportunity to testify; so make  
 14 up your minds not to prepare your defence  
 beforehand, because I myself will give you  
 15 power of utterance and a wisdom which no  
 opponent will be able to resist or refute.  
 16 Even your parents and brothers, your  
 relations and friends, will betray you.  
 17 Some of you will be put to death; and all  
 will hate you for your allegiance to me.  
 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost.  
 By standing firm you will win true life  
 19 for yourselves.  
 20 'But when you see Jerusalem encircled  
 by armies, then you may be sure that her  
 21 destruction is near. Then those who are in  
 Judaea must take to the hills; those who  
 are in the city itself must leave it, and  
 22 those who are out in the country must not  
 enter; because this is the time of retribu-  
 tion, when all that stands written is to be  
 fulfilled.  
 23 Alas for women who are with child in  
 those days, or have children at the breast!  
 For there will be great distress in the land  
 and a terrible judgement upon this people.  
 24 They will fall at the sword's point; they  
 will be carried captive into all countries;  
 and Jerusalem will be trampled down by  
 foreigners until their day has run its course.  
 25 'Portents will appear in sun, moon,

and stars. On earth nations will stand  
 helpless, not knowing which way to turn  
 from the roar and surge of the sea; men  
 will faint with terror at the thought of  
 26 all that is coming upon the world; for the  
 celestial powers will be shaken. And then  
 they will see the Son of Man coming on a  
 cloud with great power and glory. When  
 27 all this begins to happen, stand upright and  
 hold your heads high, because your libera-  
 tion is near.'

He told them this parable: 'Look at the  
 28 fig-tree, or any other tree. As soon as it  
 buds, you can see for yourselves that  
 summer is near. In the same way, when  
 29 you see all this happening, you may know  
 that the kingdom of God is near.'

'I tell you this: the present generation  
 30 will live to see it all. Heaven and earth  
 will pass away; my words will never pass  
 away.'

'Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let  
 31 your minds be dulled by dissipation and  
 drunkenness and worldly cares so that the  
 great Day closes upon you suddenly like  
 32 a trap; for that day will come on all men,  
 wherever they are, the whole world over.  
 Be on the alert, praying at all times for  
 33 strength to pass safely through all these  
 imminent troubles and to stand in the  
 presence of the Son of Man.'

His days were given to teaching in the  
 34 temple; and then he would leave the city  
 and spend the night on the hill called  
 Olivet. And in the early morning the  
 35 people flocked to listen to him in the  
 temple.<sup>m</sup>

*The final conflict*

NOW THE FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED Bread,  
 22 known as Passover, was ap-

<sup>m</sup> Some witnesses here insert the passage printed on p. 138.

12-17: Mt.10.17-22. 14-15: 12.11-12; Acts 6.10. 16: 12.52-53. 17: Mt.10.22. 18: 12.7; Mt.10.30; Acts 27.34. 20: Lk. speaks, not of a cryptic "abomination of desolation" (Mt.24.15 n.), but directly of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. 22: Deut.32.35. 24: Isa.63.18; Zech.12.3 (Sept.). 25-26: See Mt.24.29 n. 27: Dan.7.13. 32: 9.27; see Mt.24.34 n. 33: 16.17.

21.37-38: Summary. Lk. apparently thinks of the final period in Jerusalem as longer than the "week" of Mk. (see Mk.11.1-13.37 n.).

22.1-23.56: The final conflict (Mt.26.1-27.66; Mk.14.1-15.47; Jn. chs. 12-19). While individual episodes (e.g. 23.27-31) can be removed from the narrative leading up to the crucifixion, the outline of the passion story appears to have been fixed quite early and is carried by all four Gospels in much the same form. However, Lk. and Jn., when compared with Mt.-Mk.,

- 2 proaching, and the chief priests and the doctors of the law were trying to devise some means of doing away with him; for they were afraid of the people.
- 3 Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve; and Judas went to the chief priests and officers of the temple police to discuss ways and means of putting Jesus into their power. They were greatly pleased and undertook to pay him a sum of money. He agreed, and began to look out for an opportunity to betray him to them without collecting a crowd.
- 7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover victim had to be slaughtered, and Jesus sent Peter and John with these instructions: 'Go and prepare for our Passover supper.' 'Where would you like us to make the preparations?' they asked.
- 10 He replied, 'As soon as you set foot in the city a man will meet you carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house that he enters and give this message to the householder: "The Master says, 'Where is the room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" He will show you a large room upstairs all set out: make the preparations there.'
- 13 They went and found everything as he had said. So they prepared for Passover.
- 14 When the time came he took his place at table, and the apostles with him; and he said to them, 'How I have longed<sup>n</sup> to eat this Passover with you before my death! For I tell you, never again shall I<sup>o</sup> eat it until the time when it finds its fulfilment in the kingdom of God.'
- 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you, from this moment I shall drink from the fruit of the vine no more until the time when the kingdom of God comes.' And he
- took bread, gave thanks, and broke it; and he gave it to them, with the words: "This is my body."<sup>p</sup>
- 'But mark this—my betrayer is here, 21 his hand with mine on the table. For the Son of Man is going his appointed way; but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed!' At this they began to ask 23 among themselves which of them it could possibly be who was to do this thing.
- Then a jealous dispute broke out: 24 who among them should rank highest? But he said, 'In the world, kings lord it 25 over their subjects; and those in authority are called their country's "Benefactors". Not so with you: on the contrary, the highest among you must bear himself like the youngest, the chief of you like a servant. For who is greater 27 —the one who sits at table or the servant who waits on him? Surely the one who sits at table. Yet here am I among you like a servant.
- 'You are the men who have stood 28 firmly by me in my times of trial; and 29 now I vest in you the kingship which my Father vested in me; you shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit<sup>q</sup> on thrones as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 'Simon, Simon, take heed: Satan has 31 been given leave to sift all of you like wheat; but for you I have prayed that 32 your faith may not fail; and when you have come to yourself, you must lend strength to your brothers.' 'Lord,' he 33 replied, 'I am ready to go with you to prison and death.' Jesus said, 'I tell you, 34

*n* Or said to them, 'I longed . . .'

*o* Some witnesses read For I tell you, I shall not . . .

*p* Some witnesses add, in whole or in part, and with various arrangements, the following: 'which is given for you; do this as a memorial of me.' (20) In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup, poured out for you, is the new covenant sealed by my blood.'

*q* Or trial; and as my Father gave me the right to reign, so I give you the right to eat and to drink . . . and to sit . . .

show sufficient dissimilarity in detail as to suggest the existence of more than one passion tradition. 1: See Mk.14.1 n. 3–6: Mt.26.14–16; Mk.14.10–11. 3: See 4.13 n.; *Satan* is not mentioned as the agent in Mt. or Mk.; compare Jn.6.70–71; 13.2.27.

22.7–13: Preparation for the Passover (Mt.26.17–19; Mk.14.12–16). 7–8: See Mt.26.17 n. 10–12: See Mt.26.18 n.

22.14–38: The Last Supper (Mt.26.20–29; Mk.14.17–21). 14: See Mt.26.20 n. 15–20: See also 1 Cor.11.23–26. 17–19: Lk. apparently follows a special tradition which places the cup ahead of the loaf. If Tfn. *p* represents the original text, the *new covenant* (v. 20) refers to Jer.31.31; see Mt.26.28 n. 21–23: See also Jn.13.21–30. 24–26: Mt.20.25–28; Mk.10.42–45. 29: Compare Acts 1.6–8. 30: Mt.19.28. 31–34: Mt.26.30–35 (see 33–35 n.); Mk.14.26–31; Jn.13.36–38. 31: 4.13 n. 35: 10.4. 37: Isa.53.12.

Peter, the cock will not crow tonight until you have three times over denied that you know me.'

- 35 He said to them, 'When I sent you out barefoot without purse or pack, were you ever short of anything?'  
 36 'No,' they answered. 'It is different now,' he said; 'whoever has a purse had better take it with him, and his pack too; and if he has no sword, let him  
 37 sell his cloak to buy one. For Scripture says, "And he was counted among the outlaws", and these words, I tell you, must find fulfilment in me; indeed, all that is written of me is being fulfilled.'  
 38 'Look, Lord,' they said, 'we have two swords here.' 'Enough, enough!' he replied.

- 39 THEN HE WENT OUT AND MADE HIS WAY as usual to the Mount of Olives, accompanied by the disciples. When he reached the place he said to them, 'Pray that you may be spared the hour of testing.' He himself withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and began to pray: 'Father, if it be thy will, take this cup away from me. Yet not my will but thine be done.'  
 43 And now there appeared to him an angel from heaven bringing him strength, and in anguish of spirit he prayed the more urgently; and his sweat was like clots of blood falling to the ground.<sup>r</sup>

- 45 When he rose from prayer and came to the disciples he found them asleep, worn out by grief. 'Why are you sleeping?' he said. 'Rise and pray that you may be spared the test.'

- 47 WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING A CROWD appeared with the man called Judas, one of the Twelve, at their head. He came up to Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said, 'Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'

- 49 When his followers saw what was coming, they said, 'Lord, shall we use our swords?' And one of them struck

at the High Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, 'Let them have their way.' Then he touched the man's ear and healed him.<sup>s</sup>

Turning to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders, who had come to seize him, he said, 'Do you take me for a bandit, that you have come out with swords and cudgels to arrest me? Day after day, when I was in the temple with you, you kept your hands off me. But this is your moment—the hour when darkness reigns.'

Then they arrested him and led him away. They brought him to the High Priest's house, and Peter followed at a distance. They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat round it, and Peter sat among them. A serving-maid who saw him sitting in the firelight stared at him and said, 'This man was with him too.' But he denied it: 'Woman,' he said, 'I do not know him.' A little later someone else noticed him and said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said to him, 'No, I am not.' About an hour passed and another spoke more strongly still: 'Of course this fellow was with him. He must have been; he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' At that moment, while he was still speaking, a cock crew; and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the Lord's words, 'Tonight before the cock crows you will disown me three times.'<sup>t</sup>

The men who were guarding Jesus mocked at him. They beat him, they blindfolded him, and they kept asking him, 'Now, prophet, who hit you? Tell us that.' And so they went on heaping insults upon him.

WHEN DAY BROKE, THE ELDERS OF THE

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses omit And now . . . ground.

<sup>s</sup> Or 'Let me do as much as this', and touching the man's ear, he healed him.

<sup>t</sup> Some witnesses add (62) He went outside, and wept bitterly, as in Matthew 26. 75.

22.39–46: Gethsemane (Mt.26.30–46; Mk.14.26–42). 39: Jn.18.1. 40–46: Several elements in this scene are reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer (e.g. vv. 40,42,46). 42: Cup: see Mk.10.38 n.

22.47–53: The arrest (Mt.26.47–56; Mk.14.43–52; Jn.18.2–11). 47: Kiss: see Mt.26.48 n. 50: One: see Mt.26.51 n.

22.54–71: Before the Jewish authorities (Mt.26.57–75; Mk.14.53–72; Jn.18.12–27). See Mt.26.57–75 n. 61: Compare v. 34. 63–65: See Mt.26.67–68; Mk.14.65. 66: Council: see

nation, chief priests, and doctors of the law assembled, and he was brought before their Council. 'Tell us,' they said, 'are you the Messiah?' 'If I tell you,' he replied, 'you will not believe me; and if I ask questions, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of Almighty God.'<sup>u</sup> 'You are the Son of God, then?' they all said, and he replied, 'It is you who say I am.'<sup>v</sup> They said, 'Need we call further witnesses? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.'

**23** With that the whole assembly rose, and they brought him before Pilate. They opened the case against him by saying, 'We found this man subverting our nation, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Messiah, a king.'<sup>w</sup> Pilate asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' He replied, 'The words are yours.'<sup>x</sup> Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no case for this man to answer.' But they insisted: 'His teaching is causing disaffection among the people all through Judaea. It started from Galilee and has spread as far as this city.'

When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilean, and on learning that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction he remitted the case to him, for Herod was also in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus he was greatly pleased; having heard about him, he had long been wanting to see him, and had been hoping to see some miracle performed by him. He questioned him at some length without getting any reply; but the chief priests and lawyers appeared and pressed the case against him vigorously. Then Herod and his troops treated him with contempt and ridicule, and sent him back to Pilate dressed in a gorgeous robe. That same day Herod and Pilate

became friends; till then there had been a standing feud between them.

Pilate now called together the chief priests, councillors, and people, and said to them, 'You brought this man before me on a charge of subversion. But, as you see, I have myself examined him in your presence and found nothing in him to support your charges. No more did Herod, for he has referred him back to us. Clearly he has done nothing to deserve death. I therefore propose to let him off with a flogging.' But<sup>y</sup> there was a general outcry. 'Away with him! Give us Barabbas.' (This man had been put in prison for a rising that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate addressed them again, in his desire to release Jesus, but they shouted back, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' For the third time he spoke to them: 'Why, what wrong has he done? I have not found him guilty of any capital offence. I will therefore let him off with a flogging.' But they insisted on their demand, shouting that Jesus should be crucified. Their shouts prevailed and Pilate decided that they should have their way. He released the man they asked for, the man who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and gave Jesus up to their will.

**AS THEY LED HIM AWAY TO EXECUTION** they seized upon a man called Simon, from Cyrene, on his way in from the country, put the cross on his back, and made him walk behind Jesus carrying it.

Great numbers of people followed, many women among them, who mourned and lamented over him. Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; no,

<sup>u</sup> Literally of the Power of God.

<sup>v</sup> Or You are right, for I am.

<sup>w</sup> Or to be an anointed king.

<sup>x</sup> Or It is as you say.

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read (17) At festival time he was obliged to release one person for them; (18) and now...

Mt.26.59 n. 67,70: *Messiah, Son*: see Mt.1.1 n.; 16.16 n. 69: Dan.7.13; Ps.110.1. *Son of Man*: see Mk.2.10 n.

**23.1-25: Before Roman authority** (Mt.27.1-31; Mk.15.1-20; Jn.18.28-19.16). **1:** *Pilate*: see 3.1 n. **2:** *Opposing the payment of Roman taxes* and claiming to be *king* are obviously seditious; Lk. has made the charge quite clear (see v. 14). **4:** In Lk., Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent three times in the course of the hearing (vv. 4,14,22); see Acts 3.13-14. **7:** *Herod*: Antipas (see 3.1 n.). The appearance before Antipas is found only in Lk.; see Acts 4.27-28. **8:** 9.9. **11:** Compare Mt.27.27-31; Mk.15.16-20; Jn.19.2-3. **18:** *Barabbas*: Mt.27.16 n.

**23.26-56: The crucifixion** (Mt.27.32-66; Mk.15.21-47; Jn.19.17-42). **26:** *Simon*: see



weep for yourselves and your children.  
 29 For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Happy are the barren, the wombs that never bore a child, the breasts that never fed one." Then they will start saying to the mountains, "Fall on us", and to the hills, "Cover us." For if these things are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?

32 There were two others with him, criminals who were being led away to execution; and when they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, and the criminals with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.'<sup>z</sup>

They divided his clothes among them by casting lots. The people stood looking on, and their rulers jeered at him: 'He saved others: now let him save himself, if this is God's Messiah, his Chosen.' The soldiers joined in the mockery and came forward offering him their sour wine. 'If you are the king of the Jews,' they said, 'save yourself.' There was an inscription above his head which ran: 'This is the king of the Jews.'

39 One of the criminals who hung there with him taunted him: 'Are not you the Messiah? Save yourself, and us.' But the other rebuked him: 'Have you no fear of God? You are under the same sentence as he. For us it is plain justice; we are paying the price for our misdeeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come to your throne.'<sup>a</sup>  
 43 He answered, 'I tell you this: today you shall be with me in Paradise.'

44 By now it was about midday and a darkness fell over the whole land, which lasted until three in the afternoon; the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.  
 46 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and said,

'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit'; and with these words he died. The centurion saw it all, and gave praise to God. 'Beyond all doubt', he said, 'this man was innocent.'

The crowd who had assembled for the spectacle, when they saw what had happened, went home beating their breasts.

HIS FRIENDS HAD ALL BEEN STANDING AT a distance; the women who had accompanied him from Galilee stood with them and watched it all.

Now there was a man called Joseph, a member of the Council, a good, upright man, who had dissented from their policy and the action they had taken. He came from the Judaeen town of Arimathaea, and he was one who looked forward to the kingdom of God. This man now approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Taking it down from the cross, he wrapped it in a linen sheet, and laid it in a tomb cut out of the rock, in which no one had been laid before. It was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

The women who had accompanied him from Galilee followed; they took note of the tomb and observed how his body was laid. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes: and on the Sabbath they rested in obedience to the commandment. But on the Sunday morning very early they came to the tomb bringing the spices they had prepared. Finding that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, they went inside; but the body was not to be found. While they stood utterly at a loss, all of a sudden two men in dazzling garments were at their side. They were terrified, and stood with eyes cast down, but the men said, 'Why search among the dead for one

<sup>z</sup> Some witnesses omit Jesus said, 'Father . . . doing.'  
<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read come in royal power.

Mk.15.21 n.; contrast Jn.19.17. 29: Compare 21.23. 30: Hos.10.8. 32: Crucifixion was a form of Roman punishment reserved for dangerous criminals; further, Judaism regarded anyone who was crucified as cursed (Deut.21.23). 33: Isa.53.12. 34: *Forgive them*: compare Acts 7.60. 35: Ps.22.18. 36: The *wine* was probably offered as a sedative. 43: *Paradise*, in Jewish thought, was the garden in which the righteous lived after death; compare Rev.2.7. 45: *Curtain*: see Mt.27.51 n. 46: Ps.31.5. 49: Ps.38.11. 50: *Council*: see Mt.26.59 n. 53: Deut.21.22-23. 55-56: The women delay the burial anointing because the Sabbath has begun and work must be postponed (Deut.5.12-14).

24.1-11: **The empty tomb** (Mt.28.1-10; Mk.16.1-8; Jn.20.1-18). 2: *Stone*: see Mt.27.60 n.

6 who lives?<sup>b</sup> Remember what he told  
7 you while he was still in Galilee, about  
the Son of Man: how he must be given  
up into the power of sinful men and be  
crucified, and must rise again on the  
8 third day.' Then they recalled his words  
9 and, returning from the tomb, they  
reported all this to the Eleven and all  
the others.

10 The women were Mary of Magdala,  
Joanna, and Mary the mother<sup>c</sup> of  
James, and they, with the other women,  
11 told the apostles. But the story ap-  
peared to them to be nonsense, and they  
would not believe them.<sup>d</sup>

13 THAT SAME DAY TWO OF THEM WERE ON  
their way to a village called Emmaus,  
which lay about seven miles from  
14 Jerusalem, and they were talking  
together about all these happenings.  
15 As they talked and discussed it with one  
another, Jesus himself came up and  
16 walked along with them; but some-  
thing kept them from seeing who it was.  
17 He asked them, 'What is it you are  
debating as you walk?' They halted,  
18 their faces full of gloom, and one,  
called Cleopas, answered, 'Are you the  
only person staying in Jerusalem not to  
know<sup>e</sup> what has happened there in the  
19 last few days?' 'What do you mean?'  
he said. 'All this about Jesus of  
Nazareth,' they replied, 'a prophet  
powerful in speech and action before  
20 God and the whole people; how our  
chief priests and rulers handed him over  
to be sentenced to death, and crucified  
21 him. But we had been hoping that he  
was the man to liberate Israel. What is  
more, this is the third day since it  
22 happened, and now some women of  
our company have astounded us: they  
23 went early to the tomb, but failed to  
find his body, and returned with a story  
that they had seen a vision of angels  
24 who told them he was alive. So some  
of our people went to the tomb and  
found things just as the women had  
said; but him they did not see.'

25 'How dull you are!' he answered.  
'How slow to believe all that the proph-

ets said! Was the Messiah not bound to 26  
suffer thus before entering upon his  
glory?' Then he began with Moses and 27  
all the prophets, and explained to them  
the passages which referred to himself  
in every part of the scriptures.

By this time they had reached the 28  
village to which they were going, and  
he made as if to continue his journey,  
but they pressed him: 'Stay with us, 29  
for evening draws on, and the day is  
almost over.' So he went in to stay with  
them. And when he had sat down with 30  
them at table, he took bread and said  
the blessing; he broke the bread, and  
offered it to them. Then their eyes were 31  
opened, and they recognized him; and  
he vanished from their sight. They said 32  
to one another, 'Did we not feel our  
hearts on fire as he talked with us on the  
road and explained the scriptures to us?'

Without a moment's delay they set 33  
out and returned to Jerusalem. There  
they found that the Eleven and the rest  
of the company had assembled, and 34  
were saying, 'It is true: the Lord has  
risen; he has appeared to Simon.' Then 35  
they gave their account of the events of  
their journey and told how he had been  
recognized by them at the breaking of  
the bread.

As they were talking about all this, 36  
there he was, standing among them.<sup>f</sup>  
Startled and terrified, they thought 37  
they were seeing a ghost. But he said 38  
'Why are you so perturbed? Why do  
questionings arise in your minds? 39  
Look at my hands and feet. It is I my-  
self. Touch me and see; no ghost has  
flesh and bones as you can see that I 40  
have.'<sup>g</sup> They were still unconvinced,  
still wondering, for it seemed too good  
to be true. So he asked them, 'Have  
you anything here to eat?' They offered 42

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses insert He is not here: he has been raised.

<sup>c</sup> Or wife, or daughter.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses add (12) Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb, and, peering in, saw the wrappings and nothing more; and he went home amazed at what had happened.

<sup>e</sup> Or Have you been staying by yourself in Jerusalem, that you do not know . . .

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses insert And he said to them, 'Peace be with you!'

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses insert (40) After saying this he showed them his hands and feet.

6: Contrast Mt.28.7; Mk.16.7; in Lk. the resurrection appearances are restricted to the vicinity of Jerusalem.

24.13-53: Appearances and commissioning. 27: *Moses and all the prophets*: v. 44; see Mt.5.17 n.

30: The scene obviously suggests a eucharistic setting. 34: 1 Cor.15.5. 36-43: Jn.20.19-29.

him a piece of fish they had cooked,  
 43 which he took and ate before their eyes.  
 44 And he said to them, 'This is what I  
 meant by saying, while I was still with  
 you, that everything written about me  
 in the Law of Moses and in the proph-  
 45 ets and psalms was bound to be ful-  
 filled.' Then he opened their minds  
 46 to understand the scriptures. 'This', he  
 said, 'is what is written: that the  
 47 Messiah is to suffer death and to rise  
 from the dead on the third day, and  
 that in his name repentance bringing  
 the forgiveness of sins is to be pro-  
 claimed to all nations. Begin from

Jerusalem; it is you who are the wit- 48  
 nesses to it all. And mark this: I am 49  
 sending upon you my Father's promised  
 gift; so stay here in this city until you  
 are armed with the power from above.'

Then he led them out as far as 50  
 Bethany, and blessed them with up-  
 lifted hands; and in the act of blessing 51  
 he parted from them.<sup>h</sup> And they<sup>i</sup> re- 52  
 turned to Jerusalem with great joy, and 53  
 spent all their time in the temple  
 praising God.

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses add and was carried up into heaven.  
<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses insert worshipped him and . . .

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44: V. 27; Mt.5.17 n. 46: Hos.6.2. 47-49: Compare Mt.28.18-20; Acts 1.4-8. 47: From Jerusalem: v. 52 n. 49: Power from above: compare Acts 1.8; 2.1-4. 50-51: Acts 1.9-12. 52: As the Gospel concludes, the disciples are in Jerusalem (compare Acts 1.12-14), but the reader is assured (v. 47) that what began in Galilee and culminated in the Holy City would now move out "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1.8).

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

While the Gospel According to John stands in contrast to Matthew, Mark, and Luke in matters of theological perspective, arrangement of its contents, and its distinctive use of imagery and symbols, it nevertheless clearly belongs to the same form of literature as do the other three. Its author, whose identity is unknown, displays exact knowledge both of Palestinian topography and of the Judaism of the first Christian century. This Gospel seems to record a tradition independent of that reflected in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, a tradition which may well go back to John, the son of Zebedee (see 21.2 n.), to whom the book was ascribed in the late second century. In Christian tradition John has often been called the "spiritual" Gospel, because of its attention to the spiritual import of the incidents it reports.

The Gospel is frequently analyzed into "The Book of Signs" (1.19–12.50) and "The Book of Glory" (13.1–20.31), with 1.1–18 as a Prologue and ch. 21 as an Epilogue. A "sign" is an act of power by Jesus, which points to a truth inaccessible to sight and touch, but apprehensible by faith. Paradoxically, "glory," an Old Testament term signifying God's presence, is for the evangelist publicly manifest in the earthly career of Jesus—who, to eyes of faith, reveals himself as the Son of God in certain significant events and through his death and resurrection. The writer's aim is "that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess life by his name" (20.31).

The Gospel probably originated in Asia Minor, possibly at Ephesus, shortly before the end of the first century.

## *The coming of Christ*

1 **W**HEN ALL THINGS BEGAN, THE Word already was.<sup>a</sup> The Word  
2 dwelt with God, and what God  
3 was, the Word was. The Word, then,  
4 was with God at the beginning, and  
5 through him all things came to be; no  
6 single thing was created without him.  
7 All that came to be was alive with his  
8 life,<sup>b</sup> and that life was the light of men.  
9 The light shines on in the dark, and the  
10 darkness has never mastered it.  
11 There appeared a man named John,  
12 sent from God; he came as a witness  
13 to testify to the light, that all might  
14 become believers through him. He was  
15 not himself the light; he came to bear  
16 witness to the light. The real light which  
17 enlightens every man was even then  
18 coming into the world.<sup>c</sup>  
19 He was in the world;<sup>d</sup> but the world,  
20 though it owed its being to him, did not

recognize him. He entered his own 11  
realm, and his own would not receive 12  
him. But to all who did receive him, to 13  
those who have yielded him their  
allegiance, he gave the right to become 14  
children of God, not born of any  
human stock, or by the fleshly desire of 15  
a human father, but the offspring of  
God himself. So the Word became 16  
flesh; he came to dwell among us, and 17  
we saw his glory, such glory as befits 18  
the Father's only Son, full of grace and 19  
truth. 20

Here is John's testimony to him: he 15  
cried aloud, "This is the man I meant  
when I said, "He comes after me, but  
takes rank before me"; for before I was  
born, he already was."

*a* Or The Word was at the creation.

*b* Or no single created thing came into being without him. There was life in him . . .

*c* Or The light was in being, light absolute, enlightening every man born into the world.

*d* Or The Word, then, was in the world.

**1.1–18: The prologue.** 1: The *Word* (Gk. *logos*) as the title of Jesus Christ (v. 17) appears only here in Jn.; compare 1 Jn.1.1; Rev.19.13. *Word* and related terms in earlier Jewish tradition (see Wis.9.1–4,9,17–18; Eccclus.24.1–12) prepared the way for its use here to denote Jesus as revealer of the unseen God. 4: *Life* in Jn. always means eternal (not merely natural) life (see 3.15). This *life* becomes the *light of men* in that it reveals the Father to them. 5: The *darkness* symbolizes those death-dealing forces in history irreconcilably opposed to God. 6: *John* (in Mt., Mk., Lk., "the Baptist") is in Jn. a *witness* (see 1.19–51 n.) to Jesus, but in every way less important than he (1.19–27; 3.25–30). 11: *His own realm*: the Holy Land. *His own*: the people of Israel. Jn. may think of the earlier appearance of the Word in the Mosaic Law (see v. 17; compare Eccclus.24.1–3,8,23). 14: *Flesh*: human. *Came to dwell* (lit. pitched his tent): perhaps an echo of the glory of God which filled the Tent of the Presence (Exod.40.34–38). *Glory*:

- 16 Out of his full store we have all received grace upon grace; for while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- 17 No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known.<sup>e</sup>
- 18 THIS IS THE TESTIMONY WHICH JOHN gave when the Jews of Jerusalem sent a deputation of priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He confessed without reserve and avowed, 'I am not the Messiah.' 'What then? Are you Elijah?' 'No,' he replied. 'Are you the prophet we await?' He answered 'No.' 'Then who are you?' they asked. 'We must give an answer to those who sent us. What account do you give of yourself?'
- 19 He answered in the words of the prophet Isaiah: 'I am a voice crying aloud in the wilderness, "Make the Lord's highway straight."'
- 20 Some Pharisees who were in the deputation asked him, 'If you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet, why then are you baptizing?' 'I baptize in water,' John replied, 'but among you, though you do not know him, stands the one who is to come after me. I am not good enough to unfasten his shoes.' This took place at Bethany beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.
- 21 The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him. 'Look,' he said, 'there is the Lamb of God; it is he who takes away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I spoke when I said, "After me a
- man is coming who takes rank before me"; for before I was born, he already was. I myself did not know who he was; but the very reason why I came, baptizing in water, was that he might be revealed to Israel.'
- 22 John testified further: 'I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove and resting upon him. I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize in water had told me, "When you see the Spirit coming down upon someone and resting upon him, you will know that this is he who is to baptize in Holy Spirit."' I saw it myself, and I have borne witness. This is God's Chosen One.<sup>f</sup>
- 23 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples when Jesus passed by. John looked towards him and said, 'There is the Lamb of God.' The two disciples heard him say this, and followed Jesus. When he turned and saw them following him, he asked, 'What are you looking for?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means a teacher), 'where are you staying?' 'Come and see', he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent the rest of the day with him. It was then about four in the afternoon.
- 24 One of the two who followed Jesus after hearing what John said was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The first thing he did was to find<sup>g</sup> his brother Simon. He said to him, 'We
- <sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read but the only one, the one nearest to the Father's heart, has made him known; others read but the only one, himself God, the nearest to the Father's heart, has made him known.
- <sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read This is the Son of God.
- <sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read In the morning he found . . .

radiance; therefore, the presence of God. 16: *Grace upon grace*: God's gift to mankind in Jesus Christ is added to that of the Mosaic Law. 18: The generalization that *no one has ever seen God* is modified in 14.9; there, to have seen Jesus is equivalent to having seen God.

1.19-51: *Testimonies to Jesus*. The language of the courtroom, frequent in biblical literature (e.g. Isa.43.10-13), is particularly important to the description of Jesus' public life in Jn. Thus *testimony* (v. 19 and elsewhere) has a quasi-judicial meaning and seems to point to the climax at 12.31-32 ("judgement for this world"). 19: *The Jews* is the evangelist's generalized name for the religious authorities who oppose Jesus (such as the chief priests, scribes, etc., of the Synoptics), not literally meant to include all Jews. The term probably also reflects tensions between the Johannine church and the synagogue late in the first century. 20-21: *The Messiah*: see Mt.1.1 n. *Elijah*: see Mt.17.10-13; Mk.6.15 n. *Prophet*: see 6.14 n.; Mk.8.28 n. 23: See Isa.40.3. 24: *Pharisees*: see Mt.3.7 n. 27: *To unfasten his shoes*: the task of the slave who washed the master's feet. 28: The exact location of this *Bethany* is unknown. 29: *The Lamb of God* derives from Isa.53.7-12, especially Isa.53.7. See also 1 Cor.5.7 where Jesus is identified with the paschal lamb of Exod.12.3-10. Compare 19.14 n. 30: Although Jesus appears in history after John, in reality *he already was*, i.e. already existed before John's time. In Jn., Jesus has always existed (1.1; 8.56-57). 32: Jn. does not narrate the baptism of Jesus as do Mt., Mk., Lk., but only the *coming down* of the Spirit which accompanied it; see Mk.1.9-11 n. 34: *Chosen One*: see Isa.42.1. 35: *Two disciples*: see v. 40. 40: *Andrew* appears more prominently in Jn.

have found the Messiah' (which is the  
 42 Hebrew for 'Christ'). He brought  
 Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and  
 said, 'You are Simon son of John.  
 You shall be called Cephas' (that is,  
 Peter, the Rock).  
 43 The next day Jesus decided to leave  
 44 for Galilee. He met Philip, who, like  
 Andrew and Peter, came from Beth-  
 saida, and said to him, 'Follow me.'  
 45 Philip went to find Nathanael, and  
 told him, 'We have met the man spoken  
 of by Moses in the Law, and by the  
 prophets: it is Jesus son of Joseph,  
 46 from Nazareth.' 'Nazareth!' Nathanael  
 exclaimed; 'can anything good come  
 from Nazareth?' Philip said, 'Come  
 47 and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael  
 coming, he said, 'Here is an Israelite  
 worthy of the name; there is nothing  
 48 false in him.' Nathanael asked him,  
 'How do you come to know me?' Jesus  
 replied, 'I saw you under the fig-tree  
 49 before Philip spoke to you.' 'Rabbi,'  
 said Nathanael, 'you are the Son of  
 50 God; you are king of Israel.' Jesus  
 answered, 'Is this the ground of your  
 faith, that I told you I saw you under  
 the fig-tree? You shall see greater  
 51 things than that.' Then he added, 'In  
 truth, in very truth I tell you all, you  
 shall see heaven wide open, and God's  
 angels ascending and descending upon  
 the Son of Man.'

*Christ the giver of life*

2 ON THE THIRD DAY THERE WAS A  
 wedding at Cana-in-Galilee. The  
 2 mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus  
 3 and his disciples were guests also. The

wine gave out, so Jesus's mother said  
 to him, 'They have no wine left.' He 4  
 answered, 'Your concern, mother, is  
 not mine. My hour has not yet come.'  
 His mother said to the servants, 'Do 5  
 whatever he tells you.' There were six 6  
 stone water-jars standing near, of the  
 kind used for Jewish rites of purifica-  
 tion; each held from twenty to thirty  
 gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 7  
 'Fill the jars with water', and they filled  
 them to the brim. 'Now draw some 8  
 off', he ordered, 'and take it to the  
 steward of the feast'; and they did so.  
 The steward tasted the water now 9  
 turned into wine, not knowing its  
 source; though the servants who had  
 drawn the water knew. He hailed the  
 bridegroom and said, 'Everyone serves 10  
 the best wine first, and waits until the  
 guests have drunk freely before serving  
 the poorer sort; but you have kept the  
 best wine till now.'

This deed at Cana-in-Galilee is the 11  
 first of the signs by which Jesus revealed  
 his glory and led his disciples to believe  
 in him.

AFTER THIS HE WENT DOWN TO CAPER- 12  
 naum in company with his mother, his  
 brothers, and his disciples, but they  
 did not stay there long. As it was near 13  
 the time of the Jewish Passover, Jesus  
 went up to Jerusalem. There he found 14  
 in the temple the dealers in cattle, sheep,  
 and pigeons, and the money-changers  
 seated at their tables. Jesus made a 15  
 whip of cords and drove them out of  
 the temple, sheep, cattle, and all. He  
 upset the tables of the money-changers,  
 scattering their coins. Then he turned 16  
 on the dealers in pigeons: 'Take them

(6.8; 12.22) than in the Synoptics. 44: *Bethsaida* lay north of the Lake of Galilee and east of the Jordan. 45: Although *Nathanael* is sometimes identified with Bartholomew (Mk.3.18), this identification is not justified by NT evidence. 49: *King*: the Messiah (see Mt.1.1 n.). 51: Jacob's vision of *God's angels* mediating between heaven and earth (Gen.28.12) provides this image about the *Son of Man* (see Mk.2.10 n.).

2.1-12: *First sign at Cana*. 1: Jn. envisages the events of 1.19-2.12 as encompassing a week. He has previously (1.19-28,29-34,35-42,43-51) indicated the first four days of Jesus' ministry; hence the *third day* here marks the conclusion of this week. *Cana* is nine miles north of Nazareth. *The mother of Jesus* appears again in 19.25-27. 4: *Mother*: lit. woman. *Hour* in Jn. denotes the climactic moment of Jesus' passion and glorification (see also 12.27). 11: *Signs*: see Introduction. *His glory*: see 12.23; 17.24. 12: *Capernaum* (Mk.1.21-28) is on the Lake of Galilee.

2.13-25: *The cleansing of the Temple*. 13: Jn. understands Jesus' ministry to have spanned three *Passovers* (see also 6.4; 11.55) of which this is the first. Contrast the Synoptics where only a single Passover is involved. On Passover, see Mk.14.1 n. 14: The *temple* here includes the entire area of which the sanctuary proper is the center; see v. 19 n. *Money-changers*: see Mt.21.12 n. 15: This action is symbolic; there are a good many "acted" prophecies in the OT

out,' he said; 'you must not turn my  
 17 Father's house into a market.' His  
 disciples recalled the words of Scrip-  
 18 ture, 'Zeal for thy house will destroy  
 me.' The Jews challenged Jesus: 'What  
 19 sign', they asked, 'can you show as  
 authority for your action?' 'Destroy  
 20 this temple,' Jesus replied, 'and in three  
 days I will raise it again.' They said,  
 'It has taken forty-six years to build  
 21 this temple. Are you going to raise it  
 again in three days?' But the temple he  
 22 was speaking of was his body. After his  
 resurrection his disciples recalled what  
 he had said, and they believed the  
 Scripture and the words that Jesus had  
 spoken.

23 WHILE HE WAS IN JERUSALEM FOR  
 Passover many gave their allegiance to  
 him when they saw the signs that he  
 24 performed. But Jesus for his part would  
 not trust himself to them. He knew men  
 25 so well, all of them, that he needed no  
 evidence from others about a man, for  
 he himself could tell what was in a man.

3 THERE WAS ONE OF THE PHARISEES  
 named Nicodemus, a member of the  
 2 Jewish Council, who came to Jesus by  
 night. 'Rabbi,' he said, 'we know that  
 you are a teacher sent by God; no one  
 could perform these signs of yours un-  
 3 less God were with him.' Jesus an-  
 swered, 'In truth, in very truth I tell  
 you, unless a man has been born over  
 again he cannot see the kingdom of  
 4 God.' 'But how is it possible', said  
 Nicodemus, 'for a man to be born

when he is old? Can he enter his  
 mother's womb a second time and be  
 5 born?' Jesus answered, 'In truth I tell  
 you, no one can enter the kingdom of  
 God without being born from water  
 and spirit. Flesh can give birth only to  
 6 flesh; it is spirit that gives birth to  
 spirit. You ought not to be astonished,  
 7 then, when I tell you that you must be  
 born over again. The wind<sup>h</sup> blows  
 8 where it wills; you hear the sound of it,  
 but you do not know where it comes  
 from, or where it is going. So with  
 everyone who is born from spirit<sup>h</sup>.

Nicodemus replied, 'How is this  
 9 possible?' 'What!' said Jesus. 'Is this  
 famous teacher of Israel ignorant of  
 such things? In very truth I tell you, we  
 11 speak of what we know, and testify to  
 what we have seen, and yet you all re-  
 ject our testimony. If you disbelieve me  
 12 when I talk to you about things on  
 earth, how are you to believe if I  
 should talk about the things of  
 heaven?

'No one ever went up into heaven  
 13 except the one who came down from  
 heaven, the Son of Man whose home is  
 in heaven.<sup>i</sup> This Son of Man must be  
 14 lifted up as the serpent was lifted up by  
 Moses in the wilderness, so that every-  
 15 one who has faith in him may in him  
 possess eternal life.

'God loved the world so much that  
 16 he gave his only Son, that everyone  
 who has faith in him may not die but  
 have eternal life. It was not to judge  
 17

<sup>h</sup> wind and spirit are translations of the same Greek word,  
 which has both meanings.  
<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses omit whose home is in heaven.

(see, e.g. Jer.13.1-11). 16: *Market*: see Zech.14.21. 17: In Jn. the term *recalled* usually points to something associated with Jesus which was understood only in Christian reflection after his time (see v. 22; 12.16; 14.26). See Ps.69.9 and Tfn. *q* there. 19: *Temple* here indicates the sanctuary itself; contrast v. 14. 20: *Forty-six years*: see Mt.24.1-3 n. The date would appear to be 27 A.D. 21: *His body*: Jesus' risen body was to supersede the sanctuary; see Mt.24.1-3 n. 23: See 4.48 n.

3.1-21: *Jesus with Nicodemus*. 1: *Pharisees*: Mt.3.7 n. *Jewish Council*: Judea's highest native court, called the Sanhedrin in other translations. *Nicodemus* reappears at 7.50; 19.39. *Rabbi*: see Mt.23.8-10 n. 3: The Gk. for *over again* can also mean "from above." The expression *kingdom of God*, frequent in the Synoptics (see Mk.1.15 n.), is found in Jn. only here and in v. 5. 5: *Water and spirit*: baptism; see 1 Cor.6.11. 6: *Flesh* describes man in his creaturely limitations, while *spirit* can reflect divine action on man. The contrast between flesh and spirit, frequent in the Hellenistic world, is given a strongly religious turn here and in 6.63; 7.79. In 4.24, God is described as spirit. 8: *Wind, spirit*: Tfn. *h*. 13: *Went up*: writing after the resurrection, Jn. refers to the ascension as a past event. 14: *Lifted up* is a term with a paradoxical double meaning which includes both Jesus' crucifixion and his glorification (see 8.28; 12.32,34). On *Moses and the serpent*, see Num.21.4-9; Wis.16.5-6. 16: God's giving *his only Son* in love may allude to Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen.22.1-12); see Rom.8.32. In Jn. *the world* may denote mankind in a good sense (as here) but also in a pejorative sense as in 12.31. 17: Although Jesus' purpose is to save rather than to condemn, Jn. is aware of Jesus' role as *judge* (5.22; 9.39).

the world that God sent his Son into the world, but that through him the world might be saved.

18 'The man who puts his faith in him does not come under judgement; but the unbeliever has already been judged in that he has not given his allegiance

19 to God's only Son. Here lies the test: the light has come into the world, but men preferred darkness to light because

20 their deeds were evil. Bad men all hate the light and avoid it, for fear their

21 practices should be shown up. The honest man comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that God is in all he does.'

22 AFTER THIS, JESUS WENT INTO JUDAEA with his disciples, stayed there with

23 them, and baptized. John too was baptizing at Aenon, near to Salim, because water was plentiful in that

24 region; and people were constantly coming for baptism. This was before John's imprisonment.

25 Some of John's disciples had fallen into a dispute with Jews about purification; so they came to him and said,

26 'Rabbi, there was a man with you on the other side of the Jordan, to whom you bore your witness. Here he is, baptizing, and crowds are flocking to

27 him.' John's answer was: 'A man can have only what God gives him. You

28 yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Messiah; I have been sent as his forerunner." It is the bridegroom to

29 whom the bride belongs. The bridegroom's friend, who stands by and listens to him, is overjoyed at hearing

30 the bridegroom's voice. This joy, this perfect joy, is now mine. As he grows

31 greater, I must grow less.'

He who comes from above is above all others; he who is from the earth belongs to the earth and uses earthly speech. He who comes from heaven<sup>j</sup>

bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his witness. To accept his witness is to attest that

33 God speaks the truth; for he whom

34 God sent utters the words of God, so measureless is God's gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has

35 entrusted him with all authority. He who

36 puts his faith in the Son has hold of eternal life, but he who disobeys the Son shall not see that life; God's wrath rests upon him.

A REPORT NOW REACHED THE PHARISEES: 4 'Jesus is winning and baptizing more disciples than John'; although, in fact, 2 it was only the disciples who were baptizing, and not Jesus himself. When Jesus learned this, he left Judaea and

3 set out once more for Galilee. He had

4 to pass through Samaria, and on his

5 way came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the plot of ground which

6 Jacob gave to his son Joseph and the spring called Jacob's well. It was about

noon, and Jesus, tired after his journey, sat down by the well.

The disciples had gone away to the

8 town to buy food. Meanwhile a

7 Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' The Samaritan woman said, 'What!

9 You, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?' (Jews and Samaritans, it should be noted, do not use

10 vessels in common.<sup>k</sup>) Jesus answered her, 'If only you knew what God gives,

and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

11 'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have no bucket and this well is deep. How can you give me "living water"?' Are you a

12 greater man than Jacob our ancestor, who gave us the well, and drank from it

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses insert *is above all and . . .*  
<sup>k</sup> *Of Jews, it should be noted, are not on familiar terms with Samaritans; some witnesses omit these words.*

3.22-36: Jesus and John. 22: The statement that Jesus *baptized* is qualified in 4.2. 23: *Aenon* (Aram. "springs"): like *Salim*, probably a Samaritan village. 24: Mk.1.14, however, states that Jesus began his ministry after John's arrest. 29: *The bridegroom* imagery recalls the OT theme of God's marriage with Israel (Hos. chs. 1-2). For Jesus' self-designation as the bridegroom see Mk.2.19-20; compare Mt.25.1-13. The imagery appears also in Rev.19.7; 21.2.

4.1-42: Jesus and the Samaritans. 5: *Sychar* is probably Shechem, connected with *Jacob* in Gen.33.18-19. 9: After the fall of the kingdom of Israel (721 B.C.) the population was mixed, though largely Gentile. The descendants are the *Samaritans*. Rebuffed by the Jews returning from the Babylonian Exile (Neh.3.20), the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim (v. 20). 10: *Living water*, from a spring (contrasted in Jer.2.13 with cistern water), here sym-



himself, he and his sons, and his cattle  
 13 too?" Jesus said, 'Everyone who drinks  
 14 this water will be thirsty again, but  
 whoever drinks the water that I shall  
 give him will never suffer thirst any  
 more. The water that I shall give him  
 will be an inner spring always welling  
 15 up for eternal life.' 'Sir,' said the  
 woman, 'give me that water, and then I  
 shall not be thirsty, nor have to come  
 all this way to draw.'  
 16 Jesus replied, 'Go home, call your  
 17 husband and come back.' She answered,  
 'I have no husband.' 'You are right',  
 said Jesus, 'in saying that you  
 18 have no husband, for, although you  
 have had five husbands, the man with  
 whom you are now living is not your  
 husband; you told me the truth there.'  
 19 'Sir,' she replied, 'I can see that you are  
 20 a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on  
 this mountain, but you Jews say that the  
 temple where God should be worshipped  
 21 is in Jerusalem.' 'Believe me,'  
 said Jesus, 'the time is coming when  
 you will worship the Father neither on  
 22 this mountain, nor in Jerusalem. You  
 Samaritans worship without knowing  
 what you worship, while we worship  
 what we know. It is from the Jews that  
 23 salvation comes. But the time approaches,  
 indeed it is already here, when those  
 who are real worshippers will worship the  
 Father in spirit and in truth. Such are the  
 24 worshippers whom the Father wants. God  
 is spirit, and those who worship him must  
 worship in spirit and in truth.' The woman  
 25 answered, 'I know that Messiah' (that  
 is Christ) 'is coming. When he comes  
 26 he will tell us everything.' Jesus said,  
 'I am he, I who am speaking to you  
 now.'  
 27 At that moment his disciples returned,  
 and were astonished to find him talking  
 with a woman; but none of them said,  
 28 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you  
 talking with her?' The woman put down  
 her water-jar and went away to the town,  
 29 where she said to the people, 'Come and  
 see a man

who has told me everything I ever did.  
 Could this be the Messiah?' They came  
 30 out of the town and made their way  
 towards him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging  
 31 him, 'Rabbi, have something to eat.'  
 But he said, 'I have food to eat of which  
 32 you know nothing.' At this the disciples  
 33 said to one another, 'Can someone have  
 brought him food?' But Jesus said  
 34 'It is meat and drink for me to do the  
 will of him who sent me until I have  
 finished his work.'

'Do you not say, "Four months more  
 35 and then comes harvest"? But look, I tell  
 you, look round on the fields; they are  
 already white, ripe for harvest. The  
 36 reaper is drawing his pay and gathering  
 a crop for eternal life, so that sower and  
 reaper may rejoice together. That is  
 37 how the saying comes true: "One sows,  
 and another reaps." I sent you to reap  
 38 a crop for which you have not toiled.  
 Others toiled and you have come in for  
 the harvest of their toil.'

Many Samaritans of that town came  
 39 to believe in him because of the woman's  
 testimony: 'He told me everything I ever  
 40 did.' So when these Samaritans had  
 come to him they pressed him to stay  
 with them; and he stayed there two days.  
 41 Many more became believers because of  
 what they heard from his own lips. They  
 42 told the woman, 'It is no longer because  
 of what you said that we believe, for we  
 have heard him ourselves; and we know  
 that this is in truth the Saviour of the  
 world.'

WHEN THE TWO DAYS WERE OVER HE  
 43 set out for Galilee; for Jesus himself  
 44 declared that a prophet is without  
 honour in his own country. On his  
 45 arrival in Galilee the Galileans gave  
 him a welcome, because they had seen  
 all that he did at the festival in  
 Jerusalem; they had been at the festival  
 themselves.

Once again he visited Cana-in-  
 46 Galilee, where he had turned the water

bolizes the Holy Spirit. 16: *Husband*: a play on words is involved, since the same Gk. word means both "husband" and "man." 23: God is to be worshipped in *spirit* and *truth*, rather than by visits to cultic holy places. 24: That *God is spirit* does not mean for Jn. that God is remote from history; rather, it affirms his involvement in history. 35: Compare Mt.9.37-38.

4.43-54: Second sign at Cana. See 2.1-11. 44: See Mk.6.4. 45: *In Jerusalem*: see 2.23. 46: This

into wine. An officer in the royal service was there, whose son was lying ill at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judaea into Galilee, he came to him and begged him to go down and cure his son, who was at the point of death. Jesus said to him, 'Will none of you ever believe without seeing signs and portents?' The officer pleaded with him, 'Sir, come down before my boy dies.' Then Jesus said, 'Return home; your son will live.' The man believed what Jesus said and started for home. When he was on his way down his servants met him with the news, 'Your boy is going to live.' So he asked them what time it was when he began to recover. They said, 'Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.' The father noted that this was the exact time when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live', and he and all his household became believers.

54 This was now the second sign which Jesus performed after coming down from Judaea into Galilee.

5 LATER ON JESUS WENT UP TO JERUSALEM for one of the Jewish festivals.<sup>l</sup>  
 2 Now at the Sheep-Pool in Jerusalem there is a place with five colonnades. Its name in the language of the Jews is  
 3 Bethesda. In these colonnades there lay a crowd of sick people, blind, lame,  
 5 and paralysed.<sup>m</sup> Among them was a man who had been crippled for thirty-  
 6 eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and was aware that he had been ill a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to recover?' 'Sir,' he replied, 'I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is disturbed, but while I am moving, someone else is in the pool  
 8 before me.' Jesus answered, 'Rise to

your feet, take up your bed and walk.' The man recovered instantly, took up his stretcher, and began to walk.

That day was a Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the Sabbath. You are not allowed to carry your bed on the Sabbath.' He answered, 'The man who cured me said, "Take up your bed and walk."' They asked him, 'Who is the man who told you to take up your bed and walk?' But the cripple who had been cured did not know; for the place was crowded and Jesus had slipped away. A little later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'Now that you are well again, leave your sinful ways, or you may suffer something worse.' The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him.

It was works of this kind done on the Sabbath that stirred the Jews to persecute Jesus. He defended himself by saying, 'My Father has never yet ceased his work, and I am working too.' This made the Jews still more determined to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but, by calling God his own Father, he claimed equality with God.

To this charge Jesus replied, 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he does only what he sees the Father doing: what the Father does, the Son does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all his works, and will show greater yet, to fill you with wonder. As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to men,

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read for the Jewish festival.

<sup>m</sup> Some witnesses add waiting for the disturbance of the water; some further insert (4) for from time to time an angel came down into the pool and stirred up the water. The first to plunge in after this disturbance recovered from whatever disease had afflicted him.

officer was probably in the employ of Herod Antipas (see Lk.3.1 n.). 48: Jn. exhibits an ambivalence with respect to *signs*, which provide the substance of 1.19-12.50 (the Book of Signs; see Introduction). Here, Jn. attempts to establish limits to their significance; *signs and portents* cannot produce real faith, for Jesus is no mere wonder-worker.

5.1-15: Cure of a cripple on the Sabbath. 1: *One of the Jewish festivals*: possibly Pentecost. 2: In addition to the four *colonnades* which surrounded the pool, a fifth divided it in half. 14: Since Jesus' admonition, *leave your sinful ways*, comes after the healing, it is not intended to connect the man's disability with sin (see 9.3). Rather, it teaches that the purpose of the healing is to lead to a new life.

5.16-30: Jesus' divine Sonship. For Jn., Jesus is the Son of God in that he exercises uniquely divine prerogatives which show he is one with the Father (10.30; 17.11,22). 17: God continues *his work* even on the Sabbath in sustaining the world. 19-30: That the *Son . . . does only what he sees the Father doing* (v. 19) is explained in the following verses. First (vv. 21,24-26), as the

22 as he determines. And again, the  
 23 Father does not judge anyone, but has  
 given full jurisdiction to the Son; it is  
 his will that all should pay the same  
 honour to the Son as to the Father. To  
 deny honour to the Son is to deny it to  
 the Father who sent him.

24 'In very truth, anyone who gives heed  
 to what I say and puts his trust in him  
 who sent me has hold of eternal life, and  
 does not come up for judgement, but  
 has already passed from death to life.

25 In truth, in very truth I tell you, a time  
 is coming, indeed it is already here,  
 when the dead shall hear the voice of  
 the Son of God, and all who hear shall  
 26 come to life. For as the Father has life-  
 giving power in himself, so has the Son,  
 by the Father's gift.

27 'As Son of Man, he has also been  
 28 given the right to pass judgement. Do  
 not wonder at this, because the time is  
 coming when all who are in the grave  
 shall hear his voice and come out:  
 29 those who have done right will rise to  
 life; those who have done wrong will  
 rise to hear their doom. I cannot act by  
 30 myself; I judge as I am bidden, and my  
 sentence is just, because my aim is not  
 my own will, but the will of him who  
 sent me.

31 'If I testify on my own behalf, that  
 32 testimony does not hold good. There is  
 another who bears witness for me, and  
 33 I know that his testimony holds. Your  
 messengers have been to John; you  
 34 have his testimony to the truth. Not  
 that I rely on human testimony, but I  
 remind you of it for your own salvation.  
 35 John was a lamp, burning brightly, and  
 for a time you were ready to exult in his  
 36 light. But I rely on a testimony higher  
 than John's. There is enough to testify  
 that the Father has sent me, in the  
 works my Father gave me to do and to  
 finish—the very works I have in hand.

This testimony to me was given by the 37  
 Father who sent me, although you  
 never heard his voice, or saw his form.  
 But his word has found no home in 38  
 you, for you do not believe the one  
 whom he sent. You study the scriptures 39  
 diligently, supposing that in having  
 them you have eternal life; yet, al-  
 though their testimony points to me,  
 you refuse to come to me for that life. 40

'I do not look to men for honour. 41  
 But with you it is different, as I know 42  
 well, for you have no love for God in  
 you. I have come accredited by my 43  
 Father, and you have no welcome for  
 me; if another comes self-accredited  
 you will welcome him. How can you 44  
 have faith so long as you receive  
 honour from one another, and care  
 nothing for the honour that comes  
 from him who alone is God? Do not 45  
 imagine that I shall be your accuser at  
 the Father's tribunal. Your accuser is  
 Moses, the very Moses on whom you  
 have set your hope. If you believed 46  
 Moses you would believe what I tell you,  
 for it was about me that he wrote. But  
 if you do not believe what he wrote, 47  
 how are you to believe what I say?'

SOME TIME LATER JESUS WITHDREW TO 6  
 the farther shore of the Sea of Galilee  
 (or Tiberias), and a large crowd of 2  
 people followed who had seen the signs  
 he performed in healing the sick. Then 3  
 Jesus went up the hill-side and sat down  
 with his disciples. It was near the time 4  
 of Passover, the great Jewish festival.  
 Raising his eyes and seeing a large 5  
 crowd coming towards him, Jesus said  
 to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread  
 to feed these people?' This he said to 6  
 test him; Jesus himself knew what he  
 meant to do. Philip replied, 'Twenty 7  
 pounds' would not buy enough bread  
 n Literally 200 denarii.

*Son, he gives life to men* (v. 21). Second (vv. 22,27–30), as *Son of Man* (see Mk.2.10 n.), he is the judge of mankind at the final resurrection (vv. 28–29).

5.31–47: Further testimonies to Jesus. See 1.19–51 and n. The preceding material seems to be regarded as Jesus' testimony to himself; now other witnesses are evoked. 32: *Another*: God; see 8.18. 33–35: *John*: see 1.35–39. 36–37: *Jesus' works*: for example, 2.1–11. 39–40: *The scriptures*: see, for example, 6.45. The passage may reflect debate with opponents over the proper interpretation of OT passages. 46: The appeal to *Moses* refers specifically to Deut.18.15, or possibly to the Pentateuch as a whole.

6.1–15: *The sign of the bread*. 3: *Hill-side*: a frequent motif; see Mt.5.1 n. Jn. may wish to contrast Jesus, who takes his disciples onto the mountain with him, with Moses, who ascended alone according to Exod.19.10–24. 7: The sum of money was the equivalent of two hundred

for every one of them to have a little.’  
 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him,  
 9 ‘There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that  
 10 among so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ There was plenty of  
 11 grass there, so the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Then Jesus took  
 the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to the people as they sat there. He  
 12 did the same with the fishes, and they had as much as they wanted. When  
 everyone had had enough, he said to his disciples, ‘Collect the pieces left  
 13 over, so that nothing may be lost.’ This they did, and filled twelve baskets  
 with the pieces left uneaten of the five barley loaves,  
 14 When the people saw the sign Jesus had performed, the word went round,  
 ‘Surely this must be the prophet that was to come into the world.’ Jesus,  
 15 aware that they meant to come and seize him to proclaim him king, with-  
 drew again to the hills by himself.  
 16 At nightfall his disciples went down  
 17 to the sea, got into their boat, and pushed off to cross the water to  
 Capernaum. Darkness had already fallen, and Jesus had not yet joined  
 18 them. By now a strong wind was blowing and the sea grew rough. When they  
 19 had rowed about three or four miles they saw Jesus walking on the sea and  
 approaching the boat. They were terrified, but he called out, ‘It is I; do  
 20 not be afraid.’ Then they were ready to take him aboard, and immediately  
 the boat reached the land they were making for.  
 22 NEXT MORNING THE CROWD WAS STAND-  
 ing on the opposite shore. They had seen only one boat there, and Jesus,  
 they knew, had not embarked with his disciples, who had gone away without

him. Boats from Tiberias, however, 23  
 came ashore<sup>o</sup> near the place where the people had eaten the bread over which  
 the Lord gave thanks.<sup>p</sup> When the 24  
 people saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were any longer there, they  
 themselves went aboard these boats and made for Capernaum in search of  
 Jesus. They found him on the other 25  
 side. ‘Rabbi,’ they said, ‘when did you come here?’ Jesus replied, ‘In very truth 26  
 I know that you have not come looking for me because you saw signs, but  
 because you ate the bread and your hunger was satisfied. You must work, 27  
 not for this perishable food, but for the food that lasts, the food of eternal life.

‘This food the Son of Man will give you, for he it is upon whom God the  
 Father has set the seal of his authority.’ ‘Then what must we do’, they asked 28  
 him, ‘if we are to work as God would have us work?’ Jesus replied, ‘This is 29  
 the work that God requires: believe in the one whom he has sent.’

They said, ‘What sign can you give 30  
 us to see, so that we may believe you? What is the work you do? Our 31  
 ancestors had manna to eat in the desert; as Scripture says, “He gave  
 them bread from heaven to eat.”’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you this; the 32  
 truth is, not that Moses gave you the bread from heaven, but that my Father  
 gives you the real bread from heaven. The bread that God gives comes down<sup>q</sup> 33  
 from heaven and brings life to the world.’ They said to him, ‘Sir, give us 34  
 this bread now and always.’ Jesus said 35  
 to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be  
 hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty. But you, as I 36

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses read Other boats from Tiberias came ashore . . .

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses omit over which . . . thanks.

<sup>q</sup> Or is he who comes down . . .

days’ wages. 14: The *prophet* here, as in 1.21,25, is the one like Moses (see Deut.18.15). 15: The avoidance of being proclaimed *king* probably is intended to clarify for the reader that Jesus was not a political figure; see 18.33–37.

6.16–21. *Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee.* 18: The incident of the storm is described tersely compared with Mk.6.47–51. 20: The scene focuses on Jesus’ words, “*It is I* (lit. ‘I am’); *do not be afraid*” (see 8.24 n.).

6.22–71: *The bread of life.* 26–28: The crowd fails to see beyond the material “sign” of the miraculous feeding to the *food of eternal life which the Son of Man will give.* 31: *On manna*, see Exod.16.14. The quotation is from Ps.78.24. 32–33: Jesus, sent by the Father (3.31), is *the real bread from heaven.* 32: *Moses*: compare v.14 n. 35: *Never . . . be thirsty*: see 4.14–15.

said, do not believe although you have  
 37 seen.' All that the Father gives me will  
 come to me, and the man who comes  
 38 to me I will never turn away. I have  
 come down from heaven, not to do my  
 own will, but the will of him who sent  
 39 me. It is his will that I should not lose  
 even one of all that he has given me,  
 but raise them all up on the last day.  
 40 For it is my Father's will that everyone  
 who looks upon the Son and puts his  
 faith in him shall possess eternal life;  
 and I will raise him up on the last  
 day.'

41 At this the Jews began to murmur  
 disapprovingly because he said, 'I am  
 the bread which came down from  
 42 heaven.' They said, 'Surely this is Jesus  
 son of Joseph; we know his father and  
 mother. How can he now say, "I have  
 43 come down from heaven"?' Jesus  
 answered, 'Stop murmuring among  
 44 yourselves. No man can come to me  
 unless he is drawn by the Father who  
 sent me; and I will raise him up on the  
 45 last day. It is written in the prophets:  
 "And they shall all be taught by God."  
 Everyone who has listened to the  
 Father and learned from him comes  
 to me.

46 'I do not mean that anyone has seen  
 the Father. He who has come from  
 God has seen the Father, and he alone.  
 47 In truth, in very truth I tell you, the  
 believer possesses eternal life. I am the  
 48 bread of life. Your forefathers ate the  
 manna in the desert and they are dead.  
 50 I am speaking of the bread that comes  
 down from heaven, which a man may  
 51 eat, and never die. I am that living  
 bread which has come down from  
 heaven; if anyone eats this bread he  
 shall live for ever. Moreover, the bread  
 which I will give is my own flesh; I give  
 it for the life of the world.'

52 This led to a fierce dispute among  
 the Jews. 'How can this man give us his  
 53 flesh to eat?' they said. Jesus replied,  
 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless  
 you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and

drink his blood you can have no life in  
 you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks  
 54 my blood possesses eternal life, and I  
 will raise him up on the last day. My  
 55 flesh is real food; my blood is real  
 drink. Whoever eats my flesh and  
 56 drinks my blood dwells continually in  
 me and I dwell in him. As the living  
 57 Father sent me, and I live because of  
 the Father, so he who eats me shall live  
 because of me. This is the bread which  
 58 came down from heaven; and it is not  
 like the bread which our fathers ate:  
 they are dead, but whoever eats this  
 bread shall live for ever.'

THIS WAS SPOKEN IN SYNAGOGUE WHEN  
 59 Jesus was teaching in Capernaum.  
 Many of his disciples on hearing it  
 60 exclaimed, 'This is more than we can  
 stomach! Why listen to such talk?'  
 Jesus was aware that his disciples were  
 61 murmuring about it and asked them,  
 'Does this shock you? What if you see  
 the Son of Man ascending to the place  
 where he was before? The spirit alone  
 63 gives life; the flesh is of no avail; the  
 words which I have spoken to you are  
 both spirit and life. And yet there are  
 64 some of you who have no faith.' For  
 Jesus knew all along who were without  
 faith and who was to betray him. So  
 65 he said, 'This is why I told you that no  
 one can come to me unless it has been  
 granted to him by the Father.'

From that time on, many of his  
 66 disciples withdrew and no longer went  
 about with him. So Jesus asked the  
 67 Twelve, 'Do you also want to leave  
 me?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord,  
 68 to whom shall we go? Your words are  
 words of eternal life. We have faith,  
 69 and we know that you are the Holy  
 One of God.' Jesus answered, 'Have I  
 70 not chosen you, all twelve? Yet one of  
 you is a devil.' He meant Judas, son of  
 71 Simon Iscariot. He it was who would  
 betray him, and he was one of the  
 Twelve.

r Some witnesses add me.

37b: See 17.2,7,24. 45: See Isa.54.13; Jer.31.33-34 for the experiential, inner knowledge of God. 51-54: Notice the allusion to Jesus' words over the bread and wine at the Last Supper (see 1 Cor.11.24). 63: Until Jesus' glorification (v. 62; 7.39), his words are not known as *spirit and life* (see 2.22; 12.16). 68-69: Peter's profession of faith; see Mt.16.13-16 where no mention is made of disciples who have withdrawn from Jesus. 70-71: In Mt.16.23, Jesus addresses Peter as "Satan"; here, Judas is identified as *a devil*.

*The great controversy*

7 AFTERWARDS JESUS WENT ABOUT IN Galilee. He wished to avoid Judaea because the Jews were looking for a chance to kill him. As the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was close at hand, his brothers said to him, 'You should leave this district and go into Judaea, so that your disciples there may see the great things you are doing. Surely no one can hope to be in the public eye if he works in seclusion. If you really are doing such things as these, show yourself to the world.' For even his brothers had no faith in him. Jesus said to them, 'The right time for me has not yet come, but any time is right for you. The world cannot hate you; but it hates me for exposing the wickedness of its ways. Go to the festival yourselves. I am not<sup>5</sup> going up to this festival because the right time for me has not yet come.' With this answer he stayed behind in Galilee.

10 Later, when his brothers had gone to the festival, he went up himself, not publicly, but almost in secret. The Jews were looking for him at the festival and asking, 'Where is he?', and there was much whispering about him in the crowds. 'He is a good man', said some. 'No,' said others, 'he is leading the people astray.' However, no one talked about him openly, for fear of the Jews.

14 WHEN THE FESTIVAL WAS ALREADY HALF over, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished: 'How is it', they said, 'that this untrained man has such learning?' Jesus replied, 'The teaching that I give is not my own; it is the teaching of him who sent me. Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own. Anyone whose

teaching is merely his own, aims at honour for himself. But if a man aims at the honour of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in him.

'Did not Moses give you the Law? 19 Yet you all break it. Why are you trying to kill me?' The crowd answered, 20 'You are possessed! Who wants to kill you?' Jesus replied, 'Once only have I 21 done work on the Sabbath, and you are all taken aback. But consider: Moses 22 gave you the law of circumcision (not that it originated with Moses but with the patriarchs) and you circumcise on the Sabbath. Well then, if a child is 23 circumcised on the Sabbath to avoid breaking the Law of Moses, why are you indignant with me for giving health on the Sabbath to the whole of a man's body? Do not judge superficially, but 24 be just in your judgements.'

At this some of the people of 25 Jerusalem began to say, 'Is not this the man they want to put to death? And 26 here he is, speaking openly, and they have not a word to say to him. Can it be that our rulers have actually decided that this is the Messiah? And 27 yet we know where this man comes from, but when the Messiah appears no one is to know where he comes from.' Thereupon Jesus cried aloud as he taught in the temple, 'No doubt you know me; no doubt you know where I come from.<sup>6</sup> Yet I have not come of my own accord. I was sent by the One who truly is, and him you do not know. I know him because I come 29 from him and he it is who sent me.' At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him because his appointed hour had not yet come. Yet 31 among the people many believed in him. 'When the Messiah comes,' they

<sup>5</sup> Some witnesses read not yet.

<sup>6</sup> Or: Do you know me? And do you know where I come from?

7.1-36: The Feast of Tabernacles. 2: *Tabernacles* was a thanksgiving festival, associated with Israel's wandering in the desert, held for seven days in September-October (Lev.23.39-43; Deut.16.13-15). In Jn. chs. 7-8, it provides the background in terms of which Jesus' self-revelation is interpreted (see v. 37 n.; 8.12 n.). 6: *The right time*: the moment determined by God's will. Jn. consistently conceives of a preordained schedule of events in the career of Jesus. 8: *I am not going up* involves a play on words in that it can also refer to Jesus' ascension (20.17). 15: Jesus apparently lacks formal schooling in Scripture and, therefore, is regarded as *untrained*. 19: The polemic against the *Law* is heightened as the Gospel proceeds; see 8.17 n.; 10.34. 21: See 5.1-9. 26: *Our rulers*: that is, leaders. 27: The hidden character of the Messiah was a motif, too, in ancient Jewish Enoch literature; it is possibly alluded to in Mk.8.28; Mt.24.23-27,

said, 'is it likely that he will perform more signs than this man?'

32 The Pharisees overheard these mutterings of the people about him, so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him. Then Jesus said, 'For a little longer I shall be with you; then I am going away to him who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me. Where I am, you cannot come.' So the Jews said to one another, 'Where does he intend to go, that we should not be able to find him? Will he go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?'

36 What did he mean by saying, "You will look for me, but you will not find me. Where I am, you cannot come"?'<sup>u</sup>

37 ON THE LAST AND GREATEST DAY OF THE festival Jesus stood and cried aloud, 'If anyone is thirsty let him come to me; whoever believes in me, let him drink.' As Scripture says, 'Streams of living water shall flow out from within him.'<sup>v</sup> He was speaking of the Spirit which believers in him would receive later; for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

40 On hearing this some of the people said, 'This must certainly be the expected prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' Others again, 'Surely the Messiah is not to come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah is to be of the family of David, from David's village of Bethlehem?'

43 Thus he caused a split among the people. Some were for seizing him, but no one laid hands on him.

45 The temple police came back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked, 'Why have you not brought him?'

46 'No man', they answered, 'ever spoke

as this man speaks.' The Pharisees <sup>47</sup> retorted, 'Have you too been misled? Is there a single one of our rulers who <sup>48</sup> has believed in him, or of the Pharisees? As for this rabble, which cares nothing <sup>49</sup> for the Law, a curse is on them.' Then <sup>50</sup> one of their number, Nicodemus (the man who had once visited Jesus), intervened. 'Does our law', he asked <sup>51</sup> them, 'permit us to pass judgement on a man unless we have first given him a hearing and learned the facts?' 'Are <sup>52</sup> you a Galilean too?' they retorted. 'Study the scriptures and you will find that prophets do not come from Galilee.'<sup>w</sup>

ONCE AGAIN JESUS ADDRESSED THE <sup>8</sup>12 people: 'I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall wander in the dark; he shall have the light of life.' The Pharisees said to him, 'You are <sup>13</sup> witness in your own cause; your testimony is not valid.' Jesus replied, <sup>14</sup> 'My testimony is valid, even though I do bear witness about myself; because I know where I come from, and where I am going. You do not know either where I come from or where I am going. You judge by worldly standards. I pass judgement on no man, but <sup>15</sup> if I do judge, my judgement is valid because it is not I alone who judge, but I and he who sent me. In your own law <sup>17</sup> it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. Here am I, a witness <sup>18</sup> in my own cause, and my other witness is the Father who sent me.' They <sup>19</sup> asked, 'Where is your father?' Jesus replied, 'You know neither me nor my

<sup>u</sup> Some witnesses here insert the passage printed on p. 138.  
<sup>v</sup> Or 'If any man is thirsty let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as Scripture says, streams of living water shall flow out from within him.'  
<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses here insert the passage 7. 53-8. 11, which is printed on p. 138.

as well. 33-36: The theme of *going away*, with the significant overtone of Jesus' ascension, recurs in 8.21; 13.33.

7.37-52: **Jesus, the source of living water.** 37: At Tabernacles (see 7.2 n.), water was carried in a gold pitcher from the spring of Siloam and was poured out as a petition for rain. 38: *Scripture*: see Isa.12.3; Pss.78.15-16; 105.41. The text presents Jesus, not the believer (see Tfn. *v*), as the source of *living water*, a symbol of the Spirit. 39: See Jn.14.15-16. The giving of the *Spirit* is the result of Jesus' death and glorification. 42: 2 Sam.7.12-14; Mic.5.2. That Jesus was descended from King David was a significant motif in early Christology (see Mt.1.1 n.; Rom.1.3; 2 Tim.2.8). 52: See Tfn. *w*.

8.12-30: **Jesus, the light of the world.** 12: At Tabernacles (see 7.2 n.) the Temple court was brightly illuminated; Jesus is described as the *light* (see 1.4 n.,9; 3.19; 9.5; 12.46) who brings *life* to men (1.4). 14: See 5.31. 17: By referring to the *law* as *your own*, Jn. has Jesus dissociate himself from the Mosaic institutions (see 7.19) or from Judaism (see 1.19 n.). 19: See 14.7; 16.3.

Father; if you knew me you would know my Father as well.'

20 These words were spoken by Jesus in the treasury as he taught in the temple. Yet no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

21 Again he said to them, 'I am going away. You will look for me, but you will die in your sin; where I am going you cannot come.' The Jews then said, 'Perhaps he will kill himself: is that what he means when he says, "Where 23 I am going you cannot come"?' So Jesus continued, 'You belong to this world below, I to the world above. Your home is in this world, mine is not. 24 That is why I told you that you would die in your sins. If you do not believe that I am what I am, you will die in your sins.' They asked him, 'Who are you?' Jesus answered, 'Why should I 26 speak to you at all?<sup>x</sup> I have much to say about you—and in judgement. But he who sent me speaks the truth, and what I heard from him I report to the world.'

27 They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So 28 Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man you will know that I am what I am. I do nothing on my own authority, but in all that I say, 29 I have been taught by my Father. He who sent me is present with me, and has not left me alone; for I always do 30 what is acceptable to him.' As he said this, many put their faith in him.

31 Turning to the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you dwell within the revelation I have brought, 32 you are indeed my disciples; you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They replied, 'We are 33 Abraham's descendants; we have never been in slavery to any man. What do you mean by saying, "You will become 34 free men"?' 'In very truth I tell you', said Jesus, 'that everyone who commits

sin is a slave. The slave has no permanent standing in the household, but the son belongs to it for ever. If then the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.

'I know that you are descended from 37 Abraham, but you are bent on killing me because my teaching makes no headway with you. I am revealing in 38 words what I saw in my Father's presence; and you are revealing in action what you learned from your father.' They retorted, 'Abraham is our 39 father.' 'If you were Abraham's children', Jesus replied, 'you would do as Abraham did.<sup>y</sup> As it is, you are bent on 40 killing me, a man who told you the truth, as I heard it from God. That is not how Abraham acted. You are 41 doing your own father's work.'

They said, 'We are not base-born; God is our father, and God alone.' Jesus said, 'If God were your father, 42 you would love me, for God is the source of my being, and from him I come. I have not come of my own accord; he sent me. Why do you not 43 understand my language? It is because my revelation is beyond your grasp.

'Your father is the devil and you 44 choose to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and is not rooted in the truth; there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie he is speaking his own language, for he is a liar and the 45 father of lies. But I speak the truth and therefore you do not believe me. Which of you can prove me in the 46 wrong?<sup>z</sup> If what I say is true, why do you not believe me? He who has God 47 for his father listens to the words of God. You are not God's children; that is why you do not listen.'

The Jews answered, 'Are we not right 48

<sup>x</sup> Or What I have told you all along.

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read 'If you are Abraham's children', Jesus replied, 'do as Abraham did.'

<sup>z</sup> Or Which of you convicts me of sin?

20: *In the treasury*: see Lk.21.1 n. 21: See 7.33–36 and n. *Your sin*: the refusal to believe in Jesus as the Son of God (see also v. 24). 24: *I am what I am* (lit. "I am"): perhaps this is an echo of Exod.3.14 used to indicate Jesus' divine nature (see vv. 28,58; 13.19). 25: The meaning of Jesus' reply is not sufficiently clear for any translation to be regarded as secure (see Tfn. x). 28: *Lifted up* is another term with extended meaning. Jesus is lifted up on the cross, but this is also his exaltation or glorification (12.32).

8.31–59: *Further controversies*. 32: *Set you free*: from sin. The saving *truth* is not abstract but rather that found in the gospel and apprehended by faith. 35: This seems to be a parenthetical remark by Jn., not a word of Jesus; compare Heb.3.3–6. 48: *Samaritan*: a term of abuse;



in saying that you are a Samaritan, and that you are possessed?" "I am not possessed," said Jesus; "I am honouring my Father, but you dishonour me. I do not care about my own glory; there is one who does care, and he is judge. In very truth I tell you, if anyone obeys my teaching he shall never know what it is to die."

The Jews said, "Now we are certain that you are possessed. Abraham is dead; the prophets are dead; and yet you say, "If anyone obeys my teaching he shall not know what it is to die." Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? The prophets are dead too. What do you claim to be?"

Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, that glory of mine is worthless. It is the Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, "He is our God", though you do not know him. But I know him; if I said that I did not know him I should be a liar like you. But in truth I know him and obey his word.

"Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day; he saw it and was glad." The Jews protested, "You are not yet fifty years old. How can you have seen Abraham?"<sup>a</sup> Jesus said, "In very truth I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am."

They picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus was not to be seen; and he left the temple.<sup>b</sup>

**9 AS HE WENT ON HIS WAY JESUS SAW A** man blind from his birth. His disciples put the question, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents? Why was he born blind?" "It is not that this man or his parents sinned," Jesus answered; "he was born blind so that God's power might be displayed in curing him. While daylight lasts we<sup>c</sup> must carry on the work of him who sent me; night comes, when no one can work. While I am in the world I am the light of the world."

With these words he spat on the

ground and made a paste with the spittle; he spread it on the man's eyes, and said to him, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam." (The name means 'sent'.) The man went away and washed, and when he returned he could see.

His neighbours and those who were accustomed to see him begging said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Others said, "Yes, this is the man." Others again said, "No, but it is someone like him." The man himself said, "I am the man." They asked him, "How were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made a paste and smeared my eyes with it, and told me to go to Siloam and wash. I went and washed, and gained my sight." "Where is he?" they asked. He answered, "I do not know."

**THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN BLIND WAS** brought before the Pharisees. As it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened his eyes, the Pharisees now asked him by what means he had gained his sight. The man told them, "He spread a paste on my eyes; then I washed, and now I can see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This fellow is no man of God; he does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How could such signs come from a sinful man?" So they took different sides. Then they continued to question him: "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He answered, "He is a prophet."

The Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, until they had summoned his parents and questioned them: "Is this man your son? Do you say that he was born blind? How is it that he can see now?" The parents replied, "We know that he is our son and that he was born

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read How can Abraham have seen you?  
<sup>b</sup> Or the division may be made after the words was not to be seen; the paragraph following would then begin Then Jesus left the temple, and as he went . . .  
<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read I.

see 4.9 n. 56: *He saw it*: similarly 12.41 with respect to Isaiah. Since the Christ was preexistent, he already existed in Abraham's time and Isaiah's. Later Jewish tradition (based on Gen. 15.13-17) portrays Abraham as having had the entire future history of his descendants revealed to him. 58: *I am*: see 8.24 n. The preexistent Christ preceded Abraham.

9.1-41: *Cure of a blind man on the Sabbath*. This "sign" reveals Jesus as the light of men, who not only restores physical sight, but confers spiritual sight through faith and baptism. 2-3: Compare Lk.13.1-5. 6: A ritual "anointing." 7: *Siloam*: Heb. *shiloah*, lit. "sent," but denoting "conduit." Jn. wishes to associate Jesus and the pool, both *sent* by God; Jn. sees

- 21 blind. But how it is that he can now see, or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age; he will speak for himself.' His parents gave this answer because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jewish authorities had already agreed that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah should be banned from the synagogue. That is why the parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'
- 22 So for the second time they summoned the man who had been blind, and said, 'Speak the truth before God. We know that this fellow is a sinner.'
- 23 'Whether or not he is a sinner, I do not know', the man replied. 'All I know is this: once I was blind, now I can see.'
- 24 'What did he do to you?' they asked. 'How did he open your eyes?' 'I have told you already,' he retorted, 'but you took no notice. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' Then they became abusive. 'You are that man's disciple,' they said, 'but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we do not know where he comes from.'
- 25 The man replied, 'What an extraordinary thing! Here is a man who has opened my eyes, yet you do not know where he comes from! It is common knowledge that God does not listen to sinners; he listens to anyone who is devout and obeys his will. To open the eyes of a man born blind—it is unheard of since time began. If that man had not come from God he could have done nothing.' 'Who are you to give us lessons,' they retorted, 'born and bred in sin as you are?' Then they expelled him from the synagogue.
- 26 Jesus heard that they had expelled him. When he found him he asked, 'Have you faith in the Son of Man<sup>d</sup>?' The man answered, 'Tell me who he is, sir, that I should put my faith in him.'
- 'You have seen him,' said Jesus; 'indeed, it is he who is speaking to you.' 'Lord, I believe', he said, and bowed before him.
- Jesus said, 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world—to give sight to the sightless and to make blind those who see.' Some Pharisees in his company asked, 'Do you mean that we are blind?' 'If you were blind,' said Jesus, 'you would not be guilty, but because you say "We see", your guilt remains.'
- 'IN TRUTH I TELL YOU, IN VERY TRUTH, the man who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is nothing but a thief or a robber. The man who enters by the door is the shepherd in charge of the sheep. The door-keeper admits him, and the sheep hear his voice; he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he has brought them all out, he goes ahead and the sheep follow, because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.'
- This was a parable that Jesus told them, but they did not understand what he meant by it.
- So Jesus spoke again: 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, I am the door of the sheepfold. The sheep paid no heed to any who came before me, for these were all thieves and robbers. I am the door; anyone who comes into the fold through me shall be safe. He shall go in and out and shall find pasturage.'
- 'The thief comes only to steal, to kill, to destroy; I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fullness. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hireling, when he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read Son of God.

baptismal symbolism in the incident. 22: *Banned from the synagogue*: the practice of expelling Jewish Christians apparently arose near the end of the first century. See also v. 34. 29: The issue of *where he (Jesus) comes from* is raised in different, "earthly" ways by Jesus' opponents (see also 7.27,41-42); Jn. intends the question to elicit the response: "From God" (v. 33; 8.42). 35-38: The dialogue is often viewed as reflecting the late first-century baptismal interrogation of the neophyte.

10.1-21: *Jesus, the Good Shepherd*. 3: God is spoken of often as the shepherd; see Isa.40.11; Jer.23.3; Ps.23.1. 11: The ancient ideal of a *good shepherd* (as in Ezek.34.23) is regarded as

runs away, because he is no shepherd and the sheep are not his. Then the wolf harries the flock and scatters the  
13 sheep. The man runs away because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep and my sheep know me—  
15 as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the  
16 sheep. But there are other sheep of mine, not belonging to this fold, whom I must bring in; and they too will listen to my voice. There will then be one  
17 flock, one shepherd. The Father loves me because I lay down my life, to receive it back again. No one has robbed me of it; I am laying it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to receive it back again; this charge I have received from my Father.'

19 These words once again caused a split among the Jews. Many of them said, 'He is possessed, he is raving. Why  
20 listen to him?' Others said, 'No one possessed by an evil spirit could speak like this. Could an evil spirit open blind men's eyes?'

22 IT WAS WINTER, AND THE FESTIVAL OF THE Dedication was being held in  
23 Jerusalem. Jesus was walking in the temple precincts, in Solomon's Portico.  
24 The Jews gathered round him and asked: 'How long must you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah say so plainly.' 'I have told you,' said Jesus, 'but you do not believe. My deeds done in my Father's name are my credentials,  
25 but because you are not sheepl of my flock you do not believe. My own sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one shall snatch them from my care. My  
26 Father who has given them to me is

greater than all, and no one can snatch them<sup>e</sup> out of the Father's care. My  
27 Father and I are one.'

Once again the Jews picked up stones  
28 to stone him. At this Jesus said to them, 'I have set before you many good deeds, done by my Father's power; for which of these would you stone me?' The Jews replied, 'We are  
29 not going to stone you for any good deed, but for your blasphemy. You, a mere man, claim to be a god.'<sup>f</sup> Jesus  
30 answered, 'Is it not written in your own Law, "I said: You are gods"? Those  
31 are called gods to whom the word of God was delivered—and Scripture cannot be set aside. Then why do you  
32 charge me with blasphemy because I, consecrated and sent into the world by the Father, said, "I am God's son"?'  
33

'If I am not acting as my Father  
34 would, do not believe me. But if I am,  
35 accept the evidence of my deeds, even if you do not believe me, so that you may recognize and know that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.'

This provoked them to one more  
36 attempt to seize him. But he escaped from their clutches.

### Victory over death

JESUS WITHDREW AGAIN ACROSS THE  
37 Jordan, to the place where John had been baptizing earlier. There he stayed, while crowds came to him. They said,  
38 'John gave us no miraculous sign, but all that he said about this man was true.'  
39 Many came to believe in him there.

There was a man named Lazarus  
40 who had fallen ill. His home was at Bethany, the village of Mary and her

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read My Father is greater than all, and that which he has given me no one can snatch . . . ; others read That which my Father has given me is greater than all, and no one can snatch it . . .  
<sup>f</sup> Or claim to be God.

fulfilled in Jesus. 16: *Other sheep*: Gentiles. 17–18: A series of key expressions—*lay down, receive it back, and right*—reflect a major motif that the anticipated crucifixion and vindication of Jesus are not imposed by human decision, but result from Jesus' free decision in obedience to the Father's will. 21: An allusion to the incident in ch. 9.

10.22–39: *Further controversy*. 22: *Dedication*, Hanukkah, a Jewish feast held in December, commemorated the reconsecration of the Temple (164 B.C.) after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes (167 B.C.). 24–38: This exchange can call to mind the trial scene before the Sanhedrin (see Lk.22.66–71). Here, too, the issue is raised whether Jesus claims to be Messiah (vv. 24–31) or the Son of God (vv. 33–38). 34: *You are gods*: an allusion to Ps.82.6.

10.40–11.54: *The supreme sign: Lazarus' resurrection*. 40: See 1.28. 11.1: This *Bethany*

2 sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus had fallen ill, was the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair.) The sisters sent a message to him: 'Sir, you should know that your friend lies ill.' When Jesus heard this he said, 'This illness will not end in death; it has come for the glory of God, to bring glory to the Son of God.' And therefore, though he loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after hearing of his illness Jesus waited for two days in the place where he was.

7 After this, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back to Judaea.' 'Rabbi,' his disciples said, 'it is not long since the Jews there were wanting to stone you. Are you going there again?' Jesus replied, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone can walk in daytime without stumbling, because he sees the light of this world. But if he walks after nightfall he stumbles, because the light fails him.'

11 After saying this he added, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I shall go and wake him.' The disciples said, 'Master, if he has fallen asleep he will recover.' Jesus, however, had been speaking of his death, but they thought that he meant natural sleep. Then Jesus spoke out plainly: 'Lazarus is dead. I am glad not to have been there; it will be for your good and for the good of your faith. But let us go to him.'

16 Thomas, called 'the Twin', said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

17 ON HIS ARRIVAL JESUS FOUND THAT Lazarus had already been four days in the tomb. Bethany was just under two miles from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come from the city to Martha and Mary to condole with them on their brother's death. As soon as she heard that Jesus was on his way,

Martha went to meet him, while Mary stayed at home.

Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, sir, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will grant you.' Jesus said, 'Your brother will rise again.' 'I know that he will rise again', said Martha, 'at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and I am life.<sup>g</sup> If a man has faith in me, even though he die, he shall come to life; and no one who is alive and has faith shall ever die. Do you believe this?' 'Lord, I do,' she answered; 'I now believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who was to come into the world.'

With these words she went to call her sister Mary, and taking her aside, she said, 'The Master is here; he is asking for you.' When Mary heard this she rose up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet reached the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were in the house condoling with Mary, when they saw her start up and leave the house, went after her, for they supposed that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

So Mary came to the place where Jesus was. As soon as she caught sight of him she fell at his feet and said, 'O sir, if you had only been here my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews her companions weeping, he sighed heavily and was deeply moved. 'Where have you laid him?' he asked. They replied, 'Come and see, sir.' Jesus wept. The Jews said, 'How dearly he must have loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not this man, who opened the blind man's eyes, have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?'

Jesus again sighed deeply; then he went over to the tomb. It was a cave,

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses omit and I am life.

(contrast 1.28) was a town near Jerusalem (see v. 18). *Mary and her sister Martha* appear in Lk.10.38–42. On Mary's anointing of Jesus, see 12.1–8 and nn. 2: *Lord*: a title rare in Jn. before the postresurrection narratives (see 6.23, and probably 4.1); it is frequent in Lk.–Acts, and in Paul's letters. 4: *Son of God*: see 5.16–30 n. 9: *The light of this world*: the sun, but with the overtone that even daylight is a sign through which Jesus reveals himself as the true light. 17: It was popularly held that corruption of the body began the third day after death; hence, the point of *four days* is to assert that Lazarus was truly dead and his resurrection real. 25: *I am the resurrection and I am life*: This, like other sayings in Jn. (e.g., 3.13; 5.25; 17.10 n.; perhaps

39 with a stone placed against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, 'Sir, by now there will be a stench; he has  
40 been there four days.' Jesus said, 'Did I not tell you that if you have faith you  
41 will see the glory of God?' So they removed the stone.

Then Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank thee; thou hast heard  
42 me. I knew already that thou always hearest me, but I spoke for the sake of the people standing round, that they might believe that thou didst send me.'  
43 Then he raised his voice in a great cry: 'Lazarus, come forth.' The dead man came out, his hands and feet swathed in linen bands, his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said, 'Loose him; let him go.'

45 NOW MANY OF THE JEWS WHO HAD come to visit Mary and had seen what  
46 Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went off to the Pharisees and reported what he had done.  
47 Thereupon the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a meeting of the Council. 'What action are we taking?' they said. 'This man is performing  
48 many signs. If we leave him alone like this the whole populace will believe in him. Then the Romans will come and sweep away our temple and our nation.'  
49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said, 'You know nothing whatever; you do not use your judgement; it is more to your interest that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be destroyed.' He did not say this of his  
51 own accord, but as the High Priest in office that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the nation—would  
52 die not for the nation alone but to gather together the scattered children

of God. So from that day on they 53 plotted his death.

Accordingly Jesus no longer went 54 about publicly in Judaea, but left that region for the country bordering on the desert, and came to a town called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

THE JEWISH PASSOVER WAS NOW AT 55 hand, and many people went up from the country to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the festival. They 56 looked out for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple they asked one another, 'What do you think? Perhaps he is not coming to the festival.' Now the chief 57 priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where he was should give information, so that they might arrest him.

SIX DAYS BEFORE THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL 12 Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived whom he had raised from the dead. There a supper was given in his 2 honour, at which Martha served, and Lazarus sat among the guests with Jesus. Then Mary brought a pound of 3 very costly perfume, pure oil of nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair, till the house was filled with the fragrance. At this, 4 Judas Iscariot, a disciple of his—the one who was to betray him—said, 'Why 5 was this perfume not sold for thirty pounds<sup>h</sup> and given to the poor?' He 6 said this, not out of any care for the poor, but because he was a thief; he used to pilfer the money put into the common purse, which was in his charge. 'Leave her alone', said Jesus. 7 'Let her keep it till the day when she prepares for my burial; for you have 8

<sup>h</sup> Literally for 300 denarii.

4.38), is best understood if the speaker is viewed as the risen Christ. 40: This remark reflects Jesus' previous statements to the disciples (v. 4) and Martha (vv. 25–26). *Glory of God*: see Introduction. 45–48: Jn. views the raising of Lazarus as the chief basis of the hostility which caused Jesus' death (but, on the other hand, see 10.17–18 n.). 47: Jn. alone ascribes to the Pharisees a role in the ordeal of Jesus (see 18.3), probably reflecting the tension between Christianity and Pharisaic Judaism when this Gospel was written about 90 A.D. 49: *Caiaphas* was high priest from 18 to 36 A.D. 52: *The scattered children of God* probably denotes the Gentiles. 54: *Ephraim*: not the well-known region, but a town which cannot now be located.

11.55–12.50: Conclusion of Jesus' public ministry. 55: This is the third *Passover* in Jesus' public life (see 2.13 n.; 6.4). 12.1: See Mk.14.3–9 for a different account of Jesus' anointing. 3: That Mary anointed *the feet* (rather than the head) of Jesus is strange; compare Lk.7.37–38,

the poor among you always, but you will not always have me.<sup>4</sup>

9 A great number of the Jews heard that he was there, and came not only to see Jesus but also Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. The chief priests then resolved to do away with Lazarus as well, since on his account many Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

12 THE NEXT DAY THE GREAT BODY OF pilgrims who had come to the festival, hearing that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the king of Israel!' Jesus found a donkey and mounted it, in accordance with the text of Scripture: 'Fear no more, daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, mounted on an ass's colt.'

16 At the time his disciples did not understand this, but after Jesus had been glorified they remembered that this had been written about him, and that this had happened to him. The people who were present when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead told what they had seen and heard. That is why the crowd went to meet him; they had heard of this sign that he had performed. The Pharisees said to one another, 'You see you are doing no good at all; why, all the world has gone after him!'

20 AMONG THOSE WHO WENT UP TO worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' So Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went to tell Jesus. Then Jesus replied: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. In truth,

in very truth I tell you, a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest. The man who loves himself is lost, but he who hates himself in this world will be kept safe for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; where I am, my servant will be. Whoever serves me will be honoured by my Father.

'Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? Father, save me from this hour.' No, it was for this that I came to this hour. Father, glorify thy name.' A voice sounded from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd standing by said it was thunder, while others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' Jesus replied, 'This voice spoke for your sake, not mine. Now is the hour of judgement for this world; now shall the Prince of this world be driven out. And I shall draw all men to myself, when I am lifted up from the earth.' This he said to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The people answered, 'Our Law teaches us that the Messiah continues for ever. What do you mean by saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? What Son of Man is this?' Jesus answered them: 'The light is among you still, but not for long. Go on your way while you have the light, so that darkness may not overtake you. He who journeys in the dark does not know where he is going. While you have the light, trust to the light, so that you may become men of light.' After these words Jesus went away from them into hiding.

IN SPITE OF THE MANY SIGNS WHICH Jesus had performed in their presence they would not believe in him, for the prophet Isaiah's utterance had to be

*i* Some witnesses omit for you have . . . have me.  
*j* Or . . . turmoil. Shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour"?

perhaps a related tradition. 9-11: The raising of Lazarus is linked by these verses to the messianic entry in vv. 12-19; in Jewish tradition, the advent of the Messiah was related to the resurrection of the dead. 12-19: Jesus' entry into the city is interpreted as messianic by citing Zech.9.9. 13: *Hosanna*: see Mt.21.9 n. 16: *Remembered*: see 2.17 n. 20: *Some Greeks*: possibly Gentiles who acknowledged the God of Israel; see Acts 10.2 n. 23: *Hour*: see 2.4 n. 27: *My soul is in turmoil* introduces a scene reminiscent of the Synoptic narrative of Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane (see Mk.14.32-42). 31-32: *Judgement for this world*: see 1.19-51 n. 35-36: The theme of judgment and salvation is restated in terms of *light* and *darkness* (see 1.5; 3.19-21). 37-43: Jn. concludes the Book of Signs (see Introduction) by noting that Jesus' own people did not respond to him. 38-41: Jesus' lack of success with fellow Jews is explained by two citations

fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed what we reported, and to whom has the Lord's power been revealed?' So it was that they could not believe, for there is another saying of Isaiah's: 'He has blinded their eyes and dulled their minds, lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their minds, and turn to me to heal them.' Isaiah said this because<sup>k</sup> he saw his glory and spoke about him.

For all that, even among those in authority a number believed in him, but would not acknowledge him on account of the Pharisees, for fear of being banned from the synagogue. For they valued their reputation with men rather than the honour which comes from God.

SO JESUS CRIED ALOUD: 'WHEN A MAN believes in me, he believes in him who sent me rather than in me; seeing me, he sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that no one who has faith in me should remain in darkness. But if anyone hears my words and pays no regard to them, I am not his judge; I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the man who rejects me and does not accept my words; the word that I spoke will be his judge on the last day. I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself commanded me what to say and how to speak. I know that his commands are eternal life. What the Father has said to me, therefore—that is what I speak.'

### Farewell discourses

13 IT WAS BEFORE THE PASSOVER FESTIVAL. Jesus knew that his hour had come and he must leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved his own

who were in the world, and now he was to show the full extent of his love.

The devil had already put it into the mind of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. During supper, Jesus, well aware that the Father had entrusted everything to him, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from table, laid aside his garments, and taking a towel, tied it round him. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel.

When it was Simon Peter's turn, Peter said to him, 'You, Lord, washing my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You do not understand now what I am doing, but one day you will.' Peter said, 'I will never let you wash my feet.' 'If I do not wash you,' Jesus replied, 'you are not in fellowship with me.' 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter, 'not my feet only; wash my hands and head as well!'

Jesus said, 'A man who has bathed needs no further washing; he is altogether clean; and you are clean, though not every one of you.' He added the words 'not every one of you' because he knew who was going to betray him.

After washing their feet and taking his garments again, he sat down. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked. 'You call me "Master" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. Then if I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you an example: you are to do as I have done for you. In very truth I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor a messenger than the one who sent him. If you know this, happy are you if you act upon it.

I am not speaking about all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But there

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read when.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read needs only to wash his feet.

from the prophet Isaiah (53.1; 6.10). Moreover, Jn. interprets Isa.6.1-13 as a preview of Christ's glorification. 44-50: The message of the Book of Signs (see Introduction) is recapitulated in these verses.

13.1-30: **The Last Supper.** 1: *His hour had come*: an important theme of the Johannine passion narrative is that Jesus *knew* in advance all that was to happen to him (see 16.28; 18.4; 19.28). 3-5: Jesus washes his disciples' feet to symbolize the humiliation of his death, which is the sole source of forgiveness of sins and of fellowship with him (v. 8). 7: The contrast between the disciples' limited understanding before Jesus' death and their future understanding, to take place *one day* is frequent; see 2.22; 12.16; 16.12. 11: *Betray him*: 6.64. 18: See Ps.41.9.

is a text of Scripture to be fulfilled: "He who eats bread with me has turned against me."<sup>m</sup> I tell you this now, before the event, so that when it happens you may believe that I am what I am. In very truth I tell you, he who receives any messenger of mine receives me; receiving me, he receives the One who sent me.<sup>19</sup>

21 After saying this, Jesus exclaimed in deep agitation of spirit, 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.' The disciples looked at one another in bewilderment: whom could he be speaking of? One of them, the disciple he loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. So Simon Peter nodded to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means.' That disciple, as he reclined, leaned back close to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus replied, 'It is the man to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, after dipping it in the dish, he took it out and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas had received it Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you have to do.' No one at the table understood what he meant by this. Some supposed that, as Judas was in charge of the common purse, Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to make some gift to the poor. As soon as Judas had received the bread he went out. It was night.<sup>22</sup>

31 WHEN HE HAD GONE OUT JESUS SAID, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and in him God is glorified. If God is glorified in him,<sup>n</sup> God will also glorify him in himself; and he will glorify him now. My children, for a little longer I am with you; then you will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, I tell you now, where I am going you cannot come. I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another. If there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples.'<sup>23</sup>

Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, 36 where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but one day you will.' Peter 37 said, 'Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' Jesus answered, 'Will you indeed lay 38 down your life for me? I tell you in very truth, before the cock crows you will have denied me three times.

'Set your troubled hearts at rest. 14 Trust in God always; trust also in me. There are many dwelling-places in my 2 Father's house; if it were not so I should have told you; for I am going there on purpose to prepare a place for you.<sup>o</sup> And if I go and prepare a place 3 for you, I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also; and my way there is 4 known to you.'<sup>p</sup> Thomas said, 'Lord, 5 we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus 6 replied, 'I am the way; I am the truth and I am life; no one comes to the Father except by me.

'If you knew me you would know my 7 Father too.<sup>q</sup> From now on you do know him; you have seen him.' Philip 8 said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father and we ask no more.' Jesus answered, 9 'Have I been all this time with you, Philip, and you still do not know me? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Then how can you say, "Show us the Father"?' Do you not believe 10 that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you: it is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work. Believe me when I say that I am 11 in the Father and the Father in me; or else accept the evidence of the deeds themselves. In truth, in very truth I tell 12 you, he who has faith in me will do what

*m* Literally has lifted his heel against me.

*n* Some witnesses omit If God . . . in him.

*o* Or if it were not so, should I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

*p* Some witnesses read also. You know where I am going and you know the way.

*q* Some witnesses read If you know me you will know my Father too.

19: *I am*: see 8.24 n. 23: *The disciple he loved*: see 18.15 n. 27: The words *Satan entered him* prepare the reader to see that Jesus' confrontation in 18.2-6 is really with Satan. See also Lk 22.3.

13.31-14.31: Jesus' farewell discourse. This final message is partly repeated later in chs. 15-16. 33: See 7.34; 8.21. 34: Jesus' death for his friends (15.13) makes the observance of the new commandment of fraternal love possible. 14.1: The words *set your troubled hearts at rest* (repeated



I am doing; and he will do greater things still because I am going to the Father. Indeed anything you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it.

‘If you love me you will obey my commands; and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to be your Advocate, who will be with you for ever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive him, because the world neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he dwells with you and is<sup>r</sup> in you. I will not leave you bereft; I am coming back to you. In a little while the world will see me no longer, but you will see me; because I live, you too will live; then you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you. The man who has received my commands and obeys them—he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and disclose myself to him.’

Judas asked him—the other Judas, not Iscariot—‘Lord, what can have happened, that you mean to disclose yourself to us alone and not to the world?’ Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will heed what I say; then my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him; but he who does not love me does not heed what I say. And the word you hear is not mine: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have told you all this while I am still here with you; but your Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will call to mind all that I have told you.’

‘Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears. You heard me say, “I am going away, and coming

back to you.” If you loved me you would have been glad to hear that I was going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now, beforehand, so that when it happens you may have faith.

‘I shall not talk much longer with you, for the Prince of this world approaches. He has no rights over me; but the world must be shown that I love the Father, and do exactly as he commands; so up, let us go forward!’<sup>t</sup>

‘I AM THE REAL VINE, AND MY FATHER IS the gardener. Every barren branch of mine he cuts away; and every fruiting branch he cleans, to make it more fruitful still. You have already been cleansed by the word that I spoke to you. Dwell in me, as I in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, but only if it remains united with the vine; no more can you bear fruit, unless you remain united with me.

‘I am the vine, and you the branches. He who dwells in me, as I dwell in him, bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing. He who does not dwell in me is thrown away like a withered branch. The withered branches are heaped together, thrown on the fire, and burnt.

‘If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask what you will, and you shall have it. This is my Father’s glory, that you may bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciples.’<sup>u</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Dwell in my love. If you heed my commands, you will dwell in my love, as I have heeded my Father’s commands, and dwell in his love.

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses insert me.

<sup>s</sup> Some witnesses read shall be.

<sup>t</sup> Or for the Prince of this world is coming, though he has nothing in common with me. But he is coming so that the world may recognize that I love the Father, and do exactly as he commands. Up, and let us go forward to meet him!

<sup>u</sup> Some witnesses read that you may bear fruit in plenty. Thus you will be my disciples.

at v. 27) state the theme of the discourse; i.e. Jesus’ departure is to make possible the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and disciples (see vv. 2,20,23). 13–14: The phrases *in my name* and *I will do* indicate the belief that Jesus and the Father are so related (vv. 9–10) that petitionary prayer may be directed to the Son. See 15.16 n.; 16.23–26 n. 26: *Your Advocate* is identified as *the Holy Spirit* sent in Jesus’ name by the Father (compare v. 16). Compare 1 Jn.2.1 n. 28: *The Father is greater than I*: see v. 10; 5.19 n.

15.1–17: The abiding of Christians in Jesus and in one another. 1: Jesus, *the real vine*, fulfills the prophetic images of Israel as vineyard (Isa.5.1–7) and vine (Jer.2.21; Ezek.19.10–14). 4: The invitation to *dwell in me* implies obedience to Jesus’ commands (v. 10), especially that

11 'I have spoken thus to you, so that  
 my joy may be in you, and your joy  
 complete.<sup>v</sup> This is my commandment:  
 12 love one another, as I have loved you.  
 13 There is no greater love than this, that  
 a man should lay down his life for his  
 14 friends. You are my friends, if you  
 15 do what I command you. I call you  
 servants no longer; a servant does not  
 know what his master is about. I have  
 called you friends, because I have  
 disclosed to you everything that I heard  
 16 from my Father. You did not choose  
 me: I chose you. I appointed you to go  
 on and bear fruit, fruit that shall last;  
 so that the Father may give you all that  
 17 you ask in my name. This is my com-  
 mandment to you: love one another.  
 18 'If the world hates you, it hated me  
 19 first, as you know well.<sup>w</sup> If you be-  
 longed to the world, the world would  
 love its own; but because you do not  
 belong to the world, because I have  
 chosen you out of the world, for that  
 20 reason the world hates you. Remember  
 what I said: "A servant is not greater  
 than his master." As they persecuted  
 me, they will persecute you; they will  
 follow your teaching as little as they  
 21 have followed mine. It is on my account  
 that they will treat you thus, because  
 they do not know the One who sent  
 me.  
 22 'If I had not come and spoken to  
 them, they would not be guilty of sin;  
 but now they have no excuse for their  
 23 sin: he who hates me, hates my Father.  
 24 If I had not worked among them and  
 accomplished what no other man has  
 done, they would not be guilty of sin;  
 but now they have both seen and hated  
 25 both me and my Father.<sup>x</sup> However,  
 this text in their Law had to come true:<sup>y</sup>  
 "They hated me without reason."  
 26 'But when your Advocate has come,

whom I will send you from the  
 Father—the Spirit of truth that issues  
 from the Father—he will bear witness  
 to me. And you also are my witnesses, 27  
 because you have been with me from  
 the first.

'I have told you all this to guard you 16  
 against the breakdown of your faith.  
 They will ban you from the synagogue; 2  
 indeed, the time is coming when anyone  
 who kills you will suppose that he is  
 performing a religious duty. They will 3  
 do these things because they do not  
 know either the Father or me. I have 4  
 told you all this so that when the time  
 comes for it to happen you may  
 remember my warning. I did not tell  
 you this at first, because then I was with  
 you; but now I am going away to him 5  
 who sent me. None of you asks me  
 "Where are you going?" Yet you are 6  
 plunged into grief because of what I  
 have told you. Nevertheless I tell you 7  
 the truth: it is for your good that I am  
 leaving you. If I do not go, your  
 Advocate will not come, whereas if I 8  
 go, I will send him to you. When he  
 comes, he will confute the world, and  
 show where wrong and right and  
 judgement lie. He will convict them of 9  
 wrong, by their refusal to believe in me;  
 he will convince them that right is on 10  
 my side, by showing that I go to the  
 Father when I pass from your sight;  
 and he will convince them of divine 11  
 judgement, by showing that the Prince  
 of this world stands condemned.

'There is still much that I could say 12  
 to you, but the burden would be too  
 great for you now. However, when he 13

<sup>v</sup> Or so that I may have joy in you and your joy may be complete.

<sup>w</sup> Or bear in mind that it hated me first.

<sup>x</sup> Or but now they have indeed seen my work and yet hated both me and my Father.

<sup>y</sup> Or let this text in their Law come true.

of fraternal love (v. 17). 14: The title *friend* denotes great intimacy; it was bestowed on Abraham (Isa.41.8; Jas.2.23). 16: In this passage (see 16.23–26 n.), the efficacy of prayer *in my name* is presented as a product of the close union with Jesus (see v. 4 n.) to which the disciples have been called.

15.18–27: The Christian is separated from the world. 18: *The world*: a term often ambivalent, here indicates Jesus' enemies, as in 12.31; 14.17; 16.33; 17.9; see 3.16 n. 20: The *servant, master* saying occurs several times with varying interpretations; see 13.16 (compare 12.26); Mt.10.24; Lk.6.40. 25: See Pss.35.19; 69.4.

16.1–15: Jesus' departure; the sending of the Advocate. 4: *Remember*: 2.17 n. 7–11: As the one who represents the risen Christ, the *Advocate* is here assigned a three-fold task: to pass judgment on the sin of the world, to testify to Jesus' presence with the Father, and to attest to God's condemnation of the powers of evil. See also v. 13; 14.26.

comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, for everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine. All that the Father has is mine, and that is why I said, "Everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine."

16 'A LITTLE WHILE, AND YOU SEE ME NO more; again a little while, and you will see me.' Some of his disciples said to one another, 'What does he mean by this: "A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me", and by this: "Because I am going to my Father"?' So they asked, 'What is this "little while" that he speaks of? We do not know what he means.'

19 Jesus knew that they were wanting to question him, and said, 'Are you discussing what I said: "A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"?' In very truth I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will be glad. But though you will be plunged in grief, 21 your grief will be turned to joy. A woman in labour is in pain because her time has come; but when the child is born she forgets the anguish in her joy that a man has been born into the world. So it is with you; for the moment you are sad at heart; but I shall see you again, and then you will be joyful, and no one shall rob you of 23 your joy. When that day comes you will ask nothing of me. In very truth I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything 24 in my name, he will give it you.<sup>2</sup> So far you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete.

'Till now I have been using figures 25 of speech; a time is coming when I shall no longer use figures, but tell you of the Father in plain words. When 26 that day comes you will make your request in my name, and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, for the Father loves you himself, be- 27 because you have loved me and believed that I came from God. I came from the 28 Father and have come into the world. Now I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.' His disciples said, 29 'Why, this is plain speaking; this is no figure of speech. We are certain now 30 that you know everything, and do not need to be questioned; because of this we believe that you have come from God.'

Jesus answered, 'Do you now be- 31 lieve? Look,<sup>a</sup> the hour is coming, has 32 indeed already come, when you are all to be scattered, each to his home, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have 33 told you all this so that in me you may find peace. In the world you will have trouble. But courage! The victory is mine; I have conquered the world.'

AFTER THESE WORDS JESUS LOOKED UP 17 to heaven and said:

'Father, the hour has come. Glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee. For thou hast made him sovereign over 2 all mankind, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. This is 3 eternal life: to know thee who alone art truly God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

'I have glorified thee on earth by 4 completing the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify me 5 in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world began.

<sup>2</sup> Some witnesses read if you ask the Father for anything, he will give it you in my name.

<sup>a</sup> Or At the moment you believe; but look . . .

16.16-33: Jesus' return to the disciples. 16: *You will see me* is a promise which includes Christ's postresurrection appearances, his presence through the Spirit, and his second (final) coming. 23-26: Jn. now completes his teaching on prayer *in my name* (see 14.13-14 n.; 15.16 n.): it is a form of prayer which arises from Jesus' glorification and the gift of the Spirit (vv. 13-14); it is heard because of the intimacy between the Father and the believer. 32: Mk.14.27 and Mt.26.31 connect this prophecy with the Gethsemane scene; see Zech. 13.7.

17.1-8: Jesus prays for the revelation of God's glory. 1: Jesus' intercession has a high-priestly character reminiscent of Rom.8.34 and Heb. He does not pray for himself, except perhaps in v. 5, but for the completion of his mission, to reveal the unseen God, who can be seen in the Son.

- 6 'I have made thy name known to the men whom thou didst give me out of the world. They were thine, thou gavest them to me, and they have obeyed thy  
7 command. Now they know that all thy  
8 gifts have come to me from thee; for I have taught them all that I learned from thee, and they have received it: they know with certainty that I came from thee; they have had faith to believe that thou didst send me.
- 9 'I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, because they belong to thee. All that is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine; and through them has my glory shone.
- 11 'I am to stay no longer in the world, but they are still in the world, and I am on my way to thee. Holy Father, protect by the power of thy name those whom thou hast given me,<sup>b</sup> that they may be one, as we are one. When I was with them, I protected by the power of thy name those whom thou hast given me,<sup>c</sup> and kept them safe. Not one of them is lost except the man who must be lost, for Scripture has to be fulfilled.
- 13 'And now I am coming to thee; but while I am still in the world I speak these words, so that they may have my joy within them in full measure. I have delivered thy word to them, and the world hates them because they are strangers in the world, as I am. I pray thee, not to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are strangers in the world, as I am. Consecrate them by the truth;<sup>d</sup> thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I now consecrate myself, that they too may be consecrated by the truth.<sup>d</sup>
- 20 'But it is not for these alone that I pray, but for those also who through their words put their faith in me; may 21 they all be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me. The glory which 22 thou gavest me I have given to them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me, may they be perfectly one. Then the world will learn that thou didst send me, that thou didst love them as thou didst me.
- 'Father, I desire that these men, who 24 are thy gift to me, may be with me where I am, so that they may look upon my glory, which thou hast given me because thou didst love me before the world began. O righteous Father, 25 although the world does not know thee, I know thee, and these men know that thou didst send me. I made thy name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love thou hadst for me may be in them, and I may be in them.'

#### The final conflict

AFTER THESE WORDS, JESUS WENT OUT 18 with his disciples, and crossed the Kedron ravine. There was a garden there, and he and his disciples went into it. The place was known to Judas, 2 his betrayer, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas 3 took a detachment of soldiers, and police provided by the chief priests and the Pharisees, equipped with lanterns, torches, and weapons, and made his way to the garden. Jesus, knowing all 4 that was coming upon him, went out to them and asked, 'Who is it you want?'

*b* Or keep in loyalty to thee those whom thou hast given me; some witnesses read protect them by the power of thy name which thou hast given me.

*c* Or kept in loyalty to thee those whom thou hast given me; some witnesses read protected them by the power of thy name which thou hast given me.

*d* Or in truth.

17.9–19: Jesus' intercession for the disciples. 10: *Through them has my glory shone* refers to the disciple's postresurrection faith, which grasps Jesus' identity as the Son of God. 12: *The man who must be lost* is Judas (see 6.70–71). 19: *I now consecrate myself* expresses Jesus' self-offering to God through his death.

17.20–26: Jesus' intercession for future Christians. 20: *Through their words*: i.e. the gospel handed down by the first disciples, which provides the occasion for the gift of faith to future Christians (see Rom.10.10–17). 23: *The world will learn*: the complete unity of the believers will challenge the world to recognize Jesus' mission from the Father.

18.1–11: The garden. 1: *The Kedron ravine* lay between Mount Moriah to the west, and the Mount of Olives to the east. Jn. lacks the place name Gethsemane (Mk.14.32) and Jesus' prayer and struggle (Mk.14.33–42); but see 12.27 n. 3: See 11.47 n. 4: *Knowing all*: compare 10.17–18 n.

5 'Jesus of Nazareth', they answered. Jesus said, 'I am he.' And there stood  
6 Judas the traitor with them. When he said, 'I am he', they drew back and fell  
7 to the ground. Again Jesus asked, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth',  
8 they answered. Then Jesus said, 'I have told you that I am he. If I am the man  
9 you want, let these others go.' (This was to make good his words, 'I have not lost one of those whom thou gavest  
10 me.'). Thereupon Simon Peter drew the sword he was wearing and struck at the High Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was  
11 Malchus.) Jesus said to Peter, 'Sheathe your sword. This is the cup the Father has given me; shall I not drink it?'

12 THE TROOPS WITH THEIR COMMANDER, and the Jewish police, now arrested  
13 Jesus and secured him. They took him first to Annas.<sup>e</sup> Annas was father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest for that  
14 year<sup>e</sup>—the same Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be to their interest if one man died for the  
15 whole people. Jesus was followed by Simon Peter and another disciple. This disciple, who was acquainted with the High Priest, went with Jesus into the  
16 High Priest's courtyard, but Peter halted at the door outside. So the other disciple, the High Priest's acquaintance, went out again and spoke to the woman at the door, and brought Peter  
17 in. The maid on duty at the door said to Peter, 'Are you another of this man's  
18 disciples?' 'I am not', he said. The servants and the police had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and were standing round it warming themselves. And Peter too was standing with them, sharing the warmth.

The High Priest questioned Jesus 19 about his disciples and about what he taught. Jesus replied, 'I have spoken  
20 openly to all the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews congregate; I have said nothing in secret. Why question me?  
21 Ask my hearers what I told them; they know what I said.' When he said this, 22 one of the police who was standing next to him struck him on the face, exclaiming, 'Is that the way to answer the High Priest?' Jesus replied, 'If I  
23 spoke amiss, state it in evidence; if I spoke well, why strike me?'

So Annas sent him bound to 24 Caiaphas the High Priest.<sup>f</sup>

Meanwhile Simon Peter stood warming himself. The others asked, 'Are you another of his disciples?' But he denied it: 'I am not', he said. One of the High  
26 Priest's servants, a relation of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, insisted, 'Did I not see you with him in the garden?' Peter denied again; and just  
27 then a cock crew.

FROM CAIAPHAS JESUS WAS LED INTO 28 the Governor's headquarters. It was now early morning, and the Jews themselves stayed outside the headquarters to avoid defilement, so that they could eat the Passover meal.<sup>g</sup> So Pilate went out to them and asked, 29 'What charge do you bring against this man?' 'If he were not a criminal,' they  
30 replied, 'we should not have brought him before you.' Pilate said, 'Take him  
31 away and try him by your own law.' The Jews answered, 'We are not

<sup>e</sup> See note on verse 24.

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses give this verse after first to Annas in verse 13; others at the end of verse 13.

<sup>g</sup> Or could share in the offerings of the Passover season.

9: His words: see 6.39; 17.12. 11: The words seem to echo Jesus' prayer in Mk.14.36; Mt.26.39, 42; Lk.22.42.

18.12-27: Interrogation by Annas. 12: The Gk. term for *troops* (lit. 'cohort') may imply Roman intervention. 13: Annas had been high priest from 6-15 A.D. 14: The same Caiaphas: see 11.49 (and n.)-51. 15: Another is plausibly the same disciple as in 20.2-10, the friend of Peter (13.23-25; 21.7,20-24), possibly John, the son of Zebedee. 20: The tradition consistently records the claim that Jesus taught openly in the Temple; see Mt.26.55; Mk.14.49; Lk.22.53. 24: Jn. apparently omits an official Jewish trial, substituting for it an informal hearing; but see 10.24-38 n.

18.28-19.16: Jesus and Pilate. 28: The site of the trial was either the Fortress Antonia, which was connected with the Temple area, or the palace which had been built by Herod and was sometimes used as the Governor's headquarters. In Jn. the Passover meal was celebrated in the evening following Jesus' crucifixion, in apparent contradiction to the other Gospels (see Mt.26.17 n.). 31: We are not allowed: under Roman rule, the Sanhedrin lacked the authority

32 allowed to put any man to death.' Thus they ensured the fulfilment of the words by which Jesus had indicated the manner of his death,

33 Pilate then went back into his headquarters and summoned Jesus. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked.<sup>h</sup>  
 34 Jesus said, 'Is that your own idea, or have others suggested it to you?'  
 35 'What! am I a Jew?' said Pilate. 'Your own nation and their chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?' Jesus replied, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere.' 'You are a king, then?' said Pilate. Jesus answered, "'King" is your word. My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice.' Pilate said, 'What is truth?', and with those words went out again to the Jews. 'For my part,' he said, 'I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Would you like me to release the king of the Jews?' Again the clamour rose: 'Not him; we want Barabbas!' (Barabbas was a bandit.)

19 Pilate now took Jesus and had him flogged; and the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on his head, and robed him in a purple cloak. Then time after time they came up to him, crying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!', and struck him on the face,

4 Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, 'Here he is; I am bringing him out to let you know that I find no case against him'; and Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. 'Behold the Man!' said

Pilate. The chief priests and their 6 henchmen saw him and shouted, 'Crucify! crucify!' 'Take him and crucify him yourselves,' said Pilate; 'for my part I find no case against him.' The Jews answered, 'We have a law; 7 and by that law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be Son of God.'

When Pilate heard that, he was more 8 afraid than ever, and going back into 9 his headquarters he asked Jesus, 'Where have you come from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. 'Do you refuse to 10 speak to me?' said Pilate. 'Surely you know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?' 'You would have no authority 11 at all over me', Jesus replied, 'if it had not been granted you from above; and therefore the deeper guilt lies with the man who handed me over to you.'

From that moment Pilate tried hard 12 to release him; but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend to Caesar; any man who claims to be a king is defying Caesar.' When Pilate heard what they were 13 saying, he brought Jesus out and took his seat on the tribunal at the place known as 'The Pavement' ('Gabbatha' in the language of the Jews). It was the 14 eve of Passover,<sup>i</sup> about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, 'Here is your king.' They shouted, 'Away with him! Away 15 with him! Crucify him!' 'Crucify your king?' said Pilate. 'We have no king but Caesar', the Jews replied. Then at 16 last, to satisfy them, he handed Jesus over to be crucified.

JESUS WAS NOW TAKEN IN CHARGE AND, 17 carrying his own cross, went out to the Place of the Skull, as it is called (or, in

<sup>h</sup> Or 'You are king of the Jews, I take it', he said.  
<sup>i</sup> Or It was Friday in Passover.

to execute criminals, though some commentators have raised questions about the full accuracy of the statement. 32: See 3.14; 8.28; 12.32. 33: The implication of *king of the Jews* is ambiguous. Either it might be a purely religious title ("king of Israel," see 1.49) or, on the contrary, it could carry the political connotation of opposition to Rome. 40: *Bandit*: probably, a revolutionary. 19.1-5: Jn. highlights Jesus' royalty by locating his mockery as king in the center of his trial by Romans. 11: Jn. views Pilate as the appointed instrument of the divine will in these predetermined events. *Who handed me over*: either the high priest (18.28,35) or, perhaps, Judas (13.2). 13: *Took his seat*: the Gk. is ambiguous; it could mean that Pilate seated Jesus on the tribunal. 14: *About noon*: the time when the paschal lamb was slaughtered by the priests; Jesus is the "paschal lamb"; see also 1.29 n.

19.17-37: *Events on Calvary*. 17: Unlike the Synoptics, Jn. does not mention Simon of Cyrene (Mk.15.21 n.). His account also omits the mockery at the cross, the darkness, the tearing

18 the Jews' language, 'Golgotha'), where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on the right, one on the left, and Jesus between them.

19 And Pilate wrote an inscription to be fastened to the cross; it read, 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.' This inscription was read by many Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the inscription was in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Then the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the Jews"; write, "He claimed to be king of the Jews."' Pilate replied, 'What I have written, I have written.'

23 The soldiers, having crucified Jesus, took possession of his clothes, and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier, leaving out the tunic. The tunic was seamless, woven in one piece throughout; so they said to one another, 'We must not tear this; let us toss for it'; and thus the text of Scripture came true: 'They shared my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothing.'

25 That is what the soldiers did. But meanwhile near the cross where Jesus hung stood his mother, with her sister, Mary wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus saw his mother, with the disciple whom he loved standing beside her. He said to her, 'Mother, there is your son'; and to the disciple, 'There is your mother'; and from that moment the disciple took her into his home.

28 After that, Jesus, aware that all had now come to its appointed end, said in fulfilment of Scripture, 'I thirst.' A jar stood there full of sour wine; so they soaked a sponge with the wine, fixed it on a javelin,<sup>j</sup> and held it up to his lips.

30 Having received the wine, he said, 'It is accomplished!' He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.<sup>k</sup>

Because it was the eve of Passover,<sup>l</sup> 31 the Jews were anxious that the bodies should not remain on the cross for the coming Sabbath, since that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity; so they requested Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers accordingly came to the first of his fellow-victims and to the second, and broke their legs; but when they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers 34 stabbed his side with a lance, and at once there was a flow of blood and water. This is vouched for by an 35 eyewitness, whose evidence is to be trusted. He knows that he speaks the truth, so that you too may believe; for 36 this happened in fulfilment of the text of Scripture: 'No bone of his shall be broken.' And another text says, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced.'

AFTER THAT, PILATE WAS APPROACHED 38 by Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple of Jesus, but a secret disciple for fear of the Jews, who<sup>m</sup> asked to be allowed to remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave the permission; so Joseph came and took the body away. He was joined by 39 Nicodemus (the man who had first visited Jesus by night), who brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, more than half a hundredweight. They 40 took the body of Jesus and wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen cloth according to Jewish burial-customs. Now at the place where he had been 41 crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial. There, because the tomb was 42 near at hand and it was the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, they laid Jesus.

<sup>j</sup> So one witness; the others read on marjoram.

<sup>k</sup> Or breathed out his life.

<sup>l</sup> Or Because it was Friday in Passover . . .

<sup>m</sup> Or of Arimathaea. He was a disciple of Jesus, but had gone into hiding for fear of the Jews. He now . . .

of the Temple curtain, and the centurion's remark (see Mk.15.29-39). 19: Jn. ascribes to the Romans a bitter irony in this scornful inscription about Jesus' kingship; see Mt.27.37; Mk.15.26; Lk.23.38. 23: *His clothes*: see Ps.22.18. 25-27: Jn. alone mentions the presence of Jesus' mother and her relationship to the beloved disciple. 34: In the *blood and water* Jn. perceives a deep theological significance (see 7.38-39; 1 Jn.5.6,8); he intends this as a symbol of the gift of the Spirit or, possibly, of baptism. 35: This *eyewitness* is the beloved disciple of v. 26. 36: Compare Exod.12.46. 37: See Zech.12.10.

19.38-42: **Jesus' burial.** 39: *Nicodemus*: see 3.1. Jn. omits the presence of the women (compare Mt.27.61; Mk.15.47; Lk.23.55-56). 40: In accordance with *Jewish burial-customs* the corpse was not eviscerated, as in Egyptian mummification; thus, Jesus' body would remain intact.

20 EARLY ON THE SUNDAY MORNING, WHILE it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance, and ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of his tomb,' she cried, 'and we do not know where they have laid him.' So Peter and the other set out and made their way to the tomb. They were running side by side, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He peered in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but did not enter. Then Simon Peter came up, following him, and he went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying, and the napkin which had been over his head, not lying with the wrappings but rolled together in a place by itself. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first went in too, and he saw and believed; until then they had not understood the scriptures, which showed that he must rise from the dead. So the disciples went home again; but Mary stood at the tomb outside, weeping. As she wept, she peered into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They said to her, 'Why are you weeping?' She answered, 'They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him.' With these words she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, 'Why are you weeping? Who is it you are looking for?' Thinking it was the gardener, she said, 'If it is you, sir, who removed him, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said, 'Mary!' She turned to him

and said, 'Rabbuni!' (which is Hebrew for 'My Master'). Jesus said, 'Do not cling to me,<sup>n</sup> for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers, and tell them that I am now ascending<sup>o</sup> to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.' Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with her news: 'I have seen the Lord!' she said, and gave them his message.

Late that Sunday evening, when the disciples were together behind locked doors, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them. 'Peace be with you!' he said, and then showed them his hands and his side. So when the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Jesus repeated, 'Peace be with you!', and said, 'As the Father sent me, so I send you.' Then he breathed on them, saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit! If you forgive any man's sins, they stand forgiven; if you pronounce them unforgiven, unforgiven they remain.'

One of the Twelve, Thomas, that is 'the Twin', was not with the rest when Jesus came. So the disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' He said, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails on his hands, unless I put my finger into the place where the nails were, and my hand into his side, I will not believe it.'

A week later his disciples were again in the room, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, saying, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here; see my hands. Reach your hand here and put it into my side. Be unbelieving no longer, but believe.' Thomas said, 'My Lord and my God!'

<sup>n</sup> Or Touch me no more.

<sup>o</sup> Or I am going to ascend . . .

20.1–23: The first Easter. 1: Sunday became the Christian day of worship rather than Saturday. 2: Lord: see 11.2 n. The other disciple: see 18.15 n. 6–8: Peter's reaction shows that inspection of the empty tomb did not in itself cause faith in Jesus' resurrection; however, the disciple (v. 2) whom Jn. favors above Peter saw and believed. 9: That without Christian faith the disciples had not understood the scriptures is crucial, since it shows that the OT in itself had not led them to anticipate Jesus' resurrection. 14: Mary did not recognize him because she did not yet have faith in the risen Jesus. 17: Jesus' prohibition, do not cling to me, shows that Mary's gesture of adoration is premature, because his glorification is incomplete. 22: Breathed on them recalls God's creative action in Gen.2.7. 23: The risen Lord bestows the power to forgive sins on the Church.

20.24–29: Thomas. This account of Thomas' doubt and ensuing faith invites belief which is not dependent on physical evidence.



- 29 Jesus said, 'Because you have seen me you have found faith. Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith.'
- 30 There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith<sup>p</sup> that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess life by his name.
- 21 SOME TIME LATER, JESUS SHOWED HIMSELF to his disciples once again, by the 2 Sea of Tiberias; and in this way. Simon Peter and Thomas 'the Twin' were together with Nathanael of Cana-in-Galilee. The sons of Zebedee and two 3 other disciples were also there. Simon Peter said, 'I am going out fishing.' 'We will go with you', said the others. So they started and got into the boat. But that night they caught nothing.
- 4 Morning came, and there stood Jesus on the beach, but the disciples did not 5 know that it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, have you caught 6 anything?' They answered 'No.' He said, 'Shoot the net to starboard, and you will make a catch.' They did so, and found they could not haul the net aboard, there were so many fish in it.
- 7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that, he wrapped his coat about him (for he had stripped) and plunged into the sea.
- 8 The rest of them came on in the boat, towing the net full of fish; for they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards.
- 9 When they came ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish laid on it, and some bread. Jesus said, 'Bring 10 some of your catch.' Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to land,
- full of big fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and yet, many as they were, the net was not torn. Jesus said, 12 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared to ask 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus now came up, took the bread, 13 and gave it to them, and the fish in the same way.
- This makes the third time that Jesus 14 appeared to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead.
- After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon 15 Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than all else<sup>q</sup>?' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered, 'you know that I love you.'<sup>r</sup> 'Then feed my lambs', he said. A second time he asked, 'Simon son of 16 John, do you love me?' 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.'<sup>r</sup> 'Then tend my sheep.' A third time he said, 'Simon son 17 of John, do you love me<sup>s</sup>?' Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time. 'Do you love me?'<sup>t</sup> 'Lord,' he said, 'you know everything; you know I love you.'<sup>r</sup> Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.
- 'And further, I tell you this in very 18 truth: when you were young you fastened your belt about you and walked where you chose; but when you are old you will stretch out your arms, and a stranger will bind you fast, and carry you where you have no wish to go.' He said this to indicate the manner 19 of death by which Peter was to glorify God. Then he added, 'Follow me.'
- Peter looked round, and saw the 20 disciple whom Jesus loved following—the one who at supper had leaned back close to him to ask the question, 'Lord, who is it that will betray you?' When 21 he caught sight of him, Peter asked, 'Lord, what will happen to him?' Jesus said, 'If it should be my will that 22

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read that you may come to believe . . .

<sup>q</sup> Or more than they do.

<sup>r</sup> Or that I am your friend.

<sup>s</sup> Or are you my friend.

<sup>t</sup> Or that at the third asking he should have said, 'Are you my friend?'

20.30–31: The first conclusion of the Gospel. See 21.1–25 n. 30: Although Jn. is aware of many other signs, he has recounted only seven. 31: The purpose of the Gospel is expressly stated here.

21.1–25: The epilogue. This chapter is sometimes regarded as a later appendix. 2: *The sons of Zebedee*, prominent in Mt., Mk., Lk., are now mentioned for the first time in Jn.; some scholars think this points to John, the son of Zebedee, as the source of this Gospel's tradition. 7: Note this Gospel's apparent preference for the beloved *disciple* over *Peter*. 12: Hesitation or doubt appears in all accounts of the disciples' postresurrection experiences (see Mt.28.17; Lk.24.37–38; Jn.20.25). 15–17: Peter is given a unique task among the disciples (see Mt.16.18; Lk.22.31–32). 20: See 13.23–25. 22: *Until I come* probably has more than one meaning: see

he wait until I come, what is it to you? Follow me.'

23 That saying of Jesus became current in the brotherhood, and was taken to mean that that disciple would not die. But in fact Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If it should be my will that he wait until I come, what is it to you?'

24 It is this same disciple who attests what has here been written. It is in fact he who wrote it, and we know that his testimony is true.<sup>u</sup>

25 There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world could not hold the books that would be written.

out in the middle they said to him, 4  
'Master, this woman was caught in the 5  
very act of adultery. In the Law Moses 5  
has laid down that such women are to 6  
be stoned. What do you say about it?' 6  
They put the question as a test, hoping 6  
to frame a charge against him. Jesus 7  
bent down and wrote with his finger on 7  
the ground. When they continued to 7  
press their question he sat up straight 7  
and said, 'That one of you who is 8  
faultless shall throw the first stone.' 8  
Then once again he bent down and 8  
wrote on the ground. When they heard 9  
what he said, one by one they went 9  
away,<sup>v</sup> the eldest first; and Jesus was 9  
left alone, with the woman still standing 10  
there. Jesus again sat up and<sup>w</sup> said to 10  
the woman, 'Where are they? Has no 11  
one condemned you?' She answered, 11  
'No one, sir.' Jesus said, 'Nor do I 11  
condemn you. You may go; do not 11  
sin again.'

*An incident in the temple\**

53\* AND THEY WENT EACH TO HIS HOME, 1,2  
and Jesus to the Mount of Olives. At 1,2  
daybreak he appeared again in the 1,2  
temple, and all the people gathered 1,2  
round him. He had taken his seat and 1,2  
3 was engaged in teaching them when 3  
the doctors of the law and the Pha- 3  
risees brought in a woman caught 3  
committing adultery. Making her stand

<sup>u</sup> Some witnesses here insert the passage printed below.

\* This passage, which in the most widely received editions of the New Testament is printed in the text of John, 7. 53–8. 11, has no fixed place in our witnesses. Some of them do not contain it at all. Some place it after Luke 21. 28, others after John 7. 36, or 7. 52, or 21. 24.

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses insert convicted by their conscience.  
<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses insert seeing no one but the woman.

16.16 n. 24: This same disciple refers to the one on whose authority the Gospel of John rests.

7.53–8.11: The woman accused of adultery. 1: The terms *Mount of Olives*, *daybreak* (v. 2), *the doctors of the law and the Pharisees* (v. 3) are expressions more typical of the Synoptics, than of Jn. 5: See Lev.20.10; Deut.22.20–21. 6: The *question* was a *test* in that it posed a dilemma for Jesus: whether to show mercy or to advocate the death penalty. What, if anything, Jesus *wrote on the ground* is unimportant in the story. 11: *Do not sin again*: see 5.14.

ACTS OF THE  
APOSTLES



# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

With this book the author of the third Gospel continues his story of the birth of the Christian Church. Acts shows a wide acquaintance with the Hellenistic world, its customs and political organizations; and its good, if not artistic, Greek betrays the hand of a cosmopolitan author, whom tradition has identified as Luke, a physician (Col.4.14; 2 Tim.4.11). Written to show how God continues to fulfill his plan for the salvation of mankind, a plan which our author understands to have begun with Israel, Acts follows the Church from its origin at Pentecost (ch. 2) through the geographical progression which Jesus himself had announced (1.8). Led by God's Spirit, the Church moved from a small Jewish group centered in Jerusalem to a worldwide movement embracing Rome, the capital of the world (ch. 28). This shift from Jewish to Gentile mission was a primary interest of the author, and he details how admission of the first Gentiles (ch. 10) led to a council (ch. 15) whose decision opened Christian fellowship to all men. Following ancient custom, Luke has composed summaries (e.g. 2.42-43; 5.12-16; 9.31-32) and speeches (e.g. 2.14-36; 3.12-26; 5.35-39; 7.2-53; 10.34-43; 15.13-21; 17.22-31; 28.25-28) as a method of informing the reader about the meaning of the events which he narrates. Our author may have had some sources at his disposal (e.g. the "we" sections: 16.10-18; 20.5-15; 21.1-18; 27.1-28.16; collections of local traditions from Palestine and Antioch), but he has worked them so skillfully into his narrative that their reconstruction is very difficult. That his sources were incomplete, however, is indicated by the inexact chronological references throughout the narrative, and by the fact that information contained in Paul's letters seems not to have been available to him. Despite that fact, Acts stands as a mighty witness to the conviction that God is at work within human history to accomplish his saving purpose for mankind.

## *The beginnings of the church*

1 **I**N THE FIRST PART OF MY WORK,  
Theophilus, I wrote of all that Jesus  
did and taught from the beginning  
2 until the day when, after giving instructions  
through the Holy Spirit to the  
apostles whom he had chosen, he was  
3 taken up to heaven. He showed himself  
to these men after his death, and  
gave ample proof that he was alive:  
over a period of forty days he appeared  
to them and taught them about the  
4 kingdom of God. While he was in their  
company he told them not to leave  
Jerusalem. 'You must wait', he said,  
'for the promise made by my Father,  
about which you have heard me speak:  
5 John, as you know, baptized with  
water, but you will be baptized with the  
Holy Spirit, and within the next few  
days.'  
6 So, when they were all together, they

asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when  
you are to establish once again the  
sovereignty of Israel?' He answered, 7  
'It is not for you to know about dates  
or times, which the Father has set  
within his own control. But you will 8  
receive power when the Holy Spirit  
comes upon you; and you will bear  
witness for me in Jerusalem, and all  
over Judaea and Samaria, and away to  
the ends of the earth.'

When he had said this, as they 9  
watched, he was lifted up, and a cloud  
removed him from their sight. As he 10  
was going, and as they were gazing  
intently into the sky, all at once there  
stood beside them two men in white  
who said, 'Men of Galilee, why stand 11  
there looking up into the sky? This  
Jesus, who has been taken away from  
you up to heaven, will come in the same  
way as you have seen him go.'

Then they returned to Jerusalem 12

1.1-5: **Preface.** 1: *Theophilus* (lit. lover of—or loved by—God) was probably a patron who would sponsor the distribution of this book. 2: These instructions are summarized in Lk.24.44-49. 3: *Forty days* is a general number; see Lk.4.1-2. 4: On the *promise* concerning baptism, see Lk.3.16; Isa.44.2-5; Ezek.39.28-29; Joel 2.28-29. 5: In Lk.3.16 this saying is attributed to John the Baptist.

1.6-14: **Jesus' ascension.** 6: *All together* may imply table-fellowship; compare 10.41. On the problem of when and how the Kingdom comes, see Lk.7.20-23; 19.11; 21.5-36. 7: *Dates or times*: see 1 Th.5.1. 8: Compare 28.14 n. 12: *Sabbath day's journey*: the travel permitted Jews,

from the hill called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, no farther than a Sabbath day's journey. Entering the city they went to the room upstairs where they were lodging: Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly at prayer together, and with them a group of women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

It was during this time that Peter stood up before the assembled brotherhood, about one hundred and twenty in all, and said: 'My friends, the prophecy in Scripture was bound to come true, which the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, uttered about Judas who acted as guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was one of our number and had his place in this ministry.' (This Judas, be it noted, after buying a plot of land with the price of his villainy, fell forward on the ground, and burst open, so that his entrails poured out. This became known to everyone in Jerusalem, and they named the property in their own language Akeldama, which means 'Blood Acre'.) 'The text I have in mind', Peter continued, 'is in the Book of Psalms: "Let his homestead fall desolate; let there be none to inhabit it"; and again, "Let another take over his charge." Therefore one of those who bore us company all the while we had the Lord Jesus with us, coming and going, from John's ministry of baptism until the day when he was taken up from us—one of those must now join us as a witness to his resurrection.'

Two names were put forward: Joseph, who was known as Barsabbas,

and bore the added name of Justus; and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, declare which of these two thou hast chosen to receive this office of ministry and apostleship which Judas abandoned to go where he belonged.' They drew lots and the lot fell on Matthias, who was then assigned a place among the twelve apostles.<sup>a</sup>

WHILE THE DAY OF PENTECOST WAS running its course they were all together in one place, when suddenly there came from the sky a noise like that of a strong driving wind, which filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire, dispersed among them and resting on each one. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance.

Now there were living in Jerusalem devout Jews<sup>b</sup> drawn from every nation under heaven; and at this sound the crowd gathered, all bewildered because each one heard his own language spoken. They were amazed and in their astonishment exclaimed, 'Why, they are all Galileans, are they not, these men who are speaking? How is it then that we hear them, each of us in his own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites; inhabitants of Mesopotamia, of Judaea and Cappadocia, of Pontus and Asia, of Phrygia and Pamphylia, of Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs, we hear them telling in our own tongues the great things God has done.' And they were all amazed and

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read was then appointed a colleague of the eleven apostles.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read devout men.

about a thousand paces. **13:** *Room upstairs*, or upper room, was a normal meeting place (see 20.8), not necessarily to be identified with the locus of the Last Supper. **14:** *Jesus' brothers* are named in Mk.6.3. Hitherto they had not been his followers; compare Mk.3.21. *Group of women:* compare Lk.8.1-3; 23.49.

**1.15-26: Replacement of Judas. 16:** *Bound to come true:* see 2.23 n. **17:** *One of our number:* see Lk.6.12-16. **18:** The meaning of *fell forward* is uncertain; Papias (an early second-century Christian) took it to mean "became swollen." According to Mt.27.5 Judas hanged himself. **20:** *The text* is Pss.69.25; 109.8. **23:** Many Jews bore two names, one Jewish (*Joseph*), the other Latin or Greek (*Justus*).

**2.1-47: Pentecost. 1:** *Pentecost*, fifty days following Passover, was a harvest festival which at this time celebrated the covenant (Lev.23.15-21). **2-3:** *Wind and fire* are meant to be understood symbolically, not literally. **4:** It is not clear whether *other tongues* means languages (vv. 6,8,11) or ecstatic speaking (v. 13.) **9-11:** Examples are given illustrating the universality expressed in

perplexed, saying to one another,  
 13 'What can this mean?' Others said  
 contemptuously, 'They have been  
 drinking!'

14 But Peter stood up with the Eleven,  
 raised his voice, and addressed them:  
 'Fellow Jews, and all you who live in  
 Jerusalem, mark this and give me a  
 15 hearing. These men are not drunk, as  
 you imagine; for it is only nine in the  
 16 morning. No, this is what the prophet  
 17 spoke of: "God says, 'This will happen  
 in the last days: I will pour out upon  
 everyone a portion of my spirit; and  
 your sons and daughters shall prophesy;  
 your young men shall see visions,  
 and your old men shall dream dreams.  
 18 Yes, I will endue even my slaves,  
 both men and women, with a portion  
 of my spirit, and they shall prophesy.  
 19 And I will show portents in the sky  
 above, and signs on the earth below—  
 blood and fire and drifting smoke.  
 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness,  
 and the moon to blood, before that  
 great, resplendent day, the day of the  
 21 Lord, shall come. And then, everyone  
 who invokes the name of the Lord  
 shall be saved.'"

22 'Men of Israel, listen to me: I speak  
 of Jesus of Nazareth, a man singled out  
 by God and made known to you  
 through miracles, portents, and signs,  
 which God worked among you through  
 23 him, as you well know. When he had  
 been given up to you, by the deliberate  
 will and plan of God, you used heathen  
 24 men to crucify and kill him. But God  
 raised him to life again, setting him  
 free from the pangs of death, because  
 it could not be that death should keep  
 him in its grip.

25 'For David says of him:

"I foresaw that the presence of the  
 Lord would be with me always,  
 for he is at my right hand so that I  
 may not be shaken;

therefore my heart was glad and my  
 26 tongue spoke my joy;  
 moreover, my flesh shall dwell in  
 hope,  
 for thou wilt not abandon my soul 27  
 to death,  
 nor let thy loyal servant suffer  
 corruption.  
 Thou hast shown me the ways of life, 28  
 thou wilt fill me with gladness by  
 thy presence."

'Let me tell you plainly, my friends, 29  
 that the patriarch David died and was  
 buried, and his tomb is here to this very  
 day. It is clear therefore that he spoke 30  
 as a prophet, who knew that God had  
 sworn to him that one of his own direct  
 descendants should sit on his throne;  
 and when he said he was not abandoned 31  
 to death, and his flesh never suffered  
 corruption, he spoke with foreknowl-  
 edge of the resurrection of the Mes- 32  
 siah. The Jesus we speak of has been  
 raised by God, as we can all bear wit- 33  
 ness. Exalted thus with God's right  
 hand, he received the Holy Spirit from  
 the Father, as was promised, and all  
 that you now see and hear flows from 34  
 him. For it was not David who went  
 up to heaven; his own words are:  
 "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my  
 right hand until I make your enemies 35  
 your footstool.'" Let all Israel then 36  
 accept as certain that God has made  
 this Jesus, whom you crucified, both  
 Lord and Messiah.'

When they heard this they were cut 37  
 to the heart, and said to Peter and the  
 apostles,<sup>d</sup> 'Friends, what are we to do?'  
 'Repent,' said Peter, 'repent and be 38  
 baptized, every one of you, in the name  
 of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness  
 of your sins; and you will receive the  
 gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise 39  
 is to you, and to your children, and to

<sup>c</sup> Or at.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read the rest of the apostles.

v. 5. 14–36: Peter's sermon. 14: Addressed is the same word as "utterance" (v. 4); the Spirit also empowers Peter's words. 17–21: Joel 2.28–32a. 22: Proof of Jesus' divine mission by miracles is a regular part of Lukan theology; compare 10.38; Lk.4.16–27. 23: Plan of God is a regular motif of Lukan theology; compare Lk.22.22. 25–28: Ps.16.8–11a. 30: The language reflects Ps.132.11. 32: Bear witness: to qualify as an apostle one had to have seen the risen Jesus; see I Cor.9.1; 15.3–8. 36: This verse says nothing about the time at which Jesus became Messiah; for Luke, Jesus was Messiah already during his lifetime, see 10.38; Lk.4.18. 37–41: Response to the sermon. 38: Baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit are usually simultaneous; when

all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God may call.'

40 In these and many other words he pressed his case and pleaded with them: 'Save yourselves', he said, 'from this

41 crooked age.' Then those who accepted his word were baptized, and some three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread, and to pray.

43 A sense of awe was everywhere, and many marvels and signs were brought

44 about through the apostles. All whose faith had drawn them together held

45 everything in common:<sup>e</sup> they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need

46 of each required. With one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, breaking bread in private

47 houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy, as they praised God and enjoyed the favour of the whole people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving.

3 ONE DAY AT THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, the hour of prayer, Peter and John were on their way up to the temple.

2 Now a man who had been a cripple from birth used to be carried there and laid every day by the gate of the temple called 'Beautiful Gate', to beg

3 from people as they went in. When he saw Peter and John on their way into

4 the temple he asked for charity. But Peter fixed his eyes on him, as John did also, and said, 'Look at us.'

5 Expecting a gift from them, the man

6 was all attention. And Peter said, 'I

have no silver or gold; but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' Then he grasped

7 him by the right hand and pulled him up; and at once his feet and ankles

8 grew strong; he sprang up, stood on his feet, and started to walk. He entered the temple with them, leaping and

9 praising God as he went. Everyone saw him walking and praising God, and when they recognized him as the

10 man who used to sit begging at Beautiful Gate, they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

And as he was clutching Peter and

11 John all the people came running in astonishment towards them in Solomon's Portico, as it is called. Peter saw

12 them coming and met them with these words: 'Men of Israel, why be surprised at this? Why stare at us as if we had made this man walk by some power or godliness of our own? The God of

13 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has given the highest honour to his servant Jesus, whom you committed for trial and repudiated in

14 Pilate's court—repudiated the one who was holy and righteous when Pilate had decided to release him. You begged as a

15 favour the release of a murderer, and killed him who has led the way to life. But God raised him from the dead; of

16 that we are witnesses. And the name of Jesus, by awakening faith, has strengthened this man, whom you see and know, and this faith has made him completely well, as you can all see for yourselves.

<sup>e</sup> Or All who had become believers held everything together in common.

they are not, it is due to special reasons; see 8.16–17; 10.47; 19.1–6. **42–47: Summary of early Christian life.** **42:** *Break bread* refers to common meals which included the Eucharist. **44–45:** It was a usual practice in religious communities, including Qumran, to hold everything in common. Such common ownership (Gk., *koina*) was an expression of community (Gk., *koinonia*).

**3.1–4.31: Apostolic activity and Jewish persecution.**

**3.1–10: Peter heals a cripple.** **1:** Herod's temple, an entire complex of courtyards and buildings, was still under construction. **2:** The exact location of the *Beautiful Gate* is unknown. **6:** Typically for Acts, the name of *Jesus Christ* implies acting in his full power and authority; see 4.10, 18, 30. **8:** Jesus' word in Mt. 10.8 begins to receive its fulfillment.

**3.11–26: Peter's second sermon.** **11:** *Solomon's Portico* was a colonnade on the east side of the great court of the Temple, the "Court of the Gentiles." **13:** *Servant* as a title for Jesus is taken from Isa. 52.13–53.11, and is used only three other times in the NT, all in Acts (v. 26; 4.27, 30). *The God of Abraham:* see Exod. 3.6, 15. The reference shows that the church is the continuation of Israel. **14:** On *Pilate's* decision, see Lk. 23.4a, 13–25. **15:** *Witnesses* to resurrec-



17 'And now, my friends, I know quite well that you acted in ignorance, and so  
 18 did your rulers; but this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold in the utterances of all the prophets: that his  
 19 Messiah should suffer. Repent then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. Then the Lord may grant  
 20 you a time of recovery and send you the Messiah he has already appointed, that  
 21 is, Jesus. He must be received into heaven until the time of universal restoration comes, of which God spoke by  
 22 his holy prophets.<sup>f</sup> Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up a prophet for you from among yourselves as he  
 23 raised me;<sup>g</sup> you shall listen to everything he says to you, and anyone who refuses to listen to that prophet must  
 24 be extirpated from Israel." And so said all the prophets, from Samuel onwards; with one voice they all predicted this present time.  
 25 'You are the heirs of the prophets; you are within the covenant which God made with your fathers, when he said to Abraham, "And in your offspring all the families on earth shall find blessing."  
 26 When God raised up his Servant, he sent him to you first, to bring you blessing by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.'  
 4 They were still addressing the people when the chief<sup>h</sup> priests came upon them, together with the Controller of the Temple and the Sadducees, exasperated at their teaching the people and proclaiming the resurrection from the dead—the resurrection of Jesus. They were arrested and put in prison for the  
 4 night, as it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message became believers. The number of men now reached about five thousand.  
 5 Next day the Jewish rulers, elders,

and doctors of the law met in Jerusalem. There were present Annas the  
 6 High Priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan,<sup>i</sup> Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. They brought the  
 7 apostles before the court and began the examination. 'By what power', they asked, 'or by what name have such  
 8 men as you done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if the  
 9 question put to us today is about help given to a sick man, and we are asked by what means he was cured, here is  
 10 the answer, for all of you and for all the people of Israel: it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the  
 11 dead; it is by his name<sup>j</sup> that this man stands here before you fit and well. This Jesus is the stone rejected by the  
 12 builders which has become the keystone—and you are the builders. There is no salvation in anyone else  
 13 at all,<sup>k</sup> for there is no other name under heaven granted to men, by which we may receive salvation.'

Now as they observed the boldness  
 13 of Peter and John, and noted that they were untrained laymen, they began to wonder, then recognized them as former companions of Jesus. And when  
 14 they saw the man who had been cured standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. So they ordered them  
 15 to leave the court, and then discussed the matter among themselves. 'What  
 16 are we to do with these men?' they said; 'for it is common knowledge in Jerusalem that a notable miracle has come about through them; and we

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses add from the beginning of the world.

<sup>g</sup> Or like me.

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses omit chief.

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses read John.

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses insert and no other.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses omit There is no . . . at all.

tion: see 2.32 n. 17: *You acted in ignorance*: compare Lk.23.34. 18: See 2.23 n. 20: *Send you the Messiah*: Peter implies Jesus will return when the Jews turn to Jesus; compare Rom.11.25–31. 22: Compare Deut.18.15–19; Lev.23.29. 25: Compare Gen.22.18. *Offspring* here refers to Jesus, as in Gal.3.16. 26: That the Jews were the first to whom God sent his Son is a common theme in Acts; see Mk.7.27; Rom.1.16; 2.9.

4.1–31: Peter and John arrested, then freed. 1: *The Controller of the Temple* headed the Levitical guard which kept order in the Temple precincts. *Sadducees*: See Mt.3.7 n. 2: See 23.6–8; Lk.20.27. 5–22: Hearing before Jewish authorities. 5: Members of these groups constituted the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. 6: The office of *High Priest* was no longer of lifetime tenure; because of its political prestige, it was granted and removed by Rome. The author may mean *Annas* (Lk.3.2 n.) or *Ananias* (23.2 n.). Neither was in office at this time, although the former still had great influence. 7: See 12.11–12. 11: Ps.118.22; compare 1 Pet.2.7–8.

17 cannot deny it. But to stop this from spreading further among the people, we had better caution them never again to speak to anyone in this name.' They then called them in and ordered them to refrain from all public speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John said to them in reply: 'Is it right in God's eyes for us to obey you rather than God? Judge for yourselves. We cannot possibly give up speaking of things we have seen and heard.'

21 The court repeated the caution and discharged them. They could not see how they were to punish them, because the people were all giving glory to God for what had happened. The man upon whom this miracle of healing had been performed was over forty years old.

23 As soon as they were discharged they went back to their friends and told them everything that the chief priests and elders had said. When they heard it, they raised their voices as one man and called upon God:

25 'Sovereign Lord, maker of heaven and earth and sea and of everything in them, who by the Holy Spirit,<sup>1</sup> through the mouth of David thy servant, didst say,

26 "Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples lay their plots in vain? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers made common cause against the Lord and against his Messiah."

27 They did indeed make common cause in this very city against thy holy servant Jesus whom thou didst anoint as Messiah. Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired with the Gentiles and peoples of Israel to do all the things which, under thy hand and by thy decree,

were foreordained. And now, O Lord, mark their threats, and enable thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness. Stretch out thy hand to heal and cause signs and wonders to be done through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.'

31 When they had ended their prayer, the building where they were assembled rocked, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 THE WHOLE BODY OF BELIEVERS WAS united in heart and soul. Not a man of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common, while the apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They were all held in high esteem; for they had never a needy person among them, because all who had property in land or houses sold it, brought the proceeds of the sale, and laid the money at the feet of the apostles; it was then distributed to any who stood in need.

36 For instance, Joseph, surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means 'Son of Exhortation'), a Levite, by birth a Cypriot, owned an estate, which he sold; he brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5 But there was another man, called Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, who sold a property. With the full knowledge of his wife he kept back part of the purchase-money, and part he brought and laid at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, how was it that Satan so possessed your mind that you lied to the Holy Spirit, and kept back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain yours? When it was turned into money, was it not still at your own disposal?'

<sup>1</sup> Some witnesses omit by the Holy Spirit.

23-31: Return of Peter and John. 24: Sovereign Lord (Gk., *despota*), used also in Lk.2.29, is a Hellenistic prayer formula. 25: Compare Ps.2.1-2. 27: Herod Antipas: see Mk.6.14 n. Herod and Pontius Pilate: see Lk.23.6-12. 30: Cause signs and wonders: the further narrative of Acts shows the author felt this prayer was granted. 31: See 2.1-4.

4.32-5.12: Communal life. 32-37: All property was held in common. 32: See 2.44-45 n. 34: As 5.4 makes clear, such disposal of personal property was not mandatory, but was done at the prompting of the Spirit. 36: Joseph . . . Barnabas: see 11.22-26; 13.2-3.

5.1-12: Ananias and Sapphira. This story is intended to show the powerful and immediate presence of the Spirit with the early church, represented in the person of the apostles: compare vv. 15-16. 4: See 4.34. 5: The sin is that they lied, rather than any refusal to turn property over

What made you think of doing this thing? You have lied not to men but to  
 5 God.' When Ananias heard these words  
 he dropped dead; and all the others  
 6 who heard were awestruck. The young-  
 er men rose and covered his body, then  
 carried him out and buried him.  
 7 About three hours passed, and then  
 his wife came in, unaware of what had  
 8 happened. Peter turned to her and  
 said, 'Tell me, were you paid such and  
 such a price for the land?' 'Yes,' she  
 9 said, 'that was the price.' Then Peter  
 said, 'Why did you both conspire to  
 put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?  
 Hark! there at the door are the foot-  
 steps of those who buried your hus-  
 band; and they will carry you away.'  
 10 And suddenly she dropped dead at his  
 feet. When the young men came in, they  
 found her dead; and they carried her  
 out and buried her beside her husband.  
 11 And a great awe fell upon the whole  
 church, and upon all who heard of  
 12 these events; and many remarkable  
 and wonderful things took place  
 among the people at the hands of the  
 apostles.

THEY USED TO MEET BY COMMON  
 13 consent in Solomon's Portico, no one  
 from outside their number venturing  
 to join with them. But people in general  
 14 spoke highly of them,<sup>m</sup> and more than  
 that, numbers of men and women were  
 added to their ranks as believers in the  
 15 Lord.<sup>n</sup> In the end the sick were actually  
 carried out into the streets and laid  
 there on beds and stretchers, so that  
 even the shadow of Peter might fall on  
 16 one or another as he passed by; and  
 the people from the towns round Jeru-  
 salem flocked in, bringing those who  
 were ill or harassed by unclean spirits,  
 and all of them were cured.  
 17 Then the High Priest and his col-  
 leagues, the Sadducean party as it then  
 was, were goaded into action by jea-  
 18 lously. They proceeded to arrest the  
 apostles, and put them in official

custody. But an angel of the Lord 19  
 opened the prison doors during the  
 night, brought them out, and said, 'Go, 20  
 take your place in the temple and speak  
 to the people, and tell them about this  
 new life and all it means.' Accordingly 21  
 they entered the temple at daybreak  
 and went on with their teaching.

When the High Priest arrived with  
 his colleagues they summoned the  
 'Sanhedrin', that is, the full senate of  
 the Israelite nation, and sent to the  
 jail to fetch the prisoners. But the 22  
 police who went to the prison failed  
 to find them there, so they returned  
 and reported, 'We found the jail secure- 23  
 ly locked at every point, with the  
 warders at their posts by the doors,  
 but when we opened them we found no  
 one inside.' When they heard this, the 24  
 Controller of the Temple and the chief  
 priests were wondering what could have  
 become of them,<sup>o</sup> and then a man 25  
 arrived with the report, 'Look! the  
 men you put in prison are there in the  
 temple teaching the people.' At that 26  
 the Controller went off with the police  
 and fetched them, but without using  
 force for fear of being stoned by the  
 people.

So they brought them and stood 27  
 them before the Council; and the High  
 Priest began his examination. 'We 28  
 expressly ordered you', he said, 'to  
 desist from teaching in that name; and  
 what has happened? You have filled  
 Jerusalem with your teaching, and you  
 are trying to make us responsible for  
 that man's death.' Peter replied for 29  
 himself and the apostles: 'We must  
 obey God rather than men. The God 30  
 of our fathers raised up Jesus whom  
 you had done to death<sup>p</sup> by hanging him  
 on a gibbet. He it is whom God has 31  
 exalted with his own right hand<sup>q</sup> as  
<sup>m</sup> Or ... Portico. Although others did not venture to  
 join them, the common people spoke highly of them.  
<sup>n</sup> Or and an ever-increasing number of believers, both  
 men and women, were added to the Lord.  
<sup>o</sup> Or wondering about them, what this could possibly  
 mean.  
<sup>p</sup> Or ... Jesus, and you did him to death ...  
<sup>q</sup> Or at his right hand.

to the apostles. 12: Along with vv. 15-16, this shows that the prayer in 4.30 was answered.  
 13: *Solomon's Portico*: see 3.11 n.

5.13-42: **Further Jewish persecution.** 17: Despite such opposition by Jewish authorities, especially the priestly party, the masses of Jews remained sympathetic; see vv. 14, 26. 19: *Angel*: compare 12.6-10. 27-32: **Peter before the Sanhedrin.** 29: What *Peter* says is a summary of the whole apostolic tradition. 30: *Hanging on a gibbet* (regarded as equivalent to crucifixion):

leader and saviour, to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are witnesses to all this, and so is the Holy Spirit given by God to those who are obedient to him.<sup>r</sup>

33 This touched them on the raw, and they wanted to put them to death. But a member of the Council rose to his feet, a Pharisee called Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in high regard by all the people. He moved that the men be put outside for a while. Then he said, 'Men of Israel, be cautious in deciding what to do with these men. Some time ago Theudas came forward, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. But he was killed and his whole following was broken up and disappeared. After him came Judas the Galilean at the time of the census; he induced some people to revolt under his leadership, but he too perished and his whole following was scattered. And so now: keep clear of these men, I tell you; leave them alone. For if this idea of theirs or its execution is of human origin, it will collapse; but if it is from God, you will never be able to put them down, and you risk finding yourselves at war with God.'

40 They took his advice. They sent for the apostles and had them flogged; then they ordered them to give up speaking in the name of Jesus, and discharged them. So the apostles went out from the Council rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer indignity for the sake of the Name. And every day they went steadily on with their teaching in the temple and in private houses, telling the good news of Jesus the Messiah.<sup>r</sup>

### The church moves outwards

DURING THIS PERIOD, WHEN DISCIPLES 6 were growing in number, there was disagreement between those of them who spoke Greek<sup>s</sup> and those who spoke the language of the Jews.<sup>t</sup> The former party complained that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called the whole 2 body of disciples together and said, 'It would be a grave mistake for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait at table. Therefore, friends, look 3 out seven men of good reputation from your number, men full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and we will appoint them to deal with these matters, while we devote 4 ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.' This proposal proved 5 acceptable to the whole body. They elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch, a former convert to Judaism. These they presented to the 6 apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

The word of God now spread more 7 and more widely; the number of disciples in Jerusalem went on increasing rapidly, and very many of the priests adhered to the Faith.

Stephen, who was full of grace and 8 power, began to work great miracles and signs among the people. But some 9 members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, comprising Cyrenians and Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and Asia, came forward

<sup>r</sup> Or the good news that the Messiah was Jesus.

<sup>s</sup> Literally the Hellenists.

<sup>t</sup> Literally the Hebrews.

compare Deut.21.22-23; Gal.3.13. 33-39: **Gamaliel's advice.** 33: There is some question as to whether the Romans permitted the Jews to exercise such punishment at that time; see Jn.18.31. 34: As a *Pharisee* (see Mt.23.7 n.), *Gamaliel* (see 22.3 n.) belonged to a movement which opposed both the theology and politics of the Sadducees. 36-37: *Theudas's* rebellion occurred some years after Gamaliel is reported to have made this speech, and long after *Judas* led his uprising about 6 A.D. 40: *Flogged*: see Deut.25.1-3. Rabbinic law sets thirty-nine lashes as the maximum (see 2 Cor.11.24), although sentences of fewer were usual. 41: Compare Lk.6.22; 9.23; 1 Pet.4.14-18.

#### 6.1-7.60: The Hellenists and Stephen.

6.1-7: **Choosing the Seven.** 1: Luke uses the word *disciples* as equivalent to Christians. *Widows*: see 1 Tim.5.3 n., 9 n. 3: *Your number* is addressed to the Hellenists, not all believers. 6: It is evident from the following verses that they were ordained as evangelists, rather than table overseers; compare 21.8. Paul and Barnabas were set apart for mission in the same way (13.3). This passage has nothing to do with the later "deaconate" as a church order.

6.8-15: **Stephen is brought before the council.** 8: By performing *miracles and signs*, *Stephen* functioned as an evangelist, rather than as a table waiter; see v. 2; see also 2.43; 14.3. 11: Jesus

10 and argued with Stephen, but could not hold their own against the inspired  
 11 wisdom with which he spoke. They then put up men who alleged that they had heard him make blasphemous statements against Moses and against  
 12 God. They stirred up the people and the elders and doctors of the law, set upon him and seized him, and brought  
 13 him before the Council. They produced false witnesses who said, 'This man is for ever saying things against this holy  
 14 place and against the Law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and alter the customs handed down to us by Moses.'  
 15 And all who were sitting in the Council fixed their eyes on him, and his face appeared to them like the face of an angel.

7 Then the High Priest asked, 'Is this  
 2 so?' And he said, 'My brothers, fathers of this nation, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to Abraham our ancestor while he was in Mesopotamia,  
 3 before he had settled in Harran, and said: "Leave your country and your kinsfolk and come away to a land that  
 4 I will show you." Thereupon he left the land of the Chaldaeans and settled in Harran. From there, after his father's death, God led him to migrate to this  
 5 land where you now live. He gave him nothing in it to call his own, not one yard; but promised to give it in possession to him and his descendants after him, though he was then childless.  
 6 God spoke in these terms: "Abraham's descendants shall live as aliens in a foreign land, held in slavery and oppression for four hundred years.  
 7 And I will pass judgement", said God, "on the nation whose slaves they are; and after that they shall come out free,  
 8 and worship me in this place." He then gave him the covenant of circumcision, and so, after Isaac was born, he circumcised him on the eighth day; and

Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs.

'The patriarchs out of jealousy sold 9 Joseph into slavery in Egypt, but God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He also gave him a presence and powers of mind which so commended him to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he appointed him chief administrator for Egypt and the whole of the royal household.

'But famine struck all Egypt and 11 Canaan, and caused great hardship; and our ancestors could find nothing to eat. But Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt and sent our fathers there. This was their first visit. On the 13 second visit Joseph was recognized by his brothers, and his family connections were disclosed to Pharaoh. So 14 Joseph sent an invitation to his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five persons altogether; and Jacob went 15 down into Egypt. There he ended his days, as also our forefathers did. Their 16 remains were later removed to Shechem and buried in the tomb which Abraham had bought and paid for from the clan of Emmor at Shechem.

'Now as the time approached for 17 God to fulfil the promise he had made to Abraham, our nation in Egypt grew and increased in numbers. At length 18 another king, who knew nothing of Joseph, ascended the throne of Egypt. He made a crafty attack on our race, 19 and cruelly forced our ancestors to expose their children so that they should not survive. At this time Moses 20 was born. He was a fine child, and pleasing to God. For three months he was nursed in his father's house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's 21 daughter herself adopted him and brought him up as her own son. So 22 Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, a powerful speaker and a man of action.

also was charged with blasphemy; see Mk.14.64. 12: The people here oppose Stephen; compare 5.26. 14: *Destroy this place*: see Mt.24.1-3 n. A similar charge of trying to *alter the customs* was leveled against Paul (21.21).

7.1-53: **Stephen's speech.** 3: Gen.12.1. 5: See Gen.12.7; 17.8; for other discussions of Abraham, see Rom. ch. 4; Gal. ch. 3, 6: *Four hundred years*: Gen.15.13; but according to Exod. 12.40, it was 430 years. 14: *Seventy-five persons* are reported in Gen.46.27 Sept. 16: This is at variance with the OT, according to which *Abraham* bought the cave of Machpelah (Gen.23) at Hebron. The purchase from *Emmor* (Hamor) was made by Jacob (Gen.33.19) and provided Joseph's burial place at *Shechem* (Josh.24.32). 22: *Powerful speaker*: the opposite is reported in

23 'He was approaching the age of forty, when it occurred to him to look into the conditions of his fellow-countrymen the Israelites. He saw one of them being ill-treated, so he went to his aid, and avenged the victim by striking down the Egyptian. He thought his fellow-countrymen would understand that God was offering them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. The next day he came upon two of them fighting, and tried to bring them to make up their quarrel. "My men," he said, "you are brothers; why are you ill-treating one another?" But the man who was at fault pushed him away. "Who set you up as a ruler and judge over us?" he said. "Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?" At this Moses fled the country and settled in Midianite territory. There two sons were born to him.

30 'After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the flame of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. Moses was amazed at the sight. But as he approached to look closely, the voice of the Lord was heard: "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Moses was terrified and dared not look. Then the Lord said to him, "Take off your shoes; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen how my people are oppressed in Egypt and have heard their groans; and I have come down to rescue them. Up, then; let me send you to Egypt."

35 'This Moses, whom they had rejected with the words, "Who made you ruler and judge?"—this very man was commissioned as ruler and liberator by God himself, speaking through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.

36 It was Moses who led them out, working miracles and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and for forty years in the desert. It was he again who said to the Israelites, "God will raise up a prophet for you from among yourselves as he

raised me."<sup>u</sup> He it was who, when they were assembled there in the desert, conversed with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our forefathers; he received the living utterances of God, to pass on to us.

39 'But our forefathers would not accept his leadership. They thrust him aside. They wished themselves back in Egypt, and said to Aaron, "Make us gods to go before us. As for that Moses, who brought us out of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." That was when they made the bull-calf, and offered sacrifice to the idol, and held a feast in honour of the thing their hands had made. But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the host of heaven, as it stands written in the book of the prophets: "Did you bring me victims and offerings those forty years in the desert, you house of Israel? No, you carried aloft the shrine of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan, the images which you had made for your adoration. I will banish you beyond Babylon."

44 'Our forefathers had the Tent of the Testimony in the desert, as God commanded when he told Moses to make it after the pattern which he had seen. Our fathers of the next generation, with Joshua, brought it with them when they dispossessed the nations whom God drove out before them, and there it was until the time of David. David found favour with God and asked to be allowed to provide a dwelling-place for the God of Jacob;<sup>v</sup> but it was Solomon who built him a house. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men: as the prophet says, "Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord; where is my resting-place? Are not all these 50 things of my own making?"

51 'How stubborn you are, heathen still

<sup>u</sup> Or like me.

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses read for the house of Jacob.

Exod.4.10. In accordance with Hellenistic-Jewish practice, Moses is described in terms of the Hellenistic "divine man"; see 14.11 n.; 28.6 n. 23: Later Jewish tradition divided Moses' life into three periods of forty years each. 32: Exod.3.6. 33: Exod.3.5. 34: Exod.3.7. 37: Deut.18.15. 40: Exod.32.1-6. 42: See Amos 5.25-27. 48: For Stephen, building the Temple dishonored God. 49: Isa.66.1-2; compare 1 Kgs.8.29. 51: For a similar attack, see Jesus' words in Mt.23.13-36.

at heart and deaf to the truth! You always fight against the Holy Spirit. Like fathers, like sons. Was there ever a prophet whom your fathers did not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One; and now you have betrayed him and murdered him, you who received the Law as God's angels gave it to you, and yet have not kept it.'

This touched them on the raw and they ground their teeth with fury. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, and gazing intently up to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. 'Look,' he said, 'there is a rift in the sky; I can see the Son of Man standing at God's right hand!' At this they gave a great shout and stopped their ears. Then they made one rush at him and, flinging him out of the city, set about stoning him. The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. So they stoned Stephen, and as they did so, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried aloud, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them', and with that he died.

8 And Saul was among those who approved of his murder.

THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF A TIME OF violent persecution for the church in Jerusalem; and all except the apostles were scattered over the country districts of Judaea and Samaria. Stephen was given burial by certain devout men, who made a great lamentation for him. Saul, meanwhile, was harrying the church; he entered house after house,

seizing men and women, and sending them to prison.

As for those who had been scattered, they went through the country preaching the Word. Philip came down to a city in Samaria and began proclaiming the Messiah to them. The crowds, to a man, listened eagerly to what Philip said, when they heard him and saw the miracles that he performed. For in many cases of possession the unclean spirits came out with a loud cry; and many paralysed and crippled folk were cured; and there was great joy in that city.

A man named Simon had been in the city for some time, and had swept the Samaritans off their feet with his magical arts, claiming to be someone great. All of them, high and low, listened eagerly to him. 'This man', they said, 'is that power of God which is called "The Great Power".' They listened because they had for so long been carried away by his magic. But when they came to believe Philip with his good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, men and women alike. Even Simon himself believed, and was baptized, and thereupon was constantly in Philip's company. He was carried away when he saw the powerful signs and miracles that were taking place.

The apostles in Jerusalem now heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God. They sent off Peter and John, who went down there and prayed for the converts, asking that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For until then the Spirit had not come upon any of

53: *The Law as God's angels gave it to you*: contrast Gal.3.19, where the intention seems to be to reduce the Law's importance.

7.54-60: *The stoning of Stephen*. 56: *Son of Man*: see Lk.12.8 n.; 22.69; Mk.2.10 n. 58: *Saul* (Paul) appears here for the first time in the Acts account. *Stoning* was the punishment for blasphemy; see Lev.24.10-16. 59: *Receive my spirit*: compare Lk.23.46. 60: *Do not hold this sin*: compare Lk.23.34. The account here seems intended to stress the similarity of Stephen's death to that of Jesus'.

8.1-40: *The mission spreads beyond Jerusalem*. 1: The *violent persecution* was apparently directed only against the Hellenistic Jews who shared Stephen's views. 3: See 9.1,21; 22.4; 26.10-11; 1 Cor.15.9; Gal.1.13,23; Phil.3.6. 5: *Samaria* is the area of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel, settled by non-Jews when it fell to Assyria (see 2 Kgs.17.24-41). 6: Like Stephen, *Philip*, one of the Seven, performed *miracles* and preached, thus doing the apostolic work; compare 4.30; 6.8 n. 8: *Great joy*: the Samaritans had a lively expectation of the coming of a redeemer; compare Jn.4.25. 9-24: *Simon the magician*. 9: His *magical arts* put *Simon* in competition with the wonder-working disciples of Jesus; compare Mk.13.22. Such competition was common, and recognized as valid, in the Hellenistic world. 15: Acts pictures Jerusalem as the continuing center of the church, overseeing all its operations. 16: *Spirit had not yet come*:

them. They had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, that and nothing more. So Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, 'Give me the same power too, so that when I lay my hands on anyone, he will receive the Holy Spirit.' Peter replied, 'Your money go with you to damnation, because you thought God's gift was for sale! You have no part nor lot in this, for you are dishonest with God. Repent of this wickedness and pray the Lord to forgive you for imagining such a thing. I can see that you are doomed to taste the bitter fruit and wear the fetters of sin.'<sup>w</sup> Simon answered, 'Pray to the Lord for me yourselves and ask that none of the things you have spoken of may fall upon me.'

25 So, after giving their testimony and speaking the word of the Lord, they took the road back to Jerusalem, bringing the good news to many Samaritan villages on the way.

26 Then the angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Start out and go south to the road that leads down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is the desert road.) So he set out and was on his way when he caught sight of an Ethiopian. This man was a eunuch, a high official of the Kandake, or Queen, of Ethiopia, in charge of all her treasure. He had been to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage and was now on his way home, sitting in his carriage and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go and join the carriage.' When Philip ran up he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He said, 'How can I understand unless someone will

give me the clue?' So he asked Philip to get in and sit beside him.

The passage he was reading was this: 32 'He was led like a sheep to be slaughtered; and like a lamb that is dumb before the shearer, he does not open his mouth. He has been humiliated and has no redress. Who will be able to speak of his posterity? For he is cut off from the world of living men.'

'Now', said the eunuch to Philip, 34 'tell me, please, who it is that the prophet is speaking about here: himself or someone else?' Then Philip began. 35 Starting from this passage, he told him the good news of Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water. 'Look,' said the eunuch, 'here is water: what is there to prevent my being baptized?';<sup>x</sup> and he ordered 38 the carriage to stop. Then they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water 39 the Spirit snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw no more of him, but went happily on his way. Philip appeared at Azotus, and toured the country, preaching in all the towns till he reached Caesarea.

MEANWHILE SAUL WAS STILL BREATHING 9 murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the High Priest and applied for letters to the synagogues at Damascus authorizing him to arrest anyone he found, men or women, who followed the new way, and bring them to Jerusalem. While he was still on the road and nearing Damascus, suddenly a light flashed from the sky all around him. He fell 4 to the ground and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'

<sup>w</sup> Literally you are for gall of bitterness and a fetter of unrighteousness.

<sup>x</sup> Some witnesses insert (37) Philip said, 'If you wholeheartedly believe, it is permitted.' He replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'

see 2.38 n. 17: *Received the Holy Spirit*: compare 10.44 n. 26–40: *Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch*. 27: In ancient times, Ethiopia, peopled by the Nubians, centered in what is now the Sudan; compare Ps.68.31. *Eunuch*: compare Isa.56.3–5. 28: *Reading aloud* was the common practice, even when reading alone. 32: Isa.53.7–8. Isa. ch. 53 was a key passage in the earliest Christian proclamation (compare Mt.8.17; Jn.12.38; 1 Pet.2.22–25). 38: *They both went down into the water*: baptism of adults was by immersion, as Rom.6.3–4 ('By baptism we were buried with him...') indicates.

9.1–30: *Saul converted*. 1: For other accounts of this conversion, see chs. 22; 26. 3: There is no hint in Acts that Paul at this time suffered inner turmoil; Phil.3.6 indicates he felt no guilt while pursuing the law. 4: *Persecute me*: Jesus identifies himself with the Church Paul is



5 'Tell me, Lord,' he said, 'who you are.'  
 6 The voice answered, 'I am Jesus, whom  
 7 you are persecuting. But get up and go  
 8 into the city, and you will be told what  
 9 you have to do.' Meanwhile the men  
 10 who were travelling with him stood  
 11 speechless; they heard the voice but  
 12 could see no one. Saul got up from the  
 13 ground, but when he opened his eyes  
 14 he could not see; so they led him by the  
 15 hand and brought him into Damascus.  
 16 He was blind for three days, and took  
 17 no food or drink.  
 18 There was a disciple in Damascus  
 19 named Ananias. He had a vision in  
 20 which he heard the voice of the Lord:  
 21 'Ananias!' 'Here I am, Lord', he  
 22 answered. The Lord said to him, 'Go at  
 23 once to Straight Street, to the house of  
 24 Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus  
 25 named Saul. You will find him at  
 26 prayer; he has had a vision of a man  
 27 named Ananias coming in and laying  
 28 his hands on him to restore his sight.'  
 29 Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have often  
 30 heard about this man and all the harm  
 31 he has done to thy people in Jeru-  
 32 salem. And he is here with authority  
 33 from the chief priests to arrest all who  
 34 invoke thy name.' But the Lord said to  
 35 him, 'You must go, for this man is my  
 36 chosen instrument to bring my name  
 37 before the nations and their kings, and  
 38 before the people of Israel. I myself will  
 39 show him all that he must go through  
 40 for my name's sake.'  
 41 So Ananias went. He entered the  
 42 house, laid his hands on him and said,  
 43 'Saul, my brother, the Lord Jesus, who  
 44 appeared to you on your way here, has  
 45 sent me to you so that you may recover  
 46 your sight, and be filled with the Holy  
 47 Spirit.' And immediately it seemed that  
 48 scales fell from his eyes, and he re-  
 49 gained his sight. Thereupon he was  
 50 baptized, and afterwards he took food  
 51 and his strength returned.

He stayed some time with the dis-

5 ciples in Damascus. Soon he was pro- 20  
 6 claiming Jesus publicly in the syna-  
 7 gogues: 'This', he said, is the Son of 21  
 8 God.' All who heard were astounded.  
 9 'Is not this the man', they said, 'who  
 10 was in Jerusalem trying to destroy  
 11 those who invoke this name? Did he  
 12 not come here for the sole purpose of  
 13 arresting them and taking them to the  
 14 chief priests?' But Saul grew more and 22  
 15 more forceful, and silenced the Jews  
 16 of Damascus with his cogent proofs  
 17 that Jesus was the Messiah.

18 As the days mounted up, the Jews 23  
 19 hatched a plot against his life; but 24  
 20 their plans became known to Saul.  
 21 They kept watch on the city gates day  
 22 and night so that they might murder  
 23 him; but his converts took him one 25  
 24 night and let him down by the wall,  
 25 lowering him in a basket.

26 When he reached Jerusalem he tried 26  
 27 to join the body of disciples there; but  
 28 they were all afraid of him, because  
 29 they did not believe that he was really  
 30 a convert. Barnabas, however, took him 27  
 31 by the hand and introduced him to the  
 32 apostles. He described to them how  
 33 Saul had seen the Lord on his journey,  
 34 and heard his voice, and how he had  
 35 spoken out boldly in the name of  
 36 Jesus at Damascus. Saul now stayed 28  
 37 with them, moving about freely in  
 38 Jerusalem. He spoke out boldly and 29  
 39 openly in the name of the Lord, talking  
 40 and debating with the Greek-speaking  
 41 Jews.<sup>y</sup> But they planned to murder 30  
 42 him, and when the brethren learned of  
 43 this they escorted him to Caesarea and  
 44 saw him off to Tarsus.

45 MEANWHILE THE CHURCH, THROUGHOUT 31  
 46 Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, was left  
 47 in peace to build up its strength. In  
 48 the fear of the Lord, upheld by the Holy  
 49 Spirit, it held on its way and grew in  
 50 numbers.

<sup>y</sup> Literally the Hellenists.

tormenting; compare Lk.10.16. 7: The details of who *heard* and who *saw* are reversed in 22.9.  
 12: Mutually confirming visions or dreams also appear in Hellenistic religious literature.  
 15: *The people of Israel*: Acts reports that Paul regularly preached to the Jews (13.15; 14.1;  
 17.1-2); his own letters give a different impression (Gal.1.16; 2.8). 17: Compare 22.12-16.  
 20: At this point, the account in Acts begins to diverge significantly from Paul's account of  
 these events in Gal.1.13-2.10. 23-25: **Plot against Saul.** 23: With a *plot against his life*, the  
 prediction in v. 16 begins its fulfillment. 25: Compare 2 Cor.11.32-33. 26-30: **Saul in Jerusalem.**  
 27: Paul gives a different account of these events in Gal.1.16-20.

9.31-43: **Peter performs two miracles.** Mighty deeds were understood to accredit authorita-

32 Peter was making a general tour, in the course of which he went down to visit God's people at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas who had been bed-ridden with paralysis for eight years. Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ cures you; get up and make your bed', and immediately he stood up. All who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him; and they turned to the Lord.

36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek, Dorcas, meaning a gazelle), who filled her days with acts of kindness and charity. At that time she fell ill and died; and they washed her body and laid it in a room upstairs. As Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who had heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the urgent request, 'Please come over to us without delay.' Peter thereupon went off with them. When he arrived they took him upstairs to the room, where all the widows came and stood round him in tears, showing him the shirts and coats that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. Peter sent them all outside, and knelt down and prayed. Then, turning towards the body, he said, 'Get up, Tabitha.' She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the members of the congregation and the widows and showed her to them alive. The news spread all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord. Peter stayed on in Joppa for some time with one Simon, a tanner.

10 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Cohort, as it was called. He was a religious man, and he and his whole family joined in the worship of God. He gave generously to help the Jewish people, and was regular in his prayers to God. One day about three in the

afternoon he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God, who came into his room and said, 'Cornelius!' He stared at him in terror. 'What is it, my lord?' he asked. The angel said, 'Your prayers and acts of charity have gone up to heaven to speak for you before God. And now send to Joppa for a man named Simon, also called Peter: he is lodging with another Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.' So when the angel who was speaking to him had gone, he summoned two of his servants and a military orderly who was a religious man, told them the whole story, and sent them to Joppa. Next day, while they were still on their way and approaching the city, about noon Peter went up on the roof to pray. He grew hungry and wanted something to eat. While they were getting it ready, he fell into a trance. He saw a rift in the sky, and a thing coming down that looked like a great sheet of sail-cloth. It was slung by the four corners, and was being lowered to the ground. In it he saw creatures of every kind, whatever walks or crawls or flies. Then there was a voice which said to him, 'Up, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'No, Lord, no: I have never eaten anything profane or unclean.' The voice came again a second time: 'It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.' This happened three times; and then the thing was taken up again into the sky.

While Peter was still puzzling over the meaning of the vision he had seen, the messengers of Cornelius had been asking the way to Simon's house, and now arrived at the entrance. They called out and asked if Simon Peter was lodging there. But Peter was thinking over the vision, when the Spirit said to him, 'Some men are here look-

*z One witness reads Two; others read Three.*

tive persons; see 14.11 n. 35: In Acts, miracles validly lead to faith; but compare Jn.20.29; Mk.8.12; Mt.16.4. 36: For similarities between this account and a miracle of Jesus, see Mk.5.37-42. 39: On widows, compare 1 Tim.5.3 n., 9 n.

10.1-48: Peter and Cornelius. 1: Caesarea, the Roman capital of the provinces of Judea and Samaria, was the official residence of the procurators who ruled them. A centurion commanded one hundred men. A cohort was a military unit, part of a legion. 2: *Worship of God*, lit. he was a God-fearer: a term applied to Gentiles who observed Jewish rites without becoming converts; compare 13.50; 16.14. 14: *Profane or unclean*: see Lev. ch. 11. 15: The voice annuls Jewish food laws, and thus the distinction between Jew and Gentile; see also v. 28; Mk.7.1-23. 17: Cornelius: see v. 3. 19-22: This is another case of mutually confirming visions; see 9.12 n.

20 ing for you; make haste and go down-  
stairs. You may go with them without  
any misgiving, for it was I who sent  
21 them.' Peter came down to the men  
and said, 'You are looking for me?  
Here I am. What brings you here?'  
22 'We are from the centurion Cornelius,'  
they replied, 'a good and religious  
man, acknowledged as such by the  
whole Jewish nation. He was directed  
by a holy angel to send for you to his  
house and to listen to what  
23 you have to say.' So Peter asked them  
in and gave them a night's lodging.  
Next day he set out with them, accom-  
panied by some members of the con-  
gregation at Joppa.  
24 The day after that, he arrived at  
Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting  
them and had called together his rela-  
tives and close friends. When Peter  
25 arrived, Cornelius came to meet him,  
and bowed to the ground in deep rever-  
ence. But Peter raised him to his feet  
26 and said, 'Stand up; I am a man like  
anyone else.' Still talking with him he  
went in and found a large gathering.  
27 He said to them, 'I need not tell you  
that a Jew is forbidden by his religion  
to visit or associate with a man of  
another race; yet God has shown me  
28 clearly that I must not call any man  
profane or unclean. That is why I came  
here without demur when you sent for  
me. May I ask what was your reason  
for sending?'  
30 Cornelius said, 'Four days ago, just  
about this time, I was in the house here  
saying the afternoon prayers, when  
suddenly a man in shining robes stood  
31 before me. He said: "Cornelius, your  
prayer has been heard and your acts of  
charity remembered before God. Send  
32 to Joppa, then, to Simon Peter, and ask  
him to come. He is lodging in the house  
of Simon the tanner, by the sea." So I  
33 sent to you there and then; it was kind  
of you to come. And now we are  
all met here before God, to hear all

that the Lord has ordered you to say.'

Peter began: 'I now see how true it  
34 is that God has no favourites, but that  
35 in every nation the man who is god-  
fearing and does what is right is ac-  
ceptable to him. He sent his word to the  
36 Israelites and gave the good news of  
peace through Jesus Christ, who is  
Lord of all. I need not tell you what  
37 happened lately all over the land of the  
Jews, starting from Galilee after the  
baptism proclaimed by John. You  
38 know about Jesus of Nazareth, how  
God anointed him with the Holy Spirit  
and with power. He went about doing  
good and healing all who were op-  
pressed by the devil, for God was with  
him. And we can bear witness to all  
39 that he did in the Jewish country-side  
and in Jerusalem. He was put to death  
by hanging on a gibbet; but God raised  
40 him to life on the third day, and al-  
lowed him to appear, not to the whole  
41 people, but to witnesses whom God  
had chosen in advance—to us, who ate  
and drank with him after he rose from  
the dead. He commanded us to pro-  
42 claim him to the people, and affirm  
that he is the one who has been desig-  
nated by God as judge of the living and  
the dead. It is to him that all the  
43 prophets testify, declaring that everyone  
who trusts in him receives forgiveness  
of sins through his name.'

Peter was still speaking when the  
44 Holy Spirit came upon all who were  
listening to the message. The believers  
45 who had come with Peter, men of Jew-  
ish birth, were astonished that the gift  
of the Holy Spirit should have been  
poured out even on Gentiles. For they  
46 could hear them speaking in tongues of  
ecstasy and acclaiming the greatness of  
God. Then Peter spoke: 'Is anyone  
47 prepared to withhold the water for  
baptism from these persons, who have  
received the Holy Spirit just as we did  
ourselves?' Then he ordered them to  
48 be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

23: *Some members*: in 11.12 there are six who function as witnesses at this turning point in the life of the church. 30: *Four days ago*: the Gr. is obscure for this. 34-35: These verses justify the Gentile mission which now begins. 36-38: *Lord of all*, as well as *doing good and healing*, were claims commonly made for deities and rulers in the Hellenistic world. 41: *Who ate and drank*: compare 1.6; Lk.24.30,42. 42: *As judge*: compare 17.31. 43: *All the prophets*: see 3.24. *Everyone*: compare 13.39. 44-46: The coming of the *Holy Spirit* is here identified with *speaking in tongues of ecstasy*: see 8.15-17 where the same may be implied. 48: *Baptized*: see 2.38 n.

After that they asked him to stay on with them for a time.

- 11 News came to the apostles and the members of the church in Judaea that Gentiles too had accepted the word of  
 2 God; and when Peter came up to Jerusalem those who were of Jewish birth  
 3 raised the question with him. 'You have been visiting men who are uncircumcised,' they said, 'and sitting at  
 4 table with them!' Peter began by laying before them the facts as they had happened.  
 5 'I was in the city of Joppa', he said, 'at prayer; and while in a trance I had a vision: a thing was coming down that looked like a great sheet of sail-cloth, slung by the four corners and lowered  
 6 from the sky till it reached me. I looked intently to make out what was in it and I saw four-footed creatures of the earth, wild beasts, and things that crawl or  
 7 fly. Then I heard a voice saying to me, 8 "Up, Peter, kill and eat." But I said, "No, Lord, no: nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth." A voice from heaven answered a second time, "It is not for you to call profane  
 10 what God counts clean." This happened three times, and then they were all drawn up again into the sky. At that moment three men, who had been sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where I was<sup>a</sup> staying; and the Spirit told me to go with them.<sup>b</sup> My six companions here came with me and  
 13 we went into the man's house. He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house who said, "Send to Joppa  
 14 for Simon also called Peter. He will speak words that will bring salvation to you and all your household." Hardly had I begun speaking, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, just as upon  
 16 us at the beginning. Then I recalled what the Lord had said: "John bap-

tized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." God gave 17 them no less a gift than he gave us when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; then how could I possibly stand in God's way?"

When they heard this their doubts 18 were silenced. They gave praise to God and said, 'This means that God has granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles also.'

MEANWHILE THOSE WHO HAD BEEN 19 scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, bringing the message to Jews only and to no others. But there were some natives of 20 Cyprus and Cyrene among them, and these, when they arrived at Antioch, began to speak to Gentiles as well, telling them the good news of the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with 21 them, and a great many became believers, and turned to the Lord.

The news reached the ears of the 22 church in Jerusalem; and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived 23 and saw the divine grace at work, he rejoiced, and encouraged them all to hold fast to the Lord with resolute hearts; for he was a good man, full of 24 the Holy Spirit and of faith. And large numbers were won over to the Lord.

He then went off to Tarsus to look 25 for Saul; and when he had found him, 26 he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year the two of them lived in fellowship with the congregation there, and gave instruction to large numbers. It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name of Christians.

During this period some prophets 27 came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read we were.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses add making no distinctions; others add without any misgiving, as in 10. 20.

11.1–18: Peter in Jerusalem. 2: Of Jewish birth (or, of the circumcision party): compare Gal.2.12. 12: These companions are apparently to help Peter in his presentation. 15: At the beginning: i.e. Pentecost; compare 2.1–4 (and nn.); 10.44–46 (and n.). 16: See 1.5 n. 18: Repentance is also used as a synonym for faith in 5.31.

11.19–30: Expanding missionary activity among Gentiles. 19: Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, was the official residence of the Roman administrator of the province of Syria. Here, it now becomes the center of the Gentile mission. 20: For the first time, Gentiles are evangelized as a general practice. Vv. 19–20 reflect Acts' missionary scheme: first to Jews, then to Gentiles. 22: They sent Barnabas, apparently because the Gentile mission was still regarded with suspicion; compare 15.1; Gal.2.11–14. 26: The name of Christians, coined by outsiders, was not necessarily derisive in intent, as some interpreters assert. 27: Prophets: compare 13.1;

28 One of them, Agabus by name, was inspired to stand up and predict a severe and world-wide famine, which in fact  
 29 occurred in the reign of Claudius. So the disciples agreed to make a contribution, each according to his means, for the relief of their fellow-Christians in  
 30 Judaea. This they did, and sent it off to the elders, in the charge of Barnabas and Saul.

12 IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT KING Herod attacked certain members of the church. He beheaded James, the brother  
 2 of John, and then, when he saw that the Jews approved, proceeded to arrest Peter also. This happened during the  
 3 festival of Unleavened Bread. Having secured him, he put him in prison under a military guard, four squads of four men each, meaning to produce him in  
 4 public after Passover. So Peter was kept in prison under constant watch, while the church kept praying fervently for him to God.

6 On the very night before Herod had planned to bring him forward, Peter was asleep between two soldiers, secured by two chains, while outside the doors sentries kept guard over the  
 7 prison. All at once an angel of the Lord stood there, and the cell was ablaze with light. He tapped Peter on the shoulder and woke him. 'Quick! Get up', he said, and the chains fell  
 8 away from his wrists. The angel then said to him, 'Do up your belt and put your sandals on.' He did so. 'Now wrap your cloak round you and follow  
 9 me.' He followed him out, with no idea that the angel's intervention was real:  
 10 he thought it was just a vision. But they passed the first guard-post, then the second, and reached the iron gate

leading out into the city, which opened for them of its own accord. And so they came out and walked the length of one street; and the angel left him.

Then Peter came to himself. 'Now I  
 11 know it is true,' he said; 'the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.' When  
 12 he realized how things stood, he made for the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where a large company was at prayer. He knocked at the outer  
 13 door and a maid called Rhoda came to answer it. She recognized Peter's voice  
 14 and was so overjoyed that instead of opening the door she ran in and announced that Peter was standing outside. 'You are crazy', they told her;  
 15 but she insisted that it was so. Then they said, 'It must be his guardian angel.'

Meanwhile Peter went on knocking,  
 16 and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded. With a  
 17 movement of the hand he signed to them to keep quiet, and told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. 'Report this to James and the members of the church', he said. Then he left the house and went off elsewhere.

When morning came, there was  
 18 consternation among the soldiers: what could have become of Peter? Herod  
 19 made close search, but failed to find him, so he interrogated the guards and ordered their execution.

Afterwards he left Judaea to reside for a time at Caesarea. He had for some  
 20 time been furiously angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, who now by common agreement presented themselves at his court. There they won over Blastus the royal chamberlain, and sued

15.32; 21.9. 28: *Agabus*: see 21.10–12. *Claudius* was emperor of Rome in 41–54 A.D. Although there was a famine in Palestine about 46–48, there is no other record of a *world-wide famine*. 29: There is some confusion as to when the *contribution* was sent. According to this account, it was sent prior to the Apostolic Council (ch. 15). According to Gal.2.10, it occurred after the Council, as is implied in Acts 24.17; compare Rom.15.25–29. The reference to Claudius (v. 28) makes either time possible.

12.1–25: **Herod's persecution.** 1: *Herod Agrippa I* ruled as *king* of Judea 41–44 A.D., by the appointment of the Emperor Claudius. 2: *James, John*: see Mk.1.19. On the fate of *John*, the NT is silent. 10: The wondrous opening of locked doors is a widespread theme in Hellenistic stories. 12: *John Mark*: 12.25; 13.5,13; Col.4.10; Philem.24; 2 Tim.4.11. 15: In popular thought, each person had a *guardian angel* who was identical in appearance to the person. 17: From this point on, *James, Jesus' brother*, emerges as the leader of the church in Jerusalem (compare Gal.1.19; 2.12), and there is no further mention of the Twelve. Peter reappears only at 15.7. 20: Since the time of Solomon, Phoenicia *drew its supplies* from Judea; see 1 Kgs.5.9–11;

for peace, because their country drew its supplies from the king's territory. 21 So, on an appointed day, attired in his royal robes and seated on the rostrum, 22 Herod harangued them; and the populace shouted back, 'It is a god speaking, not a man!' Instantly an angel of 23 the Lord struck him down, because he had usurped the honour due to God; he was eaten up with worms and died. 24 Meanwhile the word of God continued to grow and spread. 25 Barnabas and Saul, their task fulfilled, returned from Jerusalem,<sup>c</sup> taking John Mark with them.

### The church breaks barriers

13 THERE WERE AT ANTIOCH, IN THE congregation there, certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been at the court of Prince 2 Herod, and Saul. While they were keeping a fast and offering worship to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me, to do the work to which I have called them.' 3 Then, after further fasting and prayer, they laid their hands on them and let them go. 4 So these two, sent out on their mission by the Holy Spirit, came down to Seleucia, and from there sailed to 5 Cyprus. Arriving at Salamis, they declared the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. They had John with them 6 as their assistant. They went through the whole island as far as Paphos, and there they came upon a sorcerer, a Jew who posed as a prophet, Bar-Jesus by 7 name. He was in the retinue of the

Governor, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who had sent for Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. This Elymas the sorcerer (so 8 his name may be translated) opposed them, trying to turn the Governor away from the Faith. But Saul, also 9 known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him and said, 10 'You swindler, you rascal, son of the devil and enemy of all goodness, will you never stop falsifying the straight ways of the Lord? Look now, the hand 11 of the Lord strikes: you shall be blind, and for a time you shall not see the sunlight.' Instantly mist and darkness came over him and he groped about for someone to lead him by the hand. When the Governor saw what had 12 happened he became a believer, deeply impressed by what he learned about the Lord.

Leaving Paphos, Paul and his companions went by sea to Perga in Pamphylia; John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem. From Perga they 14 continued their journey as far as Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they went to synagogue and took their seats; and after the readings from the 15 Law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent this message to them: 'Friends, if you have anything to say to the people by way of exhortation, let us hear it.' Paul rose, made a 16 gesture with his hand, and began:

'Men of Israel and you who worship our God, listen to me! The God of this 17 people of Israel chose our fathers. When they were still living as aliens in Egypt he made them into a nation and

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read their task fulfilled, returned to Jerusalem; or, as it might be rendered, their task at Jerusalem fulfilled, returned.

Ezek. 27.17. 23: Josephus (a first-century Jewish historian) confirms Herod's sudden death (*Ant.* xix, 8.2) and the detail that he was acclaimed as divine. After the death of Herod Agrippa I, Judea reverted to an imperial province, ruled by governors; see 23.24.

13.1-14.28: Paul's missionary travels (first journey). 1-3: Barnabas and Saul set apart. 1: Niger means black. Prince Herod is Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch, not the Herod of 12.1. 2: Acts' conviction that the Holy Spirit guided the Church is again evident here. 3: The laying on of hands commissioned persons for special tasks; compare 6.6. 4-12: Elymas confounded. 4: Travelers at that time sailed on any available boat; passenger ships plying regular routes were unknown. 6: Paphos was the capital of Cyprus. 8: The meaning of Elymas is unknown. 9: Paul a Latin name, would be appropriate for a Roman citizen (22.25-29); but see 1.23 n. 11: Acts' opposition to magic is clear here; compare also 8.9-11; 19.13-20. 13-15: To Pisidian Antioch. 13: There was some altercation accompanying John's leaving, as 15.38 makes clear. 14: Pisidian Antioch, a remotely situated Roman colony (see 16.12 n.), was in the southern part of the province of Galatia, as were the other cities visited on this "journey." 16-41: Paul's sermon. 17: As did Peter (13.25) and Stephen (7.2-50), Paul recounts the origins of the Jewish people as

brought them out of that country with  
 18 arm outstretched. For some forty years  
 he bore with their conduct<sup>d</sup> in the  
 19 desert. Then in the Canaanite country  
 he overthrew seven nations, whose  
 lands he gave them to be their heritage  
 20 for some four hundred and fifty years,  
 and afterwards appointed judges for  
 them until the time of the prophet  
 Samuel.

21 Then they asked for a king and God  
 gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man  
 of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned  
 22 for forty years. Then he removed him  
 and set up David as their king, giving  
 him his approval in these words: "I  
 have found David son of Jesse to be a  
 man after my own heart, who will carry  
 23 out all my purposes." This is the man  
 from whose posterity God, as he prom-  
 ised, has brought Israel a saviour,  
 24 Jesus. John made ready for his coming  
 by proclaiming baptism as a token of  
 repentance to the whole people of  
 25 Israel. And when John was nearing the  
 end of his course, he said, "I am not  
 what you think I am. No, after me  
 comes one whose shoes I am not fit to  
 unfasten."

26 My brothers, you who come of the  
 stock of Abraham, and others among  
 you who revere our God, we are the  
 people to whom the message of this  
 27 salvation has been sent. The people of  
 Jerusalem and their rulers did not  
 recognize him, or understand the  
 words of the prophets which are read  
 Sabbath by Sabbath; indeed they ful-  
 filled them by condemning him.  
 28 Though they failed to find grounds for  
 the sentence of death, they asked Pilate  
 29 to have him executed. And when they  
 had carried out all that the scriptures  
 said about him, they took him down  
 from the gibbet and laid him in a tomb.  
 30 But God raised him from the dead;  
 31 and there was a period of many days  
 during which he appeared to those who  
 had come up with him from Galilee to  
 Jerusalem.

"They are now his witnesses before  
 our nation; and we are here to give you 32  
 the good news that God, who made the  
 promise to the fathers, has fulfilled it 33  
 for the children<sup>e</sup> by raising Jesus from  
 the dead, as indeed it stands written, in  
 the second<sup>f</sup> Psalm: "You are my son;  
 this day I have begotten you." Again, 34  
 that he raised him from the dead, never  
 again to revert to corruption, he de-  
 clares in these words: "I will give you  
 the blessings promised to David, holy  
 and sure." This is borne out by another 35  
 passage: "Thou wilt not let thy loyal  
 servant suffer corruption." As for 36  
 David, when he had served the purpose  
 of God in his own generation, he died,  
 and was gathered to his fathers, and  
 suffered corruption; but the one whom 37  
 God raised up did not suffer corrup-  
 tion; and you must understand, my 38  
 brothers, that it is through him that  
 forgiveness of sins is now being pro-  
 claimed to you. It is through him that 39  
 everyone who has faith is acquitted of  
 everything for which there was no  
 acquittal under the Law of Moses.  
 Beware, then, lest you bring down 40  
 upon yourselves the doom proclaimed  
 by the prophets: "See this, you scoffers, 41  
 wonder, and begone; for I am doing a  
 deed in your days, a deed which you  
 will never believe when you are told of  
 it."

As they were leaving the synagogue 42  
 they were asked to come again and  
 speak on these subjects next Sabbath;  
 and after the congregation had dis- 43  
 persed, many Jews and gentile wor-  
 shippers went along with Paul and  
 Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged  
 them to hold fast to the grace of God.

On the following Sabbath almost the 44  
 whole city gathered to hear the word  
 of God. When the Jews saw the crowds, 45  
 they were filled with jealous resent-  
 ment, and contradicted what Paul said,  
 with violent abuse. But Paul and Bar- 46

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read he sustained them.

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read our children; others read us their children. <sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read first.

the necessary presupposition of understanding the Christian faith. 18b-19a: Compare Deut.7.1. 20: *Afterwards* refers to the occupation of Canaan (v. 19), not the 450 years; the Greek text is not entirely clear. 22: Compare 1 Sam.13.14; Ps.89.21. 25: Compare Mk.1.7; Lk.3.16. 33: Ps.2.7. 35-37: Compare 2.25-31. 35: Ps.16.10. 41: Hab.1.5. Paul's more sophisticated Christology, and his eschatological concerns, characteristic of his letters, are absent from this sermon. 42-52: Paul and Barnabas turn to Gentiles. 46: This point is repeated in 18.6 and 28.28; compare

nabas were outspoken in their reply. 'It was necessary', they said, 'that the word of God should be declared to you first. But since you reject it and thus condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For these are our instructions from the Lord: "I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, and a means of salvation to earth's farthest bounds."' When the Gentiles heard this, they were overjoyed and thankfully acclaimed the word of the Lord, and those who were marked out for eternal life became believers. So the word of the Lord spread far and wide through the region. But the Jews stirred up feeling among the women of standing who were worshippers, and among the leading men of the city; a persecution was started against Paul and Barnabas, and they were expelled from the district. So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. And the converts were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

14 At Iconium similarly they went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke to such purpose that a large body both of Jews and Gentiles became believers. But the unconverted Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the Christians. For some time Paul and Barnabas stayed on and spoke boldly and openly in reliance on the Lord; and he confirmed the message of his grace by causing signs and miracles to be worked at their hands. The mass of the townspeople were divided, some siding with the Jews, others with the apostles. But when a move was made by Gentiles and Jews together, with the connivance of the city authorities, to maltreat them and stone them, they got wind of it and made their escape to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and

Derbe and the surrounding country, where they continued to spread the good news.

At Lystra sat a crippled man, lame from birth, who had never walked in his life. This man listened while Paul was speaking. Paul fixed his eyes on him and saw that he had the faith to be cured, so he said to him in a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet'; and he sprang up and started to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted, in their native Lycaonian, 'The gods have come down to us in human form.' And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul they called Mercury, because he was the spokesman. And the priest of Jupiter, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and he and all the people were about to offer sacrifice.

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd shouting, 'Men, what is this that you are doing? We are only human beings, no less mortal than you. The good news we bring tells you to turn from these follies to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In past ages he allowed all nations to go their own way; and yet he has not left you without some clue to his nature, in the kindness he shows: he sends you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons, and gives you food and good cheer in plenty.'

With these words they barely managed to prevent the crowd from offering sacrifice to them.

Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came on the scene and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, thinking him dead. The converts formed a ring

*g Or At Iconium they went together . . .*

also 19.8-9. 50: The risen Jesus had foretold such persecution of Paul; see 9.16. 51: They thus follow a command of Jesus: Lk.9.5; compare 10.10-11. 14.1-7: On to Iconium. 1: Iconium, like Antioch a Roman colony, was a commercial center for its area (see 13.14 n.). 4: Paul and Barnabas are called *apostles* only here and in v. 14; the term is normally reserved in Acts for the leaders in Jerusalem (compare 15.2), although Paul himself claimed to be an apostle: see 1 Cor.9.1; Gal.1.1. 8-20: Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. 8: Lystra was also a Roman colony. 11: The idea of "divine men" was common in the Hellenistic world; great deeds were attributed to divine power in such persons; compare 28.6 n. 12: Jupiter: lit. Zeus. Mercury: lit. Hermes, the god who, in Greek mythology, brought men messages from the gods. 15: Ps.146.6; compare Acts 4.24. Peter also rejected any attribute of divinity (10.26). 19: See



round him, and he got to his feet and went into the city. Next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

- 21 After bringing the good news to that town, where they gained many converts, they returned to Lystra, then to  
22 Iconium, and then to Antioch, heartening the converts and encouraging them to be true to their religion. They warned them that to enter the kingdom of God we must pass through many hardships.  
23 They also appointed elders for them in each congregation, and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith.

- 24 Then they passed through Pisidia and  
25 came into Pamphylia. When they had given the message at Perga, they went  
26 down to Attalia, and from there set sail for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the task which they had now completed. When they arrived and had  
27 called the congregation together, they reported all that God had done through them, and how he had thrown open the gates of faith to the Gentiles.  
28 And they stayed for some time with the disciples there.

- 15 NOW CERTAIN PERSONS WHO HAD COME down from Judaea began to teach the brotherhood that those who were not circumcised in accordance with Mosaic  
2 practice could not be saved. That brought them into fierce dissension and controversy with Paul and Barnabas. And so it was arranged that these two and some others from Antioch should go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

- 3 They were sent on their way by the congregation, and travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling the full story of the conversion of the Gentiles. The news caused great rejoicing among all the Christians there.

When they reached Jerusalem they  
4 were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, and reported all that God had done through them. Then  
5 some of the Pharisaic party who had become believers came forward and said, 'They must be circumcised and told to keep the Law of Moses.'

The apostles and elders held a meet-  
6 ing to look into this matter; and, after  
7 a long debate, Peter rose and addressed them. 'My friends,' he said, 'in the early days, as you yourselves know, God made his choice among you and ordained that from my lips the Gentiles should hear and believe the message of the Gospel. And God, who can read  
8 men's minds, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, as he did to us. He made no difference  
9 between them and us; for he purified their hearts by faith. Then why do you now  
10 provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? No, we believe that it is by the  
11 grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, and so are they.'

At that the whole company fell silent  
12 and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and miracles that God had worked among the Gentiles through them.

When they had finished speaking,  
13 James summed up: 'My friends,' he said, 'listen to me. Simeon has told  
14 how it first happened that God took notice of the Gentiles, to choose from among them a people to bear his name; and this agrees with the words of the  
15 prophets, as Scripture has it:

"Thereafter I will return and rebuild  
16 the fallen house of David;  
even from its ruins I will rebuild it,  
and set it up again,  
that they may seek the Lord—all the  
17 rest of mankind,

2 Cor.11.25. 21-28: Return to Antioch. 23: *Prayer and fasting*: compare 13.3. 28: Such inexact time references are typical of Acts, and make the construction of historical chronology impossible.

15.1-35: The Apostolic Council. 2: This is the *controversy* with which Paul's letter to the Galatians deals, although in that letter, it occurs much later in Paul's career (see Gal.2.1). 7: According to Gal.2.7-8, Peter was sent to the Jews. 8: Compare 10.44-45; 11.15. The conversion of Cornelius is the classic example in Acts. 10: That the law was not universally regarded as a burdensome yoke is clear from Ps.19.7-11. 13: *James* is at this time clearly the head of the mother church in Jerusalem; see 12.17 n. 14: Although a *Simeon* is mentioned in

and the Gentiles, whom I have  
 claimed for my own.  
 Thus says the Lord, whose work it is,  
 18 made known long ago.”

19 ‘My judgement therefore is that we  
 should impose no irksome restrictions  
 on those of the Gentiles who are turning  
 20 to God, but instruct them by letter  
 to abstain from things polluted by contact  
 with idols, from fornication, from anything  
 that has been strangled, and  
 21 from blood.<sup>h</sup> Moses, after all, has  
 never lacked spokesmen in every town  
 for generations past; he is read in the  
 synagogues Sabbath by Sabbath.’

22 Then the apostles and elders, with  
 the agreement of the whole church,  
 resolved to choose representatives and  
 send them to Antioch with Paul and  
 Barnabas. They chose two leading men  
 in the community, Judas Barsabbas  
 23 and Silas, and gave them this letter to  
 deliver:

‘We, the apostles and elders, send  
 greetings as brothers to our brothers  
 of gentile origin in Antioch, Syria, and  
 24 Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard  
 that some of our number, without any  
 instructions from us, have<sup>i</sup> disturbed  
 you with their talk and unsettled your  
 25 minds, we have resolved unanimously  
 to send to you our chosen representatives  
 with our well-beloved Barnabas  
 26 and Paul, who have devoted themselves  
 to the cause of our Lord Jesus  
 27 Christ. We are therefore sending Judas  
 and Silas, who will themselves confirm  
 28 this by word of mouth. It is the decision  
 of the Holy Spirit, and our decision,  
 to lay no further burden  
 29 upon you beyond these essentials: you  
 are to abstain from meat that has been  
 offered to idols, from blood, from anything  
 that has been strangled,<sup>j</sup> and  
 from fornication.<sup>k</sup> If you keep yourselves  
 free from these things you will  
 be doing right. Farewell.’

So they were sent off on their jour- 30  
 ney and travelled down to Antioch,  
 where they called the congregation  
 together, and delivered the letter. When 31  
 it was read, they all rejoiced at the en-  
 couragement it brought. Judas and 32  
 Silas, who were prophets themselves,  
 said much to encourage and strengthen  
 the members, and, after spending some 33  
 time there, were dismissed with the  
 good wishes of the brethren, to return  
 to those who had sent them.<sup>l</sup> But Paul 35  
 and Barnabas stayed on at Antioch,  
 and there, along with many others, they  
 taught and preached the word of the  
 Lord.

*Paul leads the advance*

AFTER A WHILE PAUL SAID TO BARNABAS, 36  
 ‘Ought we not to go back now to see  
 how our brothers are faring in the  
 various towns where we proclaimed  
 the word of the Lord?’ Barnabas want- 37  
 ed to take John Mark with them; but 38  
 Paul judged that the man who had  
 deserted them in Pamphylia and had  
 not gone on to share in their work was  
 not the man to take with them now.  
 The dispute was so sharp that they 39  
 parted company. Barnabas took Mark  
 with him and sailed for Cyprus, while 40  
 Paul chose Silas. He started on his  
 journey, commended by the brothers  
 to the grace of the Lord, and travelled 41  
 through Syria and Cilicia bringing new  
 strength to the congregations.

He went on to Derbe and to Lystra, 16  
 and there he found a disciple named  
 Timothy, the son of a Jewish Christian

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses omit from fornication; others omit from anything that has been strangled; some add (after blood) and to refrain from doing to others what they would not like done to themselves.

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses read have gone out and . . .  
<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses omit from anything that has been strangled.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses omit and from fornication; and some add and refrain from doing to others what you would not like done to yourselves.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses add (34) But Silas decided to remain there.

13.1 in connection with Antioch, a center for the Gentile mission, Luke clearly refers here to Peter. 20: Paul does not mention any such compromise (see Gal.2.6,9-10); he seems to contradict it in 1 Cor.8.8; 10.27. 24-29: The apostolic letter. 24: Without any instructions: a different impression is given in Gal.2.12 (“from James”). 29: Observance of these rules would make possible table-fellowship with law-observing Jewish-Christians; see Lev. chs. 17-18.

15.36-18.22: Paul’s further missionary travels (second journey). 36-41: Paul and Barnabas separate. 36: See 14.28 n. 38: See 13.13. 39: In Gal.2.13, Paul’s dispute with Barnabas turned on the more basic issue of table-fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians. 16.1-5: Timothy chosen. 1: Timothy was a trusted associate (2 Cor.1.19; Rom.16.21), whom Paul

2 mother and a Gentile father. He was well spoken of by the Christians at  
 3 Lystra and Iconium, and Paul wanted to have him in his company when he left the place. So he took him and circumcised him, out of consideration for the Jews who lived in those parts; for they all knew that his father was a  
 4 Gentile. As they made their way from town to town they handed on the decisions taken by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and enjoined their ob-  
 5 servance. And so, day by day, the congregations grew stronger in faith and increased in numbers.  
 6 They travelled through the Phrygian and Galatian region,<sup>m</sup> because they were prevented by the Holy Spirit from delivering the message in the province  
 7 of Asia; and when they approached the Mysian border they tried to enter Bithynia; but the Spirit of Jesus would  
 8 not allow them, so they skirted<sup>n</sup> Mysia and reached the coast at Troas. During the night a vision came to Paul: a Macedonian stood there appealing to him and saying, 'Come across to Macedonia and help us.' After he had seen  
 10 this vision we at once set about getting a passage to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to bring them the good news.  
 11 So we sailed from Troas and made a straight run to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, a city of the first rank in that district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. Here we stayed for some days,  
 13 and on the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river-side, where we thought there would be a place of prayer,<sup>o</sup> and sat down and talked to the women who had gathered  
 14 there. One of them named Lydia, a dealer in purple fabric from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God, was listening, and the Lord

opened her heart to respond to what Paul said. She was baptized, and her household with her, and then she said to us, 'If you have judged me to be a believer in the Lord, I beg you to come and stay in my house.' And she insisted on our going.

Once, when we were on our way to 16 the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who was possessed by an oracular spirit and brought large profits to her owners by telling fortunes. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Supreme God, and are declaring to you a way of salvation.' She did this day after day, 18 until Paul could bear it no longer. Rounding on the spirit he said, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her', and it went out there and then.

When the girl's owners saw that their 19 hope of gain had gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the city authorities in the main square; and 20 bringing them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are causing a disturbance in our city; they are Jews; they are advocating customs which it 21 is illegal for us Romans to adopt and follow.' The mob joined in the attack; 22 and the magistrates tore off the prisoners' clothes and ordered them to be flogged. After giving them a severe 23 beating they flung them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them under close guard. In view of these 24 orders, he put them in the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas, at 25 their prayers, were singing praises to God, and the other prisoners were listening, when suddenly there was such 26 a violent earthquake that the founda-

<sup>m</sup> Or through Phrygia and the Galatian region.

<sup>n</sup> Possibly traversed.

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses read where there was a recognized place of prayer.

often sent on important errands; see 1 Cor.4.17; 16.10. 3: Paul did not think circumcision necessary for Christians; see Gal.2.3; 5.11; 6.15. 6-10: Paul's vision. 7: Bithynia was the northernmost province in Asia Minor. 9: Paul continues his westward movement; this seems to have been his overall strategy (see Rom.15.19 n.). Macedonia was a Roman province in northern Greece. 11-15: Lydia converted. 11: Samothrace is an island about halfway between Troas and Neapolis. 12: As a Roman colony, Philippi was a military outpost and had a civil government modeled after Rome. 14: Worshipper of God: see 10.2 n. 16-40: Trouble in Philippi. In using the name of Jesus Christ, Paul literally fulfills the prayer of 4.30. 19: Paul may refer to this episode in 1 Th.2.2. 22: Paul suffered three such floggings at the hands of the Romans, who used rods (see 2 Cor.11.25). 25-26: A violent earthquake...all the doors burst open;

tions of the jail were shaken; all the doors burst open and all the prisoners found their fetters unfastened. The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open, and assuming that the prisoners had escaped, drew his sword intending to kill himself. But Paul shouted, 'Do yourself no harm; we are all here.' The jailer called for lights, rushed in and threw himself down before Paul and Silas, trembling with fear. He then escorted them out and said, 'Masters, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord<sup>p</sup> to him and to everyone in his house. At that late hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; and immediately afterwards he and his whole family were baptized. He brought them into his house, set out a meal, and rejoiced with his whole household in his new-found faith in God.

When daylight came the magistrates sent their officers with instructions to release the men. The jailer reported the message to Paul: 'The magistrates have sent word that you are to be released. So now you may go free, and blessings on your journey.'<sup>q</sup> But Paul said to the officers: 'They gave us a public flogging, though we are Roman citizens and have not been found guilty; they threw us into prison, and are they now to smuggle us out privately? No indeed! Let them come in person and escort us out.' The officers reported his words. The magistrates were alarmed to hear that they were Roman citizens, and came and apologized to them. Then they escorted them out and requested them to go away from the city. On leaving the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met their fellow-Christians, and spoke words of encouragement to them; then they departed.

**17** THEY NOW TRAVELLED BY WAY OF Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a

Jewish synagogue. Following his usual practice Paul went to their meetings; and for the next three Sabbaths he argued with them, quoting texts of Scripture which he expounded and applied to show that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. 'And this Jesus,' he said, 'whom I am proclaiming to you, is the Messiah.' Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so did a great number of godfearing Gentiles and a good many influential women.<sup>r</sup>

But the Jews in their jealousy recruited some low fellows from the dregs of the populace, roused the rabble, and had the city in an uproar. They mobbed Jason's house, with the intention of bringing Paul and Silas before the town assembly. Failing to find them, they dragged Jason himself and some members of the congregation before the magistrates, shouting, 'The men who have made trouble all over the world have now come here; and Jason has harboured them. They all flout the Emperor's laws, and assert that there is a rival king, Jesus.' These words caused a great commotion in the mob, which affected the magistrates also. They bound over Jason and the others, and let them go.

As soon as darkness fell, the members of the congregation sent Paul and Silas off to Beroea. On arrival, they made their way to the synagogue. The Jews here were more civil than those at Thessalonica; they received the message with great eagerness, studying the scriptures every day to see whether it was as they said. Many of them therefore became believers, and so did a fair number of Gentiles, women of standing as well as men. But when the Thessalonian Jews learned that the word of God had now been proclaimed by Paul in Beroea, they came on there to stir up trouble and rouse the rabble. Thereupon the members of the congregation

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read of God.

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses read . . . free and take your journey.

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses read a good many wives of leading men.

see 12.10 n. 37: Paul's letters do not mention his Roman citizenship. 38: Flogging Roman citizens was forbidden; hence, the magistrates were alarmed . . . and came and apologized to them. See 22.24 n. 17.1-9: Paul in Thessalonica: this city, the capital of the province of Macedonia, became an important Christian center (1 Th.1.8). 10-14: Trouble in Beroea. 13: Similar

sent Paul off at once to go down to the coast, while Silas and Timothy both stayed behind. Paul's escort brought him as far as Athens, and came away with instructions for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him with all speed.

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens he was exasperated to see how the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and gentile worshippers, and also in the city square every day with casual passers-by. And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers joined issue with him. Some said, 'What can this charlatan be trying to say?'; others, 'He would appear to be a propagandist for foreign deities'—this because he was preaching about Jesus and Resurrection. So they took him and brought him before the Court of Areopagus<sup>s</sup> and said, 'May we know what this new doctrine is that you propound? You are introducing ideas that sound strange to us, and we should like to know what they mean.' (Now the Athenians in general and the foreigners there had no time for anything but talking or hearing about the latest novelty.)

Then Paul stood up before the Court of Areopagus<sup>t</sup> and said: 'Men of Athens, I see that in everything that concerns religion you are uncommonly scrupulous. For as I was going round looking at the objects of your worship, I noticed among other things an altar bearing the inscription "To an Unknown God". What you worship but do not know—this is what I now proclaim.

'The God who created the world and everything in it, and who is Lord of

heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by men. It is not because he lacks anything that he accepts service at men's hands, for he is himself the universal giver of life and breath and all else. He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth's surface. He fixed the epochs of their history<sup>u</sup> and the limits of their territory. They were to seek God, and, it might be, touch and find him; though indeed he is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move, in him we exist; as some of your own poets<sup>v</sup> have said, "We are also his offspring." As God's offspring, then, we ought not to suppose that the deity is like an image in gold or silver or stone, shaped by human craftsmanship and design. As for the times of ignorance, God has overlooked them; but now he commands mankind, all men everywhere, to repent, because he has fixed the day on which he will have the world judged, and justly judged, by a man of his choosing; of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

When they heard about the raising of the dead, some scoffed; and others said, 'We will hear you on this subject some other time.' And so Paul left the assembly. However, some men joined him and became believers, including Dionysius, a member of the Court of Areopagus; also a woman named Damaris, and others besides.

After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. There he fell in with a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, and

<sup>s</sup> Or brought him to Mars' Hill.

<sup>t</sup> Or in the middle of Mars' Hill.

<sup>u</sup> Or fixed the ordered seasons . . .

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses read some among you.

events are reported in 13.50; 14.19. **15–34: Paul in Athens.** **16:** Athens, although less important commercially and politically at this time than Corinth, remained the intellectual center of the western world, and an important city for ancient tourists. **17:** The city square lay north of the Acropolis. **18:** Many ancient deities had descriptive names, e.g. Fate, Victory, Wisdom; some of Paul's listeners apparently assumed that *Resurrection* also referred to a specific goddess. **19:** The *Areopagus*, or Mars Hill, lies south of the market and west of the Acropolis. There is no hint of any formal legal trial, although the *Court of Areopagus* was the highest court in Athens. **22–34:** Paul's witness in Athens. **23:** No altar with this specific wording has been found. **24:** Compare 7.48; this was a regular point made by Jewish preachers as well as Stoic philosophers. **25:** That the gods need nothing was a commonplace belief among Greek philosophers and religious thinkers. **28:** The quotation is from Aratus' (a fourth-century B.C. poet) *Phaenomena* 5. **31:** That Jesus would come at the end as judge was a common early Christian theme; see 10.42; Mt.13.41; 16.27; 2 Cor.5.10. **18.1–17: Paul in Corinth. 1: Corinth**, the capital of the province of Achaia and a major port for east-west trade, had a wide reputation for low morals. **2:** On *Aquila* and *Priscilla* (or *Prisca*), see Rom.16.3; 1 Cor.16.19. *Claudius' . . . edict* is reported

his wife Priscilla; he had recently arrived from Italy because Claudius had issued an edict that all Jews should leave Rome. Paul approached them and, because he was of the same trade, he made his home with them, and they carried on business together; they were tent-makers. He also held discussions in the synagogue Sabbath by Sabbath, trying to convince both Jews and Gentiles.

Then Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, and Paul devoted himself entirely to preaching, affirming before the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. But when they opposed him and resorted to abuse, he shook out the skirts of his cloak and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! My conscience is clear; now I shall go to the Gentiles.' With that he left, and went to the house of a worshipper of God named Titius Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue. Crispus, who held office in the synagogue, now became a believer in the Lord, with all his household; and a number of Corinthians listened and believed, and were baptized. One night in a vision the Lord said to Paul, 'Have no fear: go on with your preaching and do not be silenced, for I am with you and no one shall attempt to do you harm;<sup>w</sup> and there are many in this city who are my people.' So he settled down for eighteen months, teaching the word of God among them.

But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews set upon Paul in a body and brought him into court. 'This man', they said, 'is inducing people to worship God in ways that are against the law.' Paul was just about to speak when Gallio said to them, 'If it had been a question of crime or grave misdemeanour, I should, of course, have

given you Jews a patient hearing, but if it is some bickering about words and names and your Jewish law, you may see to it yourselves; I have no mind to be a judge of these matters.' And he had them ejected from the court. Then there was a general attack on Sosthenes, who held office in the synagogue, and they gave him a beating in full view of the bench. But all this left Gallio quite unconcerned.

Paul stayed on for some time, and then took leave of the brotherhood and set sail for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchræe he had his hair cut off, because he was under a vow. When they reached Ephesus he parted from them and went himself into the synagogue, where he held a discussion with the Jews. He was asked to stay longer, but declined and set out from Ephesus, saying, as he took leave of them, 'I shall come back to you if it is God's will.' On landing at Caesarea, he went up and paid his respects to the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he set out again and made a journey through the Galatian country and on through Phrygia, bringing new strength to all the converts.

NOW THERE ARRIVED AT EPHESUS A JEW named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man,<sup>x</sup> powerful in his use of the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was full of spiritual fervour; and in his discourses he taught accurately the facts about Jesus,<sup>y</sup> though he knew only John's baptism. He now began to speak boldly in the synagogue, where Priscilla and Aquila heard him; they took him in hand and expounded the

<sup>w</sup> Or and you will not be harmed by anyone's attacks.

<sup>x</sup> Or a learned man.

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read about the Lord.

to have been issued about 49 A.D. 3: Paul regularly earned his own living; see 20.33-34; 1 Cor.4.12; 1 Th.2.9; compare 2 Cor.11.7-10. 6: See 13.46; 28.28. 9: Such a *vision* was not uncommon for Paul; see 2 Cor.12.1-5. For another such *vision*, see 22.17-21. 12: Gallio, the older brother of the philosopher Seneca, was *proconsul* (governor) of Achaia about 51-53 A.D. 18-22: **Return to Antioch.** 18: *Cenchræe* was the port on the east side of the Isthmus of Corinth. 19: *Ephesus* was the chief city of the province of Asia. 22: The Greek for *went up* (taken with the landing at Caesarea) implies Paul visited *the church* in Jerusalem, rather than going directly to Antioch, although there is no hint as to why such a visit should be made.

18.23-21.17: **Paul's final missionary travels (third journey).** 24-28: **Apollos the Alexandrian.** 24: *Apollos*: see 1 Cor.1.12; 3.4-6,22; 4.6; 16.12. 25: Apparently disciples of John the Baptist continued an active mission (compare 19.3); this is all we hear of it directly in the NT.

new way<sup>z</sup> to him in greater detail.  
 27 Finding that he wished to go across to Achaia, the brotherhood gave him their support, and wrote to the congregation there to make him welcome. From the time of his arrival, he was very helpful to those who had by God's grace become believers; for he strenuously confuted the Jews, demonstrating publicly from the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus.  
 19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul travelled through the inland regions till he came to Ephesus. There he found a number of converts, to whom he said,  
 2 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' 'No,' they replied, 'we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' He said, 'Then what baptism were you given?' 'John's baptism', they answered. Paul then said, 'The baptism that John gave was a baptism in token of repentance, and he told the people to put their trust in one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues of ecstasy and prophesied. Altogether they were about a dozen men.  
 8 During the next three months he attended the synagogue and, using argument and persuasion, spoke boldly and freely about the kingdom of God.  
 9 But when some proved obdurate and would not believe, speaking evil of the new way before the whole congregation, he left them, withdrew his converts, and continued to hold discussions daily in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, with the result that the whole population of the province of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles, heard the word of the Lord.  
 11 And through Paul God worked singular

miracles: when handkerchiefs and 12 scarves which had been in contact with his skin were carried to the sick, they were rid of their diseases and the evil spirits came out of them.

But some strolling Jewish exorcists 13 tried their hand at using the name of the Lord Jesus on those possessed by evil spirits; they would say, 'I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims.' There were seven sons of Sceva, a 14 Jewish chief priest, who were using this method, when the evil spirit answered 15 back and said, 'Jesus I acknowledge, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' And the man with the evil spirit 16 flew at them, overpowered them all, and handled them with such violence that they ran out of the house stripped and battered. This became known to 17 everybody in Ephesus, whether Jew or Gentile; they were all awestruck, and the name of the Lord Jesus gained in honour. Moreover many of those who 18 had become believers came and openly confessed that they had been using magical spells. And a good many of 19 those who formerly practised magic collected their books and burnt them publicly. The total value was reckoned up and it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. In such ways the word of the 20 Lord showed its power, spreading more and more widely and effectively.

When things had reached this stage, 21 Paul made up his mind<sup>a</sup> to visit Macedonia and Achaia and then go on to Jerusalem; and he said, 'After I have been there, I must see Rome also.' So 22 he sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed some time longer in the province of Asia.

Now about that time, the Christian 23 movement gave rise to a serious dis-

<sup>z</sup> Some witnesses read the way of God.

<sup>a</sup> Or Paul, led by the Spirit, resolved . . .

27: Writing letters of introduction was one way of guarding against false or unauthorized missionaries; Paul refers to this practice in 2 Cor.3.1. 19.1-41: Paul's mission in Ephesus. 2: This is a key question, since the presence of the *Holy Spirit* is the sign of true Christian faith; compare 11.15-18. 3: See 18.25 n. 4: Compare 13.24; Mk.1.4,7; Lk.3.3-16. 6: The presence of *tongues* and prophecy is a sign of the presence of the *Spirit*; compare 2.4-11; 10.46. 8: *Kingdom of God*: see 20.25; 28.23,31; the phrase also occurs in Paul's letters (e.g. 1 Cor.4.20; 6.9-10; Gal.5.21); it was central in Jesus' preaching (see Mk.1.15 n.). 9: Compare 13.46; 18.6. 14: There is no other record of a *Sceva* having been chief priest. 19: *Books of magic* from Ephesus enjoyed a worldwide reputation, and were eagerly sought and highly prized. 20: Luke refers on other occasions as well to the Christian faith overcoming the practice of magic: 8.9-13; 13.8-11.

24 turbance. There was a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana and provided a great deal of employment for the craftsmen. He called a meeting of these men and the workers in allied trades, and addressed them. 'Men,' he said, 'you know that our high standard of living depends on this industry. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul with his propaganda has perverted crowds of people, not only at Ephesus but also in practically the whole of the province of Asia. He is telling them that gods made by human hands are not gods at all. There is danger for us here; it is not only that our line of business will be discredited, but also that the sanctuary of the great goddess Diana will cease to command respect; and then it will not be long before she who is worshipped by all Asia and the civilized world is brought down from her divine pre-eminence.'

28 When they heard this they were roused to fury and shouted, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' The whole city was in confusion; they seized Paul's travelling-companions, the Macedonians Gaius and Aristarchus, and made a concerted rush with them into the theatre. Paul wanted to appear before the assembly but the other Christians would not let him. Even some of the dignitaries of the province, who were friendly towards him, sent and urged him not to venture into the theatre. Meanwhile some were shouting one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion and most of them did not know what they had all come for. But some of the crowd explained the trouble to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed to the front, and he, motioning for silence, attempted to make a defence before the assembly. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single cry arose from them all: for about two hours they

kept on shouting, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'

The town clerk, however, quieted the crowd. 'Men of Ephesus,' he said, 'all the world knows that our city of Ephesus is temple-warden of the great Diana and of that symbol of her which fell from heaven. Since these facts are beyond dispute, your proper course is to keep quiet and do nothing rash. These men whom you have brought here as culprits have committed no sacrilege and uttered no blasphemy against our goddess. If therefore Demetrius and his craftsmen have a case against anyone, assizes are held and there are such people as prosecutors; let the parties bring their charges and countercharges. If, on the other hand, you have some further question to raise, it will be dealt with in the statutory assembly. We certainly run the risk of being charged with riot for this day's work. There is no justification for it, and if the issue is raised we shall be unable to give any explanation of this uproar.' With that he dismissed the assembly.

WHEN THE DISTURBANCE HAD CEASED, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-bye and set out on his journey to Macedonia. He travelled through those parts of the country, often speaking words of encouragement to the Christians there, and so came into Greece. When he had spent three months there and was on the point of embarking for Syria, a plot was laid against him by the Jews, so he decided to return by way of Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus, from Beroea, the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius the Doberian<sup>b</sup> and Timothy, and the Asians Tychicus and Trophimus. These went ahead and waited for us at Troas; we ourselves set sail from Philippi

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read the Derbaean.

24: *Diana* (Artemis) was a fertility goddess whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and a major tourist attraction. 26: Demetrius seems to identify the images of Artemis with the goddess herself; compare 17.24-25. 29: The *theatre*, recovered through excavation, had places for about 29,000 people. 34: This is an indication of the anti-Semitism prevalent in many parts of the ancient world; compare 16.20-21. 20.1-6: **Return to Greece.** 2-4: This journey, with its change of plans, appears to be reflected in 1 Cor.16.5-9; 2 Cor.1.15-2.13; 7.5-7. 4: The many traveling companions imply Paul is bringing the collection to Jerusalem;



after the Passover season,<sup>c</sup> and in five days reached them at Troas, where we spent a week.

7 On the Saturday night, in our assembly for the breaking of bread, Paul, who was to leave next day, addressed them, and went on speaking until midnight. Now there were many lamps in the upper room where we were assembled; and a youth named Eutychus, who was sitting on the window-ledge, grew more and more sleepy as Paul went on talking. At last he was completely overcome by sleep, fell from the third storey to the ground, and was picked up for dead. Paul went down, threw himself upon him, seizing him in his arms, and said to them, 'Stop this commotion; there is still life in him.'

11 He then went upstairs, broke bread and ate, and after much conversation, which lasted until dawn, he departed.

12 And they took the boy away alive and were immensely comforted.

13 We went ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement, as he was going to travel by road. When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. Next day we sailed from there and arrived opposite Chios, and on the second day we made Samos. On the following day<sup>d</sup> we reached Miletus. For Paul had decided to pass by Ephesus and so avoid having to spend time in the province of Asia; he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if he possibly could, on the day of Pentecost. He did, however, send from Miletus to Ephesus and summon the elders of the congregation; and when they joined him, he spoke as follows:

19 'You know how, from the day that I first set foot in the province of Asia, for the whole time that I was with you, I served the Lord in all humility amid the sorrows and trials that came upon

me through the machinations of the Jews. You know that I kept back nothing that was for your good: I delivered the message to you; I taught you, in public and in your homes; with Jews and Gentiles alike I insisted on repentance before God and trust in our Lord Jesus. And now, as you see, I am on my way to Jerusalem, under the constraint of the Spirit.<sup>e</sup> Of what will befall me there I know nothing, except that in city after city the Holy Spirit assures me that imprisonment and hardships await me. For myself, I set no store by life; I only want to finish the race, and complete the task which the Lord Jesus assigned to me, of bearing my testimony to the gospel of God's grace.

'One word more: I have gone about among you proclaiming the Kingdom, but now I know that none of you will see my face again. That being so, I here and now declare that no man's fate can be laid at my door; for I have kept back nothing; I have disclosed to you the whole purpose of God. Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge, as shepherds of the church of the Lord,<sup>f</sup> which he won for himself by his own blood.<sup>g</sup> I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own body there will be men coming forward who will distort the truth to induce the disciples to break away and follow them. So be on the alert; remember how for three years, night and day, I never ceased to counsel each of you, and how I wept over you.

<sup>c</sup> Literally after the days of Unleavened Bread.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read . . . Samos, and, after stopping at Trogyllium, on the following day . . .

<sup>e</sup> Or under an inner compulsion.

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read of God.

<sup>g</sup> Or, according to some witnesses, by the blood of his Own.

compare 24.17. 7-12: Eutychus survives. 7: *Saturday night* may also be translated "Sunday," when Christian gatherings were usually held; see 1 Cor.16.2. The *breaking of bread* was a regular Christian act (see 2.42), and probably included the Eucharist. 10: The Greek implies Paul restored him to life; compare 1 Kgs.17.21-22. 13-16: **On to Miletus.** 14-15: *Mitylene, Chios and Samos* are located on offshore islands. 17-38: **Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders.** 19: Paul's Corinthian correspondence refers to his *sorrows* (2 Cor.1.5-10) and *trials* (1 Cor.15.32) in Ephesus. 20: See 2 Cor.4.2. 23: See 9.16; for one form of such a warning, see 21.10-11. 25: *Proclaiming the Kingdom*: see 19.8 n. The latter part of this verse anticipates Paul's imprisonment and death. 27: That everything happens according to the *purpose of God*, compare 2.23 (and n.); 4.28; 13.48. 29: Similar trouble at Ephesus is described in Rev.2.1-7. *Wolves*:

- 32 'And now I commend you to God and to his gracious word, which has power to build you up and give you your heritage among all who are dedicated to him. I have not wanted anyone's money or clothes for myself; you all know that these hands of mine earned enough for the needs of myself and my companions. I showed you that it is our duty to help the weak in this way, by hard work, and that we should keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself said, "Happiness lies more in giving than in receiving,"'
- 36 As he finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. Then there were loud cries of sorrow from them all, as they folded Paul in their arms and kissed him. What distressed them most was his saying that they would never see his face again. So they escorted him to his ship.
- 21 When we had parted from them and set sail, we made a straight run and came to Cos; next day to Rhodes, and thence to Patara.<sup>h</sup> There we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, so we went aboard and sailed in her. We came in sight of Cyprus, and leaving it to port, we continued our voyage to Syria, and put in at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload her cargo. We went and found the disciples and stayed there a week; and they, warned by the Spirit, urged Paul to abandon his visit to Jerusalem. But when our time ashore was ended, we left and continued our journey; and they and their wives and children all escorted us out of the city. We knelt down on the beach and prayed, then bade each other good-bye; we went aboard, and they returned home.
- 7 We made the passage from Tyre and reached Ptolemais, where we greeted the brotherhood and spent one day with them. Next day we left and came to Caesarea. We went to the home of Philip the evangelist, who was one of
- the Seven, and stayed with him. He had four unmarried daughters, who possessed the gift of prophecy. When we had been there several days, a prophet named Agabus arrived from Judaea. He came to us, took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, 'These are the words of the Holy Spirit: Thus will the Jews in Jerusalem bind the man to whom this belt belongs, and hand him over to the Gentiles.' When we heard this, we and the local people begged and implored Paul to abandon his visit to Jerusalem. Then Paul gave his answer: 'Why all these tears? Why are you trying to weaken my resolution? For my part I am ready not merely to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' So, as he would not be persuaded, we gave up and said, 'The Lord's will be done.'
- At the end of our stay we packed our baggage and took the road up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples Caesarea came along with us, bringing a certain Mnason of Cyprus, a Christian from the early days, with whom we were to lodge. So we reached Jerusalem, where the brotherhood welcomed us gladly.
- Next day Paul paid a visit to James; we were with him, and all the elders attended. He greeted them, and then described in detail all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they gave praise to God. Then they said to Paul: 'You see, brother, how many thousands of converts we have among the Jews, all of them staunch upholders of the Law. Now they have been given certain information about you: it is said that you teach all the Jews in the gentile world to turn their backs on Moses, telling them to give up circumcising their children and following our way of life. What is the position, then?

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses add and Myra.

see Mt.7.15 (and n.). 35: This saying of Jesus does not appear in any of the Gospels. 21.1-17: To Jerusalem via Caesarea. 8: Compare 8.40. *Evangelist*: compare Eph.4.11; 2 Tim.4.5 n. *The Seven*: see 6.5. 10: *Agabus* acts out his message as did the OT prophets; see Jer. chs.27-28; Ezek. ch. 4; Isa. ch. 20.

21.18-22.29: Paul arrested in Jerusalem. 18-26: Paul undergoes ritual purification. 20-25: These verses are written as though the events surrounding the Apostolic Council had not happened, and as if Paul had not known of the letter sent to the Gentile churches; see ch. 15. 21: As far as Paul's conduct in Acts is concerned, these charges are false, as v. 26 and 16.3 affirm.

They are sure to hear that you have  
 23 arrived. You must therefore do as we  
 tell you. We have four men here who  
 24 are under a vow; take them with you  
 and go through the ritual of purification  
 with them, paying their expenses, after  
 which they may shave their heads. Then  
 everyone will know that there is nothing  
 in the stories they were told about you,  
 but that you are a practising Jew and  
 25 keep the Law yourself. As for the gen-  
 tile converts, we sent them our decision  
 that they must abstain from meat that  
 has been offered to idols, from blood,  
 from anything that has been strangled,<sup>i</sup>  
 26 and from fornication.' So Paul took the  
 four men, and next day, after going  
 through the ritual of purification with  
 them, he went into the temple to give  
 notice of the date when the period of  
 purification would end and the offering  
 be made for each one of them.

*From Jerusalem to Rome*

27 **BUT JUST BEFORE THE SEVEN DAYS WERE**  
 up, the Jews from the province of Asia  
 saw him in the temple. They stirred up  
 the whole crowd, and seized him,  
 28 shouting, 'Men of Israel, help, help!  
 This is the fellow who spreads his  
 doctrine all over the world, attacking  
 our people, our law, and this sanctuary.  
 On top of all this he has brought Gen-  
 tiles into the temple and profaned this  
 29 holy place.' For they had previously  
 seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him  
 in the city, and assumed that Paul had  
 brought him into the temple.

30 The whole city was in a turmoil, and  
 people came running from all direc-  
 tions. They seized Paul and dragged  
 him out of the temple; and at once the  
 31 doors were shut. While they were  
 clamouring for his death, a report

reached the officer commanding the  
 cohort, that all Jerusalem was in an  
 uproar. He immediately took a force  
 of soldiers with their centurions and  
 32 came down on the rioters at the double.  
 As soon as they saw the commandant  
 and his troops, they stopped beating  
 Paul. The commandant stepped for-  
 33 ward, arrested him, and ordered him  
 to be shackled with two chains: he then  
 asked who the man was and what he  
 had been doing. Some in the crowd  
 34 shouted one thing, some another. As  
 he could not get at the truth because  
 of the hubbub, he ordered him to be  
 taken into barracks. When Paul reached  
 35 the steps, he had to be carried by the  
 soldiers because of the violence of the  
 mob. For the whole crowd were at their  
 36 heels yelling, 'Kill him!'

Just before Paul was taken into the  
 37 barracks he said to the commandant,  
 'May I have a word with you?' The  
 commandant said, 'So you speak  
 Greek, do you? Then you are not the  
 38 Egyptian who started a revolt some  
 time ago and led a force of four thou-  
 sand terrorists out into the wilds?'  
 Paul replied, 'I am a Jew, a Tarsian  
 39 from Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.  
 I ask your permission to speak to the  
 people.' When permission had been  
 40 given, Paul stood on the steps and with  
 a gesture called for the attention of the  
 people. As soon as quiet was restored,  
 he addressed them in the Jewish lan-  
 guage:

22 'Brothers and fathers, give me a  
 hearing while I make my defence before  
 you.' When they heard him speaking  
 2 to them in their own language, they  
 listened the more quietly. 'I am a true-  
 3 born Jew,' he said, 'a native of Tarsus  
 in Cilicia. I was brought up in this city,

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses omit from anything that has been strangled.

23: *A vow*: perhaps the Nazirite; see 18.18; Num.6.1-21. 26: Compare Num.6.13-21. 27-40: **Paul arrested in the Temple.** 28: Compare the charges against Stephen: 6.13-14. *Into the temple*: into the Court of the Israelites. Gentiles were permitted only in the outer court. 30: *The doors* separated the Court of the Israelites from the Court of the Gentiles, into which Paul was now dragged. 32: The Roman *soldiers* charged with keeping order in the Temple were stationed in the Tower of Antonia, a fortress adjoining the Temple at the northwest corner. 35: The *steps* led up into the Tower of Antonia; there were two flights. 38: The Jewish historian Josephus puts the original army of this *Egyptian* at thirty thousand, but his attempt to conquer Jerusalem was defeated by the procurator Felix (23.24), and only a portion of the revolutionaries escaped. 22.1-21: **Paul's speech in Jerusalem.** 3: *Gamaliel* (see 5.34) enjoyed some fame as a rabbi, but is not mentioned in any of Paul's letters nor by the contemporary Jewish writers, Philo and

and as a pupil of Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in every point of our ancestral law. I have always been ardent in God's service, as you all are today. And so I began to persecute this movement to the death, arresting its followers, men and women alike, and putting them in chains. For this I have as witnesses the High Priest and the whole Council of Elders. I was given letters from them to our fellow-Jews at Damascus, and had started out to bring the Christians there to Jerusalem as prisoners for punishment; and this is what happened. I was on the road and nearing Damascus, when suddenly about midday a great light flashed from the sky all around me, and I fell to the ground. Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" I answered, "Tell me, Lord, who you are." "I am Jesus of Nazareth," he said, "whom you are persecuting." My companions saw the light, but did not hear the voice that spoke to me. "What shall I do, Lord?" I said, and the Lord replied, "Get up and continue your journey to Damascus; there you will be told of all the tasks that are laid upon you." As I had been blinded by the brilliance of that light, my companions led me by the hand, and so I came to Damascus.

12 "There, a man called Ananias, a devout observer of the Law and well spoken of by all the Jews of that place, came and stood before me and said, "Saul, my brother, recover your sight." Instantly I recovered my sight and saw him. He went on: "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear his very voice, because you are to be his witness before the world, and testify to what you have seen and

heard. And now why delay? Be baptized at once, with invocation of his name, and wash away your sins."

17 "After my return to Jerusalem, I was praying in the temple when I fell into a trance and saw him there, speaking to me. "Make haste", he said, "and leave Jerusalem without delay, for they will not accept your testimony about me." "Lord," I said, "they know that I imprisoned those who believe in thee, and flogged them in every synagogue; and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed I stood by, approving, and I looked after the clothes of those who killed him." But he said to me, "Go, for I am sending you far away to the Gentiles."

22 Up to this point they had given him a hearing; but now they began shouting, "Down with him! A scoundrel like that is better dead!" And as they were yelling and waving their cloaks and flinging dust in the air, the commandant ordered him to be brought into the barracks and gave instructions to examine him by flogging, and find out what reason there was for such an outcry against him. But when they tied him up for the lash,<sup>j</sup> Paul said to the centurion who was standing there, "Can you legally flog a man who is a Roman citizen, and moreover has not been found guilty?" When the centurion heard this, he went and reported it to the commandant. "What do you mean to do?" he said. "This man is a Roman citizen." The commandant came to Paul. "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" he asked. "Yes," said he. The commandant rejoined, "It cost me a large sum to acquire this citizenship." Paul said, "But it was mine by birth." Then those who were about to examine him with-

*j Or tied him up with thongs.*

Josephus. 5: The *Council of Elders* is the Sanhedrin; see Mt.26.59 n. 6-11: Compare 9.3-9; 26.13-16. 7: *Persecute me*: see 9.4 n. 12: *Ananias*: compare 9.10-16, although his attitude to the *Law* is not mentioned there. 14: *Appointed you*: Paul expressly denied he received his commission from any man (Gal.1.1). 18: *Leave Jerusalem without delay*, implying Paul did not preach in Jerusalem, agrees with Gal.1.16-20; but see 9.28-29. 19-20: In a situation like this, the testimony of a Jewish convert to the Christian faith could be expected to carry considerable weight. 21: The immediate occasion of Paul's arrest was temple profanation (21.28); here the point at issue seems to be Paul's association with *Gentiles* and the resulting dissolution of the *Law*. Later the charge will concern resurrection (23.6). 22-29: *Reaction to Paul's speech*. 24: It was Roman practice to obtain testimony from slaves and noncitizens by torture (*flogging*), on the assumption that lying in such circumstances was not likely. 27: The penalty for falsely claiming citizenship was death.

drew hastily, and the commandant himself was alarmed when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had put him in irons.

30 THE FOLLOWING DAY, WISHING TO BE quite sure what charge the Jews were bringing against Paul, he released him and ordered the chief priests and the entire Council to assemble. He then took Paul down and stood him before them.

23 Paul fixed his eyes on the Council and said, 'My brothers, I have lived all my life, and still live today, with a perfectly clear conscience before God.' At this the High Priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike him on the mouth. Paul retorted, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me in accordance with the Law; and then in defiance of the Law you order me to be struck!' The attendants said, 'Would you insult God's High Priest?' 'My brothers,' said Paul, 'I had no idea that he was High Priest; Scripture, I know, says: "You must not abuse the ruler of your people."'

6 Now Paul was well aware that one section of them were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, so he called out in the Council, 'My brothers, I am a Pharisee, a Pharisee born and bred; and the true issue in this trial is our hope of the resurrection of the dead.' At these words the Pharisees and Sadducees fell out among themselves, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees deny that there is any resurrection, or angel, or spirit, but the Pharisees accept them.) So a great uproar broke out; and some of the doctors of the law belonging to the Pharisaic party openly took sides and declared, 'We can find no fault with this man; perhaps an

angel or spirit has spoken to him.' The dissension was mounting, and the commandant was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces, so he ordered the troops to go down, pull him out of the crowd, and bring him into the barracks.

The following night the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Keep up your courage; you have affirmed the truth about me in Jerusalem, and you must do the same in Rome.'

When day broke, the Jews banded together and took an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty in this conspiracy. They came to the chief priests and elders and said, 'We have bound ourselves by a solemn oath not to taste food until we have killed Paul. It is now for you, acting with the Council, to apply to the commandant to bring him down to you, on the pretext of a closer investigation of his case; and we have arranged to do away with him before he arrives.'

But the son of Paul's sister heard of the ambush; he went to the barracks, obtained entry, and reported it to Paul. Paul called one of the centurions and said, 'Take this young man to the commandant; he has something to report.' The centurion took him and brought him to the commandant. 'The prisoner Paul', he said, 'sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.' The commandant took him by the arm, drew him aside, and asked him, 'What is it you have to report?' He said, 'The Jews have made a plan among themselves and will request you to bring Paul down to the Council tomorrow, on the pretext of obtaining more precise information about him. Do not listen to them; for a party more than

22.30-24.27: Paul and Felix. 23.1-10: Paul before the Council. 1: The clear conscience mentioned here apparently is meant to include the events recited in 22:19-20; Paul refers to his persecution of Christians in his letters, but does not relate it to a clear conscience. 2: The High Priest Ananias entered that office about 48 A.D., was deposed during the rule of Felix, and was murdered in 66 A.D.; see 4.6 n. 5: Exod.22.28. This continues Acts' picture of Paul as a true follower of the Law; compare 16.3; 22.26; 24.14; Lk.24.44. For Luke, the Christian faith is the true fulfillment of Judaism. 6: See 22.21 n. 8: On Sadducees and resurrection, see 4.2; Mt.3.7 n.; Lk.20.27-38. 11: Key events in Paul's life were revealed to him by the Lord, or by the Holy Spirit; see 18.9-10; 20.23; 22.17-21. 12-22: A plot against Paul. 13: Such a conspiracy is repeated in 25.3 (compare 9.23); it was possible under Jewish law to be released from such an oath. 16: That Paul's nephew was able to obtain entry was not unusual; see Mt.11.2; 25.36.

forty strong are lying in wait for him. They have sworn not to eat or drink until they have done away with him; they are now ready, and wait only for your consent.' So the commandant dismissed the young man, with orders not to let anyone know that he had given him this information.

23 Then he called a couple of his centurions and issued these orders: 'Get ready two hundred infantry to proceed to Caesarea, together with seventy cavalymen and two hundred light-armed troops;<sup>k</sup> parade three hours after sunset. Provide also mounts for Paul so that he may ride through under safe escort to Felix the Governor.' And he wrote a letter to this effect:

26 'Claudius Lysias to His Excellency the Governor Felix. Your Excellency: 27 This man was seized by the Jews and was on the point of being murdered when I intervened with the troops and removed him, because I discovered that he was a Roman citizen. As I wished to ascertain the charge on which they were accusing him, I took him down 28 to their Council. I found that the accusation had to do with controversial matters in their law, but there was no charge against him meriting death or imprisonment. However, I have now 29 been informed of an attempt to be made on the man's life, so I am sending him to you at once, and have also instructed his accusers to state their case against him before you.'<sup>l</sup>

31 Acting on their orders, the infantry took Paul and brought him by night 32 to Antipatris. Next day they returned to their barracks, leaving the cavalry to escort him the rest of the way. The cavalry entered Caesarea, delivered the letter to the Governor, and handed 34 Paul over to him. He read the letter, asked him what province he was from, and learned that he was from Cilicia. 35 'I will hear your case', he said, 'when your accusers arrive.' He then ordered

him to be held in custody at his headquarters in Herod's palace.

FIVE DAYS LATE THE HIGH PRIEST 24 Ananias came down, accompanied by some of the elders and an advocate named Tertullus, and they laid an information against Paul before the Governor. When the prisoner was 2 called, Tertullus opened the case.

'Your Excellency,' he said, 'we owe it to you that we enjoy unbroken peace. It is due to your provident care that, in all kinds of ways and in all sorts of places, improvements are being made for the good of this province. We welcome this, sir, most gratefully. And 4 now, not to take up too much of your time, I crave your indulgence for a brief statement of our case. We have 5 found this man to be a perfect pest, a fomentor of discord among the Jews all over the world, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even made an 6 attempt to profane the temple; and then we arrested him.<sup>m</sup> If you will 8 examine him yourself you can ascertain from him the truth of all the charges we bring.' The Jews supported the 9 attack, alleging that the facts were as he stated.

Then the Governor motioned to 10 Paul to speak, and he began his reply: 'Knowing as I do that for many years you have administered justice in this province, I make my defence with confidence. You can ascertain the facts for yourself. It is not more than twelve 11 days since I went up to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage. They did not find me arguing with anyone, or collecting a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or up and down the city; and 13 they cannot make good the charges

<sup>k</sup> Or two hundred spearmen (the meaning of the Greek word is uncertain).

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read: '... before you. Farewell.'  
<sup>m</sup> Some witnesses insert: 'It was our intention to try him under our law; (7) but Lysias the commandant intervened and took him by force out of our hands, (8) ordering his accusers to come before you.'

23-35: Paul is taken to Felix. 23: *Caesarea*: see 10.1 n. 24: *Antonius Felix*, probably a freed slave of the mother of Emperor Claudius, was procurator about 52-55 A.D.; his reputation as procurator was not a good one. 35: The exact location of *Herod's palace* is unknown. 24.1-9: *Jewish charges against Paul*. 1: Compare 23.30. *Ananias*: see 23.2 n. 2: Historically, Palestine at this time was wracked with murder and revolt. Such praise is, however, rhetorical convention. 4: This is a further example of Hellenistic rhetorical convention. 6: *The attempt to profane the temple* was a baseless charge; see 21.26,29. 10-21: *Paul's defense*. 10: *For many years*: Felix was procurator for about three years in this province, but, again, this is rhetorical con-

14 they bring against me. But this much I will admit: I am a follower of the new way (the "sect" they speak of), and it is in that manner that I worship the God of our fathers; for I believe all that is written in the Law and the prophets, and in reliance on God I hold the hope, which my accusers too accept, that there is to be a resurrection of good and wicked alike. Accordingly I, no less than they, train myself to keep at all times a clear conscience before God and man.

17 'After an absence of several years I came to bring charitable gifts to my nation and to offer sacrifices. They found me in the temple ritually purified and engaged in this service. I had no crowd with me, and there was no disturbance. But some Jews from the province of Asia were there, and if they had any charge against me it is they who ought to have been in court to state it. Failing that, it is for these persons here present to say what crime they discovered when I was brought before the Council, apart from this one open assertion which I made as I stood there: "The true issue in my trial before you today is the resurrection of the dead."'

22 Then Felix, who happened to be well informed about the Christian movement, adjourned the hearing. 'When Lysias the commanding officer comes down', he said, 'I will go into your case.' He gave orders to the centurion to keep Paul under open arrest and not to prevent any of his friends from making themselves useful to him.

24 Some days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, and sending for Paul he let him talk to him about faith in Christ Jesus. But when the discourse turned to questions of

morals, self-control, and the coming judgement, Felix became alarmed and exclaimed, 'That will do for the present; when I find it convenient I will send for you again.' At the same time he had hopes of a bribe from Paul; and for this reason he sent for him very often and talked with him. When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Wishing to curry favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in custody.

THREE DAYS AFTER TAKING UP HIS appointment Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders brought before him the case against Paul. They asked Festus to favour them against him, and pressed for him to be brought up to Jerusalem, for they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. Festus, however, replied, 'Paul is in safe custody at Caesarea, and I shall be leaving Jerusalem shortly myself; so let your leading men come down with me, and if there is anything wrong, let them prosecute him.'

After spending eight or ten days at most in Jerusalem, he went down to Caesarea, and next day he took his seat in court and ordered Paul to be brought up. When he appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood round bringing many grave charges, which they were unable to prove. Paul's plea was: 'I have committed no offence, either against the Jewish law, or against the temple, or against the Emperor.' Festus, anxious to ingratiate himself with the Jews, turned to Paul and asked, 'Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial on these charges before me there?' But Paul said, 'I am now stand-

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vention. 15: Only the Pharisees among his *accusers* accepted the *resurrection*: see 23.8. 17: Compare Rom.15.25-27. While this may be historically true, the bringing of charitable gifts was not given as the reason for this trip to Jerusalem in 19.21; see 11.29 n. 21: See 22.21 n. 22-27: Discussion between Paul and Felix. 24: *Drusilla*, the daughter of Herod Agrippa (see 12.1 (and n.)-23), was one of three noble ladies Felix married, this one having deserted her husband, King Azizus of Emesa, for him. 26: This accords with the way Felix is described by ancient historians. This also informs us why Paul, though innocent, was not released. There was no legal way he could compel a decision to be rendered.

25.1-26.32: Paul and Festus. 1-5: Festus goes to Jerusalem. 1: Little is known of Porcius Festus: he probably assumed office about 55 A.D. 3: *Planning an ambush*: see 23.12-15. 6-12: Paul appeals to Caesar. 6: This is Paul's second hearing in *Caesarea*; see 24.1-21. 9: Paul was a similar pawn to Felix (24.24-26); this verse again explains why Paul, though innocent, was

ing before the Emperor's tribunal, and that is where I must be tried. Against the Jews I have committed no offence, as you very well know. If I am guilty of any capital crime, I do not ask to escape the death penalty; but if there is no substance in the charges which these men bring against me, it is not open to anyone to hand me over as a sop to them. I appeal to Caesar!' Then Festus, after conferring with his advisers, replied, 'You have appealed to Caesar: to Caesar you shall go.'

After an interval of some days King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea on a courtesy visit to Festus. They spent several days there, and during this time Festus laid Paul's case before the king. 'We have a man', he said, 'left in custody by Felix; and when I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid an information against him, demanding his condemnation. I answered them, "It is not Roman practice to hand over any accused man before he is confronted with his accusers and given an opportunity of answering the charge." So when they had come here with me I lost no time; the very next day I took my seat in court and ordered the man to be brought up. But when his accusers rose to speak, they brought none of the charges I was expecting; they merely had certain points of disagreement with him about their peculiar religion, and about someone called Jesus, a dead man whom Paul alleged to be alive. Finding myself out of my depth in such discussions, I asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand his trial there on these issues. But Paul appealed to be remanded in custody for His Imperial Majesty's decision, and I ordered him to be detained until I could send him

to the Emperor.' Agrippa said to Festus, 'I should rather like to hear the man myself.' 'Tomorrow', he answered, 'you shall hear him.'

So next day Agrippa and Bernice came in full state and entered the audience-chamber accompanied by high-ranking officers and prominent citizens; and on the orders of Festus Paul was brought up. Then Festus said, 'King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man: the whole body of the Jews approached me both in Jerusalem and here, loudly insisting that he had no right to remain alive. But it was clear to me that he had committed no capital crime, and when he himself appealed to His Imperial Majesty, I decided to send him. But I have nothing definite about him to put in writing for our Sovereign. Accordingly I have brought him up before you all and particularly before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this preliminary inquiry I may have something to report. There is no sense, it seems to me, in sending on a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.'

Agrippa said to Paul, 'You have our permission to speak for yourself.' Then Paul stretched out his hand and began his defence:

'I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that it is before you that I am to make my defence today upon all the charges brought against me by the Jews, particularly as you are expert in all Jewish matters, both our customs and our disputes. And therefore I beg you to give me a patient hearing.

'My life from my youth up, the life I led from the beginning among my people and in Jerusalem, is familiar to all Jews. Indeed they have known me long enough and could testify, if they

not released. 11: In this way, the words of the Lord to Paul (23.11) began their fulfillment. Little is known, apart from this verse, about the circumstances surrounding an *appeal to Caesar* in the time of the Roman Empire. 13-22: *Agrippa and Festus*. 13: *King Marcus Julius Agrippa II*, king of some territories in northern Palestine, was the son of Herod Agrippa I (12.1-5, 20-23), and a brother of Drusilla (24.24). *Bernice*, a widow at this time, was another of Agrippa's sisters; their constant companionship was an ancient scandal. 16: Festus himself did not hold to this *practice* in Paul's case, nor did Felix; see 24.18-19. 23-27: *Preliminary inquiry instituted*. 25: The commandant in Jerusalem had come to the same decision (23.29); the Pharisees, too, had declared him innocent (23.9). 26.1-32: *Paul makes his defence*. This speech sums up Paul's career as portrayed in Acts. 1: When Paul spoke to King *Agrippa*, the prophecy of Jesus about Paul's career (9.15) was fulfilled; compare Lk.21.12. 2-3: Such an introduction was a Hellenistic rhetorical convention; see 24.2-3, 10. 4: See 22.3. 5: See 23.6; Phil.3.5. 7: *Twelve tribes hope*:



only would, that I belonged to the strictest group in our religion: I lived as a Pharisee. And it is for a hope kindled by God's promise to our forefathers that I stand in the dock today.

Our twelve tribes hope to see the fulfilment of that promise, worshipping with intense devotion day and night; and for this very hope I am impeached, and impeached by Jews, Your Majesty.

Why is it considered incredible among you that God should raise dead men to life?

I myself once thought it my duty to work actively against the name of Jesus of Nazareth; and I did so in Jerusalem. It was I who imprisoned many of God's people by authority obtained from the chief priests; and when they were condemned to death, my vote was cast against them. In all the synagogues I tried by repeated punishment to make them renounce their faith; indeed my fury rose to such a pitch that I extended my persecution to foreign cities.

'On one such occasion I was travelling to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests; and as I was on my way, Your Majesty, in the middle of the day I saw a light from the sky, more brilliant than the sun, shining all around me and my travelling-companions. We all fell to the ground, and then I heard a voice saying to me in the Jewish language, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you, this kicking against the goad." I said, "Tell me, Lord, who you are"; and the Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But now, rise to your feet and stand upright. I have appeared to you for a purpose: to appoint you my servant and witness, to testify both to what you have seen and to what you shall yet see of me. I will rescue you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you. I send you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light,

from the dominion of Satan to God, so that, by trust in me, they may obtain forgiveness of sins and a place with those whom God has made his own."

'And so, King Agrippa, I did not disobey the heavenly vision. I turned first to the inhabitants of Damascus, and then to Jerusalem and all the country of Judaea, and to the Gentiles, and sounded the call to repent and turn to God, and to prove their repentance by deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to do away with me. But I had God's help, and so to this very day I stand and testify to great and small alike. I assert nothing beyond what was foretold by the prophets and by Moses: that the Messiah must suffer, and that he, the first to rise from the dead, would announce the dawn to Israel and to the Gentiles.'

While Paul was thus making his defence, Festus shouted at the top of his voice, 'Paul, you are raving; too much study is driving you mad.' 'I am not mad, Your Excellency,' said Paul; 'what I am saying is sober truth. The king is well versed in these matters, and to him I can speak freely. I do not believe that he can be unaware of any of these facts, for this has been no hole-and-corner business. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.' Agrippa said to Paul, 'You think it will not take much to win me over and make a Christian of me.' 'Much or little,' said Paul, 'I wish to God that not only you, but all those also who are listening to me today, might become what I am, apart from these chains.'

With that the king rose, and with him the Governor, Bernice, and the rest of the company, and after they had withdrawn they talked it over. 'This man', they said, 'is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment.' Agrippa said to Festus, 'The fellow could have been discharged, if he had not appealed to the Emperor.'

see 24.14–15. 8: See 22.21 n. 9–11: See 8.3 n. 12–15: See 9.3–6; 22.4–10. 14: *Kicking against the goad* comes from a Greek proverb. 16–18: According to 22.14–15, Paul received his commission from Ananias (see 9.6); the present account conforms more closely to Paul's own account (Gal.1.1,15–17). 21: *Do away with me*: see 21.30–32. 22: *The prophets and Moses*: see 23.5 n. 23: See Mk.8.31 for parallels; Lk.24.44–47. *First to rise*: see 1 Cor.15.20–23. 28: *Christian*: see 11.26 n. 30–32: *Paul's innocence recognized*. 31: This is the third time Paul's innocence has been implied (see 23.9; 25.25; also 23.29; compare Lk.23.4 n.). 32: Not enough is known of

- 27 WHEN IT WAS DECIDED THAT WE SHOULD sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Cohort. We embarked in a ship of Adramyttium, bound for ports in the province of Asia, and put out to sea. In our party was Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. Next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius very considerably allowed Paul to go to his friends to be cared for. Leaving Sidon we sailed under the lee of Cyprus because of the head-winds, then across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and so reached Myra in Lycia.
- 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian vessel bound for Italy and put us aboard. For a good many days we made little headway, and we were hard put to it to reach Cnidus. Then, as the wind continued against us, off Salmone we began to sail under the lee of Crete, and, hugging the coast, struggled on to a place called Fair Havens, not far from the town of Lasea.
- 9 By now much time had been lost, the Fast was already over, and it was risky to go on with the voyage. Paul therefore gave them this advice: 'I can see, gentlemen,' he said, 'that this voyage will be disastrous: it will mean grave loss, loss not only of ship and cargo but also of life.' But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said; and as the harbour was unsuitable for wintering, the majority were in favour of putting out to sea, hoping, if they could get so far, to winter at Phoenix, a Cretan harbour exposed south-west and north-west. So when a southerly breeze sprang up, they thought that their purpose was as good as achieved, and, weighing anchor, they sailed along the coast of Crete hugging the land. But before very long a fierce wind, the 'North-easter' as they call it, tore down from the landward side. It caught the ship and, as it was impossible to keep head to wind, we had to give way and run before it. We ran under the lee of a small island called Cauda, and with a struggle managed to get the ship's boat under control. When they had hoisted it aboard, they made use of tackle and undergirded the ship. Then, because they were afraid of running on to the shallows of Syrtis, they lowered the mainsail and let her drive. Next day, as we were making very heavy weather, they began to lighten the ship; and on the third day they jettisoned the ship's gear with their own hands. For days on end there was no sign of either sun or stars, a great storm was raging, and our last hopes of coming through alive began to fade.
- When they had gone for a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, 'You should have taken my advice, gentlemen, not to sail from Crete; then you would have avoided this damage and loss. But now I urge you not to lose heart; not a single life will be lost, only the ship. For last night there stood by me an angel of the God whose I am and whom I worship. "Do not be afraid, Paul," he said; "it is ordained that you shall appear before the Emperor; and, be assured, God has granted you the lives of all who are sailing with you." So keep up your courage: I trust in God that it will turn out as I have been told; though we have to be cast ashore on some island.'
- The fourteenth night came and we were still drifting in the Sea of Adria. In the middle of the night the sailors felt that land was getting nearer. They sounded and found twenty fathoms. Sounding again after a short interval

Roman law to determine whether a prisoner who had *appealed to the Emperor* could be released by some other judicial officer. This verse implies he could not.

27.1-28.31: Paul taken to Rome. 5-6: *Myra in Lycia* was an important way station for grain ships that regularly brought wheat from Egypt to Rome. *Alexandria* was the chief city of Egypt. 8: The exact locations of *Fair Havens* and *Lasea* are unknown. 9: *The Fast* probably refers to the Jewish Day of Atonement, which comes in early fall, a risky time for sailing. By November, all sailing ceased due to winter storms. 15: Ancient ships had severely limited capabilities of beating into the wind. 17: The meaning of *tackle* is unsure. How such a *ship* was *undergirded* is also unclear. *Lowered the mainsail* may also mean raise a (storm) sail, or rig a sea-anchor. 23-24: See 23.11 n. 24: Divine rescue from danger at sea was attributed to

29 they found fifteen fathoms; and fearing that we might be cast ashore on a rugged coast they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight to come. The sailors tried to abandon ship; they had already lowered the ship's boat, pretending they were going to lay out anchors from the bows, 30 when Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay on board you can none of you come off safely.' So the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let her drop away.

31 Shortly before daybreak Paul urged them all to take some food. 'For the last fourteen days', he said, 'you have lived in suspense and gone hungry; you have eaten nothing whatever. So I beg you to have something to eat; your lives depend on it. Remember, not a hair of your heads will be lost.' With these words, he took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, broke it, and began eating. Then they all plucked up courage, and took food themselves. 32 There were on board two hundred and seventy-six of us in all. When they had eaten as much as they wanted they lightened the ship by dumping the corn in the sea.

33 When day broke they could not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a sandy beach, on which they planned, if possible, to run the ship ashore. So they slipped the anchors and let them go; at the same time they loosened the lashings of the steering-paddles, set the foresail to the wind, and let her drive to the beach. But they found themselves caught between cross-currents and ran the ship aground, so that the bow stuck fast and remained immovable, while the stern was being pounded to pieces by the breakers. The soldiers thought they had better kill the prisoners for fear that any should swim away and escape; but the centurion wanted to bring Paul safely through

and prevented them from carrying out their plan. He gave orders that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land; the rest were to follow, some on planks, some on parts of the ship. And thus it was that all came safely to land.

Once we had made our way to safety we identified the island as Malta. The rough islanders treated us with uncommon kindness: because it was cold and had started to rain, they lit a bonfire and made us all welcome. Paul had got together an armful of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened on his hand. The islanders, seeing the snake hanging on to his hand, said to one another, 'The man must be a murderer; he may have escaped from the sea, but divine justice has not let him live.' Paul, however, shook off the snake into the fire and was none the worse. He still expected that any moment he would swell up or drop down dead, but after waiting a long time without seeing anything extraordinary happen to him, they changed their minds and now said, 'He is a god.'

In the neighbourhood of that place there were lands belonging to the chief magistrate of the island, whose name was Publius. He took us in and entertained us hospitably for three days. It so happened that this man's father was in bed suffering from recurrent bouts of fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and, after prayer, laid his hands upon him and healed him; whereupon the other sick people on the island came also and were cured. They honoured us with many marks of respect, and when we were leaving they put on board provision for our needs.

Three months had passed when we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island; she was the *Castor and Pollux* of Alexandria. We put in at

many Hellenistic deities. 37: The number is well within the capacity of such a ship. 39-44: Paul reports suffering three earlier shipwrecks and drifting once twenty-four hours at sea (2 Cor. 11.25), but Acts gives no report of these incidents.

28.1-10: Paul at Malta. 1: Sometime after leaving Cauda, the wind must have shifted to the east; a continuing northeast wind would have landed them on the coast of Africa (27.17), not Malta. 6: Much of what Paul did and said in 27.9-28.10 would make him appear to be a Hellenistic divine man, or even a god.

28.11-15: On to Rome. 11: *Three months*: probably between November and February.

Syracuse and spent three days there; then we sailed round and arrived at Rhegium. After one day a south wind sprang up and we reached Puteoli in two days. There we found fellow-Christians and were invited to stay a week with them. And so to Rome. The Christians there had had news of us and came out to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae, and when Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God and took courage.

16 WHEN WE ENTERED ROME PAUL WAS allowed to lodge by himself with a soldier in charge of him. Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders; and when they were assembled, he said to them: 'My brothers, I, who never did anything against our people or the customs of our forefathers, am here as a prisoner; I was handed over to the Romans at Jerusalem. They examined me and would have liked to release me because there was no capital charge against me; but the Jews objected, and I had no option but to appeal to the Emperor; not that I had any accusation to bring against my own people. That is why I have asked to see you and talk to you, because it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am in chains, as you see.' They replied, 'We have had no communication from Judaea, nor has any countryman of ours arrived with any report or gossip to your discredit. We should like to hear from you what your views are; all

we know about this sect is that no one has a good word to say for it.'

So they fixed a day, and came in large numbers as his guests. He dealt at length with the whole matter; he spoke urgently of the kingdom of God and sought to convince them about Jesus by appealing to the Law of Moses and the prophets. This went on from dawn to dusk. Some were won over by his arguments; others remained sceptical. Without reaching any agreement among themselves they began to disperse, but not before Paul had said one thing more: 'How well the Holy Spirit spoke to your fathers through the prophet Isaiah when he said, "Go to this people and say: You may hear and hear, but you will never understand; you may look and look, but you will never see. For this people's mind has become gross; their ears are dulled, and their eyes are closed. Otherwise, their eyes might see, their ears hear, and their mind understand, and then they might turn again, and I would heal them." Therefore take notice that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; the Gentiles will listen.'<sup>n</sup>

He stayed there two full years at his own expense, with a welcome for all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the facts about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and without hindrance.

<sup>n</sup> Some witnesses add (29) After he had spoken, the Jews went away, arguing vigorously among themselves.

Sailing resumed in late February or early March. 13: Grain ships from Egypt unloaded at Puteoli, the major Roman harbor for foreign trade. 14: When Paul reached Rome, the prophecy of 23.11 was fulfilled, as well as the program outlined in 1.8; see also Rom.15.22-24,28. 15: Though Paul had never been to Rome, he and the Christians there knew about each other; see Rom.1.8; 15.14-16. The NT tells us nothing about the origin of the Christian congregation in Rome.

28.16-31: Paul in Rome. 17: This was the original accusation by the Jews from Asia; see 21.28. 18: No capital charge; see 23.29; 25.25; 26.31. 23: Kingdom of God: see 19.8 n. 26: Isa.6.9-10 Sept.; compare Mk.4.12 and parallels. This is similar to Stephen's condemnation of the Jews (7.51-53). 28: As the whole narrative has shown, this is a major theme of Acts; see 13.46 n. 31: The story which began with Jesus in Galilee (the Gospel of Luke) has now moved through Jerusalem to Rome, and, in the author's view, will continue to the ends of the earth (1.8). Although we would like to know the outcome of Paul's imprisonment, that information is not essential for the author's purpose. He has had in mind a story that remains incomplete until the fulfillment of God's plan in the remote future. Meanwhile, men will be proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the facts about the Lord Jesus Christ.

# LETTERS



# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

The longest of Paul's letters (and first in the New Testament sequence) contains the fullest and most balanced statement of his theology. For a year or two Paul had been collecting relief money for the Christian poor in Jerusalem (15.16; 1 Cor.16.1; 2 Cor.8.4; 9.1). Now, perhaps because of Judaizers (see Introduction to Galatians), he has decided that he can no longer work in his old territory (from Syria to Illyricum; 15.19,23). He proposes to visit Rome, after he has delivered this collection (15.25), in order to open a new mission farther west ("Spain"; 15.24,28). To introduce himself to the Romans, a church he has never visited, he fills this impressive letter with insights derived from past crises in his eventful ministry. Perhaps he also intends to scotch any rumors that labeled him as antinomian (3.8,31; 7.12; chs. 13-14) or anti-Jewish (3.1-3; chs. 9-11).

As to the date: the collection project implies the chronological sequence—1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, chs. 1-9, Romans—over a period of perhaps two years. The Judaizing crisis suggests that Galatians immediately preceded Romans. Opinions about the year vary from 48 A.D. to 58 A.D.

## *The Gospel according to Paul*

1 FROM PAUL, SERVANT OF CHRIST Jesus, apostle by God's call, set apart for the service of the Gospel.

2 This Gospel God announced beforehand in sacred scriptures through his  
3 prophets. It is about his Son: on the human level he was born of David's  
4 stock, but on the level of the spirit—the Holy Spirit—he was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead:<sup>a</sup> it is about Jesus Christ  
5 our Lord. Through him I received the privilege of a commission in his name to lead to faith and obedience men in  
6 all nations, yourselves among them, you who have heard the call and belong to Jesus Christ.

7 I send greetings to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has called to be his dedicated people. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 Let me begin by thanking my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all, because all over the world they are telling  
9 the story of your faith. God is my wit-

ness, the God to whom I offer the humble service of my spirit by preaching the gospel of his Son: God knows how continually I make mention of you in my prayers, and am always asking 10 that by his will I may, somehow or other, succeed at long last in coming to visit you. For I long to see you; I 11 want to bring you some spiritual gift to make you strong; or rather, I want 12 to be among you to be myself encouraged by your faith as well as you by mine.

But I should like you to know,<sup>b</sup> my 13 brothers, that I have often planned to come, though so far without success, in the hope of achieving something among you, as I have in other parts of the world. I am under obligation to Greek 14 and non-Greek, to learned and simple; hence my eagerness to declare the 15 Gospel to you in Rome as well as to others. For I am not ashamed of the 16 Gospel. It is the saving power of God for everyone who has faith—the Jew

<sup>a</sup> Or declared Son of God with full powers from the time when he rose from the dead.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read I believe you know.

1.1-7: **Salutation.** Greek letters began with the names of the sender and the recipient. 1: *Apostle*: see 1 Cor.9.1 n. 5: Paul here affirms his apostleship to the *nations*, i.e. Gentiles. 7: The word *grace* (i.e. God's favor) replaces the usual and similar-sounding Greek salutation; *peace* is the Jewish salutation (e.g. Mt.10.13).

1.8-15: **Opening thanksgiving.** Next in an ancient Greek letter there was usually a prayer for the recipient's health. Similarly, Paul begins all his letters, except the angry Gal. (and 2 Cor. chs. 10-13 if that is indeed a separate letter; see annotation there), by *thanking God* for the addressees, mentioning in the process the major themes of the letter.

1.16-17: **The thesis of the letter** is that *God's way of righting wrong* gives unmerited acceptance to (i.e. justifies) the believer on the basis of his *faith* (i.e. trust). 16: *Jew first*: see 2.9-10 n.

17 first, but the Greek also—because here is revealed God's way of righting wrong, a way that starts from faith and ends in faith;<sup>c</sup> as Scripture says, 'he shall gain life who is justified through faith'.

18 FOR WE SEE DIVINE RETRIBUTION revealed from heaven and falling upon all the godless wickedness of men. In their wickedness they are stifling the truth. For all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed it to them. His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made. There is therefore no possible defence for their conduct; knowing God, they have refused to honour him as God, or to render him thanks. Hence all their thinking has ended in futility, and their misguided minds are plunged in darkness. 22 They boast of their wisdom, but they 23 have made fools of themselves, exchanging the splendour of immortal God for an image shaped like mortal man, even for images like birds, beasts, and creeping things.

24 For this reason God has given them up to the vileness of their own desires, and the consequent degradation of their bodies, because they have bartered away the true God for a false one,<sup>d</sup> and have offered reverence and worship to created things instead of to the Creator, who is blessed for ever; amen.

26 In consequence, I say God has given them up to shameful passions. Their women have exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and their men in turn, giving up natural relations with women, burn with lust for one another; males behave indecently with males, and are paid in their own persons the fitting wage of such perversion.

28 Thus, because they have not seen fit

to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved reason. This leads them to break all rules of conduct. They are filled with every kind of injustice, mischief, rapacity, and malice; they are one mass of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, and malevolence; whisperers and scandal-mongers, 30 hateful to God, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent new kinds of mischief, they show no loyalty to parents, no conscience, no fidelity to their 31 plighted word; they are without natural affection and without pity. They know 32 well enough the just decree of God, that those who behave like this deserve to die, and yet they do it; not only so, they actually applaud such practices.

You therefore have no defence—you 2 who sit in judgement, whoever you may be—for in judging your fellow-man you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, are equally guilty. It is admitted that God's judgement is rightly passed upon all who commit such crimes as these; and do you imagine— 3 you who pass judgement on the guilty while committing the same crimes yourself—do you imagine that you, any more than they, will escape the judgement of God? Or do you think lightly 4 of his wealth of kindness, of tolerance, and of patience, without recognizing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to a change of heart? In the rigid 5 obstinacy of your heart you are laying up for yourself a store of retribution for the day of retribution, when God's just judgement will be revealed, and he 6 will pay every man for what he has done. To those who pursue glory, 7 honour, and immortality by steady persistence in well-doing, he will give eternal life; but for those who are 8 governed by selfish ambition, who refuse obedience to the truth and take the wrong for their guide, there will be <sup>c</sup> *Or* . . . wrong. It is based on faith and addressed to <sup>faith</sup> *Or* the truth of God for the lie.

17: *God's way . . . ends in faith*: the book's theme; see 3.22. *Scripture*: Hab.2.4 (Gal.3.11).

1.18–32: *The depravity of the Gentiles*. "The heavens tell out the glory of God" (Ps.19.1), but men have *refused to honour him* (v. 21). 19: *All that may be known*, i.e. except God's special revelation to Jews and Christians. 23: For the Jewish scorn of idols see Isa.44.13–20; Wis. chs. 13–15. 24–28: Therefore *God has given them up* (vv. 24,26,28) to increasing wickedness that leads to death. 29–31: See Gal.5.19–21.

2.1–16: *The Jews will be judged also*, although they presume to *sit in moral judgement* over the Gentiles. 5: God's wrath, already evident (1.18), will culminate in *the day of retribution*



9 the fury of retribution. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who is an evil-doer, for the Jew  
10 first and for the Greek also; and for every well-doer there will be glory, honour, and peace, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

11, 12 For God has no favourites: those who have sinned outside the pale of the Law of Moses will perish outside its pale, and all who have sinned under  
13 that law will be judged by the law. It is not by hearing the law, but by doing it, that men will be justified before God.

14 When Gentiles who do not possess the law carry out its precepts by the light of nature, then, although they have no  
15 law, they are their own law, for they display the effect of the law inscribed on their hearts. Their conscience is called as witness, and their own thoughts argue the case on either side,  
16 against them or even for them, on the day when God judges the secrets of human hearts through Christ Jesus. So my gospel declares.

17 But as for you—you may bear the name of Jew; you rely upon the law and are proud of your God; you know his will; instructed by the law, you know  
18 right from wrong; you are confident that you are the one to guide the blind,  
19 to enlighten the benighted, to train the stupid, and to teach the immature, because in the law you see the very shape  
20 of knowledge and truth. You, then, who teach your fellow-man, do you fail to teach yourself? You proclaim, 'Do not steal'; but are you yourself a  
21 thief? You say, 'Do not commit adultery'; but are you an adulterer? You abominate false gods; but do you rob  
22 their shrines? While you take pride in the law, you dishonour God by breaking  
23 it. For, as Scripture says, 'Because of you the name of God is dishonoured among the Gentiles.'

Circumcision has value, provided  
25 you keep the law; but if you break the law, then your circumcision is as if it had never been. Equally, if an un-  
26 circumcised man keeps the precepts of the law, will he not count as circumcised? He may be uncircumcised in his  
27 natural state, but by fulfilling the law he will pass judgement on you who break it, for all your written code and your circumcision. The true Jew is not  
28 he who is such in externals, neither is the true circumcision the external mark in the flesh. The true Jew is he who is  
29 such inwardly, and the true circumcision is of the heart, directed not by written precepts but by the Spirit; such a man receives his commendation not from men but from God.

Then what advantage has the Jew? 3  
What is the value of circumcision? Great, in every way. In the first place,  
2 the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some of them  
3 were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness cancel the faithfulness of God? Certainly not! God must be true  
4 though every man living were a liar; for we read in Scripture, 'When thou speakest thou shalt be vindicated, and win the verdict when thou art on trial.'

Another question: if our injustice  
5 serves to bring out God's justice, what are we to say? Is it unjust of God (I speak of him in human terms) to bring retribution upon us? Certainly not!  
6 If God were unjust, how could he judge the world?

Again, if the truth of God brings  
7 him all the greater honour because of my falsehood, why should I any longer be condemned as a sinner? Why not  
8 indeed 'do evil that good may come', as some libellously report me as saying? To condemn such men as these is surely no injustice.

(see 1 Cor.1.8 n.). 9–10: Since the *Jew* has special knowledge of God (3.2; 9.4–5), he is *first*. 11–16: But Jews and Gentiles equally are *judged* by their actions (v. 13; see Mt.7.20–21; Gal.3.21; Jas.1.22–25), the Jews under the *Law of Moses* (v. 12) as found in Scripture, the Gentiles by the same standard as *inscribed on their hearts* (v. 15; see v. 29; 2 Cor.3.2–3 n.). 16: *Day*: see v. 5 n.

2.17–29: **The immorality of the adherents of the Law.** 21–22: Exod.20.3–6, 14–15. 24: Isa.52.5; Ezek.36.20. 25: *Circumcision* is the symbol of God's covenant with Judaism (Gen.17.11). 26: See 1 Cor.7.19; Gal.5.6. 29: *Circumcision . . . of the heart*: see Deut.10.16; Jer.4.4.

3.1–8: **Jews have the advantage of God's oracles**, i.e. the Scriptures, and the unalterable promises they contain. 4: Ps.51.4. 8: *Libellously*: see 6.1 n.

9 What then? Are we Jews any better  
 off?<sup>e</sup> No, not at all!<sup>f</sup> For we have already  
 drawn up the accusation that Jews and  
 Greeks alike are all under the  
 10 power of sin. This has scriptural warrant:

‘There is no just man, not one;  
 11 no one who understands, no one  
 who seeks God.  
 12 All have swerved aside, all alike have  
 become debased;  
 there is no one to show kindness; no,  
 not one.  
 13 Their throat is an open grave,  
 they use their tongues for treachery,  
 adders’ venom is on their lips,  
 14 and their mouth is full of bitter  
 curses.  
 15 Their feet hasten to shed blood,  
 16 ruin and misery lie along their paths,  
 17 they are strangers to the high-road of  
 peace,  
 18 and reverence for God does not  
 enter their thoughts.’

19 Now all the words of the law are  
 addressed, as we know, to those who  
 are within the pale of the law, so that  
 no one may have anything to say in  
 self-defence, but the whole world may  
 be exposed to the judgement of God.  
 20 For (again from Scripture) ‘no human  
 being can be justified in the sight of  
 God’ for having kept the law: law  
 brings only the consciousness of sin.

21 **BUT NOW, QUITE INDEPENDENTLY OF**  
 law, God’s justice has been brought to  
 light. The Law and the prophets both  
 22 bear witness to it: it is God’s way of  
 righting wrong, effective through faith  
 in Christ for all who have such faith—

all, without distinction. For all alike 23  
 have sinned, and are deprived of the  
 divine splendour, and all are justified 24  
 by God’s free grace alone, through his  
 act of liberation in the person of Christ  
 Jesus. For God designed him to be the 25  
 means of expiating sin by his sacrificial  
 death, effective through faith. God  
 meant by this to demonstrate his  
 justice, because in his forbearance he  
 had overlooked the sins of the past—  
 to demonstrate his justice now in the 26  
 present, showing that he is himself just  
 and also justifies any man who puts his  
 faith in Jesus.

What room then is left for human 27  
 pride? It is excluded. And on what  
 principle? The keeping of the law  
 would not exclude it, but faith does.  
 For our argument is that a man is 28  
 justified by faith quite apart from success  
 in keeping the law.

Do you suppose God is the God of 29  
 the Jews alone? Is he not the God of  
 Gentiles also? Certainly, of Gentiles  
 also, if it be true that God is one. And 30  
 he will therefore justify both the circum-  
 cised in virtue of their faith, and  
 the uncircumcised through their faith.  
 Does this mean that we are using faith 31  
 to undermine law? By no means: we  
 are placing law itself on a firmer  
 footing.

**WHAT, THEN, ARE WE TO SAY ABOUT 4**  
 Abraham, our ancestor in the natural  
 line? If Abraham was justified by any- 2  
 thing he had done, then he has a  
 ground for pride. But he has no such  
 ground before God; for what does 3  
 Scripture say? ‘Abraham put his faith  
 in God, and that faith was counted to  
 him as righteousness.’ Now if a man 4

<sup>e</sup> Or Are we Jews any worse off?  
<sup>f</sup> Or Not in all respects.

3.9–20: **But all are equally guilty**, for the law itself condemns its followers (5.13; 7.7–11; Gal.3.10). 10–18: Pss.14.1–3; 5.9; 140.3; 10.7; Isa.59.7–8; Ps.36.1. 19: *Words of the law*: here Scripture as a whole (contrast v. 21). 20: Ps.143.2 (Gal.2.16); *sin*: see 7.7–13 n.

3.21–31: **God’s gracious acceptance** (i.e. justifying, vv. 24,26,28,30; see Gal.2.16 n.) of the believer is now revealed 21: *Law and the prophets*: Scripture, which later included a third part, *Writings*. 22: God’s way of dealing with sin (i.e. *righting wrong*) depends on the believer’s trust (i.e. *faith*) in Christ. *All*: both Jews and Gentiles (see vv. 29–30). 24: *Act of liberation* (from sin) applies the metaphor of freeing from slavery to God’s deed in Christ. 25–26: *The past sins* of the believer are not ignored, since God is *just*. Instead, now using the language of sacrifice, Christ’s death is God’s way of cleansing the believer’s sins (4.25; 5.9). 27–28: *The keeping of the law* could be an achievement leading to *pride*. However, salvation is a gift resting on *faith*: thus pride is *excluded*. 31: God’s basic intention in the *law* is accomplished by *faith*.

4.1–12: **Abraham was justified by his faith** and not by *anything he had done*. 3: Paul finds his

does a piece of work, his wages are not 'counted' as a favour; they are paid as debt. But if without any work to his credit he simply puts his faith in him who acquits the guilty, then his faith is indeed 'counted as righteousness'. In the same sense David speaks of the happiness of the man whom God 'counts' as just, apart from any specific acts of justice: 'Happy are they', he says, 'whose lawless deeds are forgiven, whose sins are buried away; happy is the man whose sins the Lord does not count against him.' Is this happiness confined to the circumcised, or is it for the uncircumcised also? Consider: we say, 'Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness'; in what circumstances was it so counted? Was he circumcised at the time, or not? He was not yet circumcised, but uncircumcised; and he later received the symbolic rite of circumcision as the hall-mark of the righteousness which faith had given him when he was still uncircumcised. Consequently, he is the father of all who have faith when uncircumcised, so that righteousness is 'counted' to them; and at the same time he is the father of such of the circumcised as do not rely upon their circumcision alone, but also walk in the footprints of the faith which our father Abraham had while he was yet uncircumcised.

For it was not through law that Abraham, or his posterity, was given the promise that the world should be his inheritance, but through the righteousness that came from faith. For if those who hold by the law, and they alone, are heirs, then faith is empty and the promise goes for nothing, because law can bring only retribution; but where there is no law there can be no breach of law. The promise was made on the ground of faith, in order that it might be a matter of sheer grace, and that it might be valid for all Abraham's

posterity, not only for those who hold by the law, but for those also who have the faith of Abraham. For he is the father of us all, as Scripture says: 'I have appointed you to be the father of many nations.' This promise, then, was valid before God, the God in whom he put his faith, the God who makes the dead live and summons things that are not yet in existence as if they already were. When hope seemed hopeless, his faith was such that he became 'father of many nations', in agreement with the words which had been spoken to him: 'Thus shall your descendants be.' Without any weakening of faith he contemplated his own body, as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb, and never doubted God's promise in unbelief, but, strong in faith, gave honour to God, in the firm conviction of his power to do what he had promised. And that is why Abraham's faith was 'counted to him as righteousness'.

Those words were written, not for Abraham's sake alone, but for our sake too: it is to be 'counted' in the same way to us who have faith in the God who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead; for he was given up to death for our misdeeds, and raised to life to justify us.<sup>g</sup>

THEREFORE, NOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN justified through faith, let us continue at peace<sup>h</sup> with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have been allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace, where we now stand. Let us exult<sup>i</sup> in the hope of the divine splendour that is to be ours. More than this: let us even exult<sup>j</sup> in our present sufferings, because we know that

<sup>g</sup> Or raised to life because we were now justified.

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses read we are at peace.

<sup>i</sup> Or We exult.

<sup>j</sup> Or we even exult.

understanding of *faith* confirmed by Gen.15.6 (Sept.; Gal.3.6). 6: *David*: the traditional author of the Psalter. 7-8: Ps.32.1-2. 10-11: He was not circumcised until Gen.17.11,24.

4.13-25: *Faith and not law* was the basis of God's *promise* to *Abraham* and to his *posterity* (compare Gal.3.16-18). 15: *Retribution, breach of law*: see 3.10-20; 5.13,20; 7.7-11. 17: Gen.17.5. *Nations*: see 1.5 n. 18: Gen.15.5. 19: Gen.17.17; 18.11. 22-23: See v. 3. 24: *For our sake*: see 15.4 n.; Gal.3.29. 25: See 3.25-26 n.; 5.9.

5.1-11: *Peace and reconciliation*. *God* accepts us on the basis of our *faith* (v. 1). His *love* (v. 5) expressed in *Christ's* death (vv. 6-10) and communicated by the *Spirit* (v. 5), gives assurance to our *hope* (vv. 2,4,5) of salvation (see 1 Cor.12.4-6 n. and 13.13 n.). 3: *Sufferings*:

4 suffering trains us to endure, and endurance brings proof that we have stood the test, and this proof is the ground of hope. Such a hope is no mockery, because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us.

6 For at the very time when we were still powerless, then Christ died for the wicked. Even for a just man one of us would hardly die, though perhaps for a good man one might actually brave death; but Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love towards us. And so, since we have now been justified by Christ's sacrificial death, we shall all the more certainly be saved through him from final retribution. For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life! But that is not all: we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus, through whom we have now been granted reconciliation.

12 Mark what follows. It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as all men have sinned. For sin was already in the world before there was law, though in the absence of law no reckoning is kept of sin. But death held sway from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned as Adam did, by disobeying a direct command—and Adam foreshadows the Man who was to come.

15 But God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the gift that came to so many by

the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ. And again, the gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man's sin; for the judicial action, following upon the one offence, issued in a verdict of condemnation, but the act of grace, following upon so many misdeeds, issued in a verdict of acquittal. For if by the wrongdoing of that one man death established its reign, through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God's grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.

It follows, then, that as the issue of one misdeed was condemnation for all men, so the issue of one just act is acquittal and life for all men. For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Law intruded into this process to multiply law-breaking. But where sin was thus multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it, in order that, as sin established its reign by way of death, so God's grace might establish its reign in righteousness, and issue in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What are we to say, then? Shall we persist in sin, so that there may be all the more grace? No, no! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer? Have you forgotten that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death? By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendour of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life.

For if we have become incorporate with him in a death like his, we shall also be one with him in a resurrection

see 2 Cor.4.8-11; 11.23-30; 12.10. 5: *Spirit*: see ch. 8; 2 Cor.5.5 n. 8-10: As *sinners* we were God's *enemies* (v. 10), but by his unique *love* (see Jn.15.13) we are now *reconciled*, and we shall surely be acquitted in the Last Judgment. 9: See 3.25-26 n.

5.12-21: *Adam and Christ, disobedience* (Gen.2.17; 3.6) and *obedience* (v. 19), *sin and righteousness, condemnation* (Gen.3.19) and *acquittal, death for all men and life for all men*—these are Paul's contrasts (compare 1 Cor.15.21-23,45-49). 13: See v. 20. 14: *Adam, Man*: see 1 Cor.15.45-49 n. 20: The *law of Moses intruded* (Gal.3.17-20) and, by specifying sin (v. 13; 3.20), made it more flagrant (see 7.7-13 n.).

6.1-14: *Dying and rising with Christ*. 1: *Sin* to obtain *more grace* (also v. 15; 3.8)? The idea is ludicrous and probably represents one of several ways Paul's gospel was twisted by his opponents (see Introduction). 3-4: *Baptism* means dying to *sin* and rising to life *into union with*

6 like his. We know that the man we  
 once were has been crucified with  
 Christ, for the destruction of the sinful  
 self, so that we may no longer be the  
 7 slaves of sin, since a dead man is no  
 8 longer answerable for his sin. But if we  
 thus died with Christ, we believe that  
 we shall also come to life with him.  
 9 We know that Christ, once raised from  
 the dead, is never to die again: he is no  
 longer under the dominion of death.  
 10 For in dying as he died, he died to sin,  
 once for all, and in living as he lives,  
 11 he lives to God. In the same way you  
 must regard yourselves as dead to sin  
 and alive to God, in union with Christ  
 Jesus.

12 So sin must no longer reign in your  
 mortal body, exacting obedience to the  
 13 body's desires. You must no longer put  
 its several parts at sin's disposal, as im-  
 plements for doing wrong. No: put  
 yourselves at the disposal of God, as  
 dead men raised to life; yield your  
 bodies to him as implements for doing  
 14 right; for sin shall no longer be your  
 master, because you are no longer  
 under law, but under the grace of God.

15 What then? Are we to sin, because  
 we are not under law but under grace?  
 16 Of course not. You know well enough  
 that if you put yourselves at the dis-  
 posal of a master, to obey him, you are  
 slaves of the master whom you obey;  
 and this is true whether you serve sin,  
 with death as its result; or obedience,  
 17 with righteousness as its result. But  
 God be thanked, you, who once were  
 slaves of sin, have yielded whole-  
 hearted obedience to the pattern of  
 teaching to which you were made sub-  
 18 ject,<sup>k</sup> and, emancipated from sin, have  
 19 become slaves of righteousness (to use  
 words that suit your human weakness)  
 —I mean, as you once yielded your  
 bodies to the service of impurity and  
 lawlessness, making for moral anarchy,

so now you must yield them to the ser-  
 vice of righteousness, making for a  
 holy life.

When you were slaves of sin, you 20  
 were free from the control of righteous-  
 ness; and what was the gain? Nothing 21  
 but what now makes you ashamed, for  
 the end of that is death. But now, freed 22  
 from the commands of sin, and bound  
 to the service of God, your gains are  
 such as make for holiness, and the end  
 is eternal life. For sin pays a wage, and 23  
 the wage is death, but God gives freely,  
 and his gift is eternal life, in union with  
 Christ Jesus our Lord.

You cannot be unaware, my friends 7  
 —I am speaking to those who have some  
 knowledge of law—that a person is  
 subject to the law so long as he is alive,  
 and no longer. For example, a married 2  
 woman is by law bound to her husband  
 while he lives; but if her husband dies,  
 she is discharged from the obligations  
 of the marriage-law. If, therefore, in 3  
 her husband's lifetime she consorts  
 with another man, she will incur the  
 charge of adultery; but if her husband  
 dies she is free of the law, and she does  
 not commit adultery by consorting  
 with another man. So you, my friends, 4  
 have died to the law by becoming iden-  
 tified with the body of Christ, and  
 accordingly you have found another  
 husband in him who rose from the  
 dead, so that we may bear fruit for  
 God. While we lived on the level of our 5  
 lower nature, the sinful passions evoked  
 by the law worked in our bodies, to  
 bear fruit for death. But now, having 6  
 died to that which held us bound, we  
 are discharged from the law, to serve  
 God in a new way, the way of the spirit,  
 in contrast to the old way, the way of a  
 written code.

What follows? Is the law identical 7

<sup>k</sup> Or which was handed on to you.

*Christ. 6: Crucified:* see Gal.5.24; 6.14. 12–14: The basis of Paul's ethic is expressed here. That God has freed us from sin's power (v. 7) is the meaning of Christ's death; therefore we must live as if we are indeed free. *Obedience* to sin is unthinkable. See 8.5–13; Gal.5.16–25.

6.15–23: *No slave can serve two masters*, and by God's mercy the *slaves of sin* (v. 17) have become the *slaves of righteousness* (v. 18). Once again, obedience to sin is out of the question. 15: See v. 1 n. 22: *Holiness*: a consecrated life (as in v. 19).

7.1–6: *The marriage law as an analogy*. How is it that the Christian is not "under law, but under . . . grace" (6.14–15)? 4–6: In the same way we have *died to the law* and thus are free of the law. *Fruit* is a conventional metaphor for "the product of a manner of life."

7.7–13: *The Law and Sin contrasted*. Paul often speaks (especially in Gal.; see Gal.3.19–20 n.)

with sin? Of course not. But except through law I should never have become acquainted with sin. For example, I should never have known what it was to covet, if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' Through that commandment sin found its opportunity, and produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. In the absence of law, sin is a dead thing. There was a time when, in the absence of law, I was fully alive; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. The commandment which should have led to life proved in my experience to lead to death, because sin found its opportunity in the commandment, seduced me, and through the commandment killed me.

Therefore the law is in itself holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. Are we to say then that this good thing was the death of me? By no means. It was sin that killed me, and thereby sin exposed its true character: it used a good thing to bring about my death, and so, through the commandment, sin became more sinful than ever.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am not: I am unspiritual, the purchased slave of sin. I do not even acknowledge my own actions as mine, for what I do is not what I want to do, but what I detest. But if what I do is against my will, it means that I agree with the law and hold it to be admirable. But as

things are, it is no longer I who perform the action, but sin that lodges in me. For I know that nothing good lodges in me—in my unspiritual nature, I mean—for though the will to do good is there, the deed is not. The good which I want to do, I fail to do; but what I do is the wrong which is against my will; and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but sin that has its lodging in me.

I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of God, but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different law, fighting against the law that my reason approves and making me a prisoner under the law<sup>l</sup> that is in my members, the law of sin. Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death<sup>m</sup>? God alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks be to God! In a word then, I myself, subject to God's law as a rational being, am yet,<sup>n</sup> in my unspiritual nature, a slave to the law of sin.

The conclusion of the matter is this: there is no condemnation for those who are united with Christ Jesus, because in Christ Jesus the life-giving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death. What the law

<sup>l</sup> Or by means of the law.

<sup>m</sup> Or out of the body doomed to this death.

<sup>n</sup> Or Thus, left to myself, while subject . . . rational being, I am yet . . .

as if he thought of *the law* as *identical with sin* (compare "died to sin" in Rom.6.10 with "died to the law" in v. 4). Here, however, he makes his most positive assessment of the Law: it is *holy and just and good*, since it reflects God's intentions. But in practice the Law is powerless against *sin* and even encourages it (v. 8; compare 5.13,20; Gal.3.21–22). 7–8: "Thou shalt not cover" (Exod.20.17; Deut.5.21) is the only commandment in the Decalogue which restricts a man's thoughts; here *sin* finds its *opportunity*. 9–11: Paul speaks of leaving childhood and assuming responsibility under the Law in terms reminiscent of the Eden story (Gen.3.1–19; 2 Cor.11.3). 11: *Seduced*: tricked (Gen.3.13).

7.14–25: *The divided man*. In his *inmost self* (v. 22) Paul knows that the Law is *spiritual* (v. 14), *admirable* (v. 16), and a *delight* (v. 22). But sin enslaves his body so that it acts *against his will* (vv.15–17,20). 14: *Unspiritual*: lit. "fleshly." Here and in ch. 8 Paul contrasts "flesh" and "spirit"; compare 8.4,5–8,9–10 nn.; Gal.5.16–17; 2 Cor.4.7–5.5; 1 Cor.15.39–53. 17,20: Paul thinks of *sin* as a power and occasionally personifies it: *no longer I* but *sin* acts. But as chs. 1–3 show, man is still responsible for his actions. 23,25: *A different law, the law of sin*: a foreign principle, sin's command. 24–25: Paul expresses both ultimate despair at being *doomed to death* and simultaneously his profoundest *thanks* for God's *rescue* (see 8.1–4).

8.1–4: *God's act of rescue* has turned the tables. Divided by sin we could only expect *condemnation and death*. But Christ, by sharing our *sinful nature* and *dying as a sacrifice for sin* (see 3.25–26 n.), has diverted the expected condemnation to *sin* itself and given us new life instead. 1: Paul's language is fluid. The believer is *united with Christ* (lit. "in Christ") because he has the *Spirit* "dwelling within" him (v. 9). Paul also speaks of Christ "dwelling within" the believer (v. 10 and Gal.2.20; Eph.3.17). 3: *Sending his own son*: see v. 32 and 5.8. The phrase,

could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son in a form like that of our own sinful nature, and as a sacrifice for sin,<sup>o</sup> he has passed judgement against sin within that very nature, so that the commandment of the law may find fulfilment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit.

Those who live on the level of our lower nature have their outlook formed by it, and that spells death; but those who live on the level of the spirit have the spiritual outlook, and that is life and peace. For the outlook of the lower nature is enmity with God; it is not subject to the law of God; indeed it cannot be: those who live on such a level cannot possibly please God.

But that is not how you live. You are on the spiritual level, if only God's Spirit dwells within you; and if a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ, he is no Christian. But if Christ is dwelling within you, then although the body is a dead thing because you sinned, yet the spirit is life itself because you have been justified.<sup>p</sup> Moreover, if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells within you, then the God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give new life to your mortal bodies through his indwelling Spirit.

It follows, my friends, that our lower nature has no claim upon us; we are not obliged to live on that level. If you do so, you must die. But if by the Spirit

you put to death all the base pursuits of the body, then you will live.

For all who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons of God. The Spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry 'Abba! Father!' In that cry the Spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children; and if children, then heirs. We are God's heirs and Christ's fellow-heirs, if we share his sufferings now in order to share his splendour hereafter.

For I reckon that the sufferings we now endure bear no comparison with the splendour, as yet unrevealed, which is in store for us. For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed. It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so;<sup>q</sup> yet always there was hope, because<sup>r</sup> the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendour of the children of God. Up to the present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth. Not only so, but even we, to whom the Spirit is given as firstfruits of the harvest to come, are groaning inwardly while we wait for God to make us his sons and<sup>s</sup> set our whole body free. For we have been saved, though only in hope. Now to see

<sup>o</sup> Or and to deal with sin.

<sup>p</sup> Or so that you may live rightly.

<sup>q</sup> Or because God subjected it.

<sup>r</sup> Or with the hope that . . .

<sup>s</sup> Some witnesses omit make us his sons and.

*a form like that of our own sinful nature* (compare Phil.2.7), does not mean that Paul doubted Jesus' full humanity. On the contrary, his argument requires it. 4: Now *directed by the Spirit*, our *conduct* can fulfill the Law's basic requirement: love (see 13.8-10; Gal.5.14,22). *Lower nature*: lit. "flesh" (see 7.14 n.).

8.5-11: **The old life and the new.** 5-8: Those whose lives are directed by their *lower nature* (see Gal.5.19-21) live in *enmity* with God (see 5.10) and can only expect *death*. 9-10: But those who live on the *spiritual level* (see 7.14 n.) have *life itself*. *Dwelling*: see v. 1 n. *The body is dead*, i.e. mortal, because of *sin* (see 5.12). 11: The *indwelling Spirit* is our promise (see 2 Cor.1.22; 5.5) of a resurrection like Christ's.

8.12-17: **God's adopted sons.** Compare Gal.4.5-7. 12-13: See 6.12-14 n. 14-15: Paul's previous use of slavery motifs (3.24; 6.15-23; 7.14) makes his new language dramatic. Sin made us slaves; the Spirit *makes us* God's *sons*. Thus we can call God "*Father*" (notably in the Lord's Prayer) with the Aram. word that Jesus used, "*Abba*." 16: See vv. 26-27. 17: Christ is *heir* to all God's promises (Gal. 3.16), and we also, as we are found in him (Gal.3.29) and share his suffering (Phil.3.10-11). In v. 29 Paul even calls us Christ's brothers.

8.18-25: **The liberation of the whole creation.** Just as we share in Christ's sufferings (v. 17), so all of nature suffers with us (v. 22). And the whole *universe*, ourselves included, now waits eagerly to be *freed from mortality* and to *enter upon the liberty and splendour* (v. 21) which is our heritage (v. 17). 20: God *made it so*: see Gen.3.17. 23: *Firstfruits*: see 1 Cor.15.20 n. and 2 Cor.5.5. *Groaning*: see 2 Cor.5.2. 24-25: See 2 Cor.5.6-7.

is no longer to hope: why should a man endure and wait<sup>t</sup> for what he already sees? But if we hope for something we do not yet see, then, in waiting for it, we show our endurance.

26 In the same way the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray,<sup>u</sup> but through our inarticulate groans the Spirit himself is pleading for us, and God who searches our inmost being knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for God's people in God's own way; and in everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God<sup>v</sup> and are called according to his purpose. For God knew his own before ever they were, and also ordained that they should be shaped to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the eldest among a large family of brothers; and it is these, so fore-ordained, whom he has also called. And those whom he called he has justified, and to those whom he justified he has also given his splendour.

31 With all this in mind, what are we to say? If God is on our side, who is against us? He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all; and with this gift how can he fail to lavish upon us all he has to give? Who will be the accuser of God's chosen ones? It is God who pronounces acquittal; then who can condemn? It is Christ—Christ who died, and, more than that, was raised from the dead—who is at God's right hand, and indeed pleads our cause.<sup>w</sup> Then what can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword? 'We

are being done to death for thy sake all day long,' as Scripture says; 'we have been treated like sheep for slaughter'—and yet, in spite of all, overwhelming victory is ours through him who loved us. For I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### The purpose of God in history

I AM SPEAKING THE TRUTH AS A Christian, and my own conscience, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, assures me it is no lie: in my heart there is great grief and unceasing sorrow. For I could even pray to be outcast from Christ myself for the sake of my brothers, my natural kinsfolk. They are Israelites: they were made God's sons; theirs is the splendour of the divine presence, theirs the covenants, the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah.<sup>x</sup> May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever!<sup>y</sup> Amen.

<sup>t</sup> Some witnesses read why should a man hope . . .

<sup>u</sup> Or what it is right to pray for.

<sup>v</sup> Or and, as we know, all things work together for good for those who love God; some witnesses read and we know God himself co-operates for good with those who love God.

<sup>w</sup> Or Who will be the accuser of God's chosen ones? Will it be God himself? No, he it is who pronounces acquittal. Who will be the judge to condemn? Will it be Christ—he who died, and, more than that, . . . right hand? No, he it is who pleads our cause.

<sup>x</sup> Greek Christ.

<sup>y</sup> Or sprang the Messiah, supreme above all, God blessed for ever; or sprang the Messiah, who is supreme above all. Blessed be God for ever!

8.26–30: God's loving care supports us in our weakness (i.e. suffering) by the Spirit's intercession (vv. 26–28) and by the revelation of his plans for us (vv. 29–30). 26: *We do not . . . know how . . . to pray* until the Spirit teaches us to say "Father" (v. 15; compare Lk.11.1–2) and gives us ecstatic speech (see 1 Cor. chs. 12–14). 28–29: The final goal of God's purpose for us is *likeness to his Son* (see 2 Cor.3.18; Eph.4.13). 30: For Paul's own experience see Gal.1.15–16.

8.31–39: Our ultimate trust in God's love. Terms like *against us* (v. 31) and *accuser* (v. 33) suggest the heavenly court at the Last Judgment. 31: Ps. 118.6. 35: Paul's hardships (2 Cor. 11.23–28) were, of course, not unique to him. 36: Ps.44.22. 38–39: *Death* is but one of the forces which attempt to separate us from God (see 1 Cor.2.6–8 n.).

9.1–5: Paul's anguish at Israel's unbelief. 3: *Outcast*: see 1 Cor.16.22 n.; Exod.32.32. 4: *Israelites*: descendants of Jacob, renamed Israel (Gen.32.28). The name emphasizes God's special choice. *Sons*: see, e.g. Exod.4.22; Jer.31.9. *Splendour*: see Exod.16.10; 24.16; 40.34. *Covenants*: see, e.g. Gen.6.18; 9.9; 17.7; Exod.19.5; 34.10. *Law*: notably Exod.20.1–17; Deut.5.1–21. *Promises*: see 4.13–21.



6 It is impossible that the word of God should have proved false. For not all descendants of Israel are truly Israel, nor, because they are Abraham's offspring, are they all his true children;<sup>z</sup> but, in the words of Scripture, 'Through the line of Isaac your descendants shall be traced.'<sup>a</sup> That is to say, it is not those born in the course of nature who are children of God; it is the children born through God's promise who are reckoned as Abraham's descendants. 9 For the promise runs: 'At the time fixed I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.'

10 But that is not all, for Rebekah's children had one and the same father, 11 our ancestor Isaac; and yet, in order that God's selective purpose might stand, based not upon men's deeds but upon the call of God, she was told, even before they were born, when they had as yet done nothing, good or ill, 'The elder shall be servant to the younger'; and that accords with the text of Scripture, 'Jacob I loved and Esau I hated.'

14 What shall we say to that? Is God to be charged with injustice? By no means. 15 For he says to Moses, 'Where I show mercy, I will show mercy, and where I pity, I will pity.' Thus it does not depend on man's will or effort, but on God's mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'I have raised you up for this very purpose, to exhibit my power in my dealings with you, and to spread my fame over all the world.' Thus he not only shows mercy as he chooses, but also makes men stubborn as he chooses.

19 You will say, 'Then why does God blame a man? For who can resist his will?' Who are you, sir, to answer God back? Can the pot speak to the potter and say, 'Why did you make me like this?' Surely the potter can do what

he likes with the clay. Is he not free to make out of the same lump two vessels, one to be treasured, the other for common use?

But what if God, desiring to exhibit<sup>b</sup> 22 his retribution at work and to make his power known, tolerated very patiently those vessels which were objects of retribution due for destruction, and did 23 so in order to make known the full wealth of his splendour upon vessels which were objects of mercy, and which from the first had been prepared for this splendour?

Such vessels are we, whom he has 24 called from among Gentiles as well as Jews, as it says in the Book of Hosea: 25 'Those who were not my people I will call My People, and the unloved nation I will call My Beloved. For in the very 26 place where they were told "you are no people of mine", they shall be called Sons of the living God.' But Isaiah 27 makes this proclamation about Israel: 'Though the Israelites be countless as the sands of the sea, only a remnant shall be saved; for the Lord's sentence 28 on the land will be summary and final'; as also he said previously, 'If the Lord 29 of Hosts had not left us the mere germ of a nation, we should have become like Sodom, and no better than Gomorrah.'

Then what are we to say? That 30 Gentiles, who made no effort after righteousness, nevertheless achieved it, a righteousness based on faith; whereas 31 Israel made great efforts after a law of righteousness, but never attained to it. Why was this? Because their efforts 32 were not based on faith, but (as they supposed) on deeds. They fell over the 'stone' mentioned in Scripture: 'Here 33 I lay in Zion a stone to trip over, a rock

<sup>z</sup> Or all children of God.

<sup>a</sup> Or God's call shall be for your descendants in the line of Isaac.

<sup>b</sup> Or although he had the will to exhibit . . .

9.6-29: God never intended that his promises should descend to more than a *remnant* (v. 27) of Abraham's offspring, for of Abraham's sons only Isaac was chosen (compare Gal.4.21-5.1) and of Isaac's sons, only Jacob. 7: Gen.21.12. 9: Gen.18.10. 12: Gen.25.23. 13: Mal.1.2-3. 14-23: Not injustice but mercy lies behind God's choices, for men have no claims against his supreme sovereignty. 15: Exod.33.19. 17: Exod.9.16. 20: Isa.29.16; 45.9. 21: Jer.18.6. 24-26: Now, as the church's mission shows, Gentiles are also called. Paul finds the promise in Hos.1.10; 2.23. 27-28: Isa.10.22-23. *Remnant, germ* (v. 29) prepare for 11.1-12. 29: Isa.1.9. *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*: Gen.19.24-25.

9.30-10.10: God's righteousness comes by faith. 30: See 3.22; 10.20; Gal.2.16; Phil.3.9. 33: Paul equates Christ with "the stone which the builders rejected" (Ps.118.22), which he relates

to stumble against; but he who has faith in him will not be put to shame.'

**10 BROTHERS, MY DEEPEST DESIRE AND MY prayer to God is for their salvation.**

**2** To their zeal for God I can testify; but **3** it is an ill-informed zeal. For they ignore God's way of righteousness, and try to set up their own, and therefore they have not submitted themselves to **4** God's righteousness. For Christ ends the law and brings righteousness for everyone who has faith.<sup>c</sup>

**5** Of legal righteousness Moses writes, 'The man who does this shall gain life **6** by it.' But the righteousness that comes by faith says, 'Do not say to yourself, "Who can go up to heaven?"' (that is **7** to bring Christ down), 'or, "Who can go down to the abyss?"' (to bring **8** Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you: it is upon your lips and in your heart.' This means the word of faith which we proclaim. If on your lips is the confession, 'Jesus is Lord', and in your heart the faith that God raised him from the dead, then you will find salvation. For the faith that leads to righteousness is in the heart, and the confession that leads to salvation is upon the lips.

**11** Scripture says, 'Everyone who has faith in him will be saved from shame' **12** —everyone: there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him. **13** For everyone, as it says again—'everyone who invokes the name of the Lord **14** will be saved'. How could they invoke one in whom they had no faith? And how could they have faith in one they had never heard of? And how hear without someone to spread the news? **15** And how could anyone spread the news

without a commission to do so? And that is what Scripture affirms: 'How welcome are the feet of the messengers of good news!'

But not all have responded to the **16** good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' We **17** conclude that faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ.

But, I ask, can it be that they never **18** heard it? Of course they did: 'Their voice has sounded all over the earth, and their words to the bounds of the inhabited world.' But, I ask again, can **19** it be that Israel failed to recognize the message? In reply, I first cite Moses, who says, 'I will use a nation that is no nation to stir your envy, and a foolish nation to rouse your anger.' But Isaiah **20** is still more daring: 'I was found', he says, 'by those who were not looking for me; I was clearly shown to those who never asked about me'; while to **21** Israel he says, 'All day long I have stretched out my hands to an unruly and defiant people.'

**I ASK THEN, HAS GOD REJECTED HIS 11** people? I cannot believe it! I am an Israelite myself, of the stock of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. No! **2** God has not rejected the people which he acknowledged of old as his own. You know (do you not?) what Scripture says in the story of Elijah—how Elijah pleads with God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed thy prophets, **3** they have torn down thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.' But what does the divine voice **4** say to him? 'I have left myself seven thousand men who have not knelt to

<sup>c</sup> Or Christ is the end of the law as a way to righteousness for everyone who has faith.

to Isa.8.14-15; 28.16. Compare 1 Pet.2.4.(and n.)-8. **10.4:** See 3.21-26; Gal.3.19,24. **5:** Although the man who does the Law will indeed be saved (Lev.18.5; Gal.3.12), the task is beyond our strength (3.9-20; 7.7-25). **6-10:** Deut.9.4 and 30.12-14 are interpreted to mean that the faith which leads to righteousness and the confession of Christ that leads to salvation (v. 10) are now available. **9:** Compare Phil.2.11.

**10.11-21:** Israel has been deaf to the good news of Christ. **11:** See 9.33; Isa.28.16. **12:** See 3.29; Gal.3.28. **13:** Joel 2.32 (Lord is taken to mean Christ). **15:** Isa.52.7. **16:** Isa.53.1. **17:** Word of Christ: the preaching about Christ. **18:** Ps.19.4. **19-21:** The message is so simple that (foolish) Gentiles understand it; Israel, however, has failed to respond because they are an unruly and defiant people (v. 21). **19:** Deut.32.21. *Envy:* see 11.11,14. **20-21:** Isa.65.1-2.

**11.1-12:** Israel's rejection is not complete as long as a "remnant" (v. 5) exists, i.e. the church. **1:** Israelite myself: see 9.4 n.; 2 Cor.11.22; Phil.3.5. **2-4:** Elijah mistakenly believed that Israel's

- 5 Baal.' In just the same way at the present time a 'remnant' has come into being, selected by the grace of God.  
 6 But if it is by grace, then it does not rest on deeds done, or grace would cease to be grace.  
 7 What follows? What Israel sought, Israel has not achieved, but the selected few have achieved it. The rest were  
 8 made blind to the truth, exactly as it stands written: 'God brought upon them a numbness of spirit; he gave them blind eyes and deaf ears, and so  
 9 it is still.' Similarly David says:

'May their table be a snare and a trap,  
 both stumbling-block and retribution!  
 10 May their eyes become so dim that they lose their sight!  
 Bow down their backs unceasingly!'

- 11 I now ask, did their failure mean complete downfall? Far from it! Because they offended, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to stir Israel to emulation.  
 12 But if their offence means the enrichment of the world, and if their falling-off means the enrichment of the Gentiles, how much more their coming to full strength!  
 13 But I have something to say to you Gentiles. I am a missionary to the Gentiles, and as such I give all honour  
 14 to that ministry when I try to stir emulation in the men of my own race,  
 15 and so to save some of them. For if their rejection has meant the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean? Nothing less than  
 16 life from the dead! If the first portion of dough is consecrated, so is the whole lump. If the root is consecrated, so are  
 17 the branches. But if some of the branches have been lopped off, and

you, a wild olive, have been grafted in among them, and have come to share the same root and sap as the olive, do  
 18 not make yourself superior to the branches. If you do so, remember that it is not you who sustain the root: the root sustains you.

You will say, 'Branches were lopped  
 19 off so that I might be grafted in.' Very 20 well: they were lopped off for lack of faith, and by faith you hold your place. Put away your pride, and be on your guard; for if God did not spare the  
 21 native branches, no more will he spare you. Observe the kindness and the  
 22 severity of God—severity to those who fell away, divine kindness to you, if only you remain within its scope; otherwise you too will be cut off, whereas  
 23 they, if they do not continue faithless, will be grafted in; for it is in God's power to graft them in again. For if  
 24 you were cut from your native wild olive and against all nature grafted into the cultivated olive, how much more readily will they, the natural olive-branches, be grafted into their native stock!

For there is a deep truth here, my 25 brothers, of which I want you to take account, so that you may not be complacent about your own discernment: this partial blindness has come upon Israel only until the Gentiles have been admitted in full strength; when  
 26 that has happened, the whole of Israel will be saved, in agreement with the text of Scripture:

'From Zion shall come the Deliverer;  
 he shall remove wickedness from  
 Jacob.

And this is the covenant I will grant 27  
 them,  
 when I take away their sins.'

rebellion was complete (1 Kgs.19.10,14,18). 2: Ps.94.14. 6: See 4.4-5; Gal.3.18. 7-12: At present God gives Israel a numbness of spirit (vv. 7-10,25), but only to allow time to call the Gentiles, who will in turn stir Israel to emulation (v. 11; 10.19). 8: Isa.29.10; Deut.29.4 (compare Mk.4.10-12). 9-10: Ps.69.22-23. David: see 4.6 n.

11.13-24: Israel is God's olive tree (Jer.11.16; Hos.14.6). 13: See 1.5; 15.16; Gal.1.16; 2.9. 14: See 1 Cor.9.22. 15: Without Israel God has achieved the reconciliation of the world (5.10-11), but when Israel receives God's acceptance, what a glorious consummation! 16: First portion (Num.15.20-21) and root probably mean the patriarchs (v. 28; 9.5). 17: The branches . . . lopped off are the Jews, who lack faith (v. 20); the Gentiles are shoots from a wild olive grafted in "against all nature" (v. 24). 21-22: Compare 1 Cor.10.12. 24: The restoration of Israel will be swifter than the mission to the Gentiles.

11.25-36: The salvation of all mankind, both Gentiles and Jews, will be accomplished by God's mercy (v. 32). 25-27: Blindness: see vv. 8,10. Gentiles . . . in full strength and the whole

28 In the spreading of the Gospel they are treated as God's enemies for your sake; but God's choice stands, and they are his friends for the sake of the patriarchs. For the gracious gifts of God and his calling are irrevocable. Just as formerly you were disobedient to God, but now have received mercy in the time of their disobedience, so now, when you receive mercy, they have proved disobedient, but only in order that they too may receive mercy. For in making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind.

33 O depth of wealth, wisdom, and knowledge in God! How unsearchable his judgements, how untraceable his ways! Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counsellor? Who has ever made a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is—to him be glory for ever! Amen.

#### Christian behaviour

12 THEREFORE, MY BROTHERS, I IMPLORE you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart.<sup>d</sup>

2 Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

3 In virtue of the gift that God in his grace has given me I say to everyone among you: do not be conceited or think too highly of yourself; but think your way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of you. For just as in a single

human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another.

The gifts we possess differ as they are allotted to us by God's grace, and must be exercised accordingly: the gift of inspired utterance, for example, in proportion to a man's faith; or the gift of administration, in administration. A teacher should employ his gift in teaching, and one who has the gift of stirring speech should use it to stir his hearers. If you give to charity, give with all your heart; if you are a leader, exert yourself to lead; if you are helping others in distress, do it cheerfully.

Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and clinging to the good. Let love for our brotherhood breed warmth of mutual affection. Give pride of place to one another in esteem.

With unflagging energy, in ardour of spirit, serve the Lord.<sup>e</sup>

Let hope keep you joyful; in trouble stand firm; persist in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of God's people, and practise hospitality.

Call down blessings on your persecutors—blessings, not curses.

With the joyful be joyful, and mourn with the mourners.

Care as much about each other as about yourselves. Do not be haughty, but go about with humble folk. Do not keep thinking how wise you are.

Never pay back evil for evil. Let your aims be such as all men count honourable. If possible, so far as it lies with you, live at peace with all men. My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for there is a text which reads, 'Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay.' But

<sup>d</sup> Or . . . acceptance, for such is the worship which you, as rational creatures, should offer.  
<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read meet the demands of the hour.

of Israel: corporately but not necessarily every individual. *Scripture*: Isa.59.20–21; 27.9. 34: Isa.40.13 (1 Cor.2.16). 35: Job 41.11. 36: See 1 Cor.8.6; Col.1.16.

12.1–8: **The dedicated life.** 1: See 6.13,16,19. *A living sacrifice*: in contrast to the offering of a dead animal. 2: See 8.5–13. 3: *Gift*: Paul's apostleship (see 1.5). *Measure of faith*: the amount and nature of the spiritual gifts (v. 6) received by faith. 4–8: The passage is a reworking of 1 Cor.12.4–31. 6: *In proportion to a man's faith*: see v. 3 n.

12.9–21: **The greatness of love** (see 1 Cor. ch. 13). 13: *Hospitality*: see 16.2 n. 14: See Mt.5.44. 16: Prov.3.7. 17a: Prov.20.22; 1 Th.5.15. 17b: Prov.3.4 (Sept.); 2 Cor.8.21. 19: Men must not seek revenge (Lev.19.18; Mt.5.39). *Leave a place for*: leave it to. *A text*: Deut.32.35. 20: Prov.25.21–22 (Mt.5.44); *coals of fire*: deep shame and remorse.

there is another text: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; by doing this you will heap live coals on his head.' Do not let evil conquer you, but use good to defeat evil.

13 Every person must submit to the supreme authorities. There is no authority but by act of God, and the existing authorities are instituted by him; consequently anyone who rebels against authority is resisting a divine institution, and those who so resist have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive. For government, a terror to crime, has no terrors for good behaviour. You wish to have no fear of the authorities? Then continue to do right and you will have their approval, for they are God's agents working for your good. But if you are doing wrong, then you will have cause to fear them; it is not for nothing that they hold the power of the sword, for they are God's agents of punishment, for retribution on the offender. That is why you are obliged to submit. It is an obligation imposed not merely by fear of retribution but by conscience. That is also why you pay taxes. The authorities are in God's service and to these duties they devote their energies.

7 Discharge your obligations to all men; pay tax and toll, reverence and respect, to those to whom they are due.

8 Leave no claim outstanding against you, except that of mutual love. He who loves his neighbour has satisfied every claim of the law. For the commandments, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet', and any other commandment there may be, are all summed up in the one rule, 'Love

your neighbour as yourself.' Love cannot wrong a neighbour; therefore the whole law is summed up in love.<sup>f</sup>

In all this, remember how critical the moment is. It is time for you to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. It is far on in the night; day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armour as soldiers of the light. Let us have with decency as befits the day: no revelling or drunkenness, no debauchery or vice, no quarrels or jealousies! Let Christ Jesus himself be the armour that you wear; give no more thought to satisfying the bodily appetites.

IF A MAN IS WEAK IN HIS FAITH YOU MUST accept him without attempting to settle doubtful points. For instance, one man will have faith enough to eat all kinds of food, while a weaker man eats only vegetables. The man who eats must not hold in contempt the man who does not, and he who does not eat must not pass judgement on the one who does; for God has accepted him. Who are you to pass judgement on someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is his own Master's business; and stand he will, because his Master has power to enable him to stand.

Again, this man regards one day more highly than another, while that man regards all days alike. On such a point everyone should have reached conviction in his own mind. He who respects the day has the Lord in mind in doing so, and he who eats meat has the Lord in mind when he eats, since he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains has the Lord in mind no less, since he too gives thanks to God.

<sup>f</sup> Or the whole law is fulfilled by love.

13.1-7: The Christian's duty to the state is to be an obedient subject (compare Wis.6.1-5; 1 Pet.2.13-17; 3.13). Paul had experienced both the benefits of the Roman government and its punishment (v. 2; see 2 Cor.11.25 n.), but since he believed that the government's authority came by act of God, he counseled obedience. 6-7: See Mk.12.17.

13.8-10: Love sums up the law. 9: The commandments: Exod.20.13-15,17; Deut.5.17-19,21 (see Rom.7.7). One rule: Lev.19.18 (compare Mk.12.31; Mt.19.18; Gal.5.14).

13.11-14: The end of the age approaches. 11: We must wake and put the obligation of love into action. The passage is a reworking of 1 Th.5.1-8. 12: Armour: see 1 Th.5.8; Eph.6.14-17. 14: See 6.12-14 n.; Gal.3.27 n.

14.1-23: Love respects the scruples of others. Those who remain in bondage to laws about meat (vv. 6,21), wine (v. 21), and Sabbath observance (vv. 5-6) are weak in faith. Paul regards these scruples as unnecessary (v. 14), but counsels tolerance based on love (v. 15). Paul here adapts 1 Cor.8.7-13 and 10.27-11.1 for the benefit of the Romans. 5: Compare Gal.4.10.

7 For no one of us lives, and equally  
 8 no one of us dies, for himself alone. If  
 we live, we live for the Lord; and if  
 we die, we die for the Lord. Whether  
 therefore we live or die, we belong to  
 9 the Lord. This is why Christ died and  
 came to life again, to establish his  
 10 lordship over dead and living. You, sir,  
 why do you pass judgement on your  
 brother? And you, sir, why do you  
 hold your brother in contempt? We  
 shall all stand before God's tribunal.  
 11 For Scripture says, 'As I live, says the  
 Lord, to me every knee shall bow and  
 12 every tongue acknowledge God.' So,  
 you see, each of us will have to answer  
 for himself.  
 13 Let us therefore cease judging one  
 another, but rather make this simple  
 judgement: that no obstacle or stum-  
 bling-block be placed in a brother's way.  
 14 I am absolutely convinced, as a Chris-  
 tian,<sup>g</sup> that nothing is impure in itself;  
 only, if a man considers a particular  
 thing impure, then to him it is impure.  
 15 If your brother is outraged by what  
 you eat, then your conduct is no longer  
 guided by love. Do not by your eating  
 bring disaster to a man for whom  
 16 Christ died! What for you is a good  
 thing must not become an occasion for  
 17 slanderous talk; for the kingdom of  
 God is not eating and drinking, but  
 justice, peace, and joy, inspired by the  
 18 Holy Spirit. He who thus shows him-  
 self a servant of Christ is acceptable to  
 God and approved by men.  
 19 Let us then pursue the things that  
 make for peace and build up the com-  
 20 mon life. Do not ruin the work of God  
 for the sake of food. Everything is pure  
 in itself, but anything is bad for the  
 man who by his eating causes another  
 21 to fall. It is a fine thing to abstain from  
 eating meat or drinking wine, or doing  
 anything which causes your brother's  
 22 downfall. If you have a clear convic-  
 tion, apply it to yourself in the sight of  
 God. Happy is the man who can make

his decision with a clear conscience!<sup>h</sup>  
 But a man who has doubts is guilty if <sup>23</sup>  
 he eats, because his action does not  
 arise from his conviction, and anything  
 which does not arise from conviction is  
 sin.<sup>i</sup> Those of us who have a robust <sup>15</sup>  
 conscience must accept as our own  
 burden the tender scruples of weaker  
 men, and not consider ourselves. Each <sup>2</sup>  
 of us must consider his neighbour and  
 think what is for his good and will build  
 up the common life. For Christ too did <sup>3</sup>  
 not consider himself, but might have  
 said, in the words of Scripture, 'The  
 reproaches of those who reproached  
 thee fell upon me.' For all the ancient <sup>4</sup>  
 scriptures were written for our own  
 instruction, in order that through the  
 encouragement they give us we may  
 maintain our hope with fortitude. And <sup>5</sup>  
 may God, the source of all fortitude  
 and all encouragement, grant that you  
 may agree with one another after the  
 manner of Christ Jesus, so that with <sup>6</sup>  
 one mind and one voice you may praise  
 the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ.

In a word, accept one another as <sup>7</sup>  
 Christ accepted us, to the glory of God.  
 I mean that Christ became a servant of <sup>8</sup>  
 the Jewish people to maintain the truth  
 of God by making good his promises  
 to the patriarchs, and at the same time <sup>9</sup>  
 to give the Gentiles cause to glorify  
 God for his mercy. As Scripture says,  
 'Therefore I will praise thee among the  
 Gentiles and sing hymns to thy name';  
 and again, 'Gentiles, make merry to- <sup>10</sup>  
 gether with his own people'; and yet <sup>11</sup>  
 again, 'All Gentiles, praise the Lord;  
 let all peoples praise him.' Once again, <sup>12</sup>  
 Isaiah says, 'There shall be the Scion  
 of Jesse, the one raised up to govern  
 the Gentiles; on him the Gentiles shall  
 set their hope.' And may the God of <sup>13</sup>  
 hope fill you with all joy and peace by

<sup>g</sup> Or on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>h</sup> Or who does not bring judgement upon himself by what he approves!

<sup>i</sup> See p. 200, note r.

7: See Gal.2.20; 2 Cor.5.15. 8: *Live . . . die*: see Phil.1.20. 10: *Tribunal*: final judgment (see 2.5,16; 2 Cor.5.10). 11: Isa.45.23 (Phil.2.10-11). 14: See Mk.7.18-19.

15:1-13: To put others first is to imitate Christ. 3: See Phil.2.5-8; 2 Cor.8.9. *Scripture*: Ps.69.9. 4: See 4.23-24; 1 Cor.9.10; 10.11. 8: Christ was born a Jew, obedient to the Law (Gal.4.4-5), so as to maintain the truth of God's promises to the patriarchs (see 4.13-21; 9.4-13). 9-12: As a result the Gentiles share in God's promises: Ps.18.49; Deut.32.43; Ps.117.1; Isa.11.10. 12: *Scion of Jesse*: Messiah; see Mt.1.1 n.

your faith in him, until, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you overflow with hope.

14 MY FRIENDS, I HAVE NO DOUBT IN MY own mind that you yourselves are quite full of goodness and equipped with knowledge of every kind, well able to give advice to one another; nevertheless I have written to refresh your memory, and written somewhat boldly at times, in virtue of the gift I have from God. His grace has made me a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles; my priestly service is the preaching of the gospel of God, and it falls to me to offer the Gentiles to him as<sup>l</sup> an acceptable sacrifice, consecrated by the Holy Spirit.

17 Thus in the fellowship of Christ Jesus I have ground for pride in the service of God. I will venture to speak of those things alone in which I have been Christ's instrument to bring the Gentiles into his allegiance, by word and deed, by the force of miraculous signs and by the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result I have completed the preaching of the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem as far round as Illyricum. It is my ambition to bring the Gospel to places where the very name of Christ has not been heard, for I do not want to build on another man's foundation; but, as Scripture says,

'They who had no news of him shall see,  
and they who never heard of him shall understand.'

22 That is why I have been prevented all this time from coming to you. But now I have no further scope in these parts, and I have been longing for many years

to visit you on my way to Spain; for I hope to see you as I travel through, and to be sent there with your support after having enjoyed your company for a while. But at the moment I am on my way to Jerusalem, on an errand to God's people there. For Macedonia and Achaia have resolved to raise a common fund for the benefit of the poor among God's people at Jerusalem. They have resolved to do so, and indeed they are under an obligation to them. For if the Jewish Christians shared their spiritual treasures with the Gentiles, the Gentiles have a clear duty to contribute to their material needs. So when I have finished this business and delivered the proceeds under my own seal, I shall set out for Spain by way of your city, and I am sure that when I arrive I shall come to you with a full measure of the blessing of Christ.

I implore you by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love that the Spirit inspires, be my allies in the fight; pray to God for me that I may be saved from unbelievers in Judaea and that my errand to Jerusalem may find acceptance with God's people, so that by his will I may come to you in a happy frame of mind and enjoy a time of rest with you. The God of peace be with you all. Amen.<sup>k</sup>

I COMMEND TO YOU PHOEBE, A FELLOW-Christian who holds office in the congregation at Cenchreae. Give her, in the fellowship of the Lord, a welcome worthy of God's people, and stand by her in any business in which she may need your help, for she has herself been

<sup>l</sup> Or . . . of God, so that the worship which the Gentiles offer may be . . .

<sup>k</sup> See page, 200 note r.

15.14-21: A polite postscript lest the Romans consider him presumptuous (see Introduction; 1.12). 14: *One another*: perhaps an indication that they have no apostolic leader. 19: *Miraculous signs*: see 2 Cor.12.12; Gal.3.5. *Jerusalem . . . Illyricum*: Paul has been moving round the Mediterranean Sea systematically. He hopes that this program will carry him to Rome and Spain (v. 24). 20: Paul makes it a principle not to work where other missionaries have preceded him (see 1 Cor.3.10-15; 2 Cor.10.15-16). 21: Isa.52.15.

15.22-33: Paul plans to visit Rome on his way to Spain. 22-23: See 1.10-13. *No further scope*: see Introduction and v. 19 n. 25: Paul's *errand* is the collection (see Introduction). 26: Galatia is not mentioned. Paul's angry letter to them may have resulted in their abandoning the project (contrast 2 Cor.8.1-9.15 n.; 8.10-11 n.). 30-32: Presumably Paul's fears were justified and this visit to Jerusalem resulted in his arrest (Acts 21.17-24.27).

16.1-23: The closing greetings are unusually numerous. Paul lists people known by the Romans who could vouch for him. Nothing is known about most of these persons. 2: *Welcome*:

a good friend to many, including myself.

- 3 Give my greetings to Prisca and  
4 Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ  
5 Jesus. They risked their necks to save  
6 my life, and not I alone but all the  
7 gentile congregations are grateful to  
8 them. Greet also the congregation at  
9 their house.

Give my greetings to my dear friend  
Epaenetus, the first convert to Christ  
in Asia, and to Mary, who toiled hard  
for you. Greet Andronicus and Junias<sup>l</sup>  
my fellow-countrymen and comrades  
in captivity. They are eminent among  
the apostles, and they were Christians  
before I was.

- 8 Greetings to Ampliatus, my dear  
9 friend in the fellowship of the Lord,  
10 to Urban my comrade in Christ, and to  
11 my dear Stachys. My greetings to  
12 Apelles, well proved in Christ's service,  
13 to the household of Aristobulus, and  
14 my countryman Herodion, and to  
15 those of the household of Narcissus  
16 who are in the Lord's fellowship. Greet  
17 Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who toil in  
18 the Lord's service, and dear Persis who  
19 has toiled in his service so long. Give  
20 my greetings to Rufus, an outstanding  
21 follower of the Lord, and to his  
22 mother, whom I call mother too. Greet  
23 Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patro-  
24 bas, Hermas, and all friends in their  
25 company. Greet Philologus and Julia,<sup>m</sup>  
26 Nereus and his sister, and Olympas,  
27 and all God's people associated with  
28 them.

- 16 Greet one another with the kiss of  
17 peace. All Christ's congregations send  
18 you their greetings.

- 17 I implore you, my friends, keep your  
18 eye on those who stir up quarrels and  
19 lead others astray, contrary to the

20 teaching you received. Avoid them, for  
21 such people are servants not of Christ  
22 our Lord but of their own appetites,  
23 and they seduce the minds of innocent  
24 people with smooth and specious  
25 words. The fame of your obedience has  
26 spread everywhere. This makes me  
27 happy about you; yet I should wish  
28 you to be experts in goodness but  
29 simpletons in evil; and the God of  
30 peace will soon crush Satan beneath  
31 your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus  
32 be with you!<sup>n</sup>

Greetings to you from my colleague  
21 Timothy, and from Lucius, Jason, and  
22 Sosipater my fellow-countrymen. (I  
23 Tertius, who took this letter down, add  
24 my Christian greetings.) Greetings also  
25 from Gaius, my host and host of the  
26 whole congregation, and from Erastus,  
27 treasurer of this city, and our brother  
28 Quartus.<sup>o</sup>

TO HIM WHO HAS POWER TO MAKE YOU  
25 standing sure, according to the Gospel  
26 I brought you and the proclamation of  
27 Jesus Christ, according to the revela-  
28 tion of that divine secret kept in silence  
29 for long ages but now disclosed, and  
30 through prophetic scriptures by eternal  
31 God's command made known to all  
32 nations, to bring them to faith and  
33 obedience—to God who alone is wise,  
34 through Jesus Christ,<sup>p</sup> be glory for  
35 endless ages! Amen.<sup>q r</sup>

<sup>l</sup> Or Junia; some witnesses read Julia, or Julias.

<sup>m</sup> Or Julias; some witnesses read Junia, or Junias.

<sup>n</sup> The words The grace . . . with you are omitted at this point in some witnesses; in some, these or similar words are given as verse 24, and in some others after verse 27 (see note on verse 23).

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses add (24) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses insert to whom.

<sup>q</sup> Here some witnesses add The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses place verses 25–27 at the end of chapter 14, one other places them at the end of chapter 15, and others omit them altogether.

Christian travelers depended on the hospitality of their fellows (see 12.13). 3–5: *Prisca and Aquila* were in Ephesus (1 Cor.16.19); now they are back (Acts 18.2) at Rome. *House*: see v. 23 n. 7: *Apostles*: see 1 Cor.9.1 n. 16: The Christian *kiss* of ceremonial greeting (1 Cor.16.20; 2 Cor.13.12; 1 Th.5.26; 1 Pet.5.14) became a part of the church's liturgy (see 1 Cor.16.22 n.). 17–18: See Gal.1.6–9; 6.12–13; 2 Cor.11.12–15; Phil.3.2–3,18–19. 19: *Experts, simpletons*: see 1 Cor.14.20; Mt.10.16; Jer.4.22. 20: *Satan*, the serpent, will be crushed (Gen.3.15); see 1 Cor.15.25. *Grace* . . . : see 2 Cor.13.14 n. 21: *Timothy*: see 1 Cor.16.10 n. 22: Paul dictated (compare 1 Cor.1.16 n.) this letter to the scribe *Tertius*. 23: *Gaius*: the Christian of 1 Cor.1.14? *Host*: early Christians worshiped in houses (v. 5), not yet in churches.

16.25–27: **The Benediction** echoes some of the major themes of the letter (compare 1.2–6). 25: *Gospel*: see 2.16; Gal.1.6–9. *Secret*: see 1 Cor.2.6–7; Col.1.26–27. 26: *All nations*: see 1.5 n.



# THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

This letter gives a uniquely comprehensive picture of an early Christian congregation and of its founder (3.6,10), Paul. It contains the earliest written tradition of Jesus' resurrection (15.3-8) and of the Lord's Supper (11.23-26), as well as the moving "hymn" on Christian love (ch. 13). This is apparently the second letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians. The previous letter, mentioned in 5.9, is lost (unless 2 Cor.6.14-7.1 is a surviving fragment), but the Corinthians' reply to that letter provides the subject matter for chs. 7-16 of the present letter: marriage (7.1-24), celibacy (7.25-40), food offered to idols (8.1-11.1), worship (11.2-34), spiritual gifts (especially glossolalia, the gift of tongues; chs. 12-14), bodily resurrection (ch. 15), the "collection" of money for the Jerusalem Christians (16.1-11), and Apollos (16.12). But first Paul reasserts his authority at Corinth by dealing with three disciplinary lapses which have occurred there: congregational factions (chs. 1-4), a case of immorality (ch. 5), and lawsuits among Christians (ch. 6).

The letter was written from Ephesus (16.8). Paul's directions about the "collection" date the letter a year or so before 2 Cor. chs. 1-9 (see 2 Cor.8.10; 9.2 and Introduction to Rom.).

## *Unity and order in the church*

1 FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST at God's call and by God's will,  
2 together with our colleague Sosthenes, to the congregation of God's people at Corinth, dedicated to him in Christ Jesus, claimed by him as his own,  
3 along with all men everywhere who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord as well as ours.  
4 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
5 I am always thanking God for you. I thank him for his grace given to you in Christ Jesus. I thank him for all the enrichment that has come to you in Christ. You possess full knowledge and  
6 you can give full expression to it, because in you the evidence for the truth of Christ has found confirmation.  
7 There is indeed no single gift you lack, while you wait expectantly for our  
8 Lord Jesus Christ to reveal himself. He will keep you firm to the end, without

reproach on the Day of our Lord Jesus. It is God himself who called you to  
9 share in the life of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and God keeps faith.

10 I appeal to you, my brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: agree among yourselves, and avoid divisions; be firmly joined in unity of mind and thought. I have been told, my brothers,  
11 by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this:  
12 each of you is saying, 'I am Paul's man', or 'I am for Apollos'; 'I follow Cephas', or 'I am Christ's.' Surely  
13 Christ has not been divided among you! Was it Paul who was crucified for you? Was it in the name of Paul that you were baptized? Thank God, I  
14 never baptized one of you—except Crispus and Gaius. So no one can say  
15 you were baptized in my name.—Yes,  
16 I did baptize the household of Stephanas: I cannot think of anyone else.  
17 Christ did not send me to baptize, but to proclaim the Gospel; and to do it

1.1-3: **Salutation:** see Rom.1.1-7 nn. 1: *Sosthenes* is unknown (but see Acts 18.17).

1.4-9: **Opening thanksgiving:** see Rom.1.8-15 n. 8: The *Day* refers to Christ's impending (7.29,31) return to end the present age (2 Th.1.7-2.12) and to establish his kingdom (15.23-26,50) in a time of severe testing (3.13-15; 4.5; 5.5).

1.10-4.21: **Paul's apostolic authority.** In the face of divided loyalties Paul asserts his authority as founder (3.5-15), teacher (2.6-7; 3.1-2), and father (4.14-15) of the congregation.

1.10-17: **Factionousness in Corinth.** 11: *Chloe's people* are slaves or employees of this unknown lady. 12: *Apollos:* the principal missionary at Corinth after Paul (3.4-6; 4.6; 16.12; see Acts 18.24-19.1). *Cephas:* the Aram. equivalent of "Peter" (meaning "rock"; see Mt.16.18).

14-17: **Baptism** was not unimportant to Paul (see 6.11; Rom.6.3-4), but the actual rite he usually left to his assistants. 14: *Crispus:* see Acts 18.8. *Gaius:* see Rom.16.23 n. 16: Paul dictated his letters (see 16.21-24 n. and Rom.16.22 n.). Here he corrects himself. *Stephanas:* see 16.15-17 n.

without relying on the language of worldly wisdom, so that the fact of Christ on his cross might have its full weight.

18 This doctrine of the cross is sheer folly to those on their way to ruin, but to us who are on the way to salvation it is the power of God. Scripture says, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the cleverness of the clever.' Where is your wise man now, your man of learning, or your subtle debater—limited, all of them, to this passing age? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. As 21 God in his wisdom ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom, and he chose to save those who have faith 22 by the folly of the Gospel. Jews call for miracles, Greeks look for wisdom; but 23 we proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross; and though this is a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Greeks, 24 yet to those who have heard his call, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Divine folly is wiser than the wisdom of man, and divine weakness stronger 26 than man's strength. My brothers, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called. Few of you are men of wisdom, by any human standard; few are powerful or highly born. 27 Yet, to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly, and to shame what is strong, God has chosen 28 what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the 29 existing order. And so there is no place for human pride in the presence of God. 30 You are in Christ Jesus by God's act, for God has made him our wisdom; he is our righteousness; in him we are 31 consecrated and set free. And so (in the words of Scripture), 'If a man must boast, let him boast of the Lord.'

2 As for me, brothers, when I came to you, I declared the attested truth of

God<sup>a</sup> without display of fine words or wisdom. I resolved that while I was with 2 you I would think of nothing but Jesus Christ—Christ nailed to the cross. I 3 came before you weak, nervous, and shaking with fear. The word I spoke, 4 the gospel I proclaimed, did not sway you with subtle arguments; it carried conviction by spiritual power, so that 5 your faith might be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God.

And yet I do speak words of wisdom 6 to those who are ripe for it, not a wisdom belonging to this passing age, nor to any of its governing powers, which are declining to their end; I speak 7 God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning 8 to bring us to our full glory. The powers that rule the world have never known it; if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, 9 in the words of Scripture, 'Things beyond our seeing, things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him', these it is that God has revealed 10 to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit explores everything, even the depths of God's own nature. Among men, who knows what a man is 11 but the man's own spirit within him? In the same way, only the Spirit of God knows what God is. This is the Spirit 12 that we have received from God, and not the spirit of the world, so that we may know all that God of his own grace has given us; and, because we are 13 interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. A man who is unspiritual refuses 14 what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him: he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit. A man gifted with the 15

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read I declared God's secret purpose . . .

**1.18-2.5: The paradox of the cross:** God saves through weakness and in spite of folly, revealing in *Christ nailed to the cross* his true power and wisdom. **19:** Isa.29.14. **22:** *Miracles* or "signs": see Mk.8.11-12; *wisdom*: see 2.4-8. **31:** Jer.9.24 (2 Cor.10.17). **2.3-4:** See 2 Cor.10.10.

**2.6-16: The true wisdom of God** is given by his Spirit. **6-8:** *This passing age* (in contrast to the coming age or kingdom): see 1.8 n. The *governing powers* (or "elemental spirits" or "authorities") are demonic astral or planetary beings that *rule the world* (Gal.4.3,9; Rom.8.38-39; Col.1.16). By crucifying Christ they have brought their own coming destruction upon themselves (15.24; Col.2.14-15). **9:** Perhaps Isa.64.4. **13:** See chs. 12-14. **15:** See 4.3-5. **16:** Isa.40.13.

Spirit can judge the worth of every-  
 thing, but is not himself subject to  
 16 judgement by his fellow-men. For (in  
 the words of Scripture) 'who knows  
 the mind of the Lord? Who can advise  
 him?' We, however, possess the mind  
 of Christ.

3 FOR MY PART, MY BROTHERS, I COULD  
 not speak to you as I should speak to  
 people who have the Spirit. I had to  
 deal with you on the merely natural  
 2 plane, as infants in Christ. And so I  
 gave you milk to drink, instead of solid  
 food, for which you were not yet ready.  
 Indeed, you are still not ready for it,  
 3 for you are still on the merely natural  
 plane. Can you not see that while there  
 is jealousy and strife among you, you  
 are living on the purely human level  
 4 of your lower nature? When one says,  
 'I am Paul's man', and another, 'I am  
 for Apollos', are you not all too  
 human?

5 After all, what is Apollos? What is  
 Paul? We are simply God's agents in  
 bringing you to the faith. Each of us  
 performed the task which the Lord  
 6 allotted to him: I planted the seed, and  
 Apollos watered it; but God made it  
 7 grow. Thus it is not the gardeners with  
 their planting and watering who count,  
 8 but God, who makes it grow. Whether  
 they plant or water, they work as a  
 team,<sup>b</sup> though each will get his own  
 9 pay for his own labour. We are God's  
 fellow-workers;<sup>c</sup> and you are God's  
 garden.

10 Or again, you are God's building. I  
 am like a skilled master-builder who by  
 God's grace laid the foundation, and  
 someone else is putting up the building.  
 11 Let each take care how he builds. There  
 can be no other foundation beyond that  
 which is already laid; I mean Jesus  
 12 Christ himself. If anyone builds on that  
 foundation with gold, silver, and fine  
 stone, or with wood, hay, and straw,  
 13 the work that each man does will at last  
 be brought to light; the day of judge-

ment will expose it. For that day dawns  
 in fire, and the fire will test the worth  
 of each man's work. If a man's build-  
 14 ing stands, he will be rewarded; if it  
 15 burns, he will have to bear the loss;  
 and yet he will escape with his life, as  
 one might from a fire. Surely you know  
 16 that you are God's temple, where the  
 Spirit of God dwells. Anyone who de-  
 17 stroys God's temple will himself be  
 destroyed<sup>d</sup> by God, because the temple  
 of God is holy; and that temple you are.

Make no mistake about this: if there  
 18 is anyone among you who fancies him-  
 self wise—wise, I mean, by the standards  
 of this passing age—he must become  
 a fool to gain true wisdom. For the  
 19 wisdom of this world is folly in God's  
 sight. Scripture says, 'He traps the  
 wise in their own cunning', and again,  
 20 'The Lord knows that the arguments  
 of the wise are futile.' So never make  
 21 mere men a cause for pride. For though  
 everything belongs to you—Paul,  
 22 Apollos, and Cephas, the world, life,  
 and death, the present and the future,  
 all of them belong to you—yet you  
 23 belong to Christ, and Christ to God.

We must be regarded as Christ's 4  
 subordinates and as stewards of the  
 secrets of God. Well then, stewards are 2  
 expected to show themselves trust-  
 worthy. For my part, if I am called to 3  
 account by you or by any human court  
 of judgement, it does not matter to me  
 in the least. Why, I do not even pass  
 judgement on myself, for I have no 4  
 thing on my conscience; but that does  
 not mean I stand acquitted. My judge  
 is the Lord. So pass no premature 5  
 judgement; wait until the Lord comes.  
 For he will bring to light what dark-  
 ness hides, and disclose men's inward  
 motives; then will be the time for each  
 to receive from God such praise as he  
 deserves.

Into this general picture, my friends, 6  
 I have brought Apollos and myself on

<sup>b</sup> Or Whether they plant or water, it is all the same.

<sup>c</sup> Or We are fellow-workers in God's service.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read is himself destroyed.

3.1-23: Teachers and pupils. 1-2: *Infants*: see 13.11; 14.20. 3-4: See 1.12. 8: *Pay*: see vv. 14-15 n. 10: See Rom. 15.20 n. 13: *The day*: see 1.8 n. 14-15: Good workmanship *will be rewarded*, but even a bad workman *will escape*, i.e. be saved. 16: *Surely you know*: Paul had instructed them (possibly in his previous letter; see Introduction and 2 Cor.6.16). 19: Job 5.13. 20: Ps.94.11. 22: See 1.12.

4.1-13: The humility of the apostles. 5: See 1.8 n.; 5.12-13 n.; Mt.13.24-30,36-43. 6: Builders

your account, so that you may take our case as an example, and learn to 'keep within the rules', as they say, and may not be inflated with pride as you patronize one and flout the other. Who makes you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?

8 All of you, no doubt, have everything you could desire. You have come into your fortune already. You have come into your kingdom—and left us out. How I wish you had indeed won your kingdom; then you might share it with us! For it seems to me God has made us apostles the most abject of mankind. We are like men condemned to death in the arena, a spectacle to the whole universe—angels as well as men.

10 We are fools for Christ's sake, while you are such sensible Christians. We are weak; you are so powerful. We are in disgrace; you are honoured. To this day we go hungry and thirsty and in rags; we are roughly handled; we wander from place to place; we wear ourselves out working with our own hands. They curse us, and we bless; they persecute us, and we submit to it; they slander us, and we humbly make our appeal. We are treated as the scum of the earth, the dregs of humanity, to this very day.

14 I am not writing thus to shame you, but to bring you to reason; for you are my dear children. You may have ten thousand tutors in Christ, but you have only one father. For in Christ Jesus you are my offspring, and mine alone, through the preaching of the Gospel.

I appeal to you therefore to follow my example. That is the very reason why I have sent Timothy, who is a dear son to me and a most trustworthy Christian; he will remind you of the way of life in Christ which I follow, and which I teach everywhere in all our congregations. There are certain persons who are filled with self-importance because they think I am not coming to Corinth. I shall come very soon, if the Lord will; and then I shall take the measure of these self-important people, not by what they say, but by what power is in them. The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power. Choose, then: am I to come to you with a rod in my hand, or in love and a gentle spirit?

I ACTUALLY HEAR REPORTS OF SEXUAL immorality among you, immorality such as even pagans do not tolerate: the union of a man with his father's wife. And you can still be proud of yourselves! You ought to have gone into mourning; a man who has done such a deed should have been rooted out of your company. For my part, though I am absent in body, I am present in spirit, and my judgement upon the man who did this thing is already given, as if I were indeed present: you all being assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus over us, this man is to be consigned to Satan for the destruction of the body, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord.

Your self-satisfaction ill becomes

(see 5.10-11) besides Paul and *Apollos* should fear judgment. 8-13: With biting irony Paul contrasts his humiliating hardships with their complacency. 9: *Arena*: compare 15.32. *Angels*: see 6.2-3 n. 12: *Working with our own hands* (see Acts 18.3) is an especially bitter complaint (see 2 Cor.11.7-10 n.).

4.14-21: Paul's fatherly authority extends itself to the Corinthians by means of *Timothy's* mission and Paul's impending visit. 15: *Tutors* were normally slaves who supervised a boy's conduct outside of school; their temporary (Gal.3.24) authority derived from the boy's father. 17: *Timothy*: see 16.10 n. 18-19: Sternly Paul speaks of his visit as *very soon*; his actual plans are more elaborate (16.5-9). 20: *Power*, i.e. of the Spirit (2.4).

5.1-13: A case of sexual immorality. 1: Paul has received reports (possibly from Chloe's people; see 1.11) about a Christian who is living with his stepmother, who may have been widowed. Neither Roman nor Jewish law (Lev.18.8; 20.11) permitted such a union. 2: The Corinthians' pride (also v. 6) is worse than the sin itself. Perhaps the experiments in sexual asceticism discussed in ch. 7 (see 7.36-38 n.) have created the problem here. 3-5: Paul orders a formal assembly to expel the offender (see 2 Cor.2.5-11 n.). Excluded from the table-fellowship he becomes Satan's prey. His death (11.30 n.) will end his sin, but, like all Christians, he has been marked for salvation *on the Day* (1.8 n.). 6: *Leaven*, i.e. yeast, was both useful (Mt.13.33)

you. Have you never heard the saying, 'A little leaven leavens all the dough'?  
 7 The old leaven of corruption is working among you. Purge it out, and then you will be bread of a new baking. As Christians you are unleavened Passover bread; for indeed our Passover has begun; the sacrifice is offered—Christ  
 8 himself. So we who observe the festival must not use the old leaven, the leaven of corruption and wickedness, but only the unleavened bread which is sincerity and truth.  
 9 In my letter I wrote that you must  
 10 have nothing to do with loose livers. I was not, of course, referring to pagans who lead loose lives or are grabbers and swindlers or idolaters. To avoid them you would have to get out of the  
 11 world altogether. I now write that you must have nothing to do with any so-called Christian who leads a loose life, or is grasping, or idolatrous, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a swindler. You should not even eat with any such  
 12 person. What business of mine is it to judge outsiders? God is their judge.  
 13 You are judges within the fellowship. Root out the evil-doer from your community.

6 IF ONE OF YOUR NUMBER HAS A DISPUTE with another, has he the face to take it to pagan law-courts instead of to the community of God's people? It is God's people who are to judge the world; surely you know that. And if the world is to come before you for judgement, are you incompetent to deal  
 3 with these trifling cases? Are you not aware that we are to judge angels? How much more, mere matters of

business! If therefore you have such  
 4 business disputes, how can you entrust jurisdiction to outsiders, men who count for nothing in our community? I write this to shame you. Can it be that  
 5 there is not a single wise man among you able to give a decision in a brother-Christian cause? Must brother  
 6 go to law with brother—and before unbelievers? Indeed, you already fall  
 7 below your standard in going to law with one another at all. Why not rather suffer injury? Why not rather let yourself be robbed? So far from this, you  
 8 actually injure and rob—injure and rob your brothers! Surely you know  
 9 that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion,  
 10 no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers, will possess the kingdom of God. Such were some of  
 11 you. But you have been through the purifying waters; you have been dedicated to God and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of our God.

'I am free to do anything', you say.  
 12 Yes, but not everything is for my good. No doubt I am free to do anything, but I for one will not let anything make  
 13 free with me. 'Food is for the belly and the belly for food', you say. True; and one day God will put an end to both. But it is not true that the body is for  
 14 lust; it is for the Lord—and the Lord for the body. God not only raised our  
 15 Lord from the dead; he will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are limbs and organs of

and, like mold, corrupting. 7-8: Writing perhaps near Passover (16.8 n.), Paul compares the expulsion of the immoral man to the Jewish custom of discarding all household leaven before baking the *unleavened Passover bread* (Deut.16.1,3-4). This leads him to speak of Christ as the lamb sacrificed at Passover (v. 7; Deut.16.2; Exod.12.21; Jn.1.29). 9: *Letter*: see Introduction. 12-13: Church discipline applies only to church members. Judgment in these matters is an exception to Paul's rule that Christians should not judge others until they judge the world in the new age (4.5; 6.2). *Root out*: v. 2; Deut.22.21,24.

6.1-11: *Lawsuits among Christians*. It is shameful that quarrelling believers should seek justice from *pagan law-courts*. 2-3: In the age to come Christians will *judge the world and judge angels*. For Paul, *angels*, i.e. "messengers," are fearsome embodiments of supernatural power. They may be good (2 Cor.11.14) or from Satan (2 Cor.12.7). 9-11: *The unjust of the world* (this list of vices is stereotyped; see Gal.5.19-24) will have no part in *the kingdom* (1.8 n.), but believers have been washed (in baptism) and made holy.

6.12-20: *Conclusion* (to chs. 1-6) and *preface* (to chs. 7-15). 12: "*I am free . . .*" is a slogan of the Corinthians (10.23). 13: "*Food is for the belly . . .*" is another of their slogans (see chs. 8-10). *Body not for lust*: ch. 7. 14: See ch. 15. 15: *Limbs and organs of Christ*: see 12.12-13 n.

Christ? Shall I then take from Christ his bodily parts and make them over to a harlot? Never! You surely know that anyone who links himself with a harlot becomes physically one with her (for Scripture says, 'The pair shall become one flesh'); but he who links himself with Christ is one with him, spiritually. Shun fornication. Every other sin that a man can commit is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is God's gift to you? You do not belong to yourselves; you were bought at a price. Then honour God in your body.

*The Christian in a pagan society*

7 AND NOW FOR THE MATTERS YOU WROTE about.

It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with women;<sup>e</sup> but because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan.

6 All this I say by way of concession, 7 not command. I should like you all to be as I am myself; but everyone has the gift God has granted him, one this gift and another that.

To the unmarried and to widows I say this: it is a good thing if they stay as I am myself; but if they cannot control themselves, they should marry. Better be married than burn with vain desire.

To the married I give this ruling, which is not mine but the Lord's: a wife must not separate herself from her husband; if she does, she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband; and the husband must not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say this, as my own word, not as the Lord's: if a Christian has a heathen wife, and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her; and a woman who has a heathen husband willing to live with her must not divorce her husband. For the heathen husband now belongs to God through his Christian wife, and the heathen wife through her Christian husband. Otherwise your children would not belong to God, whereas in fact they do. If on the other hand the heathen partner wishes for a separation, let him have it. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is under no compulsion; but God's call is a call to live in peace. Think of it: as a wife you may be your husband's salvation; as a husband you may be your wife's salvation.

However that may be, each one must order his life according to the gift the Lord has granted him and his condition when God called him. That is what I teach in all our congregations. Was a man called with the marks of circumcision on him? Let him not remove them. Was he uncircumcised when he was called? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision or uncircumcision is neither here nor there; what matters

<sup>e</sup> Or You say, 'It is a good thing . . . women'; . . .

16: Gen.2.24 (1 Cor. ch. 7; Mk.10.6-8; Eph.5.31). 19: The *gift of the Spirit*: see chs. 12-14. 20: *Bought at a price*: like slaves set free (see 7.23; Rom.3.24 n.).

7.1-16: "Should we not avoid sex and marriage?" Some such question probably stood in the Corinthians' letter to Paul (see Introduction). 1: *It is a good thing . . .*: probably a Corinthian slogan; see Tfn. e. 2-5: Paul urges full conjugal rights, permitting only temporary asceticism. 6-9: Paul is unmarried and because of the nearness of the Day (1.8 n.; 7.29,31), considers this preferable. But it is a *gift*, not a rule. The distractions of married life (7.32-34) are infinitely preferable to moral lapses. 10: *The Lord's*: Jesus' (see Mk.10.2-12); contrast vv. 12,25. 12-16: The *divorce* even of unbelieving partners is not encouraged.

7.17-24: *Stay as you are*. The end of this age is near (vv. 29,31). Therefore believers should not try to change their outward condition. 19: See Rom.2.25-29.

20 is to keep God's commands. Every man should remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let that trouble you; but if a chance of liberty should come, take it.<sup>f</sup> For the man who as a slave received the call to be a Christian is the Lord's freedman, and, equally, the free man who received the call is a slave in the service of Christ.

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Thus each one, my friends, is to remain before God in the condition in which he received his call.

25 On the question of celibacy, I have no instructions from the Lord, but I give my judgement as one who by God's mercy is fit to be trusted.

26 It is my opinion, then, that in a time of stress like the present this is the best way for a man to live—it is best for a man to be as he is. Are you bound in marriage? Do not seek a dissolution. Has your marriage been dissolved?

28 Do not seek a wife. If, however, you do marry, there is nothing wrong in it; and if a virgin marries, she has done no wrong. But those who marry will have pain and grief in this bodily life, and my aim is to spare you.

29 What I mean, my friends, is this. The time we live in will not last long. While it lasts, married men should be as if they had no wives; mourners should be as if they had nothing to grieve them, the joyful as if they did not rejoice; buyers must not count on keeping what they buy, nor those who use the world's wealth on using it to the full. For the whole frame of this world is passing away.

32 I want you to be free from anxious care. The unmarried man cares for the Lord's business; his aim is to please the Lord. But the married man cares for worldly things; his aim is to please his wife; and he has a divided mind.

The unmarried or celibate woman cares<sup>g</sup> for the Lord's business; her aim is to be dedicated to him in body as in spirit; but the married woman cares for worldly things; her aim is to please her husband.

In saying this I have no wish to keep you on a tight rein. I am thinking simply of your own good, of what is seemly, and of your freedom to wait upon the Lord without distraction.

But if a man has a partner in celibacy<sup>h</sup> and feels that he is not behaving properly towards her, if, that is, his instincts are too strong for him,<sup>i</sup> and something must be done, he may do as he pleases; there is nothing wrong in it; let them marry.<sup>j</sup> But if a man is steadfast in his purpose, being under no compulsion, and has complete control of his own choice; and if he has decided in his own mind to preserve his partner<sup>k</sup> in her virginity, he will do well. Thus, he who marries his partner<sup>l</sup> does well, and he who does not will do better.

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband die, she is free to marry whom she will, provided the marriage is within the Lord's fellowship. But she is better off as she is; that is my opinion, and I believe that I too have the Spirit of God.

NOW ABOUT FOOD CONSECRATED TO 8  
heathen deities.

Of course we all 'have knowledge', as you say. This 'knowledge' breeds conceit; it is love that builds. If anyone fancies that he knows, he knows nothing yet, in the true sense of know-

<sup>f</sup> Or but even if a chance of liberty should come, choose rather to make good use of your servitude.

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read . . . his wife. And there is a difference between the wife and the virgin. The unmarried woman cares . . .

<sup>h</sup> Or a virgin daughter (or ward).

<sup>i</sup> Or if she is ripe for marriage.

<sup>j</sup> Or let the girl and her lover marry.

<sup>k</sup> Or his daughter.

<sup>l</sup> Or gives his daughter in marriage.

7.25–38: "Should our celibate couples abandon their vows?" (See 7.1–16 n.). 25: *Celibacy*: lit. "virgins" (referring to both sexes); see vv. 36–38 n. 26–34: Paul reiterates the argument of vv. 17–24. 36–38: Apparently some Corinthians had chosen *partners in celibacy* by undertaking some sort of mutual vow, either like the marital ascetics of v. 5 or like engaged couples.

7.39–40: An afterthought to vv. 1–16.

8.1–11.1: "Surely there is no harm in eating meat consecrated to a heathen deity?" (See 7.1–16 n.). The extent of consecration varied from full temple sacrifice to the merest slaughterhouse gesture.

8.1–13: Love is superior to knowledge (also ch. 13). 1–4: The Corinthians' slogans (see also

3 ing. But if a man loves,<sup>m</sup> he is acknowledged by God.<sup>n</sup>

4 Well then, about eating this consecrated food: of course, as you say, 'a false god has no existence in the real world. There is no god but one.' For indeed, if there be so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords' 5 —yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all being comes, towards whom we move; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came to be, and we through him.

7 But not everyone knows this. There are some who have been so accustomed to idolatry<sup>o</sup> that even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience, being 8 weak, is polluted by the eating. Certainly food will not bring us into God's presence: if we do not eat, we are none the worse, and if we eat, we are none 9 the better. But be careful that this liberty of yours does not become a pitfall for the weak. If a weak character 10 sees you sitting down to a meal in a heathen temple—you, who 'have knowledge'<sup>p</sup>—will not his conscience be emboldened to eat food consecrated to the 11 heathen deity? This 'knowledge' of yours is utter disaster to the weak, the 12 brother for whom Christ died. In thus sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience,<sup>p</sup> you sin 13 against Christ. And therefore, if food be the downfall of my brother, I will never eat meat any more, for I will not be the cause of my brother's downfall.

9 AM I NOT A FREE MAN? AM I NOT AN apostle? Did I not see Jesus our Lord? Are not you my own handiwork, in the 2 Lord? If others do not accept me as an apostle, you at least are bound to do

so, for you are yourselves the very seal of my apostolate, in the Lord.

To those who put me in the dock 3 this is my answer: Have I no right to 4 eat and drink? Have I no right to take 5 a Christian wife about with me, like the rest of the apostles and the Lord's 6 brothers, and Cephas? Or are Barnabas 6 and I alone bound to work for our living? Did you ever hear of a man 7 serving in the army at his own expense? or planting a vineyard without eating the fruit of it? or tending a flock without using its milk? Do not suppose I 8 rely on these human analogies, for the law says the same; in the Law of Moses 9 we read, 'You shall not muzzle a threshing ox.' Do you suppose God's concern is with oxen? Or is the reference clearly 10 to ourselves? Of course it refers to us, in the sense that the ploughman should plough and the thresher thresh in the hope of getting some of the produce. If 11 we have sown a spiritual crop for you, is it too much to expect from you a material harvest? If you allow others 12 these rights, have not we a stronger claim?

But I have availed myself of no such right. On the contrary, I put up with all that comes my way rather than offer any hindrance to the gospel of Christ. You know (do you not?) that those 13 who perform the temple service eat the temple offerings, and those who wait upon the altar claim their share of the sacrifice. In the same way the Lord gave 14 instructions that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel. But I have never taken 15 advantage of any such right, nor do I intend to claim it in this letter. I had rather die! No one shall make my boast

*m* Some witnesses read loves God.

*n* Or he is recognized.

*o* Some witnesses read in whom the consciousness of the

false god is so persistent.

*p* Some witnesses insert weak as it is.

10.23) defend their freedom. 6: Mal.2.10; Eph.4.6; Col.1.16; Jn.1.3. 7-13: Out of loving concern for the *weak* the mature Christian should limit his own *liberty*. 10: Men often entertained their friends with a *meal* at some *temple*, using meat previously sacrificed. The affair was largely social; thus Christians might attend (see 10.27).

9.1-27: Paul's own self-restraint extends to other matters as well. 1: An *apostle* has both seen the resurrected *Jesus* (15.5-9) and received from him a missionary task (see Gal.1.16).

9.3-12a: Paul's right to financial support. 5: *The Lord's brothers*: see Mk.6.3; Gal.1.19. 6: *Barnabas*: see Acts 4.36; Gal.2.1. *Work*: tent-making (Acts 18.3). 9: Deut.25.4. 10: The promises of Scripture apply to the new Israel (see 10.11; Rom.15.4).

9.12b-18: The Gospel free of charge. 13: Deut.18.1-4 and in pagan cults. 14: Mt.10.10. 15-18: *Boast, satisfaction*: see 2 Th.3.7-9; 2 Cor.11.7-10 n.



16 an empty boast. Even if I preach the Gospel, I can claim no credit for it; I cannot help myself; it would be misery  
 17 to me not to preach. If I did it of my own choice, I should be earning my pay; but since I do it apart from my own choice, I am simply discharging a  
 18 trust.<sup>q</sup> Then what is my pay? The satisfaction of preaching the Gospel without expense to anyone; in other words, of waiving the rights which my preaching gives me.

19 I am a free man and own no master; but I have made myself every man's servant, to win over as many as possible.  
 20 To Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; as they are subject to the Law of Moses, I put myself under that law to win them, although I am not  
 21 myself subject to it. To win Gentiles, who are outside the Law, I made myself like one of them, although I am not in truth outside God's law, being  
 22 under the law of Christ. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or  
 23 another I may save some. All this I do for the sake of the Gospel, to bear my part in proclaiming it.

24 You know (do you not?) that at the sports all the runners run the race, though only one wins the prize. Like  
 25 them, run to win! But every athlete goes into strict training. They do it to win a fading wreath; we, a wreath that never fades. For my part, I run with a  
 26 clear goal before me; I am like a boxer who does not beat the air; I bruise my own body and make it know its master, for fear that after preaching to others I  
 27 should find myself rejected.

10 You should understand, my brothers, that our ancestors were all under the pillar of cloud, and all of them  
 2 passed through the Red Sea; and so

they all received baptism into the fellowship of Moses in cloud and sea. They all ate the same supernatural  
 3 food, and all drank the same supernatural drink; I mean, they all drank  
 4 from the supernatural rock that accompanied their travels—and that rock was Christ. And yet, most of them  
 5 were not accepted by God, for the desert was strewn with their corpses.

These events happened as symbols  
 6 to warn us not to set our desires on evil things, as they did. Do not be  
 7 idolaters, like some of them; as Scripture has it, 'the people sat down to feast and rose up to revel'. Let us not  
 8 commit fornication, as some of them did—and twenty-three thousand died in one day. Let us not put the power  
 9 of the Lord<sup>r</sup> to the test, as some of them did—and were destroyed by serpents. Do not grumble against God,  
 10 as some of them did—and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

All these things that happened to  
 11 them were symbolic, and were recorded for our benefit as a warning. For upon us the fulfilment of the ages has come. If you feel sure that you are standing  
 12 firm, beware! You may fall. So far you have faced no trial beyond what man  
 13 can bear. God keeps faith, and he will not allow you to be tested above your powers, but when the test comes he will at the same time provide a way out, by  
 enabling you to sustain it.

SO THEN, DEAR FRIENDS, SHUN IDOLATRY. 14  
 I speak to you as men of sense. Form 15  
 your own judgement on what I say. When we bless 'the cup of blessing', is  
 16 it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of

<sup>q</sup> Or If I do it willingly I am earning my pay; if I did it unwillingly I should still have a trust laid upon me.  
<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses read of Christ.

9.19–27: The highest goal requires self-sacrifice. 19–23: In his behavior Paul has a higher purpose than consistency: to win men for Christ. 27: The body is not an enemy; Paul is speaking figuratively of his disciplined life. *Rejected*: see 10.5–13.

10.1–13: It is possible to provoke God and perish; baptism and the Lord's Supper do not prevent sin or excuse from judgment. 1–2: *Cloud*: see Exod.13.21. *Sea*: see Exod.14.22. 3: *Food*: manna (Exod.16.4–35). 4: *Drink*: water from the rock (Exod.17.6; Num. 20.11). Legend had it that the rock followed the Israelites in their travels. Paul identifies the source of this life-giving water with Christ (compare Jn.4.14). 5: Num.14.29–30. 7: Exod.32.4,6. 8–10: Num.25.1–18; 21.5–6; 16.41,49. 11: *Fulfillment*: end; compare 1.8 n.

10.14–22: Danger from demons. *Idols* indeed are nothing (8.4), but *demons* use them as camouflage (Deut.32.17). Thus eating food consecrated to heathen gods is defiance of God

17 Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body;<sup>s</sup> for it is one loaf of which we all partake.

18 Look at the Jewish people. Are not those who partake in the sacrificial meal sharers in the altar? What do I imply by this? that an idol is anything but an idol? or food offered to it anything more than food? No; but the sacrifices the heathen offer are offered (in the words of Scripture) 'to demons and to that which is not God'; and I will not have you become partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons. Can we defy the Lord? Are we stronger than he?

23 'We are free to do anything', you say. Yes, but is everything good for us? 'We are free to do anything', but does everything help the building of the community? Each of you must regard, not his own interests, but the other man's.

25 You may eat anything sold in the meat-market without raising questions of conscience; for the earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

27 If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you care to go, eat whatever is put before you, without raising questions of conscience. But if somebody says to you, 'This food has been offered in sacrifice', then, out of consideration for him, and for conscience' sake, do not eat it—not your conscience, I mean, but the other man's.

30 'What?' you say, 'is my freedom to be called in question by another man's conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I blamed for eating food over which I have said grace?' Well, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you are doing, do all for the honour of God: give no offence to Jews, or Greeks, or to the church of God. For my part I always try to meet everyone half-way, regarding not my own good

but the good of the many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example as I follow Christ's.

I COMMEND YOU FOR ALWAYS KEEPING 2 me in mind, and maintaining the tradition I handed on to you. But I wish 3 you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man,<sup>t</sup> as Christ's Head is God. A man who keeps his head covered 4 when he prays or prophesies brings shame on his head; a woman, on the 5 contrary, brings shame on her head if she prays or prophesies bare-headed; it is as bad as if her head were shaved. If a woman is not to wear a veil she 6 might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for her to be 7 cropped and shaved, then she should wear a veil. A man has no need to cover 8 his head, because man is the image of God, and the mirror of his glory, whereas woman reflects the glory of man.<sup>u</sup> For man did not originally spring from 9 woman, but woman was made out of man; and man was not created for 10 woman's sake, but woman for the sake of man; and therefore it is woman's 11 duty to have a sign of authority<sup>v</sup> on her head, out of regard for the angels.<sup>w</sup> And yet, in Christ's fellowship woman 12 is as essential to man as man to woman. If woman was made out of man, it is 13 through woman that man now comes to be; and God is the source of all.

Judge for yourselves: is it fitting for 14 a woman to pray to God bare-headed? Does not Nature herself teach you that 15 while flowing locks disgrace a man, they are a woman's glory? For her 16 locks were given for covering.

However, if you insist on arguing, 17 let me tell you, there is no such custom

<sup>s</sup> Or For we, many as we are, are one loaf, one body.

<sup>t</sup> Or a woman's head is her husband.

<sup>u</sup> Or a woman reflects her husband's glory.

<sup>v</sup> Some witnesses read to have a veil.

<sup>w</sup> Or and therefore a woman should keep her dignity on her head, for fear of the angels.

(Deut.32.21). 16–17: See 11.23–26; Mk.14.22–25. 20: Deut.32.17. 21: See 2 Cor.6.15–16.

10.23–11.1: Paul closes the section on idol meat (8.1–11.1) with directions which allow freedom, if it is restrained by love. 23: Another Corinthian slogan (compare 8.1–4 n.). 26: Pss.24.1; 50.12. 27: See 8.10 n. 10.28–11.1: See 8.7–13.

11.2–16: "Is it necessary for women to worship with their heads covered?" (See 7.1–16 n.). Christian women enjoyed considerable freedom, including the right to preach (prophecy), but worship without veils may have reminded Paul of pagan cults. 7: *Image*: Gen.1.26. 8–12: See Gen.2.18,21–24. 10: Women must wear veils as a *sign of authority* or power. These *angels* (see 6.2–3 n.) are perhaps the lustful spirits of a legend based on Gen.6.1–4. 16: See 14.36–38 n.

among us, or in any of the congregations of God's people.

17 In giving you these injunctions I must mention a practice which I cannot commend: your meetings tend to do more harm than good. To begin with, I am told that when you meet as a congregation you fall into sharply divided groups; and I believe there is some truth in it (for dissensions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound). The result is that when you meet as a congregation, it is impossible for you to eat the Lord's Supper, because each of you is in such a hurry to eat his own, and while one goes hungry another has too much to drink. Have you no homes of your own to eat and drink in? Or are you so contemptuous of the church of God that you shame its poorer members? What am I to say? Can I commend you? On this point, certainly not!

23 For the tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord himself: that the Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread and, after giving thanks to God, broke it and said: 'This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me.' In the same way, he took the cup after supper, and said: 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.' For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.

27 It follows that anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord. A man must test himself before eating his share of the bread and drinking from the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgement on himself if he does

not discern the Body. That is why many of you are feeble and sick, and a number have died. But if we examined ourselves, we should not thus fall under judgement. When, however, we do fall under the Lord's judgement, he is disciplining us, to save us from being condemned with the rest of the world.

Therefore, my brothers, when you meet for a meal, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that in meeting together you may not fall under judgement. The other matters I will arrange when I come.

### Spiritual gifts

ABOUT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT, THERE ARE 12 some things of which I do not wish you to remain ignorant.

You know how, in the days when you were still pagan, you were swept off to those dumb heathen gods, however you happened to be led.<sup>x</sup> For this reason I must impress upon you that no one who says 'A curse on Jesus!' can be speaking under the influence of the Spirit of God. And no one can say 'Jesus is Lord!' except under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another, by the same

<sup>x</sup> Or . . . pagan, you would be seized by some power which drove you to those dumb heathen gods.

11.17-34: **The Lord's Supper properly observed.** Paul has more news (v. 18) of their *dissensions* (compare 1.11-12). The Lord's Supper was then a full meal; the Corinthians' greed shattered the "one body" (10.16-17) with dire consequences (v. 30). 17: Contrast v. 2. 23-25: This is the earliest written account of the Lord's Supper (compare Mk.14.22-25; Lk.22.14-20). 23: *Handed on*: see 15.3 n. 25: *Covenant, blood*: Exod.24.8. 30: They had expected to live until Christ's return (v. 26; 15.51); Paul explains why some had died (see 5.3-5 n.).

12.1-14.40: "**Ecstatic utterance in worship is the gift of the Spirit, is it not?**" (See 7.1-16 n.) Paul's long response occupies chs. 12-14.

12.1-31: **Other and better gifts.** *Ecstatic utterance* (v. 10) is indeed a *gift*, but it is not the only gift. Of all the Spirit's *gifts* it ranks last (vv. 10,28,30). 2-3: Not all ecstatic speech is from the Spirit; some is pagan. 4-6: *Spirit . . . Lord . . . God*: the triad foreshadows the later doctrine of the Trinity. 7: *Useful*: the test is utility (compare Mt.7.16-20). 9: *Faith* here (and in 13.2) is a

Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the one Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift of prophecy, and another ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will.

For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, together make up one body. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink.

A body is not one single organ, but many. Suppose the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', it does belong to the body none the less. Suppose the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', it does still belong to the body. If the body were all eye, how could it hear? If the body were all ear, how could it smell? But, in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body, as he chose. If the whole were one single organ, there would not be a body at all; in fact, however, there are many different organs, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you'; nor the head to the feet, 'I do not need you.' Quite the contrary: those organs of the body which seem to be more frail than others are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we regard as less honourable are treated with special honour. To our unseemly parts is given a more than ordinary seemliness, whereas our

seemly parts need no adorning. But God has combined the various parts of the body, giving special honour to the humbler parts, so that there might be no sense of division in the body, but that all its organs might feel the same concern for one another. If one organ suffers, they all suffer together. If one flourishes, they all rejoice together.

Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it. Within our community God has appointed, in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, thirdly teachers; then miracle-workers, then those who have gifts of healing, or ability to help others or power to guide them, or the gift of ecstatic utterance of various kinds. Are all apostles? all prophets? all teachers? Do all work miracles? Have all gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues of ecstasy? Can all interpret them? The higher gifts are those you should aim at.

And now I will show you the best way of all.

I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt,<sup>y</sup> but if I have no love, I am none the better.

Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.

Love will never come to an end. Are

<sup>y</sup> Some witnesses read even seek glory by self-sacrifice.

special gift, rather than the characteristic of every believer (as in 1.21; 2.5; 3.5). **10: Prophecy:** preaching (14.1-5). *Distinguish . . . spirits:* see vv. 2-3. **12-13:** Christians are "in Christ" (Rom. 8.1 n.), not separately but "corporately." Paul speaks of the church as the *body* of Christ (v. 27) and of Christians as its differing but mutually dependent "members." **14-26:** Paul argues that a church whose members exhibit but one spiritual gift is like a body composed solely of an *eye* or an *ear*. 27: See Rom.12.4-5; Eph.1.22-23; Col.1.18-24. **28-30:** Roughly parallel to vv. 8-10.

**13.1-13: Love, the best gift of all.** This famous chapter is closely linked to chs. 12 and 14. **1: Tongues . . . of angels:** ecstatic speech. *Angels:* see 6.2-3 n. *Gong . . . cymbal:* mere noise-makers used in pagan cults. **2: Prophecy:** see 12.10 n. *Faith:* see 12.9 n.; Mk.11.22-23. **3: Burnt:** perhaps as a martyr (Dan.3.19-23; 2 Macc.7.2-6). **4-6,11:** Paul betrays his opinion of the

there prophets? their work will be over. Are there tongues of ecstasy? they will cease. Is there knowledge? it will vanish away; for our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes.

11 When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me. In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love.

14 Put love first; but there are other gifts of the Spirit at which you should aim also, and above all prophecy.

2 When a man is using the language of ecstasy he is talking with God, not with men, for no man understands him; he is no doubt inspired, but he speaks mysteries. On the other hand, when a man prophesies, he is talking to men, and his words have power to build; they stimulate and they encourage. The language of ecstasy is good for the speaker himself, but it is prophecy that builds up a Christian community. I should be pleased for you all to use the tongues of ecstasy, but better pleased for you to prophesy. The prophet is worth more than the man of ecstatic speech—unless indeed he can explain its meaning, and so help to build up the community. Suppose, my friends, that when I come to you I use ecstatic language: what good shall I do you, unless what I say contains something by way of revelation, or enlightenment, or prophecy, or instruction?

7 Even with inanimate things that produce sounds—a flute, say, or a lyre—unless their notes mark definite intervals, how can you tell what tune is being played? Or again, if the trumpet-call is not clear, who will prepare for battle?

In the same way if your ecstatic utterance yields no precise meaning, how can anyone tell what you are saying? You will be talking into the air. How many different kinds of sound there are, or may be, in the world! Nothing is altogether soundless. Well then, if I do not know the meaning of the sound the speaker makes, his words will be gibberish to me, and mine to him. You are, I know, eager for gifts of the Spirit; then aspire above all to excel in those which build up the church.

I say, then, that the man who falls into ecstatic utterance should pray for the ability to interpret. If I use such language in my prayer, the Spirit in me prays, but my intellect lies fallow. What then? I will pray as I am inspired to pray, but I will also pray intelligently. I will sing hymns as I am inspired to sing, but I will sing intelligently too. Suppose you are praising God in the language of inspiration: how will the plain man who is present be able to say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, when he does not know what you are saying? Your prayer of thanksgiving may be all that could be desired, but it is no help to the other man. Thank God, I am more gifted in ecstatic utterance than any of you,<sup>2</sup> but in the congregation I would rather speak five intelligible words, for the benefit of others as well as myself, than thousands of words in the language of ecstasy.

Do not be childish, my friends. Be as innocent of evil as babes, but at least be grown-up in your thinking. We read in the Law: 'I will speak to this nation through men of strange tongues, and by the lips of foreigners; and even so they will not heed me, says the Lord.' Clearly then these 'strange tongues' are not intended as a sign for believers, but for unbelievers, whereas prophecy is designed not for unbelievers but for

<sup>2</sup> Or . . . man. I say the thanksgiving; I use ecstatic speech more than any of you.

Corinthians' pride in their special gifts. 12: *Mirror*: ancient metal mirrors gave distorted reflections. 13: *Faith, hope, and love*: a favorite triad for Paul (1 Th.1.3; 5.8; Rom.5.1-5; Col.1.4-5).

14.1-40: **Rational preaching is of far more value than ecstatic utterance.** 1: *Love*: for love's sake they ought to make themselves understood when they *pray* (vv. 13-17). 16: Christians adopted "*Amen*" (lit. "so be it"), the Jewish response to prayer (e.g. Neh.8.6; Ps.106.48). 18: Probably the Corinthians had learned *ecstatic utterance* from Paul (see also 2 Cor.12.1-4 n.). 20: See 2.6; 3.1-2; 13.11. 21: Isa.28.11-12 is cited as *Law*, rather than *Prophet*; see Rom.3.19 n.

23 those who hold the faith. So if the whole congregation is assembled and all are using the 'strange tongues' of ecstasy, and some uninstructed persons or unbelievers should enter, will they  
24 not think you are mad? But if all are uttering prophecies, the visitor, when he enters, hears from everyone something that searches his conscience and  
25 brings conviction, and the secrets of his heart are laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, crying, 'God is certainly among you!'

26 To sum up, my friends: when you meet for worship, each of you contributes a hymn, some instruction, a revelation, an ecstatic utterance, or the interpretation of such an utterance. All of these must aim at one thing: to  
27 build up the church. If it is a matter of ecstatic utterance, only two should speak, or at most three, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is  
28 no interpreter, the speaker had better not address the meeting at all, but speak  
29 to himself and to God. Of the prophets, two or three may speak, while the rest exercise their judgement upon what is  
30 said. If someone else, sitting in his place, receives a revelation, let the first  
31 speaker stop. You can all prophesy, one at a time, so that the whole congregation may receive instruction and  
32 encouragement. It is for prophets to control prophetic inspiration, for the  
33 God who inspires them is not a God of disorder but of peace.

34 As in all congregations of God's people, women<sup>a</sup> should not address the meeting. They have no licence to speak, but should keep their place as the law  
35 directs. If there is something they want to know, they can ask their own husbands at home. It is a shocking thing that a woman should address the congregation.

Did the word of God originate with  
you? Or are you the only people to  
whom it came? If anyone claims to be  
inspired or a prophet, let him recognize  
that what I write has the Lord's authority. If he does not acknowledge  
this, God does not acknowledge him.<sup>b</sup>

In short, my friends, be eager to prophesy; do not forbid ecstatic utterance; but let all be done decently and  
in order.

### Life after death

AND NOW, MY BROTHERS, I MUST REMIND  
you of the gospel that I preached to  
you; the gospel which you received, on  
which you have taken your stand, and  
which is now bringing you salvation.  
Do you still hold fast the Gospel as I  
preached it to you? If not, your conversion was in vain.<sup>c</sup>

First and foremost, I handed on to  
you the facts which had been imparted  
to me: that Christ died for our sins, in  
accordance with the scriptures; that he  
was buried; that he was raised to life on  
the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas,  
and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he  
appeared to over five hundred of our  
brothers at once, most of whom are  
still alive, though some have died. Then  
he appeared to James, and afterwards  
to all the apostles.

In the end he appeared even to me.  
It was like an abnormal birth; I had  
persecuted the church of God and am  
therefore inferior to all other apostles  
—indeed not fit to be called an apostle.

<sup>a</sup> Or of peace, as in all communities of God's people. Women . . .

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read If he refuses to recognize this, let him refuse!

<sup>c</sup> Or Do you remember the terms in which I preached the Gospel to you?—for I assume you did not accept it thoughtlessly.

23–25: This form of worship was not closed to *visitors*, as the Lord's Supper (11.23–32) presumably was. 34–35: In view of 11.5 many consider these verses not by Paul, but a later insertion (compare 1 Tim.2.11–12). 36–38: For another abrupt closing of a difficult discussion see 11.16.

15.1–58: "Are Christians resurrected in bodily form?" (See 7.1–16 n.). 1–11: An early Christian creed (vv. 3–5) serves to remind them that Christ's resurrection is basic to the *gospel* message. 3: *Handed on, imparted*: Paul uses a traditional Jewish formula (also at 11.23) to emphasize that he is transmitting traditions which antedate his own ministry. *Scriptures* (here and in v. 4) probably means the OT in general. Later tradition cited Isa.52.13–53.12 for Jesus' death and Ps.16.10 (Acts 2.31) for his resurrection. 7: *James*: Jesus' brother (Gal.1.19; Mk.6.3). 8: *Appeared . . . to me*: see 9.1; Gal.1.16; Acts 9.3–6. *Abnormal birth* is obscure; Paul may have been ridiculed for his appearance (2 Cor.10.10; Gal.4.13–14). 9: *Persecuted*: see Gal.1.13–14.

10 However, by God's grace I am what I am, nor has his grace been given to me in vain; on the contrary, in my labours I have outdone them all—not I, indeed, but the grace of God working with me.  
11 But what matter, I or they? This is what we all proclaim, and this is what you believed.

12 Now if this is what we proclaim, that Christ was raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there be no resurrection, then Christ was not raised; and if Christ was not raised, then our gospel is null and void, and so is your faith; and we turn out to be lying witnesses for God, because we bore witness that he raised Christ to life, whereas, if the dead are not raised, he did not raise him. For if the dead are not raised, it follows that Christ was not raised; and if Christ was not raised, your faith has nothing in it and you are still in your old state of sin. It follows also that those who have died within Christ's fellowship are utterly lost. If it is for this life only that Christ has given us hope,<sup>d</sup> we of all men are most to be pitied.

20 But the truth is, Christ was raised to life—the firstfruits of the harvest of the dead. For since it was a man who brought death into the world, a man also brought resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all men die, so in Christ all will be brought to life; but each in his own proper place: Christ the firstfruits, and afterwards, at his coming, those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to God the Father, after abolishing every kind of domination, authority, and power. For he is destined to reign until God has put all enemies under his feet; and the last

enemy to be abolished is death.<sup>e</sup> Scripture says, 'He has put all things in subjection under his feet.' But in saying 'all things', it clearly means to exclude God who subordinates them; and when all things are thus subject to him, then the Son himself will also be made subordinate to God who made all things subject to him, and thus God will be all in all.

Again, there are those who receive baptism on behalf of the dead. Why should they do this? If the dead are not raised to life at all, what do they mean by being baptized on their behalf?

And we ourselves—why do we face these dangers hour by hour? Every day I die: I swear it by my pride in you, my brothers—for in Christ Jesus our Lord I am proud of you. If, as the saying is, I 'fought wild beasts' at Ephesus, what have I gained by it?<sup>f</sup> If the dead are never raised to life, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'.

Make no mistake: 'Bad company is the ruin of a good character.' Come back to a sober and upright life and leave your sinful ways. There are some who know nothing of God; to your shame I say it.

But, you may ask, how are the dead raised? In what kind of body? How foolish! The seed you sow does not come to life unless it has first died; and what you sow is not the body that shall be, but a naked grain, perhaps of wheat, or of some other kind; and God clothes it with the body of his choice, each seed with its own particular body.

<sup>d</sup> Or If it is only an uncertain hope that our life in Christ has given us . . .

<sup>e</sup> Or Then at the end, when . . . power (for he . . . feet), the last enemy, death, will be abolished.

<sup>f</sup> Or If, as men do, I had fought wild beasts at Ephesus, what good would it be to me? or If I had been in no better case than one fighting beasts in the arena at Ephesus, what good would it be to me?

10: *Grace*: God's graciousness. 11: Paul asserts the unity of the proclamation, despite differences among proclaimers.

15.12–34: **Believing the Gospel means believing in resurrection.** Paul is discussing only those few (11.30) who have died since becoming Christians (vv. 18,23,51–53 n.; 1 Th.4.13–18). 20: As the *firstfruits* ritually symbolized the whole *harvest* (Lev.23.10), so Christ's resurrection pledges the resurrection of Christians. 21–22: See vv. 45–49 n.; Gen.2.17. 23: *Coming*: see 1.8 n.; 1 Th.2.19 n. 24–28: Paul summarizes briefly the events of Christ's *kingdom*. 24–25: *Domination . . . enemies*: see 2.6–8 n. 26: Perhaps at this point those from past ages held prisoner by *death* are released for judgment (see 6.2–3 n.). 27: Ps.8.6. 29: Apparently Christians were *baptized* vicariously for previously deceased loved ones to insure their resurrection. 31: *Die*: risk death. 32: Paul does not explain what or who the *beasts* were (compare 4.9). *Let us eat*: Isa.22.13. 33: Doubters are *bad company*, quoting the Greek poet Menander.

15.35–58: "How are the dead raised?" The immortality of the soul freed of its bodily prison

39 All flesh is not the same flesh: there is  
flesh of men, flesh of beasts, of birds,  
40 and of fishes—all different. There are  
heavenly bodies and earthly bodies;  
and the splendour of the heavenly  
bodies is one thing, the splendour of  
41 the earthly, another. The sun has a  
splendour of its own, the moon another  
splendour, and the stars another, for  
42 star differs from star in brightness. So  
it is with the resurrection of the dead.  
What is sown in the earth as a perish-  
43 able thing is raised imperishable. Sown  
in humiliation, it is raised in glory;  
sown in weakness, it is raised in power;  
44 sown as an animal body, it is raised as  
a spiritual body.

If there is such a thing as an animal  
45 body, there is also a spiritual body. It  
is in this sense that Scripture says, 'The  
first man, Adam, became an animate  
being', whereas the last Adam has  
46 become a life-giving spirit. Observe, the  
spiritual does not come first; the  
animal body comes first, and then the  
47 spiritual. The first man was made 'of  
the dust of the earth': the second man  
is from heaven. The man made of dust  
48 is the pattern of all men of dust, and  
the heavenly man is the pattern of all  
49 the heavenly. As we have worn the  
likeness of the man made of dust, so  
we shall wear the likeness of the  
heavenly man.

50 What I mean, my brothers, is this:  
flesh and blood can never possess the  
kingdom of God, and the perishable  
51 cannot possess immortality. Listen! I  
will unfold a mystery: we shall not all  
52 die, but we shall all be changed in a  
flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the  
last trumpet-call. For the trumpet will  
53 sound, and the dead will rise immortal,  
and we shall be changed. This perish-  
able being must be clothed with the

imperishable, and what is mortal must  
be clothed with immortality. And 54  
when<sup>g</sup> our mortality has been clothed  
with immortality, then the saying of  
Scripture will come true: 'Death is  
swallowed up; victory is won!' 'O 55  
Death, where is your victory? O Death,  
where is your sting?' The sting of death 56  
is sin, and sin gains its power from the  
law; but, God be praised, he gives us 57  
the victory through our Lord Jesus  
Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, 58  
stand firm and immovable, and work  
for the Lord always, work without  
limit, since you know that in the Lord  
your labour cannot be lost.

### Christian giving

AND NOW ABOUT THE COLLECTION IN 16  
aid of God's people: you should follow  
my directions to our congregations in  
Galatia. Every Sunday each of you is 2  
to put aside and keep by him a sum in  
proportion to his gains, so that there  
may be no collecting when I come.  
When I arrive, I will give letters of 3  
introduction to persons approved by  
you, and send them to carry your gift  
to Jerusalem. If it should seem worth 4  
while for me to go as well, they shall  
go with me.

I shall come to Corinth after passing 5  
through Macedonia—for I am travel-  
ling by way of Macedonia—and I may 6  
stay with you, perhaps even for the  
whole winter, and then you can help  
me on my way wherever I go next. I 7  
do not want this to be a flying visit; I  
hope to spend some time with you, if  
the Lord permits. But I shall remain at 8

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses insert our perishable nature has been clothed with the imperishable, and . . .

was an idea natural to Greeks. The Corinthians seem to have balked at the idea of bodily resurrection. Paul agrees that the *flesh* has no part in the *kingdom* (v. 50), arguing that there are many kinds of bodies and that Christians will receive bodies made not of flesh, but of spirit. 45–49: Speculation based on Gen. chs. 1–2 featured an ideal Man (Heb., "Adam") who would initiate the Age to Come. Thus Paul contrasts Christ as the *last Adam* (v. 45) or *second Man* (v. 47) with the sinful and mortal *first man* (see vv. 21–22; Rom. 5.12–19; compare Phil. 2.6–11). *Dust*: Gen.2.7. 51–53: Most Christians (Paul included) will survive until Christ's return (see 1.8 n.), but *all*, whether living or dead, must receive spirit bodies. 52: See 1 Th.4.15–17. 54–55: Isa.25.8; Hos.13.14. 56: *Law*: see Rom.5.13; 7.7–8; Gal.3.21–22.

16.1–11: "How is the offering for Jerusalem to be collected?" (See 7.1–16 n.). 1: *Collection*: see Introduction to Rom. *Galatia*: see Rom.15.26 n. and Introduction to Gal. 2: *No collecting*: each Christian will have a sum ready. 3–4: Compare with the men in Acts 20.4. 5: *Macedonia*: see 2 Cor.1.8–2.13 n. 8: *Whitsuntide*: Pentecost (the "fiftieth" day after Passover); it fell in



- 9 Ephesus until Whitsuntide, for a great opportunity has opened for effective work, and there is much opposition.
- 10 If Timothy comes, see that you put him at his ease; for it is the Lord's work that he is engaged upon, as I am myself; so no one must slight him. Send him happily on his way to join me, since I am waiting for him with our friends. As for our friend Apollos, I urged him strongly to go to Corinth with the others, but he was quite determined not to go<sup>h</sup> at present; he will go when opportunity offers.
- 13 Be alert; stand firm in the faith; be 14 valiant and strong. Let all you do be done in love.
- 15 I have a request to make of you, my brothers. You know that the Stephanas family were the first converts in Achaia, and have laid themselves out 16 to serve God's people. I wish you to give their due position to such persons, and indeed to everyone who labours 17 hard at our common task. It is a great pleasure to me that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have arrived, because they have done what you had no chance to do; they have relieved my mind—and no doubt yours too. Such men deserve recognition.
- Greetings from the congregations in Asia. Many greetings in the Lord from Aquila and Prisca and the congregation at their house. Greetings from all the brothers. Greet one another with the kiss of peace.
- This greeting is in my own hand— PAUL.
- If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be outcast.
- Marana tha*—Come, O Lord!
- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
- My love to you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

<sup>h</sup> Or but it was by no means the will of God that he should go . . .

May–June. 10: *Timothy*: a trusted assistant of Paul's (4.17; 2 Th.1.1; 1 Th.1.1; 3.2,6; Phil.1.1; 2.19; 2 Cor.1.1,19; Rom.16.21; Col.1.1; Philem.1). 11: *Our friends* (the others, v. 12): Timothy is one of a group of traveling church workers.

16.12: "When can Apollos return to us?" This is the final item from the Corinthians' letter (see Introduction). *Apollos*: see 1.12 n.

16.13–24: *Final directions*. 15–17: *Stephanas* (1.16), with *Fortunatus* and *Achaicus* (otherwise unknown), probably brought the Corinthians' letter to Paul (see Introduction). 19: *Aquila, Prisca*: see Rom.16.3–5 n. 20: *Kiss*: see v. 22 n.; Rom.16.16 n. 21–24: Having finished dictating (see 1.16 n.), Paul "signs" the letter with a short paragraph (see 2 Th.3.17; Gal.6.11; Col.4.18). 22: *Outcast*: lit. anathema, i.e. cursed. *Marana tha* is Aram. for *Come, O Lord*. The kiss of peace (v. 20), the anathema, and this invocation (compare Rev.22.20) perhaps echo an early Lord's Supper liturgy.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

In the interval between 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul experienced two crises: (a) A visit to Corinth to deal with a sudden disciplinary problem was a painful failure (2.1). Retreating to Ephesus he wrote the Corinthians a severe letter (2.3-4; 7.8), now lost (see 10.1-13.14 n.), and sent it by Titus, one of his assistants. (b) Then Paul apparently underwent a crisis that caused him to despair of his life (1.8-10). When he was again able to travel, he went to Troas (2.12) and then to Macedonia (2.13; 7.5-6) before meeting Titus again. Titus had good news: the Corinthians had had a change of heart (7.7-12). Gratefully Paul wrote 2 Cor. chs. 1-9, urging forgiveness for the one who had caused the first crisis (2.5-11) and painting a joyful picture of the Christian life enjoyed despite sufferings like his second crisis (2.14-7.4). His remarks on the "collection" (chs. 8-9) date chs. 1-9 between 1 Corinthians and Romans.

Chapters 10-13, which contain valuable autobiographical material, are so angry and "boastful" that many believe Paul wrote them on quite another occasion. In any case, these chapters respond to news of Jewish-Christian interlopers in Corinth, a topic not mentioned in chs. 1-9.

## *Personal religion and the ministry*

1 FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS  
by God's will, and our colleague  
Timothy, to the congregation of  
God's people at Corinth, together with  
all who are dedicated to him throughout  
the whole of Achaia.

2 Grace and peace to you from God  
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Praise be to the God and the Father  
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-  
merciful Father, the God whose conso-  
lation never fails us! He comforts us  
in all our troubles, so that we in turn  
may be able to comfort others in any  
trouble of theirs and to share with them  
the consolation we ourselves receive

5 from God. As Christ's cup of suffering  
overflows, and we suffer with him, so  
also through Christ our consolation

6 overflows. If distress be our lot, it is the  
price we pay for your consolation,  
for your salvation; if our lot be  
consolation, it is to help us to bring you  
comfort, and strength to face with forti-  
tude the same sufferings we now endure.

7 And our hope for you is firmly  
grounded;<sup>a</sup> for we know that if you  
have part in the suffering, you have  
part also in the divine consolation.

In saying this, we should like you to 8  
know, dear friends, how serious was the  
trouble that came upon us in the  
province of Asia. The burden of it was  
far too heavy for us to bear, so heavy  
that we even despaired of life. Indeed, 9  
we felt in our hearts that we had re-  
ceived a death-sentence. This was  
meant to teach us not to place reliance  
on ourselves, but on God who raises the  
dead. From such mortal peril God 10  
delivered us; and he will deliver us  
again,<sup>b</sup> he on whom our hope is fixed.  
Yes, he will continue to deliver us, if 11  
you will co-operate by praying for us.  
Then, with so many people praying for  
our deliverance, there will be many to  
give thanks on our behalf for the  
gracious favour God has shown to-  
wards us.

There is one thing we are proud of: 12  
our conscience assures us that in our  
dealings with our fellow-men, and  
above all in our dealings with you, our  
conduct has been governed by a devout  
and godly sincerity,<sup>c</sup> by the grace of  
God and not by worldly wisdom.

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses give these clauses If distress . . . firmly grounded in different sequence.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read and he still delivers us.

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read by sincere and godly singleness of mind.

1.1-7: **Salutation and thanksgiving:** see Rom.1.1-7 nn. and 1.8-15 n. Paul praises God for his escape from danger and for Titus' good news (see Introduction). 1: *Timothy:* see 1 Cor.16.10 n.

1.8-2.13: **Explanation for a change in travel plans.** Apparently in his "severe" letter (see Introduction) Paul had threatened an immediate return visit. He later decided to wait for Titus' firsthand report, which he finally obtained in Macedonia (2.13; 7.6). 8-10: *Trouble:* see

13 There is nothing in our letters to you but what you can read for yourselves, and understand too. Partial as your present knowledge of us is, you will I hope come to understand fully that you have as much reason to be proud of us, as we of you, on the Day of our Lord Jesus.

15 It was because I felt so confident about all this that I had intended to come first of all to you<sup>d</sup> and give you the benefit of a double visit: I meant to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and after leaving Macedonia, to return to you, and you would then send me on my way to Judaea. That was my intention; did I lightly change my mind?<sup>e</sup> Or do I, when I frame my plans, frame them as a worldly man might, so that it should rest with me to say 'yes' and 'yes', or 'no' and 'no'? As God is true, the language in which we address you is not an ambiguous blend of Yes and No. The Son of God, Christ Jesus, proclaimed among you by us (by Silvanus and Timothy, I mean, as well as myself), was never a blend of Yes and No. With him it was, and is, Yes. He is the Yes pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them. That is why, when we give glory to God, it is through Christ Jesus that we say 'Amen'. And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing; it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts.

23 I appeal to God to witness what I am going to say; I stake my life upon it: it was out of consideration for you that I did not after all come to Corinth. Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you for your own happiness. So I made up my mind that my next visit to you must not be another painful one. If I cause pain to you, who is left to cheer me up,

except you, whom I have offended? This is precisely the point I made in my letter: I did not want, I said, to come and be made miserable by the very people who ought to have made me happy; and I had sufficient confidence in you all to know that for me to be happy is for all of you to be happy. That letter I sent you came out of great distress and anxiety; how many tears I shed as I wrote it! But I never meant to cause you pain; I wanted you rather to know the love, the more than ordinary love, that I have for you.

Any injury that has been done, has not been done to me; to some extent, not to labour the point, it has been done to you all. The penalty on which the general meeting has agreed has met the offence well enough. Something very different is called for now: you must forgive the offender and put heart into him; the man's sorrow must not be made so severe as to overwhelm him. I urge you therefore to assure him of your love for him by a formal act. I wrote, I may say, to see how you stood the test, whether you fully accepted my authority. But anyone who has your forgiveness has mine too; and when I speak of forgiving (so far as there is anything for me to forgive), I mean that as the representative of Christ I have forgiven him for your sake.<sup>f</sup> For Satan must not be allowed to get the better of us; we know his wiles all too well.

Then when I came to Troas, where I was to preach the gospel of Christ, and where an opening awaited me for the Lord's work, I still found no relief of mind, for my colleague Titus was not there to meet me; so I took leave of the people there and went off to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who continually leads us about, captives in Christ's triumphal procession, and

<sup>d</sup> Or had originally intended to come to you . . .

<sup>e</sup> Or In forming this intention, did I act irresponsibly?

<sup>f</sup> Or that I have forgiven him for your sake, in the presence of Christ.

Introduction. *Us, we, ourselves*: see 10.11 n. 13; See 10.10; 2 Pet. 3.16. 14: *Day*: see 1 Cor. 1.8 n. 17-20: *Amen* (see 1 Cor. 14.16 n.) can mean *yes* or *true*. 19: *Silvanus*: an assistant of Paul's (see 1 Th. 1.1; 2 Th. 1.1; as "Silas," Acts 15.22-18.5). 21-22: *Christ . . . God . . . Spirit*: see 1 Cor. 12.4-6 n. 22: *Pledge*: see 5.5 n. 2.1-4: *Visit, letter*: see Introduction. 5-11: The offending Corinthian has been disciplined (for a possible comparison see 1 Cor. 5.1-5) and he is now in need of *forgiveness*. 12-13: The narrative of Paul's movements resumes in 7.5.

2.14-7.4: The apostle's ministry of suffering occupies the main section of the letter. 14: See

everywhere uses us to reveal and spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of himself! We are indeed the incense offered by Christ to God, both for those who are on the way to salvation, and for those who are on the way to perdition: to the latter it is a deadly fume that kills, to the former a vital fragrance that brings life. Who is equal to such a calling? At least we do not go hawking the word of God about, as so many do; when we declare the word we do it in sincerity, as from God and in God's sight, as members of Christ.

3 ARE WE BEGINNING ALL OVER AGAIN TO produce our credentials? Do we, like some people, need letters of introduction to you, or from you? No, you are all the letter we need, a letter written on our heart; any man can see it for what it is and read it for himself. And as for you, it is plain that you are a letter that has come from Christ, given to us to deliver: a letter written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, written not on stone tablets but on the pages of the human heart.

4 It is in full reliance upon God, through Christ, that we make such claims. There is no question of our being qualified in ourselves: we cannot claim anything as our own. The qualification we have comes from God; it is he who has qualified us to dispense his new covenant—a covenant expressed not in a written document, but in a spiritual bond; for the written law condemns to death, but the Spirit gives life.

7 The law, then, engraved letter by letter upon stone, dispensed death, and yet it was inaugurated with divine splendour. That splendour, though it was soon to fade, made the face of Moses so bright that the Israelites

could not gaze steadily at him. But if so, must not even greater splendour rest upon the divine dispensation of the Spirit? If splendour accompanied the dispensation under which we are condemned, how much richer in splendour must that one be under which we are acquitted! Indeed, the splendour that once was is now no splendour at all; it is outshone by a splendour greater still. For if that which was soon to fade had its moment of splendour, how much greater is the splendour of that which endures!

With such a hope as this we speak out boldly; it is not for us to do as Moses did: he put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing on that fading splendour until it was gone. But in any case their minds had been made insensitive, for that same veil is there to this very day when the lesson is read from the old covenant; and it is never lifted, because only in Christ is the old covenant abrogated.<sup>g</sup> But to this very day, every time the Law of Moses is read, a veil lies over the minds of the hearers. However, as Scripture says of Moses, 'whenever he turns to the Lord the veil is removed'.<sup>h</sup> Now the Lord of whom this passage speaks is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And because for us there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; thus we are transfigured into his likeness, from splendour to splendour; such is the influence of the Lord who is Spirit.

SEEING THEN THAT WE HAVE BEEN entrusted with this commission, which we owe entirely to God's mercy, we never lose heart. We have renounced the deeds that men hide for very shame;

<sup>g</sup> Or in Christ is it abolished.  
<sup>h</sup> Or as Scripture says, when one turns to the Lord the veil is removed.

1 Cor.4.9. 15: For Paul as a sacrifice compare Phil.2.17. 17: *Hawking*: peddling or huckstering.

3.1-18: The power of the new covenant; the impotence of the old. 1: *All over again* implies some previous self-defense and criticism of it. Paul has his rivals in mind (see 10.1-13.14 n.), who carry *letters* of accreditation. 2-3: The idea of the Corinthians as Paul's living credentials suggests Jer.31.33, the law written on men's *hearts* rather than on *stone tablets* (Exod.34.1,4). 6: The *written law* both *condemns to death* (Rom.3.9-20) and is powerless to *give life* (Gal.3.21-22). 7-18: See Exod.34.29-35. Moses' veil symbolically prevents Judaism from seeing that the Law's original *splendour* has gone. 16: Exod.34.34. 18: *Are transfigured*: are now at the present time being transfigured. *From splendour to splendour*: by increasing degrees.

4.1-15: The apostle's faithfulness shown by his sufferings. 3: *Veiled*: Paul's critics may have

we neither practise cunning nor distort the word of God; only by declaring the truth openly do we recommend ourselves, and then it is to the common conscience of our fellow-men and in the sight of God. And if indeed our gospel be found veiled, the only people who find it so are those on the way to perdition. Their unbelieving minds are so blinded by the god of this passing age, that the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the very image of God, cannot dawn upon them and bring them light. It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, 'Out of darkness let light shine', has caused his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation—the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We are no better than pots of earthenware to contain this treasure, and this proves that such transcendent power does not come from us, but is God's alone. Hard-pressed on every side, we are never hemmed in; bewildered, we are never at our wits' end; hunted, we are never abandoned to our fate; struck down, we are not left to die. Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives. For continually, while still alive, we are being surrendered into the hands of death, for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be revealed in this mortal body of ours. Thus death is at work in us, and life in you.

But Scripture says, 'I believed, and therefore I spoke out', and we too, in

the same spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak out; for we know that he who raised the Lord Jesus to life will with Jesus raise us too, and bring us to his presence, and you with us. Indeed, it is for your sake that all things are ordered, so that, as the abounding grace of God is shared by more and more, the greater may be the chorus of thanksgiving that ascends to the glory of God.

No wonder we do not lose heart! Though our outward humanity is in decay, yet day by day we are inwardly renewed. Our troubles are slight and short-lived; and their outcome an eternal glory which outweighs them far. Meanwhile our eyes are fixed, not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are unseen: for what is seen passes away; what is unseen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly frame that houses us today should be demolished, we possess a building which God has provided—a house not made by human hands, eternal, and in heaven. In this present body we do indeed groan; we yearn to have our heavenly habitation put on over this one—in the hope that, being thus clothed, we shall not find ourselves naked. We groan indeed, we who are enclosed within this earthly frame; we are oppressed because we do not want to have the old body stripped off. Rather our desire is to have the new body put on over it, so that our mortal part may be absorbed into life immortal. God himself has shaped us for this very end; and as a pledge of it he has given us the Spirit.

Therefore we never cease to be confident. We know that so long as we are

called him obscure. *Perdition*: see 2.15–16. **4**: *The god of this passing age*, i.e. Satan (see 1 Cor.1.8 n.). *Image of God* recalls Adam (see Gen.1.27; 1 Cor.15.45–49 n.; Phil.2.6). **6**: Gen.1.3. Paul associates *light* and *glory* (or "splendour," 3.18) with possession of the Spirit (5.5). **8–11**: Daily hardships (see Mk.8.34) produce likeness to Christ (see Phil.3.10–11); Paul's *mortal body* is becoming like his Lord's (see 3.18). **12**: Paul accepts more than his proper share of suffering so as to provide them with *life* (see 1.6). **13**: Ps.116.10.

**4.16–5.10**: **Our changing bodies**. *Day by day* our suffering is eroding our *outward humanity* (i.e. our flesh bodies), but simultaneously we are *inwardly renewed* by spirit. (By contrast, in 1 Cor.15.42–57 this change of bodies is considered to occur instantly at Christ's return). **18**: *Things . . . seen*: the external body; *things . . . unseen*: the interior possession of the Spirit. **5.1–4**: Figuratively, the body is our home, or alternatively, our clothing. **1**: Our spirit body is *eternal* and destined for life in heaven. **2–4**: Paul *yearns* for the change to be completed and suffering ended (see Rom.8.23). Unbelievers, since they do not receive spirit bodies, are *naked* at death. **5**: The *pledge* is the down payment which puts a contract in force and implies further payments (in this case, of *the Spirit*; so also 1.22). **6–8**: Phil.1.21–24.

at home in the body we are exiles from  
 7 the Lord; faith is our guide, we do not  
 8 see him.<sup>i</sup> We are confident, I repeat,  
 9 and would rather leave our home in the  
 9 body and go to live with the Lord. We  
 therefore make it our ambition, wher-  
 ever we are, here or there, to be accept-  
 10 able to him. For we must all have our  
 lives laid open before the tribunal of  
 Christ, where each must receive what  
 is due to him for his conduct in the  
 body, good or bad.

11 WITH THIS FEAR OF THE LORD BEFORE  
 our eyes we address our appeal to men.  
 To God our lives lie open, as I hope  
 they also lie open to you in your heart  
 12 of hearts. This is not another attempt  
 to recommend ourselves to you: we  
 are rather giving you a chance to show  
 yourselves proud of us; then you will  
 have something to say to those whose  
 pride is all in outward show and not in  
 13 inward worth. It may be we are beside  
 ourselves, but it is for God; if we are in  
 14 our right mind, it is for you. For the  
 love of Christ leaves us no choice, when  
 once we have reached the conclusion  
 that one man died for all and therefore  
 15 all mankind has died. His purpose in  
 dying for all was that men, while still  
 in life, should cease to live for them-  
 selves, and should live for him who for  
 their sake died and was raised to life.  
 16 With us therefore worldly standards  
 have ceased to count in our estimate of  
 any man; even if once they counted in  
 our understanding of Christ, they do so  
 17 now no longer. When anyone is united  
 to Christ, there is a new world;<sup>j</sup> the old  
 order has gone, and a new order has  
 already begun.<sup>k</sup>

18 From first to last this has been the  
 work of God. He has reconciled us men  
 to himself through Christ, and he has  
 enlisted us in this service of reconcilia-

tion. What I mean is, that God was in 19  
 Christ reconciling the world to him-  
 self,<sup>l</sup> no longer holding men's misdeeds  
 against them, and that he has entrusted  
 us with the message of reconciliation.  
 We come therefore as Christ's am- 20  
 bassadors. It is as if God were appealing  
 to you through us: in Christ's name, we  
 implore you, be reconciled to God!  
 Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for 21  
 our sake God made him one with the  
 sinfulness of men,<sup>m</sup> so that in him we  
 might be made one with the goodness  
 of God himself. Sharing in God's work, 6  
 we urge this appeal upon you: you have  
 received the grace of God; do not let  
 it go for nothing. God's own words are: 2

'In the hour of my favour I gave  
 heed to you;  
 on the day of deliverance I came to  
 your aid.'

The hour of favour has now come;  
 now I say, has the day of deliverance  
 dawned.

In order that our service may not be 3  
 brought into discredit, we avoid giving  
 offence in anything. As God's servants, 4  
 we try to recommend ourselves in all  
 circumstances by our steadfast endur-  
 ance: in distress, hardships, and dire  
 straits; flogged, imprisoned, mobbed; 5  
 overworked, sleepless, starving. We  
 recommend ourselves by the inno- 6  
 cence of our behaviour, our grasp of  
 truth, our patience and kindness; by  
 gifts of the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,  
 by declaring the truth, by the power of 7  
 God. We wield the weapons of

<sup>i</sup> Or faith is our guide and not the things we see.

<sup>j</sup> Or a new act of creation.

<sup>k</sup> Or When anyone is united to Christ he is a new creature: his old life is over; a new life has already begun.

<sup>l</sup> Or God was reconciling the world to himself by Christ.

<sup>m</sup> Or and yet God made him a sin-offering for us.

5.11-6.10: The reconciling ministry of Christ and his apostles. 12: Another attempt: see 3.1 n. 13: Beside ourselves: in ecstasy (see 12.1-4 n.). 14: Love of Christ: Christ's love for us. One man: Christ, the second Adam (see 1 Cor.15.45-49 n.), represents all mankind. In principle the old humanity has ended. 15: See Mk.8.35. 16: Once, before his conversion, Paul thought of Jesus as a crucified criminal. 17: For Christians the new life has already begun (see 4.16-5.10 n.). 18-20: By extension the apostle shares Christ's reconciling ministry. 19-21: In Christ (v. 19): through Christ as his agent. Christ accepted mankind's sinfulness that men in Christ might no longer have their misdeeds held against them (v. 19; Rom.3.21-26). 6.2: Isa.49.8. Now: see 5.17 n. 3: Discredit: see 3.1 n. 4-5: See 11.23-29. In all circumstances: see 1 Cor.9.19-23. 6: Paul here emphasizes his patience and kindness by alluding to the abundance of personal sufferings he has undergone, all specified in v. 5. 7: Weapons: see Eph.6.14-17; 1 Th.5.8.

righteousness in right hand and left.  
 8 Honour and dishonour, praise and blame, are alike our lot: we are the  
 9 impostors who speak the truth, the unknown men whom all men know; dying we still live on; disciplined by  
 10 suffering, we are not done to death; in our sorrows we have always cause for joy; poor ourselves, we bring wealth to many; penniless, we own the world.  
 11 Men of Corinth, we have spoken very frankly to you; we have opened  
 12 our heart wide to you all. On our part there is no constraint; any constraint  
 13 there may be is in yourselves. In fair exchange then (may a father speak so to his children?) open wide your hearts to us.

*Problems of church life and discipline*

14 DO NOT UNITE YOURSELVES WITH UNBELIEVERS; they are no fit mates for you. What has righteousness to do with wickedness? Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial, or a believer join hands with an unbeliever? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen? And the temple of the living God is what we are. God's own words are: 'I will live and move about among them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' And therefore, 'come away and leave them, separate yourselves, says the Lord; touch nothing unclean. Then I will accept you, says the Lord, the Ruler of all being; I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.'  
 7 Such are the promises that have been made to us, dear friends. Let us therefore cleanse ourselves from all that can defile flesh or spirit, and in the fear of God complete our consecration.

DO MAKE A PLACE FOR US IN YOUR hearts! We have wronged no one, ruined no one, taken advantage of no one. I do not want to blame you. Why, as I have told you before, the place you have in our heart is such that, come death, come life, we meet it together. I am perfectly frank with you. I have great pride in you. In all our many troubles my cup is full of consolation, and overflows with joy.

Even when we reached Macedonia there was still no relief for this poor body of ours; instead, there was trouble at every turn, quarrels all round us, forebodings in our heart. But God, who brings comfort to the downcast, has comforted us by the arrival of Titus, and not merely by his arrival, but by his being so greatly comforted about you. He has told us how you long for me, how sorry you are, and how eager to take my side; and that has made me happier still.

Even if I did wound you by the letter I sent, I do not now regret it. I may have been sorry for it when I saw that the letter had caused you pain, even if only for a time; but now I am happy, not that your feelings were wounded but that the wound led to a change of heart. You bore the smart as God would have you bear it, and so you are no losers by what we did. For the wound which is borne in God's way brings a change of heart too salutary to regret; but the hurt which is borne in the world's way brings death. You bore your hurt in God's way, and see what its results have been! It made you take the matter seriously and vindicate yourselves. How angered you were, how apprehensive! How your longing for me awoke, yes, and your devotion and your eagerness to see justice done! At every point you have cleared your-

8-10: The apostle's ministry (like Jesus') is full of paradoxes (see 4.8-12; 1 Cor.4.9-13).

6.11-13: Paul appeals with open heart to the Corinthians for complete reconciliation free of constraint. (For their past disagreements see Introduction.) Paul here reaches the climax of 2.14-7.4.

6.14-7.1: Avoid unbelievers. The section is very probably misplaced (see 7.2-4 n. and Introduction to 1 Cor.). 15: Belial: Satan. 16-18: Paul links together a chain of texts: Lev.26.12; Ezek.37.27; Isa.52.11; 2 Sam.7.14. 7.1: Complete our consecration, i.e. our dedication to holiness.

7.2-4: Paul continues his plea. These verses would follow on 6.13, if 6.14-7.1 are misplaced (see Introduction to 1 Cor.).

7.5-16: Paul's narrative resumes from 2.13. (For the sequence of events see Introduction).

8: Although Paul was sorry that he had sent the "severe" letter, the effect in the end was healthful.

12 selves of blame in this trouble. And so, although I did send you that letter, it was not the offender or his victim that most concerned me. My aim in writing was to help to make plain to you, in the sight of God, how truly you are devoted to us. That is why we have been so encouraged.

But besides being encouraged ourselves we have also been delighted beyond everything by seeing how happy Titus is: you have all helped to set his mind completely at rest. Anything I may have said to him to show my pride in you has been justified. Every word we ever addressed to you bore the mark of truth; and the same holds of the proud boast we made in the presence of Titus: that also has proved true. His heart warms all the more to you as he recalls how ready you all were to do what he asked, meeting him as you did in fear and trembling. How happy I am now to have complete confidence in you!

8 WE MUST TELL YOU, FRIENDS, ABOUT the grace of generosity which God has imparted to<sup>n</sup> our congregations in 2 Macedonia. The troubles they have been through have tried them hard, yet in all this they have been so exuberantly happy that from the depths of their poverty they have shown themselves 3 lavishly open-handed. Going to the limit of their resources, as I can testify, 4 and even beyond that limit, they begged us most insistently, and on their own initiative, to be allowed to share in this generous service to their fellow- 5 Christians. And their giving surpassed our expectations; for they gave their very selves, offering them in the first instance to the Lord, but also, under 6 God, to us. The upshot is that we have asked Titus, who began it all, to visit you and bring this work of generosity

also to completion. You are so rich in 7 everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, and zeal of every kind, as well as in the loving regard you have for us<sup>o</sup>—surely you should show yourselves equally lavish in this generous service! This is not meant as an order; by telling 8 you how keen others are I am putting your love to the test. For you know 9 how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

Here is my considered opinion on 10 the matter. What I ask you to do is in your own interests. You made a good beginning last year both in the work you did and in your willingness to undertake it. Now I want you to go on 11 and finish it: be as eager to complete the scheme as you were to adopt it, and give according to your means. Pro- 12 vided there is an eager desire to give, God accepts what a man has; he does not ask for what he has not. There is 13 no question of relieving others at the cost of hardship to yourselves; it is a 14 question of equality. At the moment your surplus meets their need, but one day your need may be met from their surplus. The aim is equality; as 15 Scripture has it, 'The man who got much had no more than enough, and the man who got little did not go short.'

I thank God that he has made Titus 16 as keen on your behalf as we are! For Titus not only welcomed our request; he is so eager that by his own desire he is now leaving to come to you. With 18 him we are sending one of our company whose reputation is high among our congregations everywhere for his services to the Gospel. Moreover they 19 have duly appointed him to travel with us and help in this beneficent work, by

<sup>n</sup> Or how gracious God has been to . . .

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses read the love we have for you or the love which we have kindled in your hearts.

12: *The offender*: see 2.5–11 n. *His victim*: probably Paul. 14: What Paul wrote to the Corinthians was angry; what he said to Titus expressed *pride*. 15–16: Paul prepares for 8.6–8, 16–17.

8.1–9.15: **The offering for the poor** of the Jerusalem church (see Introduction to Rom.). Reconciliation assumed, Paul now turns to the collection. 1–5: Paul describes the *generosity* of the Macedonians (see Phil.4.15–18) to spur the Corinthians on (contrast 9.2). 6: See vv. 16–17 n. 7: See 1 Cor.12.8–10. 9: *Became poor*: see Phil.2.5–11. 10–11: *Finish, complete* suggests that the dispute between Paul and the Corinthians interrupted the collection project. 14: *Surplus*: contrast v. 2. 15: Exod.16.18. 16–17: Titus will precede Paul (see 9.4–5 n.). 18–24: *One of our company*: lit. "the brother." This unidentified missionary has been *appointed* (probably by Jerusalem) to help with the collection (*this beneficent work*). He and the other "brother" of



which we do honour to the Lord himself and show our own eagerness to serve. We want to guard against any criticism of our handling of this generous gift; for our aims are entirely honourable, not only in the Lord's eyes, but also in the eyes of men.

With these men we are sending another of our company whose enthusiasm we have had many opportunities of testing, and who is now all the more earnest because of the great confidence he has in you. If there is any question about Titus, he is my partner and my associate in dealings with you; as for the others, they are delegates of our congregations, an honour to Christ.<sup>p</sup> Then give them clear expression of your love and justify our pride in you; justify it to them, and through them to the congregations.

About the provision of aid for God's people, it is superfluous for me to write to you. I know how eager you are to help; I speak of it with pride to the Macedonians: I tell them that Achaia had everything ready last year; and most of them have been fired by your zeal. My purpose in sending these friends is to ensure that what we have said about you in this matter should not prove to be an empty boast. By that I mean, I want you to be prepared, as I told them you were; for if I bring with me men from Macedonia and they find you are not prepared, what a disgrace it will be to us, let alone to you, after all the confidence we have shown! I have accordingly thought it necessary to ask these friends to go on ahead to Corinth, to see that your promised bounty is in order before I come; it will then be awaiting me as a bounty indeed, and not as an extortion.

Remember: sparse sowing, sparse

reaping; sow bountifully, and you will reap bountifully. Each person should give as he has decided for himself; there should be no reluctance, no sense of compulsion; God loves a cheerful giver. And it is in God's power to provide you richly with every good gift; thus you will have ample means in yourselves to meet each and every situation, with enough and to spare for every good cause. Scripture says of such a man: 'He has lavished his gifts on the needy, his benevolence stands fast for ever.' Now he who provides seed for sowing and bread for food will provide the seed for you to sow; he will multiply it and swell the harvest of your benevolence, and you will always be rich enough to be generous. Through our action such generosity will issue in thanksgiving to God, for as a piece of willing service this is not only a contribution towards the needs of God's people; more than that, it overflows in a flood of thanksgiving to God. For through the proof which this affords, many will give honour to God when they see how humbly you obey him and how faithfully you confess the gospel of Christ; and will thank him for your liberal contribution to their need and to the general good. And as they join in prayer on your behalf, their hearts will go out to you because of the richness of the grace which God has imparted to you. Thanks be to God for his gift beyond words!

### *Trials of a Christian missionary*

**BUT I, PAUL, APPEAL TO YOU BY THE gentleness and magnanimity of Christ—I, so feeble (you say) when I am face to**

*p* Or they are . . . congregations; they reflect Christ.

v. 22 are called "apostles" (*delegates*) in v. 23. 20: On the Corinthians' suspicions about Paul and money see 12.16-18; 11.7-10 n. 21: Prov.3.4 (Sept.). 9.2: See 8.1-5 n. 4-5: Paul will come with representatives from Macedonia. From Corinth they will sail to Jerusalem (1 Cor.16.3-4). 7: Prov.22.8 (Sept.). 9: Ps.112.9. 15: God's gift beyond words: his son (see Rom.8.32).

10.1-13.14: Paul's boast against false apostles. Because of the tone of chs. 10-13, some have taken them to be part of the "severe" letter which preceded 2 Cor. chs. 1-9 (see Introduction). However, the problem of traveling Jewish "apostles" in chs. 10-13 is more probably subsequent to chs. 1-9. On the lack of an opening thanksgiving see Rom.1.8-15 n. Note the accusations against Paul: unethical (v. 2), weak (v. 3), boastful (v. 8), brave from a distance but ineffectual in person (vv. 1,10-11), an amateur "apostle" (11.7-11), a man without pedigree (11.22-23), a nobody (12.11).

10.1-18: Paul's bold counterattack. 1: On Christ's humility see Phil.2.5-8, especially v. 8.

face with you, so brave when I am  
 2 away. Spare me, I beg you, the necessity  
 of such bravery when I come, for I  
 reckon I could put on as bold a face  
 as you please against those who charge  
 3 us with moral weakness. Weak men we  
 may be, but it is not as such that we  
 4 fight our battles. The weapons we wield  
 are not merely human,<sup>q</sup> but divinely  
 5 potent to demolish strongholds; we  
 demolish sophistries and all that rears  
 its proud head against the knowledge  
 of God; we compel every human  
 thought to surrender in obedience to  
 6 Christ; and we are prepared to punish  
 all rebellion when once you have put  
 yourselves in our hands.

7 Look facts in the face.<sup>r</sup> Someone is  
 convinced, is he, that he belongs to  
 Christ? Let him think again, and reflect  
 that we belong to Christ as much as he  
 8 does. Indeed, if I am somewhat over-  
 boastful about our authority—an au-  
 thority given by the Lord to build you  
 up, not pull you down—I shall make  
 9 my boast good. So you must not think  
 of me as one who scares you by the  
 10 letters he writes. 'His letters', so it is  
 said, 'are weighty and powerful; but  
 when he appears he has no presence,  
 and as a speaker he is beneath con-  
 11 tempt.' People who talk in that way  
 should reckon with this: when I come,  
 my actions will show the same man as  
 my letters showed in my absence.

12 We should not dare to class ourselves  
 or compare ourselves with any of those  
 who put forward their own claims.  
 What fools they are to measure them-  
 selves by themselves, to find in them-  
 selves their own standard of com-  
 13 parison!<sup>s</sup> With us there will be no  
 attempt to boast beyond our proper  
 sphere; and our sphere is determined  
 by the limit God laid down for us,  
 which permitted us to come as far as  
 14 Corinth. We are not overstretching our

commission, as we should be if it did  
 not extend to you, for we were the first  
 to reach Corinth in preaching the  
 gospel of Christ. And we do not boast  
 15 of work done where others have  
 laboured, work beyond our proper  
 sphere. Our hope is rather that, as your  
 faith grows, we may attain a position  
 among you greater than ever before,  
 but still within the limits of our sphere.  
 Then we can carry the Gospel to lands  
 16 that lie beyond you, never priding our-  
 selves on work already done in another  
 man's sphere. If a man must boast, let  
 17 him boast of the Lord. Not the man  
 18 who recommends himself, but the man  
 whom the Lord recommends—he and  
 he alone is to be accepted.

I wish you would bear with me in a  
 11 little of my folly; please do bear with  
 me. I am jealous for you, with a divine  
 2 jealousy; for I betrothed you to Christ,  
 thinking to present you as a chaste  
 virgin to her true and only husband.  
 But as the serpent in his cunning  
 3 seduced Eve, I am afraid that your  
 thoughts may be corrupted and you  
 may lose your<sup>t</sup> single-hearted devotion  
 to Christ. For if someone comes who  
 4 proclaims another Jesus, not the Jesus  
 whom we proclaimed, or if you then  
 receive a spirit different from the Spirit  
 already given to you, or a gospel differ-  
 ent from the gospel you have already  
 accepted, you manage to put up with  
 that well enough. Have I in any way  
 5 come short of those superlative  
 apostles? I think not. I may be no  
 6 speaker, but knowledge I have; at all  
 times we have made known to you the  
 full truth.

Or was this my offence, that I made

<sup>q</sup> Or charge us with worldly standards. We live, no doubt, in the world; but it is not on that level that we fight our battles. The weapons we wield are not those of the world . . .

<sup>r</sup> Or You are looking only at what catches the eye.

<sup>s</sup> Some witnesses read On the contrary we measure ourselves by ourselves, by our own standard of comparison. <sup>t</sup> Some witnesses insert purity and . . .

**2: Moral weakness:** unethical action. **3-4:** Paul adopts phrases by which his opponents have disparaged him: *weak men, merely human. Weapons:* see 6.7; Eph.6.14-17; 1 Th.5.8. **8:** Words meaning *boast* or *boastful* appear nineteen times in 10.8-12.9. **9-10:** See 2.3-4; 11.6 n. **11:** *I, my:* lit. "we," "our." Here, as often, the plural stands primarily for Paul. **15-16:** *Our . . . sphere:* see Rom.15.20 n. *Lands that lie beyond you,* i.e. to the west, perhaps Spain (Rom.15.23-28). **17:** Jer.9.24 (1 Cor.1.31).

**11.1-15: Satan's apostles. 1: Folly:** see v. 16. **2:** See Hos.2.19-20; Eph.5.26-27. **3:** Paul compares his opponents to the serpent of Gen.3.4; see vv. 13-15 n. **5:** The *superlative apostles* are paid (vv. 7-10) preachers (v. 6), Jewish-Christians (vv. 22-23) probably from Jerusalem. **6:** See 10.10; 1 Cor.2.3. **7-10:** Apparently Paul's practice was to accept money for himself but

no charge for preaching the gospel of God, lowering myself to help in raising you? It is true that I took toll of other congregations, accepting<sup>u</sup> support from them to serve you. Then, while I was with you, if I ran short I sponged on no one; anything I needed was fully met by our friends who came from Macedonia; I made it a rule, as I always shall, never to be a burden to you. As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, I will preserve my pride in this matter throughout Achaia, and nothing shall stop me. Why? Is it that I do not love you? God knows I do.

And I shall go on doing as I am doing now, to cut the ground from under those who would seize any chance to put their vaunted apostleship on the same level as ours. Such men are sham-apostles, crooked in all their practices, masquerading as apostles of Christ. There is nothing surprising about that; Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore a simple thing for his agents to masquerade as agents of good. But they will meet the end their deeds deserve.

I repeat: let no one take me for a fool; but if you must, then give me the privilege of a fool, and let me have my little boast like others. I am not speaking here as a Christian, but like a fool, if it comes to bragging. So many people brag of their earthly distinctions that I shall do so too. How gladly you bear with fools, being yourselves so wise! If a man tyrannizes over you, exploits you, gets you in his clutches, puts on airs, and hits you in the face, you put up with it. And we, you say, have been weak! I admit the reproach.

But if there is to be bravado (and here I speak as a fool), I can indulge in it too. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Israelites? So am I. Abraham's descendants? So am I. Are they servants

of Christ? I am mad to speak like this, but I can outdo them. More overworked than they, scourged more severely, more often imprisoned, many a time face to face with death. Five times the Jews have given me the thirty-nine strokes; three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I have been shipwrecked, and for twenty-four hours I was adrift on the open sea. I have been constantly on the road; I have met dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my fellow-countrymen, dangers from foreigners, dangers in towns, dangers in the country, dangers at sea, dangers from false friends. I have toiled and drudged, I have often gone without sleep; hungry and thirsty, I have often gone fasting; and I have suffered from cold and exposure.

Apart from these external things,<sup>v</sup> there is the responsibility that weighs on me every day, my anxious concern for all our congregations. If anyone is weak, do I not share his weakness? If anyone is made to stumble, does my heart not blaze with indignation? If boasting there must be, I will boast of the things that show up my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus (blessed be his name for ever!) knows that what I say is true. When I was in Damascus, the commissioner of King Aretas kept the city under observation so as to have me arrested; and I was let down in a basket, through a window in the wall, and so escaped his clutches.

I AM OBLIGED TO BOAST. IT DOES NO good; but I shall go on to tell of visions and revelations granted by the Lord. I know a Christian man who fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out

<sup>u</sup> Or Did I take toll of other congregations by accepting . . . ?  
<sup>v</sup> Or Apart from things which I omit.

never to ask for it (see 1 Cor.9.12b-18). The Corinthians, unlike the *Macedonians* (Phil.4.14-18), had not offered to support him. Ironically, he is now criticized for not receiving support as a "true" apostle should. 13-15: See also Gal.5.12, a passage only slightly more intemperate.

11.16-33: Paul's credentials are his hardships. 21-23: *Hebrews*: Aram. speaking. *Israelites*: Jews by birth (see Rom.9.4 n.). Compare Phil.3.4-6. So well did Paul adapt himself to his environment (1 Cor.9.19-23) that at times he had to assert his Jewish pedigree. 24: *Thirty-nine strokes*: see Acts 5.40 n. 25: *Rods*: a Roman punishment (see Acts 16.22). *Stoned*: see Acts 14.19. 32-33: See Acts 9.23-25. Aretas IV was king of Nabataea.

12.1-10: Paul's visions and "thorn in the flesh." 1-4: Paul was given to *visions and revelations* (see v. 7; 5.13); he could also speak in tongues (see 1 Cor.14.18). 2: *Christian man*: Paul (v.7).

of it, I do not know—God knows) was caught up as far as the third heaven. 3 And I know that this same man (whether in the body or out of it, I do 4 not know—God knows) was caught up into paradise, and heard words so secret that human lips may not repeat 5 them. About such a man as that I am ready to boast; but I will not boast on my own account, except of my weaknesses. 6 If I should choose to boast, it would not be the boast of a fool, for I should be speaking the truth. But I refrain, because I should not like anyone to form an estimate of me which goes beyond the evidence of his own eyes 7 and ears. And so, to keep me from being unduly elated by the magnificence of such revelations, I was given<sup>w</sup> a sharp physical pain<sup>x</sup> which came as Satan's messenger to bruise me; this was to save me from being unduly 8 elated. Three times I begged the Lord 9 to rid me of it, but his answer was: 'My grace is all you need; power comes to its full strength in weakness.' I shall therefore prefer to find my joy and pride in the very things that are my weakness; and then the power of Christ will come and rest upon me. 10 Hence I am well content, for Christ's sake, with weakness, contempt, persecution, hardship, and frustration; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

11 I AM BEING VERY FOOLISH, BUT IT WAS you who drove me to it; my credentials should have come from you. In no respect did I fall short of these superlative apostles, even if I am a nobody. 12 The marks of a true apostle were there, in the work I did among you, which called for such constant fortitude, and was attended by signs, marvels, and 13 miracles. Is there anything in which

you were treated worse than the other congregations—except this, that I never sponged upon you? How unfair of me! I crave forgiveness.

Here am I preparing to pay you a 14 third visit; and I am not going to sponge upon you. It is you I want, not your money; parents should make provision for their children, not children for their parents. As for me, I will 15 gladly spend what I have for you—yes, and spend myself to the limit. If I love you overmuch, am I to be loved the less? But, granted that I did not prove 16 a burden to you, still I was unscrupulous enough, you say, to use a trick to catch you. Who, of the men I have sent 17 to you, was used by me to defraud you? I begged Titus to visit you, and I sent 18 our friend with him. Did Titus defraud you? Have we not both been guided by the same Spirit, and followed the same course?

Perhaps you think that all this time 19 we have been addressing our defence to you. No; we are speaking in God's sight, and as Christian men. Our whole aim, my own dear people, is to build you up. I fear that when I come I may 20 perhaps find you different from what I wish you to be, and that you may find me also different from what you wish. I fear I may find quarrelling and jealousy, angry tempers and personal rivalries, backbiting and gossip, arrogance and general disorder. I am afraid 21 that, when I come again, my God may humiliate me in your presence, that I may have tears to shed over many of those who have sinned in the past and have not repented of their unclean lives, their fornication and sensuality.

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses read . . . ears, and because of the magnificence of the revelations themselves. Therefore to keep me from being unduly elated I was given . . .  
<sup>x</sup> Or a painful wound to my pride (*literally* a stake, or thorn, for the flesh).

*The third heaven* may mean the highest; or else the third of seven, as the Jews viewed heaven. 4: *Paradise*: the heavenly Eden. 7: *Sharp physical pain*: traditionally, "thorn in the flesh." Some suggest a recurrent illness (compare Gal.4.13-14); others, a human adversary (*Satan's messenger*). 9: Just as the *power of Christ* was expressed in weakness, Paul understands that his own *weakness* is transformed into strength by means of *grace*. (Compare Phil.2.5-11; 3.7-11). 10: See 11.23-30; 4.7-12; 1 Cor.4.11-13; Rom.8.35.

12.11-21: *Paul's fatherly concern* for his congregation. 11: *Superlative apostles*: see 11.5 n. 12: *Signs, marvels, and miracles*: see Rom.15.19; Gal.3.5. 13-15: See 11.7-10 n. 14: *Third visit*: see 13.1-2 n. *Parents, children*: compare 1 Cor.4.14-15. 18: *Begged Titus*: see 8.6,16-17 n. *Our friend*: see 8.22; 18-24 n. 20-21: All the old difficulties spring to Paul's mind (see 1 Cor.1.11; 5.1; 6.12-20), but the lists are partly stereotyped (see 1 Cor.6.9-11 n.; Rom.1.29-31; Gal.5.19-21). *Humiliate*: perhaps an echo of 2.1.

- 13 This will be my third visit to you; and all facts must be established by the  
 2 evidence of two or three witnesses. To those who have sinned in the past, and to everyone else, I repeat the warning I gave before; I gave it in person on my second visit, and I give it now in  
 3 absence. It is that when I come this time, I will show no leniency. Then you will have the proof you seek of the Christ who speaks through me, the Christ who, far from being weak with you, makes his power felt among you.  
 4 True, he died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God; and we who share his weakness shall by the power of God live with him in your service.  
 5 Examine yourselves: are you living the life of faith? Put yourselves to the test. Surely you recognize that Jesus Christ is among you?—unless of course  
 6 you prove unequal to the test. I hope you will come to see that we are not  
 7 unequal to it. Our prayer to God is that you may do no wrong; we are not concerned to be vindicated ourselves; we want you to do what is right, even if we should seem to be discredited. For we have no power to act against  
 8 the truth, but only for it. We are well  
 9 content to be weak at any time if only you are strong. Indeed, my whole prayer is that all may be put right with you. My purpose in writing this letter  
 10 before I come, is to spare myself, when I come, any sharp exercise of authority—authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for pulling down.  
 And now, my friends, farewell. Mend  
 11 your ways; take our appeal to heart; agree with one another; live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be  
 12 with you. Greet one another with the kiss of peace. All God's people send  
 13 you greetings.  
 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
 14 and the love of God, and fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

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13.1–14: Final warnings, greetings and blessing. 1–2: Paul's approaching visit (see 9.4–5 n.) will be his *third*. The first was the founding visit (see 10.14); his *second visit* was "painful" (see Introduction). The *three witnesses* (Deut.19.15) may be the three visits: the Corinthians have one chance left. 12: *Kiss*: see Rom.16.16 n. 14: This is the fullest form of Paul's usual benediction (see 1 Cor.12.4–6 n.).

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Freedom is the message of this extremely important letter. The immediate issue is whether Christians should observe Jewish law. Paul's churches in Galatia (perhaps at Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; Acts ch. 14) had been visited by Christian Jews who preached at least a partial observance of Mosaic Law. Paul cites circumcision (5.2; 6.12) and the ritual calendar (4.10). Apparently they presented both themselves and Paul as subject to the authority of the Jerusalem Church. Paul asserts his divine commission and complete freedom from Jerusalem, giving us valuable autobiographical information (1.10-2.14). He attacks "legalism" as a denial in principle of the divine acceptance ("justification") which can depend only on utter trust ("faith") in Christ (2.15-3.29). The Mosaic Law is for "slaves," whereas Christians are God's adopted children (ch. 4); their brotherly love supersedes the law (5.13-6.10). Sarcastically, Paul accuses the Judaizers of seeking to give Christianity the appearance of a Jewish sect only to avoid persecution (6.12).

The date of the letter is a problem. Many of the same issues (and phrases) appear in Romans, suggesting that the interval between the two was not great. Because these issues are more urgent here in Galatians, this letter is the earlier.

## *Faith and freedom*

1 FROM PAUL, AN APOSTLE, NOT BY  
human appointment or human  
commission, but by commission  
from Jesus Christ and from God the  
2 Father who raised him from the dead. I  
and the group of friends now with me  
send greetings to the Christian congregations  
of Galatia.  
3 Grace and peace to you from God  
the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>a</sup>  
4 who sacrificed himself for our sins, to  
rescue us out of this present age of  
wickedness, as our God and Father  
5 willed; to whom be glory for ever and  
ever. Amen.  
6 I am astonished to find you turning  
so quickly away from him who called  
you by grace,<sup>b</sup> and following a different  
7 gospel. Not that it is in fact another  
gospel; only there are persons who un-  
settle your minds by trying to distort  
8 the gospel of Christ. But if anyone, if  
we ourselves or an angel from heaven,  
should preach a gospel at variance with  
the gospel we preached to you, he shall  
9 be held outcast. I now repeat what I  
have said before: if anyone preaches a

gospel at variance with the gospel  
which you received, let him be outcast!

Does my language now sound as if I  
were canvassing for men's support?  
Whose support do I want but God's  
alone? Do you think I am currying  
favour with men? If I still sought men's  
favour, I should be no servant of Christ.

I must make it clear to you, my  
11 friends, that the gospel you heard me  
preach is no human invention. I did not  
12 take it over from any man; no man  
taught it me; I received it through a  
revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have heard what my manner of  
13 life was when I was still a practising  
Jew: how savagely I persecuted the  
church of God, and tried to destroy it;  
and how in the practice of our national  
14 religion I was outstripping many of my  
Jewish contemporaries in my boundless  
devotion to the traditions of my an-  
cestors. But then in his good pleasure  
15 God, who had set me apart from birth  
and called me through his grace, chose  
to reveal his Son to me and through  
16

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read from Christ who called you by grace, or from him who called you by grace of Christ.

1.1-5: **Salutation.** See Rom.1.1-7 nn. 1: From the first line Paul emphasizes again and again that he is an *apostle* independent of human authority. 3-5: See Rom.1.7 n. and 1.8-15 n. 4: See 2.20; 1 Cor.15.3. *Age:* see 1 Cor.2.6-8n.

1.6-10: **The Galatian apostasy from God.** 8-9: *Angel:* see 2 Cor.11.14. *Outcast:* compare 1 Cor.16.22 n.; 5.2-5. 10: 1 Th.2.4; 1 Cor.9.19-23.

1.11-17: **Paul's gospel is from God not man.** 12: Compare 1 Cor.15.8 and 2 Cor.12.1-4 n. with 1 Cor.15.3 n. 13-14: See Phil.3.4-6 and compare Acts 8.3; 22.3-5; 26.4-11. 15-16: *From*

me, in order that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles. When that happened, without consulting any human being, without going up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, I went off at once to Arabia, and afterwards returned to Damascus.

18 Three years later I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas. I stayed with him for a fortnight, without seeing any other of the apostles, except<sup>c</sup> James the Lord's brother. 20 What I write is plain truth; before God I am not lying.

21 Next I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and remained unknown by sight<sup>d</sup> to Christ's congregations in Judaea. They only heard it said, 'Our former persecutor is preaching the good news of the faith which once he tried to destroy'; and they praised God for me.

2 Next, fourteen years later, I went again<sup>e</sup> to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with us. I went up because it had been revealed by God that I should do so. I laid before them—but at a private interview with the men of repute—the gospel which I am accustomed to preach to the Gentiles, to make sure that the race I had run, and was running, should not be run in vain. Yet even my companion Titus, Greek though he is, was not compelled to be circumcised. That course was urged only as a concession to certain<sup>f</sup> sham-Christians, interlopers who had stolen in to spy upon the liberty we enjoy in the fellowship of Christ Jesus. These men wanted to bring us into bondage, but not for one moment did I yield to their dictation; I was determined that the full truth of the Gospel should be maintained for you.<sup>g</sup>

6 But as for the men of high reputation (not that their importance matters to

me: God does not recognize these personal distinctions)—these men of repute, I say, did not prolong the consultation,<sup>h</sup> but on the contrary acknowledged that I had been entrusted with the Gospel for Gentiles as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel for Jews. For God whose action made Peter an apostle to the Jews, also made me an apostle to the Gentiles.

Recognizing, then, the favour thus bestowed upon me, those reputed pillars of our society, James, Cephas, and John, accepted Barnabas and myself as partners, and shook hands upon it, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles while they went to the Jews. All they asked was that we should keep their poor in mind, which was the very thing I made<sup>i</sup> it my business to do.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. For until certain persons<sup>j</sup> came from James he was taking his meals with gentile Christians; but when they<sup>k</sup> came he drew back and began to hold aloof, because he was afraid of the advocates of circumcision. The other Jewish Christians showed the same lack of principle; even Barnabas was carried away and played false like the rest. But when I saw that their conduct did not square with<sup>l</sup> the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas, before the whole congregation, 'If you, a Jew

<sup>c</sup> Or but only. <sup>d</sup> Or unknown personally.

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses omit again.

<sup>f</sup> Or The question was later raised because of certain . . .

<sup>g</sup> Or, following the reading of some witnesses, Yet even . . . is, was under no absolute compulsion to be circumcised, but for the sake of certain . . . of Christ Jesus, with the intention of bringing us into bondage, I yielded to their demand for the moment, to ensure that gospel truth should not be prevented from reaching you.

<sup>h</sup> Or gave me no further instructions.

<sup>i</sup> Or had made, or have made.

<sup>j</sup> Some witnesses read a certain person.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read he.

<sup>l</sup> Or I saw that they were not making progress towards . . .

birth: see Jer.1.5. *To me and through me*: lit. "in me" (see v. 12 n.). 17: Paul denies that he is a Jerusalem apostle.

1.18–24: Paul's first visit to Jerusalem. 18: *Cephas*: see 1 Cor.1.12 n. 19: *James*: see Mk.6.3; Acts 15.13.

2.1–10: Paul's second visit to Jerusalem confirms his apostolic freedom (compare Acts 15.2–29). 1: *Barnabas*: see Acts 4.36. *Titus*: see Introduction to 2 Cor. 2: *Men of repute*: see v. 9. 3–9: Conservative Jewish-Christians demanded that *Titus* be circumcised, but the Jerusalem apostles did not make circumcision a requirement for *Gentiles*. 9: *John*: see Mk.1.19. 10: This request probably inaugurated the "collection" for the *poor* (see Introduction to Rom.).

2.11–21: Paul argues with Peter over table-fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians, asserting that God's acceptance comes through trust (*faith*) and not by legal observances. 12: *James*: see 1.19 n. *Circumcision*: see vv. 3–5. 13: *Other Jewish Christians*: those at Antioch.

born and bred, live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew, how can you insist that Gentiles must live like Jews?

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth, not  
16 Gentiles and sinners. But we know that no man is ever justified by doing what the law demands, but only through faith in Christ Jesus; so we too have put our faith in Jesus Christ, in order that we might be justified through this faith, and not through deeds dictated by law; for by such deeds, Scripture says, no mortal man shall be justified.

17 If now, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves no less than the Gentiles turn out to be sinners against the law,<sup>m</sup> does that mean that Christ is an abettor of sin? No, never! No, if I start building up again a system which I have pulled down, then it is that I show myself up as a transgressor of the law. For through the law I died to law  
20—to live for God. I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.  
21 I will not nullify the grace of God; if righteousness comes by law, then Christ died for nothing.

**3 YOU STUPID GALATIANS! YOU MUST HAVE** been bewitched—you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly displayed upon  
2 his cross! Answer me one question: did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the gospel message<sup>n</sup>? Can it be that you are so stupid? You started with the spiritual; do you now look to the material to make you  
4 perfect? Have all your great experiences been in vain—if vain indeed they should  
5 be? I ask then: when God gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you, why is this? Is it because you keep the law, or is it because you have faith in the

gospel message? Look at Abraham: he  
6 put his faith in God, and that faith was counted to him as righteousness.

You may take it, then, that it is the  
7 men of faith who are Abraham's sons. And Scripture, foreseeing that God  
8 would justify the Gentiles through faith, declared the Gospel to Abraham beforehand: 'In you all nations shall find blessing.' Thus it is the men of faith  
9 who share the blessing with faithful Abraham.

On the other hand those who rely on  
10 obedience to the law are under a curse; for Scripture says, 'A curse is on all who do not persevere in doing everything that is written in the Book of the Law.' It is evident that no one is ever justified  
11 before God in terms of law; because we read, 'he shall gain life who is justified through faith'. Now law is not at  
12 all a matter of having faith: we read, 'he who does this shall gain life by what he does'.

Christ bought us freedom from the  
13 curse of the law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing; for Scripture says, 'A curse is on everyone who is  
14 hanged on a gibbet.' And the purpose of it all was that the blessing of Abraham should in Jesus Christ be extended to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

My brothers, let me give you an  
15 illustration. Even in ordinary life, when a man's will and testament has been duly executed, no one else can set it  
16 aside or add a codicil. Now the promises were pronounced to Abraham and to his 'issue'. It does not say 'issues' in the plural, but in the singular, 'and to your  
17 issue'; and the 'issue' intended is Christ. What I am saying is this: a testament, or covenant, had already been validated

<sup>m</sup> Or no less than the Gentiles have accepted the position of sinners against the law.

<sup>n</sup> Or or by the message of faith, or or by hearing and believing.

15–21: This section summarizes Paul's basic argument (compare Rom.3.9–26). 16: See 3.6–14. *Justified*: accepted by God as righteous (see Rom.1.16–17 n.; 3.20). *Scripture*: Ps.143.2. 17–18: Paul and Cephas indeed break the law (e.g. by eating with Gentiles); the real *transgressor*, however, is the adherent of the Law (see 3.10). 20: Compare 6.14,17.

3.1–18: Abraham's faith foreshadows the Christian's trust in Christ (Rom. ch. 4.). 1: *Openly displayed*, i.e. in Paul's preaching (see 1 Cor.1.18–24). 2: *Receive the Spirit*: see 2 Cor.5.5 n. 3: *The material*: keeping the law. 5: *Miracles*: see 1 Cor.12.10; 2 Cor.12.12. 6: Gen.15.6. 8: Gen.12.3; 18.18. 10: See Rom.3.9–20. *Scripture*: Deut.27.26. 11: Hab.2.4 (Rom.1.17). 12: Lev.18.5 (Rom.10.5). 13: Deut.21.23 (compare 2 Cor.5.21). 16: *Issue*: see e.g. Gen.17.1–8. 17: *Testament* and *covenant* translate a single Gk. word, which in the Sept. (e.g. Gen.9.9; 17.7)



by God; it cannot be invalidated, and its promises rendered ineffective, by a law made four hundred and thirty years  
18 later. If the inheritance is by legal right, then it is not by promise; but it was by promise that God bestowed it as a free gift on Abraham.

19 Then what of the law? It was added to make wrongdoing a legal offence.<sup>o</sup> It was a temporary measure pending the arrival of the 'issue' to whom the promise was made. It was promulgated through angels, and there was an intermediary; but an intermediary is not needed for one party acting alone, and God is one.

21 Does the law, then, contradict the promises? No, never! If a law had been given which had power to bestow life, then indeed righteousness would have come from keeping the law. But Scripture has declared the whole world to be prisoners in subjection to sin, so that faith in Jesus Christ may be the ground on which the promised blessing is given, and given to those who have such faith.

23 Before this faith came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law, pending the revelation of faith. Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come,<sup>p</sup> when we should be justified through faith; and now that faith has come, the tutor's charge is at an end.

26 For through faith you are all sons of God in union with Christ Jesus. Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are  
29 all one person in Christ Jesus. But if you thus belong to Christ, you are the 'issue' of Abraham, and so heirs by promise.

This is what I mean: so long as the  
4 heir is a minor, he is no better off than a slave, even though the whole estate is his; he is under guardians and trustees  
2 until the date fixed by his father. And  
3 so it was with us. During our minority we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe,<sup>q</sup> but when the term was  
4 completed, God sent his own Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to  
5 purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons.

To prove that you are sons, God has  
6 sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba! Father!' You are  
7 therefore no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then also by God's own act an heir.

Formerly, when you did not acknowl-  
8 edge God, you were the slaves of beings which in their nature are no gods.<sup>r</sup> But  
9 now that you do acknowledge God—or rather, now that he has acknowledged you—how can you turn back to the mean and beggarly spirits of the elements?<sup>s</sup> Why do you propose to enter their service all over again? You  
10 keep special days and months and seasons and years. You make me fear  
11 that all the pains I spent on you may prove to be labour lost.

PUT YOURSELVES IN MY PLACE, MY  
12 brothers, I beg you, for I have put myself in yours. It is not that you did me any wrong. As you know, it was bodily  
13 illness that originally<sup>t</sup> led to my bringing you the Gospel, and you resisted  
14

<sup>o</sup> Or added because of offences.

<sup>p</sup> Or a kind of tutor to conduct us to Christ.

<sup>q</sup> Or the elements of the natural world, or elementary ideas belong to this world.

<sup>r</sup> Or were slaves to 'gods' which in reality do not exist.

<sup>s</sup> See note on 4. 3.

<sup>t</sup> Or formerly, or on the first of my two visits.

frequently refers to God's irrevocable *promises* (vv. 16–18, 21) offered with certain conditions (v. 22), and in common Greek to a will by which *heirs* (v. 29) receive their *inheritance* (v. 18). Exod.12.40 (Sept.) gives *four hundred and thirty years* as the interval between Abraham and Moses.

**3.19–4.7: The Law as temporary guardian** of God's children. 19–20: See Rom.3.20; 5.13; 7.7–8. Here, by contrast with Rom.7.12,22, Paul suggests that God is not directly responsible for the law. Instead, the law came from the *angels* (Deut.33.2 Sept.; see 1 Cor.6.2–3 n.) with Moses as their *intermediary*. 22: *Scripture*: see v. 10 n. 24–25: *Tutor*: see 1 Cor.4.15 n. 27: *Put on Christ*: see Rom.13.14; Col.3.10–12. 28: See 1 Cor.7.18–22; Col.3.11. 29: *Christ* stands corporately for the new Israel, the church (see 6.16 n.). *Promise*: see vv. 17–18. 4.1–2: See 3.24–25 n. 3: *Elemental spirits*: see 1 Cor.2.6–8 n. 6–7: See Rom.8.14–17.

**4.8–20: A reminder of the Galatians' conversion.** 8–10: At the instigation of the Judaizers (see Introduction) they *keep* the Jewish ritual calendar, which Paul connects with astrology and the worship of demonic *spirits* (v. 3). 13: Paul appears to attribute his original visit in Galatia

any temptation to show scorn or disgust at the state of my poor body;<sup>u</sup> you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as you might have welcomed  
 15 Christ Jesus himself. Have you forgotten how happy you thought yourselves in having me with you? I can say this for you: you would have torn out your very eyes, and given them to me, had  
 16 that been possible! And have I now made myself your enemy by being frank with you?

17 The persons I have referred to are envious of you, but not with an honest envy:<sup>v</sup> what they really want is to bar the door to you so that you may come  
 18 to envy<sup>w</sup> them. It is always a fine thing to deserve an honest envy<sup>x</sup>—always, and not only when I am present with  
 19 you, dear children. For my children you are, and I am in travail with you over again until you take the shape of  
 20 Christ. I wish I could be with you now; then I could modify my tone;<sup>y</sup> as it is, I am at my wits' end about you.

21 TELL ME NOW, YOU WHO ARE SO anxious to be under law, will you not  
 22 listen to what the Law says? It is written there that Abraham had two sons, one by his slave and the other by his free-born wife. The slave-woman's son was  
 23 born in the course of nature, the free woman's through God's promise. This is an allegory. The two women stand for two covenants. The one bearing children into slavery is the covenant that comes from Mount Sinai: that is  
 24 Hagar. Sinai is a mountain in Arabia and it represents the Jerusalem of today, for she and her children are in  
 25 slavery. But the heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman; she is our mother. For  
 26 Scripture says, 'Rejoice, O barren woman who never bore child; break into a shout of joy, you who never knew a mother's pangs; for the deserted wife

shall have more children than she who lives with the husband.'

And you, my brothers, like Isaac, are  
 28 children of God's promise. But just as  
 29 in those days the natural-born son persecuted the spiritual son, so it is today. But what does Scripture say? 'Drive  
 30 out the slave-woman and her son, for the son of the slave shall not share the inheritance with the free woman's son.' You see, then, my brothers, we are no  
 31 slave-woman's children; our mother is the free woman. Christ set us free, to be  
 5 free men.<sup>z</sup> Stand firm, then, and refuse to be tied to the yoke of slavery again.

Mark my words: I, Paul, say to you  
 2 that if you receive circumcision Christ will do you no good at all. Once again,  
 3 you can take it from me that every man who receives circumcision is under obligation to keep the entire law. When  
 4 you seek to be justified by way of law, your relation with Christ is completely severed: you have fallen out of the domain of God's grace. For to us, our  
 5 hope of attaining that righteousness which we eagerly await is the work of the Spirit through faith. If we are in  
 6 union with Christ Jesus circumcision makes no difference at all, nor does the want of it; the only thing that counts is faith active in love.<sup>a</sup>

You were running well; who was it  
 7 hindered you from following the truth? Whatever persuasion he used, it did not  
 8 come from God who is calling you; 'a  
 9 little leaven', remember, 'leavens all the dough'. United with you in the Lord,  
 10 I am confident that you will not take the wrong view; but the man who is unsettling your minds, whoever he may be, must bear God's judgement. And  
 11

<sup>u</sup> Or you showed neither scorn nor disgust at the trial my poor body was enduring.

<sup>v</sup> Or paying court to you, but not with honest intentions.

<sup>w</sup> Or pay court to. <sup>x</sup> Or to be honourably wooed.

<sup>y</sup> Or now, and could exchange words with you.

<sup>z</sup> Or What Christ has done is to set us free.

<sup>a</sup> Or inspired by love.

to physical weakness rather than to design. *Illness*: see 2 Cor.12.7 n. **15**: Possibly Paul had eye trouble (see 6.11, "these big letters"). **19**: *Travail*: a metaphor depicting Paul as an expectant "mother" awaiting the rebirth of the Galatians.

**4.21-5.1**: The allegory of Sarah and Hagar (compare Rom.9.6-13). **22**: *Slave*: Hagar, mother of Ishmael (Gen.16.15). *Free-born*: Sarah, mother of Isaac (Gen.21.2-3). **23**: *Promise*: see Gen.17.15-21. **25-28**: Paradoxically the Jews (who count Isaac as their ancestor) are called children of Hagar; the church is the promised heir like Isaac. **27**: Isa.54.1. **29**: *Persecuted*: see Gen.16.12; 21.9-10. *Today*: see 5.11; 1 Th.2.14-16. **30**: Gen.21.10.

**5.2-12**: The Judaizers' message is slavery. **3**: The Judaizers apparently preached *circumcision* but not the *entire law* (see 6.12-13). **9**: *Leaven*: see 1 Cor.5.6 n. **11**: Paul's own troubles

- I, my friends, if I am still advocating circumcision, why is it I am still persecuted? In that case my preaching of the cross is a stumbling-block no more.
- 12 As for these agitators, they had better go the whole way and make eunuchs of themselves!
- 13 YOU, MY FRIENDS, WERE CALLED TO BE free men, only do not turn your freedom into licence for your lower nature, but be servants to one another in love.
- 14 For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you go on fighting one another, tooth and nail, all you can expect is mutual destruction.
- 15 I mean this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will not fulfil the desires of your lower nature. That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while the Spirit fights against it. They are in conflict with one another so that what you will to do you cannot do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.
- 16 Anyone can see the kind of behaviour that belongs to the lower nature: fornication, impurity, and indecency; idolatry and sorcery; quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies; drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who behave in such ways will never inherit the kingdom of God.
- 17 But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course.
- 18 We must not be conceited, challeng-

ing one another to rivalry, jealous of one another. If a man should do something wrong, my brothers, on a sudden impulse,<sup>b</sup> you who are endowed with the Spirit must set him right again very gently. Look to yourself, each one of you: you may be tempted too. Help one another to carry these heavy loads and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

For if a man imagines himself to be somebody, when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. Each man should examine his own conduct for himself; then he can measure his achievement by comparing himself with himself and not with anyone else. For everyone has his own proper burden to bear.

When anyone is under instruction in the faith, he should give his teacher a share of all good things he has.

Make no mistake about this: God is not to be fooled; a man reaps what he sows. If he sows seed in the field of his lower nature, he will reap from it a harvest of corruption, but if he sows in the field of the Spirit, the Spirit will bring him a harvest of eternal life. So let us never tire of doing good, for if we do not slacken our efforts we shall in due time reap our harvest. Therefore, as opportunity offers, let us work for the good of all, especially members of the household of the faith.

YOU SEE THESE BIG LETTERS? I AM NOW writing to you in my own hand. It is all those who want to make a fair outward and bodily show who are trying to force circumcision upon you; their sole object is to escape persecution for the cross of Christ. For even those who do receive circumcision are not thoroughgoing observers of the law; they only want

<sup>b</sup> Or If a man is caught doing something wrong, my brothers, . . .

(see 4.29; 6.14,17 n.) refute the Judaizers' allegation that *circumcision* was actually part of his gospel also (see 6.12 n.). *Cross*: see 1 Cor.1.18-2.5.

5.13-25: *The ethics of freedom is not licence but love*. 13: Mk.10.43. 14: Lev.19.18 (see Rom.13.8-10; Mk.12.31). 16-17: *Lower nature*: lit. "flesh" (compare 1 Cor.15.35-53; Rom.7.14-25; 7.14 n.). 19-24: The lists are stereotyped (see Col.3.1-15; compare Col. 3.18-4.1 n.). 24: *Crucified*: see Rom.6.6.

5.26-6.10: *Appeal for love and generosity*. 6.2: *The law of Christ* is love (see 5.14 n.). 6: A *teacher* should be paid (see 1 Cor.9.4-14). 7-10: *Sow and reap* echo 2 Cor.9.6-10 on the collection project (see Rom.15.25-26 nn.).

6.11-18: *Conclusion*. 11: See 1 Cor.16.21-24 n. 12: *Circumcision* would prevent *persecution* by bringing Christians under the legal protection enjoyed by Judaism (see 5.11 n.). 13: See 5.3 n.

you to be circumcised in order to boast  
 of your having submitted to that out-  
 14 ward rite. But God forbid that I should  
 boast of anything but the cross of our  
 Lord Jesus Christ, through which<sup>c</sup> the  
 world is crucified to me and I to the  
 15 world! Circumcision is nothing; un-  
 circumcision is nothing; the only thing  
 16 that counts is new creation! Whoever  
 they are who take this principle for

their guide, peace and mercy be upon  
 them, and upon the whole Israel of  
 God!  
 In future let no one make trouble for 17  
 me, for I bear the marks of Jesus  
 branded on my body.  
 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ 18  
 be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen.

*c Or whom.*

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**14:** *Cross:* see 3.1; 5.24; Phil.3.10. **16:** *Israel of God:* the church (see 4.25–28 n.). **17:** *Marks:*  
 scars received in Jesus' service (see 2 Cor.4.10–11; 11.23–28). **18:** See 2 Cor.13.14 n.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

The main theme of the letter to the Ephesians is the church, the body of Christ, in which Jew and Gentile have been united and made "a single new humanity" (2.15). The letter presents itself as written by Paul during a time of imprisonment (3.1), and its close relationship to Colossians has led many to suppose a common situation for both: Paul's captivity in Rome (61–63 A.D.).

The best and earliest manuscripts lack the words "at Ephesus" in 1.1. Therefore, some scholars have offered the suggestion that it was originally intended for many churches, not just the one at Ephesus.

Moreover, there is some basis on which doubts have arisen that the letter was written by Paul himself. Thus, though there are points of contact in thought and wording with every Pauline letter (except perhaps 2 Thessalonians) and especially with Colossians, yet in many instances these points of contact also reflect differences. For example, Eph.2.8–10 is closely related to the thought of Romans, but does not mention justification, which is central to that epistle. Again, the "revealed secret" is conceived differently in Colossians and in Ephesians; in Colossians, it is the union of Christ and his people (Col.1.27); in the latter, it is the union of Jew and Gentile in the one church (Eph.3.6). Accordingly, many (perhaps most) modern scholars regard Ephesians as the work of a member of the Pauline "school" and date it around 100 A.D.

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## *The glory of Christ in the church*

1 FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS, commissioned by the will of God, to God's people at Ephesus,<sup>a</sup> believers incorporate in Christ Jesus.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. In Christ he chose us before the world was founded, to be dedicated, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love; and he<sup>b</sup> destined us—such was his will and pleasure—to be accepted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in order that the glory of his gracious gift, so graciously bestowed on us in his Beloved, might redound to his praise. For in Christ our release is secured and our

sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the richness of God's free grace lavished upon us, 8 imparting full wisdom and insight. He 9 has made known to us his hidden purpose—such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ—to 10 be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ.

In Christ indeed we have been given 11 our share in the heritage, as was decreed in his design whose purpose is everywhere at work. For it was his will that 12 we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ,<sup>c</sup> should cause his glory to be praised. And you too, when you had 13 heard the message of the truth, the good

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<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses omit at Ephesus.

<sup>b</sup> Or . . . sight. In his love he . . .

<sup>c</sup> Or who already enjoyed the hope of Christ, or whose expectation and hope are in Christ.

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**1.3–14: Praise of God.** The greeting (vv. 1–2) is followed not by the usual thanksgiving, but by a long prayer of praise to God for what he has done in Christ. Such praise is frequent in the OT and in Jewish prayer; compare 2 Cor.1.3–4. 3: In the NT, the phrase *in the heavenly realms* (or a variation of it) occurs only in this letter (1.20; 2.6; 3.10; 6.12). Apocalyptic literature speaks of a series of heavens (frequently seven) extending above and beyond the earth, with the throne of God in the highest heaven. At times, the *heavenly realms* were thought of as accessible to men only in the future age to come, but at other times as immediately available to the dead. Here the faithful, through union with Christ (2.6), share his exaltation *in the heavenly realms* (see v. 14 n.). 4: God's choosing of his people (the church) is traced back beyond creation. *Without blemish*: see Col.1.22 n. 10: Although the main theme of the letter is the church, here the universe is viewed as intended for the *unity* destined to be achieved *in Christ*. 11–13: In the preceding verses "we" includes all Christians. This passage, however, suggests a contrast between *we* (v. 11) and *you* (v. 13), with *we* here meaning Jewish Christians (*first . . . Christ*) and *you*, later Gentile

news of your salvation, and had believed it, became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised  
 14 Holy Spirit; and that Spirit is the pledge that we shall enter upon our heritage, when God has redeemed what is his own, to his praise and glory.

15 Because of all this, now that I have heard of the faith you have in the Lord Jesus and of the love you bear towards  
 16 all God's people, I never cease to give thanks for you when I mention you in  
 17 my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-glorious Father, may give you the spiritual powers of wisdom and vision, by which  
 18 there comes the knowledge of him. I pray that your inward eyes may be illumined, so that you may know what is the hope to which he calls you, what the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their  
 19 heritage, and how vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him. They are measured by his strength and the  
 20 might which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, when he enthroned him at his right hand in  
 21 the heavenly realms, far above all government and authority, all power and dominion, and any title of sovereignty that can be named, not only in  
 22 this age but in the age to come. He put everything in subjection beneath his feet, and appointed him as supreme  
 23 head to the church, which is his body and as such holds within it the fullness of him who himself receives the entire fullness of God.<sup>d</sup>

your sins and wickedness, when you  
 2 followed the evil ways of this present age, when you obeyed the commander of the spiritual powers of the air, the spirit now at work among God's rebel subjects. We too were once of their  
 3 number: we all lived our lives in sensuality, and obeyed the promptings of our own instincts and notions. In our natural condition we, like the rest, lay under the dreadful judgement of God. But God, rich in mercy, for the great  
 4 love he bore us, brought us to life with Christ even when we were dead in our  
 5 sins; it is by his grace you are saved. And in union with Christ Jesus he  
 6 raised us up and enthroned us with him in the heavenly realms, so that he might  
 7 display in the ages to come how immense are the resources of his grace, and how great his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by his grace you  
 8 are saved, through trusting him; it is not your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done. There is  
 9 nothing for anyone to boast of. For we are God's handiwork, created in  
 10 Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us.

Remember then your former con-  
 11 dition: you, Gentiles as you are outwardly,<sup>e</sup> you, 'the uncircumcised' so called by those who are called 'the circumcised' (but only with reference to an outward rite)—you were at that  
 12 time separate from Christ, strangers

<sup>d</sup> Or as supreme head to the church, which is his body and as such holds within it the fullness of him who fills the universe in all its parts; or as supreme head to the church which is his body, and to be all that he himself is who fills the universe in all its parts.  
<sup>e</sup> Or by birth.

## 2 TIME WAS WHEN YOU WERE DEAD IN

converts (*became . . . Christ*). *Seal . . . Holy Spirit* means baptism. **14:** *The pledge:* see 2 Cor. 5.5 n. The present possession of the Spirit is the guarantee of the coming full possession of their *heritage*. Then the redemption of God's people will be complete.

**1.15–23: Thanksgiving and prayer.** **20:** *Enthroned at his right hand:* see Ps.110.1; the NT frequently applies this OT verse to the ascended Christ (e.g. Acts 2.33–34). **21:** *Government . . . authority . . . title:* see 1 Cor.2.6–8 n.; Col.1.16. **22–23:** *Head, body:* see Col.1.18 n. The *subjection* of all to Christ is expressed by a paraphrase of Ps.8.6, one of the favorite proof texts of the early church; compare 1 Cor.15.27. On Christ as the *fullness* of God, see Col.1.19 n. Here the church is conceived of as the fullness of Christ.

**2.1–10: The passage from "death" to "life."** **2:** Compare 1 Cor.2.12; 2 Cor.4.4; Gal.1.4. The *commander* is Satan. An extrabiblical book (see 2 Enoch 29.5) regarded the *air* as Satan's dwelling place. **8–10:** The emphasis on *grace* is in conformity with Paul's teaching. But the view here (and in v. 5) that salvation is already accomplished diverges from normal Pauline thought in which salvation belongs to the future (Rom.5.10) or is at most only in process (see 1 Cor.1.18). Such differences may support the opinion that Ephesians is a late product of a Pauline "school" (see Introduction).

**2.11–22: The unity of all mankind in Christ.** **14–15:** The Mosaic Law had been a *dividing wall*

to the community of Israel, outside God's covenants and the promise that goes with them. Your world was a world  
 13 without hope and without God. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ's  
 14 blood. For he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making  
 16 peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity.<sup>f</sup>

17 So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near by; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit.  
 19 Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God's people, members of God's household. You are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the foundation-stone.<sup>g</sup> In him the whole building<sup>h</sup> is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you too are being built with all the rest into a spiritual dwelling for God.

3 WITH THIS IN MIND I MAKE MY PRAYER, I, Paul, who in the cause of you Gentiles am now the prisoner of Christ Jesus—  
 2 for surely you have heard how God has assigned the gift of his grace to me  
 3 for your benefit. It was by a revelation that his secret was made known to me.

I have already written a brief account of this, and by reading it you may perceive that I understand the secret of Christ. In former generations this was  
 5 not disclosed to the human race; but now it has been revealed by inspiration to his dedicated apostles and prophets, that through the Gospel the Gentiles  
 6 are joint heirs with the Jews, part of the same body, sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus. Such is  
 7 the gospel of which I was made a minister, by God's gift, bestowed unmerited on me in the working of his power. To me, who am less than the  
 8 least of all God's people, he has granted of his grace the privilege of proclaiming to the Gentiles the good news of the unfathomable riches of Christ, and of  
 9 bringing to light how this hidden purpose was to be put into effect. It was hidden for long ages in God the creator of the universe, in order that now,  
 10 through the church, the wisdom of God in all its varied forms might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the realms of heaven. This is in accord  
 11 with his age-long purpose, which he achieved in Christ Jesus our Lord. In  
 12 him we have access to God with freedom, in the confidence born of trust in him. I beg you, then, not to lose heart  
 13 over my sufferings for you; indeed, they are your glory.

With this in mind, then, I kneel in  
 14 prayer to the Father, from whom every family<sup>i</sup> in heaven and on earth takes its name, that out of the treasures of his  
 16 glory he may grant you strength and power through his Spirit in your inner

<sup>f</sup> Or . . . cross. Thus in his own person he put the enmity to death.

<sup>g</sup> Or built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the keystone.

<sup>h</sup> Or every structure.  
<sup>i</sup> Or his whole family.

between Jew and Gentile. *A single new humanity*: lit. one new man. 17: See Isa.57.19. 20: The symbolism changes abruptly from that of a body (v. 16; 1.22-23) to that of a building (vv. 20-22). *Foundation-stone*: see Isa.28.16; Ps.118.22; compare Mt.21.42 and parallels.

3.1-13: Paul's apostolate. 1: *Prisoner*: see Introduction. 3: *Revelation*: see Gal.1.15-16. The *brief account* probably refers not to an earlier letter, but to 2.11-22. 5-6: *Revealed . . . apostles*: some take this passage as an indication that Paul did not write the letter (see Introduction), because in Gal.2.8-9 he distinguishes between his commission to preach to the Gentiles and that of the Jerusalem apostles to preach to the Jews (compare Rom.11.13). *Prophets*: see 1 Cor.12.28; Rom.12.6. The secret, *now . . . revealed*, is that the Gentiles are one with the Jews in the *body* of Christ, the church. 10: The secret is not only to be made known on earth but also among the angelic powers (see Col.1.16 n.); this is to be done by *the church*, which has a heavenly dimension. See 6.12.

3.14-21: *Prayer and doxology*. 14-15: A play on the Gk. words for *father* (*pater*) and *family* (*patria*) stresses the relationship of God to all his creation. The families *in heaven* are the angels.

17 being, that through faith Christ may  
 dwell in your hearts in love. With deep  
 18 roots and firm foundations, may you  
 be strong to grasp, with all God's  
 19 people, what is the breadth and length  
 and height and depth of the love of  
 Christ, and to know it, though it is  
 beyond knowledge. So may you attain  
 to fullness of being, the fullness of God  
 himself.<sup>j</sup>

20 Now to him who is able to do im-  
 measurably more than all we can ask  
 or conceive, by the power which is at  
 21 work among us, to him be glory in the  
 church and in Christ Jesus from  
 generation to generation evermore!  
 Amen.

4 I ENTREAT YOU, THEN—I, A PRISONER  
 for the Lord's sake: as God has called  
 2 you, live up to your calling. Be humble  
 always and gentle, and patient too.  
 Be forbearing with one another and  
 3 charitable. Spare no effort to make fast  
 with bonds of peace the unity which  
 4 the Spirit gives. There is one body and  
 one Spirit, as there is also one hope held  
 5 out in God's call to you; one Lord, one  
 6 faith, one baptism; one God and Father  
 of all, who is over all and through all  
 and in all.

7 But each of us has been given his gift,  
 his due portion of Christ's bounty.  
 8 Therefore Scripture says:

'He ascended into the heights  
 with captives in his train;  
 he gave gifts to men.'

9 Now, the word 'ascended' implies  
 that he also descended to the lowest  
 10 level, down to the very earth.<sup>k</sup> He who  
 descended is no other than he who  
 ascended far above all heavens, so that  
 11 he might fill the universe. And these  
 were his gifts: some to be apostles, some  
 prophets, some evangelists, some

pastors and teachers, to equip God's  
 12 people for work in his service, to the  
 building up of the body of Christ. So  
 13 shall we all at last attain to the unity  
 inherent in our faith and our knowl-  
 edge of the Son of God—to mature  
 manhood, measured by nothing less  
 than the full stature of Christ. We are  
 14 no longer to be children, tossed by the  
 waves and whirled about by every fresh  
 gust of teaching, dupes of crafty rogues  
 and their deceitful schemes. No, let us  
 15 speak the truth in love; so shall we fully  
 grow up into Christ. He is the head,  
 and on him the whole body depends.  
 16 Bonded and knit together by every  
 constituent joint, the whole frame  
 grows through the due activity of each  
 part, and builds itself up in love.

This then is my word to you, and I  
 17 urge it upon you in the Lord's name.  
 Give up living like pagans with their  
 good-for-nothing notions. Their wits  
 18 are beclouded, they are strangers to the  
 life that is in God, because ignorance  
 prevails among them and their minds  
 have grown hard as stone. Dead to all  
 19 feeling, they have abandoned them-  
 selves to vice, and stop at nothing to  
 satisfy their foul desires. But that is not  
 20 how you learned Christ. For were you  
 not told of him, were you not as Chris-  
 21 tians taught the truth as it is in Jesus?  
 —that, leaving your former way of life,  
 22 you must lay aside that old human  
 nature which, deluded by its lusts, is  
 sinking towards death. You must be  
 23 made new in mind and spirit, and put  
 on the new nature of God's creating,  
 24 which shows itself in the just and de-  
 vout life called for by the truth.

Then throw off falsehood; speak the  
 25 truth to each other, for all of us are the  
 parts of one body.

If you are angry, do not let anger 26

<sup>j</sup> Or the fullness which God requires.

<sup>k</sup> Or descended to the regions beneath the earth.

21: This juxtaposition of *the church* and *Christ Jesus* is unique in the NT; yet, it flows naturally from the image of the *church* as the body of *Christ*.

4.1–16: **Christian unity.** 1: *Prisoner*: see Introduction. 7: The rich variety of individual gifts contributes to the unity of the church. 8–9: *Captives in his train*: the author means the angelic powers; see Col.2.15. In the manner of rabbinic exegesis, the wording of Ps.68.18 is altered to accommodate it to its new interpretation; the "ascent" is applied to Christ and is understood as implying a prior "descent" in the incarnation. Less probably, even the translation of Tfn. *k* might be adopted, in which case a "descent into hell" would be involved; compare I Pet. 3.19–20 n. 11–13: His *gifts* are the ministries of the church. *Evangelists*: missionary preachers.

4.17–5.20: **Exhortation to the Christian life.** 21: *The truth* may refer to the inherited teachings



lead you into sin; do not let sunset find  
27 you still nursing it; leave no loop-hole  
for the devil.

28 The thief must give up stealing, and  
instead work hard and honestly with  
his own hands, so that he may have  
something to share with the needy.

29 No bad language must pass your lips,  
but only what is good and helpful to the  
occasion, so that it brings a blessing to  
30 those who hear it. And do not grieve  
the Holy Spirit of God, for that Spirit  
is the seal with which you were marked  
31 for the day of our final liberation. Have  
done with spite and passion, all angry  
shouting and cursing, and bad feeling  
of every kind.

32 Be generous to one another, tender-  
hearted, forgiving one another as God  
in Christ forgave you.

5 In a word, as God's dear children,  
2 try to be like him, and live in love as  
Christ loved you, and gave himself up  
on your behalf as an offering and  
sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to  
God.

3 Fornication and indecency of any  
kind, or ruthless greed, must not be so  
much as mentioned among you, as befits  
4 the people of God. No coarse, stupid,  
or flippant talk; these things are out of  
place; you should rather be thanking  
5 God. For be very sure of this: no one  
given to fornication or indecency, or  
the greed which makes an idol of gain,  
has any share in the kingdom of Christ  
and of God.

6 Let no one deceive you with shallow  
arguments; it is for all these things that  
God's dreadful judgement is coming  
7 upon his rebel subjects. Have no part  
or lot with them. For though you were  
8 once all darkness, now as Christians  
you are light. Live like men who are at  
9 home in daylight, for where light is,  
there all goodness springs up, all justice  
10 and truth. Try to find out what would  
11 please the Lord; take no part in the  
barren deeds of darkness, but show

them up for what they are. The things 12  
they do in secret it would be shameful  
even to mention. But everything, when 13  
once the light has shown it up, is illu-  
minated, and everything thus illumined  
is all light. And so the hymn says: 14

'Awake, sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine upon you.'

Be most careful then how you con- 15  
duct yourselves: like sensible men, not  
like simpletons. Use the present op- 16  
portunity to the full, for these are evil  
days. So do not be fools, but try to 17  
understand what the will of the Lord is.  
Do not give way to drunkenness and 18  
the dissipation that goes with it, but  
let the Holy Spirit fill you: speak to 19  
one another in psalms, hymns, and<sup>l</sup>  
songs; sing and make music in your  
hearts to the Lord; and in the name 20  
of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks  
every day for everything to our God  
and Father.

Be subject to one another out of 21  
reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands 22  
as to the Lord; for the man is the head 23  
as to the Lord; just as Christ also is the  
head of the church. Christ is, indeed, the 24  
Saviour of the body; but just as the  
church is subject to Christ, so must wo- 25  
men be to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ 26  
also loved the church and gave himself  
up for it, to consecrate it, cleansing it 27  
by water and word, so that he might  
present the church to himself all  
glorious, with no stain or wrinkle or  
anything of the sort, but holy and with- 28  
out blemish. In the same way men also  
are bound to love their wives, as they  
love their own bodies. In loving his  
wife a man loves himself. For no one 29  
ever hated his own body: on the con-  
trary, he provides and cares for it; and

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses insert spiritual, as in Colossians 3. 16.

of the historical Jesus. 5.1-2: *Like him*: lit. imitators of God. *Fragrance . . . pleasing to God*: see Lev.2.9. 8: *Darkness . . . light*: see 1 Th.5.4-7 n. 14: These lines (compare Isa.60.1) may have been drawn from an early Christian baptismal hymn; see v. 19.

5.21-6.9: *Christian domestic life*. The Christianizing of the lists of household virtues (see Col.3.18-4.1 n.) is especially clear here in the treatment of marriage. 26: Baptism is seen as the nuptial bath preparing the bride for her husband. The *word* may refer to the liturgical formula, including the invocation of the name of Jesus, pronounced over the candidate at baptism;

that is how Christ treats the church, because it is his body, of which we are living parts. Thus it is that (in the words of Scripture) 'a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'. It is a great truth that is hidden here. I for my part refer it to Christ and to the church, but it applies also individually: each of you must love his wife as his very self; and the woman must see to it that she pays her husband all respect.

Children, obey your parents, for it is right that you should. 'Honour your father and mother' is the first commandment with a promise attached, in the words: 'that it may be well with you and that you may live long in the land'.

You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, single-mindedly, as serving Christ. Do not offer merely the outward show of service, to curry favour with men, but, as slaves of Christ, do whole-heartedly the will of God. Give the cheerful service of those who serve the Lord, not men. For you know that whatever good each man may do, slave or free, will be repaid him by the Lord.

You masters, also, must do the same by them. Give up using threats; remember you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favourites.

Finally then, find your strength in the Lord, in his mighty power. Put on all the armour which God provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil. For our fight

is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. Therefore, take up God's armour; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand. Stand firm, I say. Fasten on the belt of truth; for coat of mail put on integrity; let the shoes on your feet be the gospel of peace, to give you firm footing; and, with all these, take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take salvation for helmet; for sword, take which the Spirit gives you—the words that come from God. Give yourselves wholly to prayer and entreaty; pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit. To this end keep watch and persevere, always interceding for all God's people; and pray for me, that I may be granted the right words when I open my mouth, and may boldly and freely make known his hidden purpose, for which I am an ambassador—in chains. Pray that I may speak of it boldly, as it is my duty to speak.

You will want to know about my affairs, and how I am; Tychicus will give you all the news. He is our dear brother and trustworthy helper in the Lord's work. I am sending him to you on purpose to let you know all about us, and to put fresh heart into you.

Peace to the brotherhood and love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, grace and immortality.<sup>m</sup>

*m Or who love . . . Christ with love imperishable.*

see 1 Cor.6.11. 31: See Gen.2.24. 32–33: The *great truth . . . hidden* is that Gen.2.24 can be taken to allude to the union of Christ and the church in one body; but the verse *applies also individually*, that is, it also speaks directly to the duty of a husband to love his wife as himself.

6.10–20: *The Christian battle*. 11,13–17: *Armour*: see 1 Th.5.8 n. 12: *Cosmic powers*: see 1 Cor.2.6–8 n.; Col.1.6 n. 20: *In chains*: a prisoner; see Introduction.

6.21–24: *Final greetings and blessing*. 21: *Tychicus*: a companion of Paul; see Col.4.7–8.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The church of Philippi was the first Paul founded on the continent of Europe (Acts 16.11-40; 1 Th.2.2). His cordial relations with it can be seen from the unusual warmth of this letter and from the fact that it was the only one of his churches from which he accepted support (Phil.4.15-16).

The letter was written from prison (1.7,13,17) and together with Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon makes up the group known as the Captivity Letters. Two major imprisonments of Paul are recorded in Acts, one at Caesarea (23.33-26.32), the other at Rome (28.16-31), and Rome has traditionally been identified as the place from which Philippians was written.

However, the differences in thought between Colossians (also usually assigned to the Roman imprisonment) and Philippians make it difficult to ascribe both of these letters to the same period. Moreover, Philippians speaks of four journeys made by friends between the place of Paul's imprisonment and Philippi and of a fifth which is about to take place (2.25-26)—an unlikely number considering the great distance between Rome and Philippi. On the other hand, if one of Paul's many imprisonments (2 Cor.11.23) occurred during his three-year stay at Ephesus (Acts 20.31), so many trips are easier to understand; Ephesus and Philippi were only about ten days apart. Inscriptions discovered at Ephesus show that members of the Praetorian Guard and of the imperial establishment were stationed in the Roman province of Asia; consequently, the references in 1.13 and 4.22 are as consistent with an origin in Ephesus as in Rome.

If composition at Ephesus is accepted, Philippians belongs to the period of Paul's "third missionary journey," and may be dated around 56 A.D.

It is not certain that the present document was always a unit; it may have been assembled from as many as three originally distinct letters: a note of thanks for the gift sent through Epaphroditus (4.10-20); a letter motivated by Paul's concern for the church in the face of potentially disruptive persons whose position is not clearly defined (1.1-3.1a; 4.2-9, 21-23); and a letter warning against false teachers about whose doctrines the apostle has become better informed (3.1b-4.1).

## *The apostle and his friends*

1 FROM PAUL AND TIMOTHY, SERVANTS of Christ Jesus, to all those of God's people, incorporate in Christ Jesus, who live at Philippi, including their bishops and deacons.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God whenever I think of you; and when I pray for you all, my prayers are always joyful, because of the part you have taken in the work of the Gospel from the first day until now.

6 Of one thing I am certain: the One who started the good work in you will bring it to completion by the Day of Christ

7 Jesus. It is indeed only right that I should feel like this about you all, be-

cause you hold me in such affection, and because, when I lie in prison or appear in the dock to vouch for the truth of the Gospel, you all share in the privilege that is mine.<sup>a</sup> God knows how I long for you all, with the deep yearning of Christ Jesus himself. And this is my prayer, that your love may grow ever richer and richer in knowledge and insight of every kind, and may thus bring you the gift of true discrimination.<sup>b</sup> Then on the Day of Christ you will be flawless and without blame, reaping the full harvest of righteousness

<sup>a</sup> Or I am justified in taking this view about you all, because I hold you in closest union, as those who, when I lie . . . of the Gospel, all share in the privilege that is mine.

<sup>b</sup> Or may teach you by experience what things are most worth while.

1.1-2: **Greeting.** 1: *Bishops and deacons* are mentioned only here in the certainly authentic letters of Paul. (The Pastoral Epistles are sometimes regarded as not by Paul; see Introduction to 1 Tim.). Later ecclesiastical developments should not be read into the terms here. Bishops (lit. "overseers") are those who exercise supervision; deacons are probably their assistants.

1.3-11: **Thanksgiving and prayer.** 3: *The part you have taken*: their support of Paul; see 2.25; 4.15-16. 6: *The Day of Christ Jesus*: the Parousia; see 1 Th.2.19 n. 7: *Prison*: see Introduction. 11: *The harvest* does not consist in *righteousness* but is produced by it, and Jesus is its source.

that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

12 Friends, I want you to understand that the work of the Gospel has been helped on, rather than hindered, by this  
13 business of mine. My imprisonment in Christ's cause has become common knowledge to all at headquarters<sup>c</sup> here, and indeed among the public at large;  
14 and it has given confidence to most of our fellow-Christians to speak the word of God fearlessly and with extraordinary courage.

15 Some, indeed, proclaim Christ in a jealous and quarrelsome spirit; others  
16 proclaim him in true goodwill, and these are moved by love for me; they know that it is to defend the Gospel  
17 that I am where I am. But the others, moved by personal rivalry, present Christ from mixed motives, meaning  
18 to stir up fresh trouble for me as I lie in prison.<sup>d</sup> What does it matter? One way or another, in pretence or sincerity, Christ is set forth, and for that I rejoice.

19 Yes, and rejoice I will, knowing well that the issue of it all will be my deliverance, because you are praying for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is given  
20 me for support.<sup>e</sup> For, as I passionately hope, I shall have no cause to be ashamed, but shall speak so boldly that now as always the greatness of Christ will shine out clearly in my person, whether through my life or through my  
21 death. For to me life is Christ, and death gain; but what if my living on in the  
22 body may serve some good purpose? Which then am I to choose? I cannot  
23 tell. I am torn two ways: what I should like is to depart and be with  
24 Christ; that is better by far; but for your sake there is greater need for me to stay

on in the body. This indeed I know for  
25 certain: I shall stay, and stand by you all to help you forward and to add joy  
26 to your faith, so that when I am with you again, your pride in me may be unbounded in Christ Jesus.

Only, let your conduct be worthy of  
27 the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you for myself or hear about you from a distance, I may know that you are standing firm, one in spirit, one in mind, contending as one man for the gospel faith, meeting your opponents  
28 without so much as a tremor. This is a sure sign to them that their doom is sealed, but a sign of your salvation, and one afforded by God himself; for you have been granted the  
29 privilege not only of believing in Christ but also of suffering for him. You and  
30 I are engaged in the same contest; you saw me in it once, and, as you hear, I am in it still.

IF THEN OUR COMMON LIFE IN CHRIST  
2 yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by  
2 thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity. There must be no room for rivalry and  
3 personal vanity among you, but you must humbly reckon others better than yourselves. Look to each other's  
4 interest and not merely to your own.

Let your bearing towards one another  
5 arise out of your life in Christ

<sup>c</sup> Or to all the imperial guard, or to all at the Residency (Greek Praetorium).

<sup>d</sup> Or meaning to make use of my imprisonment to stir up fresh trouble.

<sup>e</sup> Or supplies me with all I need.

1.12-30: Paul's situation and prospects. 13: *Headquarters* may mean the residence of the provincial governor (see Acts 23.25) or the headquarters of the Praetorian Guard in Rome; see Tfn. c. 15-18: In contrast to the situation in Corinth, where doctrinal differences occasioned factionalism, here the rivalry of those who proclaim Christ in a jealous . . . spirit seems to be personal. 19: Whether *deliverance* here means ultimate salvation or only release from prison is uncertain; as vv. 20,25-26 show, Paul views both freedom and execution as possible outcomes of his situation. 21: See Gal.2.20. 22: *Death is gain* for it will make Paul's union with Christ even closer (v. 23). Here Paul views the state of the Christian between his death and the Parousia as superior to life in the world. This view does not contradict, but rather complements the futuristic resurrection hope expressed in 3.21. 28: *Opponents*: in 3.1-11 they are "Judaizers," that is, Christians who advocated the observance of Jewish Law by Christians; here they are outsiders, pagans who denied the religious hopes and contentions of Christians, or scorned Christians for their way of life.

2.1-11: *Call to unity and humility*. Except for what appears to be a minor disagreement mentioned in 4.2, the church of Philippi seems to have been an unusually harmonious con-

6 Jesus.<sup>f</sup> For the divine nature was his  
 7 from the first; yet he did not think to  
 8 snatch at equality with God,<sup>g</sup> but made  
 9 himself nothing, assuming the nature  
 10 of a slave. Bearing the human likeness,  
 11 revealed in human shape, he humbled  
 12 himself, and in obedience accepted  
 13 even death—death on a cross. There-  
 14 fore God raised him to the heights and  
 15 bestowed on him the name above all  
 16 names, that at the name of Jesus every  
 17 knee should bow—in heaven, on earth,  
 18 and in the depths—and every tongue  
 19 confess, 'Jesus Christ is Lord', to the  
 20 glory of God the Father.  
 21 So you too, my friends, must be  
 22 obedient, as always; even more, now  
 23 that I am away, than when I was with  
 24 you. You must work out your own  
 25 salvation in fear and trembling; for it is  
 26 God who works in you, inspiring both  
 27 the will and the deed, for his own  
 28 chosen purpose.  
 29 Do all you have to do without com-  
 30 plaint or wrangling. Show yourselves  
 31 guileless and above reproach, faultless  
 32 children of God in a warped and  
 33 crooked generation, in which you  
 34 shine<sup>h</sup> like stars in a dark world<sup>i</sup> and  
 35 proffer the world of life.<sup>j</sup> Thus you will  
 36 be my pride on the Day of Christ, proof  
 37 that I did not run my race in vain, or  
 38 work in vain. But if my life-blood is to  
 39 crown that sacrifice which is the offer-  
 40 ing up of your faith, I am glad of it,  
 41 and I share my gladness with you all.

Rejoice, you no less than I, and let us  
 share our joy. 18

I HOPE (UNDER THE LORD JESUS) TO SEND 19  
 Timothy to you soon; it will cheer me  
 to hear news of you. There is no one else 20  
 here who sees things as I do, and takes<sup>k</sup>  
 a genuine interest in your concerns;  
 they are all bent on their own ends, not 21  
 on the cause of Christ Jesus. But 22  
 Timothy's record is known to you: you  
 know that he has been at my side in the  
 service of the Gospel like a son work-  
 ing under his father. Timothy, then, 23  
 I hope to send as soon as ever I can see  
 how things are going with me; and I 24  
 am confident, under the Lord, that I  
 shall myself be coming before long.

I feel also I must send our brother 25  
 Epaphroditus, my fellow-worker and  
 comrade, whom you commissioned to  
 minister to my needs. He has been miss- 26  
 ing all of you sadly, and has been  
 distressed that you heard he was ill.  
 (He was indeed dangerously ill, but 27  
 God was merciful to him, and merciful  
 no less to me, to spare me sorrow upon  
 sorrow.) For this reason I am all the 28  
 more eager to send him, to give you the  
 happiness of seeing him again, and to  
 relieve my sorrow. Welcome him then 29

<sup>f</sup> Or Have that bearing towards one another which was also found in Christ Jesus.

<sup>g</sup> Or yet he did not prize his equality with God.

<sup>h</sup> Or ... generation. Shine out among them ...

<sup>i</sup> Or in the firmament.

<sup>j</sup> Or as the very principle of its life.

<sup>k</sup> Or no one else here like him, who takes ...

gregation. The tone here suggests not the presence of factions, but the apostle's encouragement of a healthy community spirit. 6-11: In the view of most scholars, Paul has here incorporated into his letter an ancient Christian hymn. The hymn exalts the saving work of Christ. But because it speaks of a Christ who *made himself nothing* (v. 7) and *humbled himself* (v. 8), Paul quotes it to set forth Christ as the primary example of the humility which he here urges upon the Philippians. The hymn consists of two strophes, vv. 6-8 and 9-11; the words *death on a cross* (v. 8) were probably added by Paul. The first strophe presents a downward movement, from heavenly preexistence to human life; the second describes the exaltation of the obedient Jesus. 6: The alternative translation, *yet he did not prize his equality with God* (see Tfn. g), fits the first part of the verse best. 7: *Made himself nothing* (lit. emptied himself): instead of clinging to a divine state of existence he assumed that of a *slave* in the incarnation. 8: The phrases *bearing the human likeness* and *revealed in human shape* are probably intended to suggest that, while truly a man, he was something more, i.e. the preexistent being who possessed "the divine nature ... from the first" (v. 6). 9: *Raised him to the heights*: a contrast to the "he humbled himself" of v. 8. *The name above all names*: the title "Lord." 10-11: *Heaven, earth, the depths* probably reflect a view of a three-tiered universe ruled by angelic spirits who join in confessing Jesus' lordship.

2.12-18: *The work of salvation*. 12-13: *Fear and trembling*: a reverential attitude, since the work of *salvation* with which they must cooperate is actually the work of God. 17: Paul again speaks of the possibility of his execution. In relation to the Philippians' *faith*, which is spoken of as a sacrificial gift (see Rom.12.1), his own blood, shed in execution, would be like the drink-offering poured out to *crown that sacrifice*, as in Exod.29.40; Num.28.7. Through it all Paul hopes he will live to see the Day of Christ, i.e. the Second Coming (v. 16).

2.19-3.1a: *Timothy and Epaphroditus*. 19: *Timothy*: see 1 Cor.16.10 n. 29: See 1 Cor.16.18.

in the fellowship of the Lord with wholehearted delight. You should honour men like him; in Christ's cause he came near to death, risking his life to render me the service you could not give.

3 And now, friends, farewell; I wish you joy in the Lord.

TO REPEAT WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN TO you before is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of those dogs and their malpractices. Beware of those who insist on mutilation—'circumcision' I will not call it; we are the circumcised, we whose worship is spiritual,<sup>l</sup> whose pride is in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in anything external. Not that I am without grounds myself even for confidence of that kind. If anyone thinks to base his claims on externals, I could make a stronger case for myself: circumcised on my eighth day, Israelite by race, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born and bred;<sup>m</sup> in my attitude to the law, a Pharisee; in pious zeal, a persecutor of the church; in legal rectitude, faultless. But all such assets I have written off because of Christ. I would say more: I count everything sheer loss, because all is far outweighed by the gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I did in fact lose everything. I count it so much garbage,<sup>n</sup> for the sake of gaining Christ and finding myself incorporate in him, with no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude,

but the righteousness which comes<sup>o</sup> from faith in Christ, given by God in response to faith. All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead.

It is not to be thought that I have already achieved all this. I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. My friends, I do not reckon myself to have got hold of it yet. All I can say is this: forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press towards the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus.

Let us then keep to this way of thinking, those of us who are mature. If there is any point on which you think differently, this also God will make plain to you. Only let our conduct be consistent with the level we have already reached.

Agree together, my friends, to follow my example. You have us for a model; watch those whose way of life conforms to it. For, as I have often told you, and now tell you with tears in my eyes, there

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read who worship God in the spirit; others read who worship by the Spirit of God.

<sup>m</sup> Or a Hebrew-speaking Jew of a Hebrew-speaking family.

<sup>n</sup> Or dung.

<sup>o</sup> Or and in him finding that, though I have no righteousness of my own, no legal rectitude, I have the righteousness which comes . . .

30: Epaphroditus' *risking his life* may refer to the illness which he contracted while on his mission to Paul. 3.1a: The *farewell* here, taken with the quite different tone of the ensuing section, suggests that one letter breaks off here and the following is a fragment of another letter.

3.1b-4.1: **Warning against false teachers.** See note on 3.1a. Here Paul's tone is sharp, as he speaks of opponents who threaten the faith of the Philippians. 2: *Dogs* was a Jewish term of contempt for pagans, applied here to those who disturb the peace of the church. These may be Jewish Christian missionaries, as their insistence on *circumcision* suggests. Paul contends that physical circumcision is only *mutilation*. 3: See Jer.4.4; Rom.2.28-29. 4-8: Paul could cite *grounds* . . . for confidence similar to his opponents', but he regards it all as worthless. 5: *Pharisee*: see Mt.3.7 n. 6: *Persecutor*: see Acts 8.3; 9.1; Gal.1.13; 2.23. 9: If in *legal rectitude* he could claim to have been *faultless* (v. 6), Paul's conversion did not arise merely from despair at fulfilling the law as is sometimes supposed. But he now believes that *righteousness*, far from being earned, can only be the gift which God gives to all who believe in Christ. 10: *To know Christ* is to have not merely intellectual knowledge but to *experience his power* and to be united with him by sharing his *sufferings*. 12-13: Paul's statement that he has not *already achieved all this* or *yet reached perfection* may indicate that the false teachers he is opposing have claimed such achievement for themselves. If so, their errors may have included not only Judaizing practices but Gnostic views such as that expressed in 2 Tim.2.18. "Judaizing" alludes to a tendency on the part of Christians to imitate a legalistic Judaism. Gnostics believed themselves to be in possession of a supernatural revelation by which they escaped the bondage of evil, material existence. 15-16: Probably these verses are ironic, directed against those who thought they had already achieved perfection. 17: *My example*: see 1 Cor.11.1. 18-19: *Enemies of the cross*: Paul's

- are many whose way of life makes them  
 19 enemies of the cross of Christ. They are heading for destruction, appetite is their god, and they glory in their shame. Their minds are set on earthly things.  
 20 We, by contrast, are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we expect our deliverer to come, the Lord Jesus Christ.  
 21 He will transfigure the body belonging to our humble state, and give it a form like that of his own resplendent body, by the very power which enables him to make all things subject to himself.  
 4 Therefore, my friends, beloved friends whom I long for, my joy, my crown, stand thus firm in the Lord, my beloved!  
 2 I beg Euodia, and I beg Syntyche, to agree together in the Lord's fellowship.  
 3 Yes, and you too, my loyal comrade, I ask you to help these women, who shared my struggles in the cause of the Gospel, with Clement and my other fellow-workers, whose<sup>p</sup> names are in the roll of the living.  
 4 Farewell; I wish you all joy in the Lord. I will say it again: all joy be yours.  
 5 Let your magnanimity be manifest to all.  
 6 The Lord is near; have no anxiety, but in everything make your requests known to God in prayer and petition  
 7 with thanksgiving. Then the peace of God, which is beyond our utmost understanding,<sup>q</sup> will keep guard over your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.  
 8 And now, my friends, all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious,<sup>r</sup> whatever is excellent and admirable—fill all your thoughts with these things.

The lessons I taught you, the tradi- 9  
 tion I have passed on, all that you heard me say or saw me do, put into practice; and the God of peace will be with you.

IT IS A GREAT JOY TO ME, IN THE LORD, 10  
 that after so long your care for me has now blossomed afresh. You did care about me before for that matter; it was opportunity that you lacked. Not that 11  
 I am alluding to want, for I have learned to find resources in myself whatever my circumstances. I know what it is to be 12  
 brought low, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have been very thoroughly initiated into the human lot with all its ups and downs—fullness and hunger, plenty and want. I have 13  
 strength for anything through him who gives me power. But it was kind of you 14  
 to share the burden of my troubles.

As you know yourselves, Philippians, 15  
 in the early days of my mission, when I set out from Macedonia, you alone of all our congregations were my partners in payments and receipts; for even at 16  
 Thessalonica you contributed to my needs, not once but twice over. Do not 17  
 think I set my heart upon the gift; all I care for is the profit accruing to you. However, here I give you my receipt 18  
 for everything—for more than every-thing; I am paid in full, now that I have received from Epaphroditus what you sent. It is a fragrant offering, an accept- 19  
 able sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your wants out of the magnificence of his riches in

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read my fellow-workers, and the others whose . . .

<sup>q</sup> Or of far more worth than human reasoning.

<sup>r</sup> Or of good repute.

invective is too general (*appetite . . . shame*) for one to deduce what practices are being attacked. 4.2-9: **Final exhortations.** 3: *Comrade*: this translates the Gk. word *syzygos*, which can serve as, and may here be, a proper name. The OT concept of a *roll of the living* from which names were struck out at the time of death (see Exod.32.32; Ps.69.28) is transformed; the roll becomes a list of those who are destined to everlasting life (see Rev.3.5; 13.8). 6: *The Lord is near*: an allusion to the Parousia; see 1 Th.2.19 n.

4.10-20: **Thanks for the Philippians' gift**; see Introduction. 10-14: The main reason for Paul's joy about the gift is its evidence of the Philippians' devotion to him. Without being ungracious, he states that he is indifferent to material wants. 11-13: *To find resources in myself*: lit. to be self-sufficient. This ideal of Greek philosophy is realized by Paul, not by his own efforts, but through God who gives him power (v. 13). 15: Through commercial terms, Paul tells the Philippians that their support of him is payment for the spiritual goods they received through his ministry. *You alone*: only from the Philippians did he accept financial aid. 18: By receipt for everything, Paul acknowledges that he has been paid in full—possibly a delicate indication that he does not expect to receive anything more from them. The gift, now described in terms of OT sacrifice, is a fragrant offering (see Lev.1.9), an acceptable sacrifice (see Lev.1.3).

- 20 Christ Jesus. To our God and Father do all God's people here, particularly  
 be glory for endless ages! Amen. those who belong to the imperial  
 21 Give my greetings, in the fellowship establishment.  
 of Christ Jesus, to each one of God's The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ 23  
 people. The brothers who are now with be with your spirit.  
 22 me send their greetings to you, and so

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4.21–23: Final greetings. 22: *The imperial establishment*: lit. Caesar's household; see Introduction.



# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colossae was a city of the Roman province of Asia, east of Ephesus and near Laodicea and Hierapolis. It had been evangelized by Epaphras (see 1.7). The unity, stability, and survival of the church were threatened by doctrinal diversity, especially by a faction which had blended together with the Christian gospel some pagan and marginal Jewish elements. This amalgam detracted from the uniqueness and supremacy of Christ through the worship of heavenly beings. The principal aim of Colossians is to assert the preeminence of Christ.

Paul's authorship of Colossians is sometimes questioned because of the differences in style, vocabulary, and doctrine between it and his undisputed letters. Those who uphold its authenticity explain these differences as due to the new situation to which he addresses himself and to the maturing of his thought. If authentic, Colossians probably dates from the Roman imprisonment of Paul (61–63 A.D.). The certainly genuine Letter to Philemon has several points of contact with Colossians (see Introduction to Philemon).

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## *The centre of Christian belief*

1 FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS  
2 commissioned by the will of God,  
3 and our colleague Timothy, to  
4 God's people at Colossae, brothers in  
5 the faith, incorporate in Christ.

Grace to you and peace from God  
our Father.

3 In all our prayers to God, the Father  
4 of our Lord Jesus Christ, we thank him  
5 for you, because we have heard of the  
6 faith you hold in Christ Jesus, and the  
7 love you bear towards all God's people.  
8 Both spring from the hope stored up  
9 for you in heaven—that hope of which  
10 you learned when the message of the  
11 true Gospel first came to you. In the  
12 same way it is coming to men the whole  
13 world over; everywhere it is growing  
14 and bearing fruit as it does among you,  
15 and has done since the day when you  
16 heard of the graciousness of God and  
17 recognized it for what in truth it is. You  
18 were taught this by Epaphras, our dear  
19 fellow-servant, a trusted worker for  
20 Christ on our<sup>a</sup> behalf, and it is he who

has brought us the news of your God-  
given love.<sup>b</sup>

9 For this reason, ever since the day  
10 we heard of it, we have not ceased to  
11 pray for you. We ask God that you  
12 may receive from him all wisdom and  
13 spiritual understanding for full insight  
14 into his will, so that your manner of life  
15 may be worthy of the Lord and entirely  
16 pleasing to him. We pray that you may  
17 bear fruit in active goodness of every  
18 kind, and grow in the knowledge of  
19 God. May he strengthen you, in his  
20 glorious might, with ample power to  
meet whatever comes with fortitude,  
patience, and joy; and to give thanks<sup>c</sup>  
to the Father who has made you fit to  
share the heritage of God's people in  
the realm of light,

He rescued us from the domain of  
darkness and brought us away into the  
kingdom of his dear Son, in whom our  
release is secured and our sins forgiven.  
He is the image of the invisible God;

<sup>a</sup> Some witnesses read *your*.

<sup>b</sup> Or *your love within the fellowship of the Spirit*.

<sup>c</sup> Or *with fortitude and patience, and to give joyful thanks . . .*

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1.3–14: **Thanksgiving and prayer.** 9–10: True *wisdom* and *understanding* produce a *worthy manner of life*. Probably there is an implied contrast with the false wisdom which involved the worship of spiritual powers (see 1.16 n.). 12–14: In the OT *the heritage of God's people* was Palestine. Here the *heritage* is *in the realm of light*, i.e. a share in Christ's *kingdom*. As Israel was delivered in the Exodus from Egypt, so too the Christians have been rescued. The words *release* (lit. *redemption*), *heritage*, and *rescued* draw upon the Exodus tradition to interpret Christian experience as release from the *domain of darkness*, i.e. of evil and evil powers.

1.15–20: **A hymn to Christ.** Most scholars agree that these verses are taken over and modified by Paul from an earlier hymn. Hence, many currents of thought, even pagan, are suggested as lying behind the hymn. The dominant source of its themes, however, is probably the OT and noncanonical Jewish Wisdom literature. Israel's developed portrait of divine Wisdom (see Prov.8.22–31; Ecclus.24.1–22) is the forerunner of the portrayal of Christ as creator and redeemer. 15: *The image of the invisible God*: see Wis.7.26. *His is the primacy over all created*

his is the primacy over<sup>d</sup> all created  
 16 things. In him everything in heaven and  
 on earth was created, not only things  
 visible but also the invisible orders of  
 thrones, sovereignties, authorities, and  
 powers: the whole universe has been  
 17 created through him and for him. And  
 he exists before everything, and all  
 18 things are held together in him. He is,  
 moreover, the head of the body, the  
 church. He is its origin, the first to  
 return from the dead, to be in all things  
 19 alone supreme. For in him the com-  
 plete being of God, by God's own  
 20 choice, came to dwell. Through him  
 God chose to reconcile the whole  
 universe to himself, making peace  
 through the shedding of his blood upon  
 the cross—to reconcile all things,  
 whether on earth or in heaven, through  
 him alone.

21 Formerly you were yourselves  
 estranged from God; you were his  
 enemies in heart and mind, and your  
 22 deeds were evil. But now by Christ's  
 death in his body of flesh and blood  
 God has reconciled you to himself, so  
 that he may present you before himself  
 23 innocent in his sight. Only you must  
 continue in your faith, firm on your  
 foundations, never to be dislodged  
 from the hope offered in the gospel  
 which you heard. This is the gospel  
 which has been proclaimed in the whole

creation under heaven; and I, Paul,  
 have become its minister.

It is now my happiness to suffer for 24  
 you. This is my way of helping to com-  
 plete, in my poor human flesh, the full  
 tale of Christ's afflictions still to be en-  
 dured, for the sake of his body which  
 is the church. I became its servant by 25  
 virtue of the task assigned to me by  
 God for your benefit: to deliver his mes-  
 sage in full; to announce the secret hid- 26  
 den for long ages and through many  
 generations, but now disclosed to God's  
 people, to whom it was his will to make 27  
 it known—to make known how rich  
 and glorious it is among all nations.  
 The secret is this: Christ in<sup>e</sup> you, the  
 hope of a glory to come.

He it is whom we proclaim. We ad- 28  
 monish everyone without distinction,  
 we instruct everyone in all the ways of  
 wisdom, so as to present each one of  
 you as a mature member of Christ's  
 body. To this end I am toiling stren- 29  
 uously with all the energy and power  
 of Christ at work in me. For I want you 2  
 to know how strenuous are my exer-  
 tions for you and the Laodiceans and  
 all who have never set eyes on me. I 2  
 want them to continue in good heart  
 and in the unity of love, and to come  
 to the full wealth of conviction which  
 understanding brings, and grasp God's

<sup>d</sup> Or image of the invisible God, born before . . .  
<sup>e</sup> Or among.

*things*: see Prov.8.22. 16: Since all else was created through him (see Wis.7.22) and for him, he is superior to all, as the source and end of their being. *Invisible orders*: in the religious currents of the time, it was believed that many divine beings (*thrones, sovereignties, authorities, and powers*) existed; in some thought, these were represented as angelic beings (compare 1 Cor. 2.6-8 n.). The passage subordinates such spiritual beings to Christ, for they too are created things (v. 15). 18: In the earlier Pauline letters Christ and Christians form one body (see 1 Cor.12.12); in Col. and Eph. a distinction is made between the *body* (the church) and its *head* (Christ). Also distinctive is the fact that here *church* means the entire Christian community, not simply a local church as in the earlier Pauline usage. *The first to return from the dead*: lit. the firstborn from the dead. 19: *The complete being of God*: lit. the entire fullness. This has been interpreted by some scholars as a rebuttal of the notion that God's attributes were distributed among many angelic beings who mediate between God and man. Others doubt that that concept was current so early as to have called forth a rebuttal from Paul. 20: *The whole universe* is understood as having been estranged from God, and rebellious; this estrangement has been overcome by the reconciliation effected by the death of Christ (*the shedding of his blood upon the cross*).

1.21-23: **The reconciled community.** The universal reconciliation (1.20) is here applied to the local church. 22: *Without blemish*: the phrase draws on OT sacrificial requirements (Exod.12.5; Lev.9.3; and often).

1.24-2.5: **The apostle's suffering and dedication.** 24: The expression *Christ's afflictions still to be endured* does not imply a lack in sufferings of the historical Jesus; rather, these afflictions are to be borne by the apostle and are "Christ's" because they will be endured *for the sake of his body*, i.e. the church. The passage also reflects the apocalyptic notion that God's victory over evil would be preceded by a period of trial and suffering; see Rev.6.11; 1 Th.3.3 n. 2.1: *Laodiceans*: neighbors of the Colossians. 3: The notion that these *treasures lie hidden* in Christ is possibly derived from Prov.2.3-5, which likens wisdom to buried treasure; see also Isa.45.3.

3 secret. That secret is Christ himself; in  
 4 him lie hidden all God's treasures of  
 5 wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this  
 6 to save you from being talked<sup>f</sup> into error  
 7 by specious arguments. For though ab-  
 8 sent in body, I am with you in spirit,  
 9 and rejoice to see your orderly array  
 10 and the firm front which your faith in  
 11 Christ presents.

12 THEREFORE, SINCE JESUS WAS DELIVERED  
 13 to you as Christ and Lord, live your  
 14 lives in union with him. Be rooted in  
 15 him; be built in him; be consolidated  
 16 in the faith you were taught;<sup>g</sup> let your  
 17 hearts overflow with thankfulness. Be  
 18 on your guard; do not let your minds  
 19 be captured by hollow and delusive  
 20 speculations, based on traditions of  
 21 man-made teaching and centred on the  
 22 elemental spirits of the universe<sup>h</sup> and  
 23 not on Christ.

24 For it is in Christ that the complete  
 25 being of the Godhead dwells embodied,<sup>i</sup>  
 26 and in him you have been brought to  
 27 completion. Every power and authority  
 28 in the universe is subject to him as  
 29 Head. In him also you were circum-  
 30 cised, not in a physical sense, but by  
 31 being divested of the lower nature;  
 32 this is Christ's way of circumcision.

33 For in baptism<sup>j</sup> you were buried with  
 34 him, in baptism also you were raised to  
 35 life with him through your faith in the  
 36 active power of God who raised him  
 37 from the dead. And although you were  
 38 dead because of your sins and because  
 39 you were morally uncircumcised, he  
 40 has made you alive with Christ. For  
 41 he has forgiven us all our sins; he has  
 42 cancelled the bond which pledged us  
 43 to the decrees of the law. It stood  
 44 against us, but he has set it aside, nail-  
 45 ing it to the cross. On that cross he  
 46 discarded the cosmic powers and  
 47 authorities like a garment; he made a  
 48 public spectacle of them and led them<sup>k</sup>  
 49 as captives in his triumphal procession.

16 ALLOW NO ONE THEREFORE TO TAKE YOU  
 17 to task about what you eat or drink, or  
 18 over the observance of festival, new  
 19 moon, or sabbath. These are no more  
 20 than a shadow of what was to come;  
 21 the solid reality is Christ's. You are not  
 22 to be disqualified by the decision of  
 23 people who go in for self-mortification  
 24 and angel-worship, and try to enter into  
 25 some vision of their own. Such people,  
 26 bursting with the futile conceit of  
 27 worldly minds, lose hold upon the  
 28 Head; yet it is from the Head that the  
 29 whole body, with all its joints and liga-  
 30 ments, receives its supplies, and thus  
 31 knit together grows according to God's  
 32 design.

33 Did you not die with Christ and pass  
 34 beyond reach of the elemental spirits of  
 35 the universe<sup>l</sup>? Then why behave as  
 36 though you were still living the life of  
 37 the world? Why let people dictate to  
 38 you: 'Do not handle this, do not taste  
 39 that, do not touch the other'<sup>m</sup>—all of  
 40 them things that must perish as soon  
 41 as they are used? That is to follow  
 42 merely human injunctions and teaching.  
 43 True, it has an air of wisdom, with its  
 44 forced piety, its self-mortification, and  
 45 its severity to the body; but it is of no  
 46 use at all in combating sensuality.

47 Were you not raised to life with  
 48 Christ? Then aspire to the realm above,  
 49 where Christ is, seated at the right hand  
 50 of God, and let your thoughts dwell on  
 51 that higher realm, not on this earthly  
 52 life. I repeat, you died; and now your  
 53 life lies hidden with Christ in God.

<sup>f</sup> Or What I mean is this: no one must talk you . . .

<sup>g</sup> Or by your faith, as you were taught.

<sup>h</sup> Or the elements of the natural world, or elementary ideas belonging to this world.

<sup>i</sup> Or corporately.

<sup>j</sup> Or . . . nature, in the very circumcision of Christ himself; for in baptism . . .

<sup>k</sup> Or he stripped himself of his physical body, and thereby boldly made a spectacle of the cosmic powers and authorities, and led them . . .; or he despoiled the cosmic powers and authorities, and boldly made a spectacle of them, leading them . . .

<sup>l</sup> Or the elements of the natural world, or elementary ideas belonging to this world.

2.6-23: Warning against false teaching. 8: *The elemental spirits of the universe*: see v. 20; 1 Cor. 2.6-8 n.; Gal. 4.3,9. 11-12: Beyond the partial stripping off of flesh in *circumcision*, *baptism* causes one to be totally divested of *the lower nature* (lit. the body of flesh). 15: Since the angelic powers were thought to be the guardians of the Law (compare Gal. 3.19), its nullification means the end of their dominion. *Captives* were paraded in a public victory celebration; compare Eph. 4.8. 16-18: The false teaching specified in these verses includes both Jewish and pagan religious practices. *To enter into some vision* probably refers to the experience claimed in some pagan mystery cults.

3.1-17: *The demands of life in Christ*. 3: *Died*: abandoned your former life; compare

4 When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then you too will be manifested with him in glory.  
 5 Then put to death those parts of you which belong to the earth—fornication, indecency, lust, foul cravings, and the ruthless greed which is nothing less than idolatry. Because of these, God's dreadful judgement is impending; and in the life you once lived these are the ways you yourselves followed. But now you must yourselves lay aside all anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk—  
 9 have done with them! Stop lying to one another, now that you have discarded the old nature with its deeds and have put on the new nature, which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God.  
 11 There is no question here of Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman; but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Then put on the garments that suit God's chosen people, his own, his beloved: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Be forbearing with one another, and forgiving, where any of you has cause for complaint: you must forgive as the Lord forgave you.  
 14 To crown all, there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole. Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your hearts; to this peace you were called as members of a single body.  
 16 And be filled with gratitude. Let the message of Christ dwell among you in all its richness. Instruct and admonish each other with the utmost wisdom. Sing thankfully in your hearts to God,<sup>m</sup> with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 WIVES, BE SUBJECT TO YOUR HUSBANDS;

that is your Christian duty. Husbands, 19 love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents 20 in everything, for that is pleasing to God and is the Christian way. Fathers, do 21 not exasperate your children, for fear they grow disheartened. Slaves, give 22 entire obedience to your earthly masters, not merely with an outward show of service, to curry favour with men, but with single-mindedness, out of reverence for the Lord. Whatever 23 you are doing, put your whole heart into it, as if you were doing it for the Lord and not for men, knowing that 24 there is a Master who will give you your heritage as a reward for your service. Christ is the Master whose slaves you must be. Dishonesty will 25 be requited, and he has no favourites. Masters, be just and fair to your slaves, 4 knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

Persevere in prayer, with mind awake 2 and thankful heart; and include a 3 prayer for us, that God may give us an opening for preaching, to tell the secret of Christ; that indeed is why I am now in prison. Pray that I may make the 4 secret plain, as it is my duty to do.

Behave wisely towards those outside 5 your own number; use the present opportunity to the full. Let your conversation be always gracious, and never insipid; study how best to talk with each person you meet.

YOU WILL HEAR ALL ABOUT MY AFFAIRS 7 from Tychicus, our dear brother and trustworthy helper and fellow-servant in the Lord's work. I am sending him 8 to you on purpose to let you know all about us and to put fresh heart into you. With him comes Onesimus, our trust- 9 worthy and dear brother, who is one of

*m Some witnesses read the Lord.*

Rom.6.1–11. 4: Although Paul emphasizes the present sharing in Christ's risen life, he nevertheless continues to look forward to the Parousia (see 1 Th.2.19 n.). 5: Paradoxically, those who are in Christ have died (v. 3) but they must *put to death* (give up completely) what is earthly in them. 10: *In the image*: see Gen.1.26–27. 11: *Barbarian*: non-Greek and hence—like a *Scythian*—uncivilized.

3.18–4.1: *Christian domestic ethics*. These counsels are paralleled by the lists of household virtues found in both pagan and Jewish literature. Paul gives them a Christian tone by his additions, such as *out of reverence for the Lord* (v. 22).

4.2–18: *Final admonition, greetings, and blessing*. Among those greeted, note especially *Tychicus* (v. 7), *Onesimus* (v. 9), and *Archippus* (v. 17); see *Philem.1* and *Introduction to Philem*.

yourselves. They will tell you all the  
 news here.  
 10 Aristarchus, Christ's captive like my-  
 self, sends his greetings; so does Mark,  
 the cousin of Barnabas (you have had  
 instructions about him; if he comes,  
 11 make him welcome), and Jesus Justus.  
 Of the Jewish Christians, these are the  
 only ones who work with me for the  
 kingdom of God, and they have been  
 12 a great comfort to me. Greetings from  
 Epaphras, servant of Christ, who is one  
 of yourselves. He prays hard for you all  
 the time, that you may stand fast, ripe  
 in conviction<sup>n</sup> and wholly devoted to  
 13 doing God's will. For I can vouch for  
 him, that he works tirelessly for you  
 and the people at Laodicea and Hiera-

polis. Greetings to you from our dear 14  
 friend Luke, the doctor, and from  
 Demas. Give our greetings to the 15  
 brothers at Laodicea, and Nympha and  
 the congregation at her house.<sup>o</sup> And 16  
 when this letter is read among you, see  
 that it is also read to the congregation  
 at Laodicea, and that you in return  
 read the one from Laodicea. This 17  
 special word to Archippus: 'Attend to  
 the duty entrusted to you in the Lord's  
 service, and discharge it to the full.'

This greeting is in my own hand— 18  
 PAUL. Remember I am in prison. God's  
 grace be with you.

*n* Or stand fast, mature and complete . . .

*o* Some witnesses read Nymphas and the congregation at his house.

# THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

According to Acts 17.1–18.5, Paul came to Thessalonica (modern Salonica) with Silas and Timothy during his second missionary journey, after leaving Philippi. His stay of three weeks was spent in preaching the messiahship of Jesus in the local synagogue. Some Jews and many “God-fearing” Gentiles were converted. Jews precipitated a riot, and charged the missionaries with acting against the laws of the emperor. Consequently, the Christians sent Paul and Silas by night to the neighboring town of Berea. Success in preaching there prompted the Jews of Thessalonica to come and create a disturbance similar to that made in their own city, and for safety’s sake Paul was constrained to leave alone for Athens. He next went to Corinth where he was joined by Silas and Timothy.

This picture does not correspond with the one found in the letter itself. The letter presupposes a much longer stay at Thessalonica (2.7–9; see Phil.4.16) and a church predominantly composed of converts from paganism (1.9); the letter does not speak of any persecution suffered by Paul in the city; it states that it was from Athens that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (3.1). The letter was probably written from Corinth just after Timothy’s completion of his mission (3.6). While at Corinth (Acts 18.12) Paul was brought before the tribunal of the Roman Gallio, whose term as proconsul was around 51–52 A.D.; if that information is reliable 1 Thessalonians, written around 51 A.D., is the first of the Pauline epistles.

The letter deals primarily with questions concerning the Parousia (the future coming of Christ): its time (e.g. 5.1–2), the suffering of Christians in relation to it (e.g. 3.3), and the destiny of those who die in advance of its arrival (e.g. 4.13–14).

## *Hope and discipline*

1 FROM PAUL, SILVANUS, AND TIMOTHY to the congregation of Thessalonians who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to you and peace.

2 We always thank God for you all, and mention you in our prayers continually. We call to mind, before our God and Father, how your faith has shown itself in action, your love in labour, and your hope of our Lord Jesus Christ in fortitude. We are certain, brothers beloved by God, that he has chosen you and that<sup>a</sup> when we brought you the Gospel, we brought it not in mere words but in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with strong conviction, as you know well. That is the kind of men we were at Thessalonica, and it was for your sake.

And you, in your turn, followed the 6 example set by us and by the Lord; the welcome you gave the message meant grave suffering for you, yet you rejoiced 7 in the Holy Spirit; thus you have become a model for all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. From Thes- 8 salonica the word of the Lord rang out; and not in Macedonia and Achaia alone, but everywhere your faith in God has reached men’s ears. No words of ours are needed, for they themselves 9 spread the news of our visit to you and its effect: how you turned from idols, to be servants of the living and true God, and to wait expectantly for the 10 appearance from heaven of his Son Jesus, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the terrors of judgement to come.

<sup>a</sup> Or . . . chosen you, because . . .

**1.1: Greeting.** *Silvanus* is the Latinized form of the name “Silas” used in Acts, for example, Acts 15.39. *Timothy*: see 1 Cor.16.10 n., Acts 16.1–3. Of all his coworkers Timothy is the one most frequently mentioned by Paul. The letter is written in the name of all three, yet *Paul* is clearly the principal writer; see 3.5; 5.27. *Grace . . . peace*: see Rom.1.7 n.

**1.2–10: Thanksgiving for a fruitful ministry.** **5:** *The power of the Holy Spirit* may refer not only to the force inherent in the apostolic preaching, but also to certain miracles accompanying it; see Rom.15.19. **6:** Paul comforts the Thessalonians in their *grave suffering by the example set by Paul and Jesus*. **7:** *Macedonia*: the Roman province in northern Greece of which Thessalonica was the capital. *Achaia*: the province in southern Greece from which Paul writes. **10:** The expectation of the early return of the resurrected Jesus is a dominant motif in the letter. Jesus’ resurrection gives assurance of his *appearance from heaven*.

2 You know for yourselves, brothers, that our visit to you was not fruitless.  
 2 Far from it; after all the injury and outrage which to your knowledge we had suffered at Philippi, we declared the gospel of God to you frankly and fearlessly, by the help of our God. A hard  
 3 struggle it was. Indeed, the appeal we make never springs from error or base motive; there is no attempt to deceive;  
 4 but God has approved us as fit to be entrusted with the Gospel, and on those terms we speak. We do not curry favour with men; we seek only the favour of God, who is continually testing our  
 5 hearts. Our words have never been flattering words, as you have cause to know; nor, as God is our witness, have  
 6 they ever been a cloak for greed. We have never sought honour from men, from you or from anyone else, although  
 7 as Christ's own envoys we might have made our weight felt; but we were as gentle with you as a nurse caring fondly  
 8 for her children. With such yearning love we chose to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our very selves,  
 9 so dear had you become to us. Remember, brothers, how we toiled and drudged. We worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to anyone, while we proclaimed before you  
 10 the good news of God. We call you to witness, yes and God himself, how devout and just and blameless was our behaviour towards  
 11 you who are believers. As you well know, we dealt with you one by one, as a father deals with his children,

appealing to you by encouragement, as well as by solemn injunctions, to live  
 12 lives worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

This is why we thank God continually, because when we handed on God's message, you received it, not as the word of men, but as what it truly is, the very word of God at<sup>b</sup> work in you who hold the faith. You have fared  
 14 like the congregations in Judaea, God's people in Christ Jesus. You have been treated by your countrymen as they are treated by the Jews, who killed the Lord  
 15 Jesus and the prophets<sup>c</sup> and drove us out, the Jews who are heedless of God's will and enemies of their fellow-men, hindering us from speaking to the  
 16 Gentiles to lead them to salvation. All this time they have been making up the full measure of their guilt, and now retribution has overtaken them for good and all.<sup>d</sup>

MY FRIENDS, WHEN FOR A SHORT SPELL 17 you were lost to us—lost to sight, not to our hearts—we were exceedingly anxious to see you again. So we did  
 18 propose to come to Thessalonica—I, Paul, more than once—but Satan thwarted us. For after all, what hope  
 19 or joy or crown of pride is there for us, what indeed but you, when we stand before our Lord Jesus at his coming?  
 20 It is you who are indeed our glory and our joy.

So when we could bear it no longer, 3

<sup>b</sup> Or word of God who is at . . .

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read their own prophets.

<sup>d</sup> Or now at last retribution has overtaken them.

2.1–12: **Defense of the missionaries' conduct.** 2: *We suffered at Philippi*: see Acts 16.19–24. 3–6: Paul and his companions were not like the itinerant pagan preachers; the latter were frequently mercenary charlatans who traded on flattery and deceit. 9: Unlike the charlatans (vv. 3–6 n.), it was Paul's practice not to accept support from the churches which he founded (see 1 Cor.9.3–18). Philippi was the exception (see Phil.4.15–16); Paul accepted their freely offered gifts, abstaining from any demand of support.

2.13–16: **Consequences of accepting the Gospel.** The persecution of the Thessalonian church is compared to that of the churches of Judaea by the Jews. 14–16: Some scholars regard these verses as an addition from a much later time, containing a reference to the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. 16: *Full measure of their guilt*: the concept is that divine punishment is deferred until the sins which call it forth have reached their climax. Swift chastisement was a sign of mercy; see 2 Macc.6.14–15. The *retribution* which *has overtaken* the Jews is probably their obduracy in unbelief. For a similar view of moral evil as the punishment for previous sin, see Rom.1.18,24,26,28.

2.17–3.13: **Paul's concern for the church.** 17–18: Paul's mention of his repeated desire to return to Thessalonica is probably a response to a charge that he had not done so because he feared being caught in the persecution there (2.13–16). *Satan*: see Mt.4.1 n. The precise circumstances (illness, opposition?) in which Paul sees Satan's activity are not known. 19: *His coming*: Gk., *parousia*, ordinarily used of the "coming" of a king on a visit. This is the earliest instance in the NT of the use of *parousia* for the coming of the resurrected Jesus in glory. Frequent in

we decided to remain alone at Athens,  
 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and  
 God's fellow-worker<sup>e</sup> in the service of  
 the gospel of Christ, to encourage you  
 3 to stand firm for the faith and, under  
 all these hardships, not to be shaken;<sup>f</sup>  
 for you know that this is our appointed  
 4 lot. When we were with you we warned  
 you that we were bound to suffer hard-  
 ship; and so it has turned out, as you  
 5 know. And thus it was that when I  
 could bear it no longer, I sent to find  
 out about your faith, fearing that the  
 tempter might have tempted you and  
 my labour might be lost.

6 But now Timothy has just arrived  
 from Thessalonica, bringing good news  
 of your faith and love. He tells us that  
 you always think kindly of us, and are  
 as anxious to see us as we are to see you.  
 7 And so in all our difficulties and hard-  
 ships your faith reassures us about you.  
 8 It is the breath of life to us that you  
 stand firm in the Lord. What thanks  
 9 can we return to God for you? What  
 thanks for all the joy you have brought  
 us, making us rejoice before our God  
 10 while we pray most earnestly night and  
 day to be allowed to see you again and  
 to mend your faith where it falls short?

11 May our God and Father himself,  
 and our Lord Jesus, bring us direct to  
 12 you; and may the Lord make your love  
 mount and overflow towards one an-  
 other and towards all, as our love does  
 13 towards you. May he make your hearts  
 firm, so that you may stand before our  
 God and Father holy and faultless when  
 our Lord Jesus comes with all those  
 who are his own.

4 AND NOW, MY FRIENDS, WE HAVE ONE  
 thing to beg and pray of you, by our  
 fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We  
 passed on to you the tradition of the  
 way we must live to please God; you

are indeed already following it, but we  
 beg you to do so yet more thoroughly.

For you know what orders we gave<sup>2</sup>  
 you, in the name of the Lord Jesus.  
 This is the will of God, that you should<sup>3</sup>  
 be holy: you must abstain from fornication;  
 4 each one of you must learn to  
 gain mastery over his body, to hallow  
 and honour it, not giving way to lust<sup>5</sup>  
 like the pagans who are ignorant of  
 God; and no man must do his brother<sup>6</sup>  
 wrong in this matter,<sup>g</sup> or invade his  
 rights, because, as we told you before  
 with all emphasis, the Lord punishes  
 all such offences. For God called us to<sup>7</sup>  
 holiness, not to impurity. Anyone<sup>8</sup>  
 therefore who flouts these rules is flouting,  
 not man, but God who bestows  
 upon you his Holy Spirit.

About love for our brotherhood you<sup>9</sup>  
 need no words of mine, for you are  
 yourselves taught by God to love one  
 another, and you are in fact practising<sup>10</sup>  
 this rule of love towards all your fellow-  
 Christians throughout Macedonia. Yet  
 we appeal to you, brothers, to do better  
 still. Let it be your ambition to keep<sup>11</sup>  
 calm and look after your own business,  
 and to work with your hands, as we  
 ordered you, so that you may command<sup>12</sup>  
 the respect of those outside your own  
 number, and at the same time may  
 never be in want.

WE WISH YOU NOT TO REMAIN IN<sup>13</sup>  
 ignorance, brothers, about those who  
 sleep in death; you should not grieve  
 like the rest of men, who have no hope.  
 We believe that Jesus died and rose<sup>14</sup>  
 again; and so it will be for those who  
 died as Christians; God will bring them  
 to life with Jesus.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>e</sup> Or and fellow-worker for God; one witness has simply and fellow-worker.

<sup>f</sup> Or beguiled away.

<sup>g</sup> Or must overreach his brother in his business (or in lawsuits).

<sup>h</sup> Or will bring them in company with Jesus.

later NT literature, Paul's use of it in the sense here intended is confined to 1 and 2 Th. and 1 Cor. 15.23. 3.3: The *hardships* are not only necessary to Christian life, but are the inevitable accompaniments of the near approach of the end of time and, thus, constitute *our appointed lot*. A similar view of pre-Messianic tribulations is found in the Judaism of the time. 5: *Tempter*: Satan; compare 2.18. 13: *All those who are his own*: lit. all his holy ones, probably meaning the "angels"; see also Zech.14.5.

4.1-12: An exhortation to Christian living. 4: *Body*: the Gk. word can also mean "wife." 9: *Taught by God*: see Jer.31.33-34. 11-12: These injunctions were probably motivated by irresponsibility similar to that described in 2 Th.3.6-11.

4.13-18: The destiny of the Christian dead. 13-14: Possibly Timothy had brought a report about a concern over the fate of those who had died before the Parousia (see 2.19 n.); this



15 For this we tell you as the Lord's word: we who are left alive until the Lord comes shall not forestall those  
 16 who have died; because at the word of command, at the sound of the archangel's voice and God's trumpet-call, the Lord himself will descend from heaven; first the Christian dead will  
 17 rise, then we who are left alive shall join them, caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always  
 18 be with the Lord. Console one another, then, with these words.

5 About dates and times, my friends, we need not write to you, for you know perfectly well that the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. While they are talking of peace and security, all at once calamity is upon them, sudden as the pangs that come upon a woman with child; and there will be no escape. But you, my friends, are not in the dark, that the day should overtake you like a thief.<sup>i</sup> You are all children of light, children of day. We do not belong to night or darkness, and we must not sleep like the rest, but keep awake and sober. Sleepers sleep at night, and drunkards are drunk at night, but we, who belong to daylight, must keep sober, armed with faith and love for coat of mail, and the hope of salvation for helmet. For God has not destined us to the terrors of judgement, but to the full attainment of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that we, awake or asleep, might live in company with him. Therefore hearten one another, fortify one another—as indeed you do.

WE BEG YOU, BROTHERS, TO ACKNOWLEDGE those who are working so hard among you, and in the Lord's fellowship are your leaders and counsellors. Hold them in the highest possible esteem and affection for the work they do.

You must live at peace among yourselves. And we would urge you, brothers, to admonish the careless, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, and to be very patient with them all.

See to it that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always aim at doing the best you can for each other and for all men.

Be always joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God in Christ wills for you.

Do not stifle inspiration, and do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test and then keep what is good in them and avoid the bad of whatever kind.<sup>j</sup>

May God himself, the God of peace, make you holy in every part, and keep you sound in spirit, soul, and body, without fault when our Lord Jesus Christ comes. He who calls you is to be trusted; he will do it.

Brothers, pray for us also.

Greet all our brothers with the kiss of peace.

I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to the whole brotherhood.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

<sup>i</sup> Some witnesses read thieves.

<sup>j</sup> Or . . . utterances. Put everything to the test; keep hold of what is good and avoid every kind of evil.

passage answers that concern. 15: *The Lord's word* probably means that Paul believes he speaks here with the authority of the Lord; compare 1 Cor.14.37. 16: An archangel is a chief angel. *God's trumpet-call*: see Exod.19.16,19. That a trumpet call would usher in the final salvation is derived from Isa.27.13; see also Mt.24.31; 1 Cor.15.52. At the Parousia of the monarch (see 2.19 n.), the townsmen went out of the city to receive him. Since the Lord will descend from heaven, the Christians will meet him in the air.

5.1-11: *Uncertainty about the time of the Parousia*: 1-2: The precise time of the final saving intervention of God was a characteristic concern of apocalyptic thought; see Dan.9.24-27. Paul considers such preoccupation useless. In the OT, *the Day of the Lord* is God's future judgment day (see Amos 5.18; Joel 2.14-15 n.). Here, since the judgment comes with the Parousia, the Lord is Jesus. *Like a thief in the night*: the point of the comparison is its unexpectedness; compare Mt.24.43-44; Lk.12.39-40. 3: *Pangs . . . a woman with child*: compare Isa.13.8; Jer.6.24. 4-7: A similar contrast between men of light and those of darkness, appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 8: Aspects of God's judgment are described as pieces of divine armor (Isa.59.17; Wis.5.17-20). Here and in Eph.6.13-17 the Christians' preparedness for salvation is similarly described. 10: *Awake or asleep*: alive or dead.

5.12-28: *Final admonitions and blessing*. 12: *Leaders and counsellors*: see Rom.12.6-8. 23: *Spirit, soul, and body*: the complete man, not three separate aspects of him.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

Paul's authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been disputed on several grounds. First, the literary similarities with 1 Thessalonians have suggested to some that an anonymous author, writing in Paul's name, copied from the authentic letter. If, however, one supposes that Paul wrote the second letter very shortly after the first, that hypothesis loses much of its force.

A second and more substantial argument is that in 1 Thessalonians Paul, while emphasizing that the Parousia (see 1 Th.2.19 n.) will come unexpectedly, speaks as if it were near; 2 Thessalonians, on the other hand, indicates that there will be a considerable delay between his letter and the Parousia, and he gives detailed signs which must occur first. However, these signs are not incompatible with the view that the Parousia will take place within the lifetime of those to whom the apostle writes, or that it will occur unexpectedly even though preceded by such signs.

Third, the strongest argument for inauthenticity is that this letter speaks against the teaching that "the Day of the Lord is already here" (2.2). It is difficult to suppose that this latter view, which treats the Parousia as a present spiritual experience, would flourish in Thessalonica at the same time as the opposite, the fervent expectation of the Lord's coming as a future event, found in 1 Thessalonians. Nevertheless, it is possible that Paul responded to a new problem which arose after the writing of the earlier letter.

## *Hope and discipline*

1 FROM PAUL, SILVANUS, AND TIMOTHY to the congregation of Thessalonians who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Our thanks are always due to God for you, brothers. It is right that we should thank him, because your faith increases mightily, and the love you have, each for all and all for each, grows ever greater. Indeed we boast about you ourselves among the congregations of God's people, because your faith remains so steadfast under all your persecutions, and all the troubles you endure. See how this brings out the justice of God's judgment. It will prove you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

6 It is surely just that God should balance the account by sending trouble to those who trouble you, and relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well, when our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed

from heaven with his mighty angels 8  
blazing fire. Then he will do justice upon those who refuse to acknowledge God and upon those who will not obey<sup>a</sup> the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal ruin, cut off from the presence of the Lord and the splendour of his might, when on that great Day he comes to be glorified among his own and adored among all believers; for you did indeed believe the testimony we brought you.

9  
10  
11 With this in mind we pray for you always, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and mightily bring to fulfilment every good purpose and every act inspired by faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

AND NOW, BROTHERS, ABOUT THE 2  
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and his gathering of us to himself: I beg

<sup>a</sup> Or justice upon those who refuse . . . and will not obey . . .

1.3-12: Thanksgiving and encouragement. 4: Persecutions: see 1 Th.2.13-16. 7: The imagery of *blazing fire* in connection with Jesus being *revealed from heaven* is related to OT statements about God coming in judgment; see Ps.97.3; Isa.66.15. The association of the *angels* with the fire may be derived from a Jewish tradition arising from Deut.33.2-3 (Sept.). See also the extra-biblical 2 Enoch 29.3.

2.1-12: The delay of the Parousia. The portrayal of the events to precede the Parousia has points of contact with Mk. ch. 13 and parallels, and with some OT descriptions of the evils

2 you, do not suddenly lose your heads or alarm yourselves, whether at some oracular utterance, or pronouncement, or some letter purporting to come from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord  
3 is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way whatever. That day cannot come before the final rebellion against God, when wickedness will be revealed in human form, the man doomed to  
4 perdition. He is the Enemy. He rises in his pride against every god, so called, every object of men's worship, and even takes his seat in the temple of God claiming to be a god himself.  
5 You cannot but remember that I told  
6 you this while I was still with you; you must now be aware of the restraining hand which ensures that he shall be  
7 revealed only at the proper time. For already the secret power of wickedness is at work, secret only for the present until the Restraint disappears from  
8 the scene. And then he will be revealed, that wicked man whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the radiance  
9 of his coming. But the coming of that wicked man is the work of Satan. It will be attended by all the powerful signs  
10 and miracles of the Lie, and all the deception that sinfulness can impose on those doomed to destruction. Destroyed they shall be, because they did not open their minds to love of the  
11 truth, so as to find salvation. Therefore God puts them under a delusion, which  
12 works upon them to believe the lie, so that they may all be brought to judgment, all who do not believe the truth

but make sinfulness their deliberate choice.

BUT WE ARE BOUND TO THANK GOD 13 always for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because from the beginning of time God chose you<sup>b</sup> to find salvation in the Spirit that consecrates you, and in the truth that you believe. It was for 14 this that he called you through the gospel we brought, so that you might possess for your own the splendour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Stand firm, then, brothers, and hold 15 fast to the traditions which you have learned from us by word or by letter. And may our Lord Jesus Christ himself 16 and God our Father, who has shown us such love, and in his grace has given us such unflinching encouragement and such bright hopes, still encourage and fortify 17 you in every good deed and word!

And now, brothers, pray for us, that 3 the word of the Lord may have everywhere the swift and glorious course that it has had among you, and that 2 we may be rescued from wrong-headed and wicked men; for it is not all who have faith. But the Lord is to be trusted, 3 and he will fortify you and guard you from the evil one. We feel perfect confidence about you, in the Lord, that you are doing and will continue to do what we order. May the Lord direct your 5 hearts towards God's love and the steadfastness of Christ!

These are our orders to you, brothers, 6 in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read because God chose you as his firstfruits . . .

which will come before the arrival of God's kingdom. 2: *Oracular utterance* (lit. a spirit): the word of one who claims to be speaking under the influence of the Spirit; see 1 Th.5.19–21. *Purporting to come from us*: possibly a forged letter. *The Day . . . is already here*: see Introduction and 2 Tim.2.18 n. 3: *The final rebellion against God* (lit. the apostasy): a falling away from the faith; see Mt.24.10. Similarly, during the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) many Jews abandoned the God of Israel; see 1 Macc.2.15. The figure of Antiochus has influenced Paul's description of *the man doomed to perdition*; this "man" is an evil imitation of Jesus, and his coming is described in terms similar to that of Jesus; see v. 9 and 1.7. 4: See the descriptions of Antiochus in Dan.11.36–37 and of the prince of Tyre in Ezek.28.2. The search for "the" historical person or institution fitting Paul's prediction has been fruitless. 6–7: Some force, specified only as *the restraining hand* or *the Restraint* is holding back the revelation of the wicked person. 8: *With the breath of his mouth* is a figure for the destroying word of judgment; see Isa.11.4. 9–10: The author's dismay at the wicked one's likeness to Jesus continues. *On signs and miracles at the coming*, see Mk.13.22. 11–12: *The delusion* under which the sinners fall is seen as God's punishment for their refusal to accept the truth.

2.13–3.5: *Exhortation to steadfastness*. 15: Although the Thessalonian letters were written early in Christian experience (see Introduction to 1 Th.), the church already had a body of material which could be referred to as *traditions*.

3.6–18: *Treatment of the idlers*. 6: Some in the community are refusing to work and becoming

hold aloof from every Christian brother who falls into idle habits, and does not follow the tradition you received from us. You know yourselves how you ought to copy our example: we were no idlers among you; we did not accept board and lodging from anyone without paying for it; we toiled and drudged, we worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to any of you—not because we have not the right to maintenance, but to set an example for you to imitate. For even during our stay with you we laid down the rule: the man who will not work shall not eat. We mention this because we hear that some of your number are idling their time away, minding everybody's business but their own. To all such we give these orders, and we

appeal to them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly for their living.

But you, my friends, must never tire of doing right. If anyone disobeys our instructions given by letter, mark him well, and have no dealings with him until he is ashamed of himself. I do not mean treat him as an enemy, but give him friendly advice, as one of the family. May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in all ways.<sup>c</sup> The Lord be with you all.

The greeting is in my own hand, signed with my name, PAUL; this authenticates all my letters; this is how I write. The grace<sup>d</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

<sup>c</sup> Some witnesses read at all times, wherever you may be.  
<sup>d</sup> Or . . . letters. My message is this: the grace . . .

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public charges, regarding themselves as released from ordinary obligations since this age is to endure only briefly. 17: *My own hand*: see 1 Cor.16.21–24 n.

# THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

The letters to Timothy and Titus, commonly called the "Pastoral Epistles" because they contain much material related to the pastoral oversight of churches, form a distinct grouping within the collection of Pauline correspondence. Closely similar to one another in content, diction, and theology, they differ enough from the other Pauline letters to raise a question about their true authorship. Lacking many of the typical Pauline theological motifs, such as justification by faith and redemption through the death of Christ on the cross, they use other terms in a way foreign to Paul. Faith, for example, does not define a relationship to Christ, but signifies a body of doctrine which must be kept free of perversion. Problems of church order also emerge, and are discussed in a detail absent from Paul's other letters. The travels presumed in the Pastoral Epistles cannot be fitted into the framework of Paul's journeys as detailed in Acts, but that is also true of some genuine letters (e.g. Rom.15.19), and is not a telling argument for non-Pauline authorship. Most persuasive against Paul's authorship, however, are the language and style of these three letters. Bearing clear marks of typical Hellenistic diction, they do not contain stylistic traits displayed by the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, or Corinthians (traits such as the frequent use of rhetorical questions and complex sentence structure). Similar differences are to be noted in the vocabulary of Paul and the Pastorals. Containing a plea to believers to live quiet lives of moral and doctrinal purity, the Pastorals are probably best understood as compositions of a group who looked to Paul for leadership in religious matters, and who, after his death, sought to meet new problems in a way Paul, as they thought, would have met them.

Timothy, to whom the first of the Pastorals is addressed, was the child of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father (Acts 16.1), and a trusted friend of Paul; see 1 Cor.16.10 n. He shared in the task of Christian proclamation (2 Cor.1.19) and, on at least one occasion, was sent by Paul to clear up some problems within a Christian congregation (1 Cor.4.17). This letter also contains the earliest evidence we have of the emergence of formal leadership within the church, concentrated in the offices of bishop and elder.

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## Church order

1 FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS  
2 by command of God our Saviour  
and Christ Jesus our hope, to  
Timothy his true-born son in the faith.  
3 Grace, mercy, and peace to you from  
God the Father and Christ Jesus our  
Lord.  
4 When I was starting for Macedonia,  
I urged you to stay on at Ephesus. You  
were to command certain persons to  
give up teaching erroneous doctrines  
and studying those interminable myths  
and genealogies, which issue in mere  
speculation and cannot make known

God's plan for us, which works through  
faith.<sup>a</sup>

The aim and object of this command  
is the love which springs from a clean  
heart, from a good conscience, and  
from faith that is genuine. Through  
falling short of these, some people have  
gone astray into a wilderness of words.  
They set out to be teachers of the moral  
law, without understanding either the  
words they use or the subjects about  
which they are so dogmatic.

We all know that the law is an  
excellent thing, provided we treat it as

<sup>a</sup> Or cannot promote the faithful discharge of God's  
stewardship.

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1.1-2: **Salutation.** 1: On *Timothy*, see the Introduction. *God our Saviour* is typical of the Pastorals (e.g. 1 Tim.2.3; Ti.1.3; 3.4), and reflects OT usage more than Paul's, for whom Christ is savior (Phil.3.20).

1.3-20: **The struggle for faith.** 3: *Starting for Macedonia*: such a journey cannot be fitted into what we know of Paul's journeys from Acts. On *Ephesus*, see Acts 18.19 n.; 19.23-41. 4: The presence of teachers of *erroneous doctrines* is a major concern of the author. The nature of the false teaching cannot be simply stated, but included: myths and genealogies (as here), asceticism (e.g. 4.2-3), and a dangerous mysticism (2 Tim.2.18). *Myths*: see 2 Tim.4.4; Ti.1.14. *Genealogies* may refer to Gnostic or Jewish speculations; the meaning is not sure. *God's plan*: see Eph.1.10; 3.9. 5: *Good conscience*, along with clear conscience, is a characteristic virtue in

9 law, recognizing that it is not aimed at good citizens, but at the lawless and unruly, the impious and sinful, the irreligious and worldly; at parricides and matricides, murderers and fornicators, perverts, kidnappers, liars, perjurers—in fact all whose behaviour flouts the wholesome teaching which conforms with the gospel entrusted to me, the gospel which tells of the glory of God in his eternal felicity.

12 I thank him who has made me equal to the task, Christ Jesus our Lord; I thank him for judging me worthy of this trust and appointing me to his service—although in the past I had met him with abuse and persecution and outrage. But because I acted ignorantly in unbelief I was dealt with mercifully; the grace of our Lord was lavished upon me, with the faith and love which are ours in Christ Jesus.

15 Here are words you may trust, words that merit full acceptance: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'; and among them I stand first. But I was mercifully dealt with for this very purpose, that Jesus Christ might find in me the first occasion for displaying all his patience, and that I might be typical of all who were in future to have faith in him and gain eternal life. Now to the King of all worlds, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever! Amen.

18 This charge, son Timothy, I lay upon you, following that prophetic utterance which first pointed you out to me. So fight gallantly, armed with faith and a good conscience. It was through spurning conscience that certain persons

made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I consigned to Satan, in the hope that through this discipline they might learn not to be blasphemous.

FIRST OF ALL, THEN, I URGE THAT petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered for all men; for sovereigns and all in high office, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in full observance of religion and high standards of morality. Such prayer is right, and approved by God our Saviour, whose will it is that all men should find salvation and come to know the truth. For there is one God, also one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, himself man, who sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind, so providing, at the fitting time, proof of the divine purpose; of this I was appointed herald and apostle (this is no lie, but the truth), to instruct the nations in the true faith.

It is my desire, therefore, that everywhere prayers be said by the men of the congregation, who shall lift up their hands with a pure intention, excluding angry or quarrelsome thoughts. Women again must dress in becoming manner, modestly and soberly, not with elaborate hair-styles, not decked out with gold or pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, as befits women who claim to be religious. A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was

the Pastorals. 10: Such lists of vices were common in the Hellenistic world; for other NT examples see 6.4-5; 2 Tim.3.2-5; Ti.3.3; Rom.1.29-31; Gal.5.19-21. *Wholesome teaching*, a characteristic phrase in the Pastorals, occurs nowhere else in the NT, but frequently in other contemporary authors. 13: *I had met him*: Christ and his Church are identified in similar language in Acts 9.4-5. *Persecution*: see Acts 26.11; 1 Cor.15.9; Gal.1.13. 15: *Words you may trust* is a formula that probably introduces traditional material. *I stand first*: see 1 Cor.15.9. 17: *Of all worlds*, or, of the ages; this language is typical of Hellenistic descriptions of god(s), as well as Jewish ascriptions of praise. 20: *I consigned to Satan*: the meaning is unclear; see 1 Cor.5.5; compare Job 2.6-8.

2.1-15: *Advice on prayer*. 1: This is not an exhaustive list of kinds of prayer; see Phil.4.6. 4: *Come to know the truth*: see 2 Tim.3.7 n. *All men* points to the universality of the Christian community grounded in God's saving will; see vv. 1,6; 4.10. 5: *One God*: see Deut.6.4-9, a passage repeated daily by pious Jews. *One mediator* intends to validate Jesus among the many mediators proclaimed in the Hellenistic world. 8: *Everywhere* may refer to regular liturgical services. 9: This verse (and v. 8) probably refers to dress and conduct in worship; compare 1 Pet.3.3-5. 11-15: These verses, dealing with liturgical services, reflect the position of women in some areas of the Hellenistic religious world; they are hardly to be taken as legislative. 13: See 1 Cor.11.3-16. 14: See Gen.3.6; also 2 Cor.11.3. That for Paul himself *Adam* also sinned

14 created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was the woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin. Yet she will be saved through motherhood<sup>b</sup>—if only women continue in faith,<sup>c</sup> love, and holiness, with a sober mind.

3 There is a popular saying:<sup>d</sup> 'To aspire to leadership is an honourable ambition.' Our leader, therefore, or bishop, must be above reproach, faithful to his one wife,<sup>e</sup> sober, temperate, courteous, hospitable, and a good teacher; he must not be given to drink, or a brawler, but of a forbearing disposition, avoiding quarrels, and no lover of money. He must be one who manages his own household well and wins obedience from his children, and a man of the highest principles. If a man does not know how to control his own family, how can he look after a congregation of God's people? He must not be a convert newly baptized, for fear the sin of conceit should bring upon him a judgement contrived by the devil.<sup>f</sup> He must moreover have a good reputation with the non-Christian public, so that he may not be exposed to scandal and get caught in the devil's snare.

8 Deacons, likewise, must be men of high principle, not indulging in double talk, given neither to excessive drinking nor to money-grubbing. They must be men who combine a clear conscience with a firm hold on the deep truths of our faith. No less than bishops, they must first undergo a scrutiny, and if there is no mark against them, they may serve. Their wives,<sup>g</sup> equally, must be women of high principle, who will not talk scandal, sober and trustworthy in

every way. A deacon must be faithful 12 to his one wife,<sup>e</sup> and good at managing his children and his own household. For deacons with a good record of service may claim a high standing and the right to speak openly on matters of the Christian faith.

I am hoping to come to you before 14 long, but I write this in case I am delayed, to let you know how men ought to conduct themselves in God's household, that is, the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. And great beyond all question is 16 the mystery of our religion:

'He who was manifested in the body,  
vindicated in the spirit,  
seen by angels;  
who was proclaimed among the  
nations,  
believed in throughout the world,  
glorified in high heaven.'

THE SPIRIT SAYS EXPRESSLY THAT IN 4 after times some will desert from the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines inspired by devils, through the specious falsehoods of men whose own conscience is branded with the devil's sign. They forbid marriage and inculcate abstinence from certain foods, though God created them to be enjoyed with thanksgiving by believers who have inward knowledge of the truth. For everything that God created is 4

*b* Or saved through the Birth of the Child, or brought safely through childbirth.

*c* Or if only husband and wife continue in mutual fidelity . . .

*d* Some witnesses read Here are words you may trust, which some interpreters attach to the end of the preceding paragraph.

*e* Or married to one wife, or married only once.

*f* Or the judgement once passed on the devil.

*g* Or . . . serve. Deaconesses . . .

is clear from Rom.5.12-14. 15: The meaning of the first half of this verse is unclear (see Tfn. *b*).

3.1-16: **Leadership in the church.** 2: *Bishop* is not used in a technical sense; see Ti.1.5-9, where bishop and elder are identified. The virtues are common ideals in the Hellenistic world. 8: We cannot tell from the NT what different duties were given to bishops, elders, and deacons. Paul could describe his apostleship as a diaconate ("commission" in 2 Cor.4.1) and thus deacons may have had responsibility for preaching; see also v. 9; 4.6; Acts 6.4 ("ministry"); also Acts 6.2 ("to wait"), 6 n. 9: *Deep truths* refer to the content of the Christian faith as revealing God's plan for mankind; see v. 16, where the content is Christ, as in Col.1.27. 16: This verse is probably an early Christian hymn, or confession of faith. The rhythm of the Greek points to three couplets, rather than two stanzas.

4.1-16: **True service to Christ.** 1: See 2 Tim.3.1-9; 4.3-4; the point is made throughout the NT. 2: In the Hellenistic world, slaves were sometimes *branded* to indicate ownership. 3: *God created them to be enjoyed*: see Acts 10.15. Some contemporary sects thought that anything material was evil; only the spiritual was good. Jewish ritual purity may also be involved; compare Ti.1.14; 4: *Everything that God created is good*: see Rom.14.14; 1 Cor.10.25-26.

good, and nothing is to be rejected when it is taken with thanksgiving, since it is hallowed by God's own word and by prayer.

By offering such advice as this to the brotherhood you will prove a good servant of Christ Jesus, bred in the precepts of our faith and of the sound instruction which you have followed. Have nothing to do with those godless myths, fit only for old women. Keep yourself in training for the practice of religion. The training of the body does bring limited benefit, but the benefits of religion are without limit, since it holds promise not only for this life but for the life to come. Here are words you may trust, words that merit full acceptance: 'With this before us we labour and struggle,<sup>h</sup> because<sup>i</sup> we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men'—the Saviour, above all, of believers.

Pass on these orders and these teachings. Let no one slight you because you are young, but make yourself an example to believers in speech and behaviour, in love, fidelity, and purity. Until I arrive devote your attention to the public reading of the scriptures, to exhortation, and to teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual endowment you possess, which was given you, under the guidance of prophecy, through the laying on of the hands of the elders as a body.<sup>j</sup>

Make these matters your business and your absorbing interest, so that your progress may be plain to all. Persevere in them, keeping close watch on yourself and your teaching; by doing so you will further the salvation of yourself and your hearers.

Never be harsh with an elder; appeal to him as if he were your father. Treat the younger men as brothers, the older

women as mothers, and the younger as your sisters, in all purity.

The status of widow is to be granted only to widows who are such in the full sense. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, then they should learn as their first duty to show loyalty to the family and to repay what they owe to their parents and grandparents; for this God approves. A widow, however, in the full sense, one who is alone in the world, has all her hope set on God, and regularly attends the meetings for prayer and worship night and day. But a widow given over to self-indulgence is as good as dead. Add these orders to the rest, so that the widows may be above reproach. But if anyone does not make provision for his relations, and especially for members of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

A widow should not be put on the roll under sixty years of age. She must have been faithful in marriage to one man, and must produce evidence of good deeds performed, showing whether she has had the care of children, or given hospitality, or washed the feet of God's people, or supported those in distress—in short, whether she has taken every opportunity of doing good.

Younger widows may not be placed on the roll. For when their passions draw them away from Christ, they hanker after marriage and stand condemned for breaking their troth with him. Moreover, in going round from house to house they learn to be idle, and worse than idle, gossips and busy-bodies, speaking of things better left unspoken. It is my wish, therefore, that young widows shall marry again, have

<sup>h</sup> Some witnesses read suffer reproach.

<sup>i</sup> Or since 'It holds promise . . . to come.' These are words . . . acceptance. For this is the aim of all our labour and struggle, since . . .

<sup>j</sup> Or through your ordination as an elder.

6: *Sound instruction*: see 1.10 n. 7: *Godless myths*: see 1.4. 9: *Here are words you may trust* may refer to v. 8. 10: *Of all men*: see 2.4 n. 12: *You are young* could, in that time, be applied to anyone under forty. 14: *Laying on of the hands* conferred a task; see e.g. Acts 6.6; 13.3.

5.1–16: *General admonitions*. 1–2: On personal relations. This kind of advice was popular in the Hellenistic world. 3–16: On *widows*. 3: There were no governmental provisions for the care of the destitute in the Hellenistic world, though care of widows was an obligation for Jews (Exod.22.22; Deut.24.17–22). The church early assumed this responsibility (Acts 6.1). 9: This is our earliest evidence of an ecclesiastical order of *widows*, an order well known by the third century; see Acts 9.39. 12: *Breaking their troth* may imply a promise by a widow not to remarry. 13: *Going round from house to house* was apparently one of a widow's duties, perhaps as a Christian visitor.



children, and preside over a home; then they will give no opponent  
 15 occasion for slander. For there have in fact been some who have taken the wrong turning and gone to the devil.

16 If a Christian man or woman has widows in the family, he must support them himself;<sup>k</sup> the congregation must be relieved of the burden, so that it may be free to support those who are widows in the full sense of the term.

17 Elders who do well as leaders should be reckoned worthy of a double stipend, in particular those who labour at  
 18 preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle a threshing ox'; and besides, 'the worker earns his pay.'

19 Do not entertain a charge against an elder unless it is supported by two or  
 20 three witnesses. Those who commit sins you must expose publicly, to put  
 21 fear into the others. Before God and Christ Jesus and the angels who are his chosen, I solemnly charge you, maintain these rules, and never pre-judge the issue, but act with strict impartiality.

22 Do not be over-hasty in laying on hands in ordination,<sup>l</sup> or you may find yourself responsible for other people's misdeeds; keep your own hands clean.

23 Stop drinking nothing but water; take a little wine for your digestion, for your frequent ailments.

24 While there are people whose offences are so obvious that they run before them into court, there are others whose offences have not yet overtaken them.  
 25 Similarly, good deeds are obvious, or even if they are not, they cannot be concealed for ever.

6 All who wear the yoke of slavery must count their own masters worthy of all respect, so that the name of God and the Christian teaching are not  
 2 brought into disrepute. If the masters are believers, the slaves must not respect them any less for being their

Christian brothers. Quite the contrary; they must be all the better servants because those who receive the benefit of their service are one with them in faith and love.

THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE TO TEACH AND preach. If anyone is teaching otherwise, 3 and will not give his mind to wholesome precepts—I mean those of our Lord Jesus Christ—and to good religious teaching, I call him a pompous ignoramus. He is morbidly keen on mere 4 verbal questions and quibbles, which give rise to jealousy, quarrelling, slander, base suspicions, and endless wrangles: all typical of men who have let 5 their reasoning powers become atrophied and have lost grip of the truth. They think religion should yield dividends; and of course religion does 6 yield high dividends, but only to the man whose resources are within him. We brought nothing into the world; 7 for that matter we cannot take anything with us when we leave, but if we 8 have food and covering we may rest content. Those who want to be rich fall 9 into temptations and snares and many foolish harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and perdition. The love 10 of money is the root of all evil things, and there are some who in reaching for it have wandered from the faith and spiked themselves on many thorny griefs.

But you, man of God, must shun all 11 this, and pursue justice, piety, fidelity, love, fortitude, and gentleness. Run the 12 great race of faith and take hold of eternal life. For to this you were called; and you confessed your faith nobly before many witnesses. Now in the 13 presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Jesus Christ, who himself made the same noble confession

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read If a Christian woman has widows in her family, she must support them herself.

<sup>l</sup> Or in restoring an offender by the laying on of hands.

5.17–6.21: Advice on proper conduct. 17: Elders shared teaching duties with bishops; see 3.2 (and n.); Ti.1.5,7 nn. 18: Deut.25.4; see 1 Cor.9.9; Lk.10.7. 19: Two or three witnesses: see Deut.19.15; Mt.18.16; 2 Cor.13.1. 23: Timothy may have drunk nothing but water as an ascetic practice; the validity of such a practice is here denied; compare 4.3. 6.1: For mention of slavery in the NT, see Ti.2.9–10; 1 Cor.7.21–22; Eph.6.5–8; Col. 3.22–25; Philem.15–16; 1 Pet.2.18–25. 4: See 1.10 n. 5: The following teachings reflect Hellenistic moral maxims and teachings. 7: See Job 1.21; Eccles.5.15. 8: To rest content with little was a popular Stoic ideal. 10: This proverb about love of money was widely known and popular in the Hellenistic world; but it is not to be construed that money in itself is evil; see vv. 17–19 n. 13: See Jn.18.36–37.

- and gave his testimony to it before  
 14 Pontius Pilate, I charge you to obey  
 your orders irreproachably and without  
 15 fault until our Lord Jesus Christ ap-  
 pears. That appearance God will bring  
 to pass in his own good time—God  
 who in eternal felicity alone holds  
 16 sway. He is King of kings and Lord of  
 lords; he alone possesses immortality,  
 dwelling in unapproachable light. No  
 man has ever seen or ever can see him.  
 To him be honour and might for ever!  
 Amen.  
 17 Instruct those who are rich in this  
 world's goods not to be proud, and not  
 to fix their hopes on so uncertain a  
 thing as money, but upon God, who  
 endows us richly with all things to  
 enjoy. Tell them to do good and to  
 18 grow rich in noble actions, to be ready  
 to give away and to share, and so  
 19 acquire a treasure which will form a  
 good foundation for the future. Thus  
 they will grasp the life which is life  
 indeed.  
 Timothy, keep safe that which has  
 20 been entrusted to you. Turn a deaf ear  
 to empty and worldly chatter, and the  
 contradictions of so-called 'knowledge',  
 for many who lay claim to it have shot  
 21 far wide of the faith.  
 Grace be with you all!

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15–16: This may be a fragment of an early Christian hymn. *King of kings and Lord of lords*: see Deut.10.17. 17–19: As in v. 10, it is not wealth, but attachment to it, that is condemned. Compare Mt.6.19–21 (and 22 n.). 20: *That which has been entrusted to you* refers to sound Christian doctrine in its totality. *Contradictions* (lit. antitheses) were a favorite construction of Hellenistic philosophers, occasionally used to test another's skill in thinking.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

Of the three Pastorals, this one is the closest to Pauline style and thought, and has the best claim to authenticity. It is sometimes suggested that the letter has incorporated fragments of genuine Pauline correspondence. However, attempts to isolate such fragments have not proved generally convincing. For more detailed information on this letter, see the Introduction to 1 Timothy.

## *Character of a Christian minister*

**1** FROM PAUL, APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST by the will of God, whose promise of life is fulfilled in Christ Jesus, **2** to Timothy his dear son.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**3** I thank God—whom I, like my forefathers, worship with a pure intention—when I mention you in my prayers; **4** this I do constantly night and day. And when I remember the tears you shed, I long to see you again to make my **5** happiness complete. I am reminded of the sincerity of your faith, a faith which was alive in Lois your grandmother and Eunice your mother before you, and which, I am confident, lives in you also.

**6** That is why I now remind you to stir into flame the gift of God which is within you through the laying on of my **7** hands. For the spirit that God gave us is no craven spirit, but one to inspire **8** strength, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the sake of the Gospel, in the strength that **9** comes from God. It is he who brought us salvation and called us to a dedicated life, not for any merit of ours but of his own purpose and his own grace, which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from

all eternity, but has now at length been brought fully into view by the appearance on earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. For he has broken the power of death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Of this Gospel I, by his appointment, **11** am herald, apostle, and teacher. That is the reason for my present plight; but I am not ashamed of it, because I know who it is in whom<sup>a</sup> I have trusted, and am confident of his power to keep safe what he has put into my charge,<sup>b</sup> until the great Day. Keep **13** before you an outline of the sound teaching which<sup>c</sup> you heard from me, living by the faith and love which are ours in Christ Jesus. Guard the treasure **14** put into our charge, with the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

As you know, everyone in the province of Asia deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. But may the Lord's mercy rest on the house of Onesiphorus! He has often relieved me in my troubles. He was not ashamed to visit a prisoner, but took pains to search me out when he came to Rome, and found me. I pray that the Lord may grant him to find mercy from the Lord on the great Day. The many services he rendered at Ephesus you know better than I could tell you.

<sup>a</sup> Or I know the one whom . . .

<sup>b</sup> Or what I have put into his charge.

<sup>c</sup> Or Keep before you as a model of sound teaching that which . . .

**1.1-2: Salutation.** On Timothy, see Introduction to 1 Tim. Compare 1 Tim.1.1 n.

**1.3-18: Timothy's gifts and responsibilities.** **3-5:** It was Hellenistic custom to include an opening prayer in a private letter, a custom followed in all Pauline and sub-Pauline letters except Gal., 1 Tim., and Ti. **5:** On Timothy's *mother*, see Acts 16.1. **6:** See 1 Tim.4.14 (n.). **10:** *Saviour*, a title widely applied to deities and rulers in the Hellenistic world, is used both for Christ (Ti.2.13; 3.6) and for God (see 1 Tim.1.1 n.) in the Pastorals. **12:** *What he has put in my charge:* see 1 Tim.6.20 n. **13:** *Sound (or wholesome) teaching:* see 1 Tim.1.10 n. **15:** *Asia* was the Roman province of which Ephesus was the chief city. **18:** *That the Lord*, i.e. Jesus; *from the Lord*, i.e. the Father; see Mt.25.34,36.

2 Now therefore, my son, take strength from the grace of God which is ours in  
2 Christ Jesus. You heard my teaching in the presence of many witnesses; put that teaching into the charge of men you can trust, such men as will be competent to teach others.

3 Take your share of hardship, like a  
4 good soldier of Christ Jesus. A soldier on active service will not let himself be involved in civilian affairs; he must be wholly at his commanding officer's  
5 disposal. Again, no athlete can win a  
6 prize unless he has kept the rules. The farmer who gives his labour has first  
7 claim on the crop. Reflect on what I say, for the Lord will help you to full understanding.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, born of David's line. This is the theme of my gospel, in whose service I am exposed to hardship, even to the point of being shut up like a common criminal; but the word of  
10 God is not shut up. And I endure it all for the sake of God's chosen ones, with this end in view, that they too may attain the glorious and eternal salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

11 Here are the words you may trust:

'If we died with him, we shall live with him;

12 if we endure, we shall reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.

13 If we are faithless, he keeps faith, for he cannot deny himself.'

14 GO ON REMINDING PEOPLE OF THIS, AND charge them solemnly before God to stop disputing about mere words; it does no good, and is the ruin of those  
15 who listen. Try hard to show yourself worthy of God's approval, as a labourer who need not be ashamed; be straightforward in your proclamation of the  
16 truth. Avoid empty and worldly chat-

ter; those who indulge in it will stray further and further into godless courses, and the infection of their teaching will  
17 spread like a gangrene. Such are Hymenaeus and Philetus; they have  
18 shot wide of the truth in saying that our resurrection has already taken place, and are upsetting people's faith. But God has laid a foundation, and it  
19 stands firm, with this inscription: 'The Lord knows his own', and, 'Everyone who takes the Lord's name upon his lips must forsake wickedness.' Now in  
20 any great house there are not only utensils of gold and silver, but also others of wood or earthenware; the former are valued, the latter held cheap. To be among those which are valued  
21 and dedicated, a thing of use to the Master of the house, a man must cleanse himself from all those evil things;<sup>d</sup> then he will be fit for any honourable purpose.

Turn from the wayward impulses of  
22 youth, and pursue justice, integrity, love, and peace with all who invoke the Lord in singleness of mind. Have  
23 nothing to do with foolish and ignorant speculations. You know they breed quarrels, and the servant of the Lord  
24 must not be quarrelsome, but kindly towards all. He should be a good teacher, tolerant, and gentle when  
25 discipline is needed for the refractory. The Lord may grant them a change of heart and show them the truth, and  
26 thus they may come to their senses and escape from the devil's snare, in which they have been caught and held at his will.<sup>e</sup>

You must face the fact: the final age  
3 of this world is to be a time of troubles. Men will love nothing but money and  
2 self; they will be arrogant, boastful, and abusive; with no respect for parents, no

<sup>d</sup> Or must separate himself from these persons.

<sup>e</sup> Or escape from the devil's snare, caught now by God and made subject to his will.

2.1-26: The way to wholehearted Christian service. 2: Apostolic tradition was transmitted in the manner described in this verse; see 1.14. 11-13: These verses appear to be a fragment of an early Christian hymn. 11: *Words you may trust*: see 1 Tim.1.15 n. *If we died with him*: see Rom.6.8. 12: *If we deny him*: see Mt.10.33. 13: *He keeps faith*: see Rom.3.3-4. 18: Some apparently thought that *the resurrection has already taken place* in some spiritual or mystical experience, perhaps at baptism; contrast 1 Cor.15.50-55. 19: The first quotation reflects Num.16.5 Sept.; the second a variety of OT verses, e.g. Isa.26.13; Ps.6.8-9. 22: *Impulses of youth*: see 1 Tim.4.12 n. 23: See 1 Tim.1.4; Ti.3.9. 25: *The truth*: see 3.7 n.

3.1-17: Admonitions to stand fast amid error and persecution. 1: Christians believed *the final age* had already begun; compare Acts 2.16-21. 2-4: See 1 Tim.1.10 n. 7: *The truth* here

3 gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandal-mongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, 4 traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put 5 pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality. 6 Keep clear of men like these. They are the sort that insinuate themselves into private houses and there get miserable women into their clutches, women burdened with a sinful past, and led on 7 by all kinds of desires, who are always wanting to be taught, but are incapable of reaching a knowledge of the truth. 8 As Jannes and Jambres defied Moses, so these men defy the truth; they have lost the power to reason, and they 9 cannot pass the tests of faith. But their successes will be short-lived, for, like those opponents of Moses, they will come to be recognized by everyone for the fools they are. 10 But you, my son, have followed, step by step, my teaching and my manner of life, my resolution, my faith, patience, and spirit of love, and my 11 fortitude under persecutions and sufferings—all that I went through at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, all the persecutions I endured; and the Lord 12 rescued me out of them all. Yes, persecution will come to all who want to 13 live a godly life as Christians, whereas wicked men and charlatans will make progress from bad to worse, deceiving 14 and deceived. But for your part, stand by the truths you have learned and are assured of. Remember from whom you 15 learned them; remember that from early childhood you have been familiar with the sacred writings which have power to make you wise and lead you

to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every inspired scripture has its 16 use for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the 17 man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind.

Before God, and before Christ Jesus 4 who is to judge men living and dead, I charge you solemnly by his coming appearance and his reign, proclaim the 2 message, press it home on all occasions,<sup>f</sup> convenient or inconvenient, use argument, reproof, and appeal, with all the patience that the work of teaching requires. For the time will come when 3 they will not stand wholesome teaching, but will follow their own fancy and gather a crowd of teachers to tickle their ears. They will stop their ears to 4 the truth and turn to mythology. But 5 you yourself must keep calm and sane at all times; face hardship, work to spread the Gospel, and do all the duties of your calling.

AS FOR ME, ALREADY MY LIFE IS BEING 6 poured out on the altar, and the hour for my departure is upon me. I have run 7 the great race, I have finished the course, I have kept faith. And now 8 the prize awaits me, the garland of righteousness which the Lord, the all-just Judge, will award me on that great Day; and it is not for me alone, but for all who have set their hearts on his coming appearance.

Do your best to join me soon; for 9,10 Demas has deserted me because his heart was set on this world; he has gone to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia,<sup>g</sup> Titus to Dalmatia; I have no one with 11

<sup>f</sup> Or be on duty at all times.  
<sup>g</sup> Or Gaul; some witnesses read Gallia.

means the Christian gospel, as in 2.25; 1 Tim.2.4; Ti.1.1. 8: *Jannes and Jambres* are the names ancient Jewish tradition gave to the Egyptian magicians of Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses; see Exod.7.11; 9.11. 10: On Paul as a model for faith, see also Acts 20.18–21. 11: *All that I went through*: see 2 Cor.11.23–27. *At Antioch*: see Acts 13.50–51. *At Iconium*: see Acts 14.2–7. *At Lystra*: see Acts 14.19–20. 13: The Gk. word translated *charlatans* can also mean magicians; see v. 8 n. 15: *Sacred writings*: see v. 16 n. 16: *Scripture* refers to the OT; the NT had not yet been assembled.

4.1–5: *Charge to Timothy*. 1: *Jesus who is to judge*: see Acts 10.42. 3: *Wholesome teaching*: see 1 Tim.1.10 n. 4: *Mythology*: see 1 Tim.1.4; 4.7; Ti.1.14. 5: *Work to spread the Gospel* (or, Do the work of an evangelist); see Acts 21.8; Eph.4.11, where such an office is mentioned.

4.6–22: *Concluding personal remarks*. 7: Compare Phil.2.16–17. 8: *The garland* was the prize given the winner of a race or other Greek athletic contest. 10: On *Titus*, see the Introduction

me but Luke. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for I find him a useful assistant. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus at Troas, and the books, above all my notebooks.

Alexander the copper-smith did me a great deal of harm. Retribution will fall upon him from the Lord. You had better be on your guard against him too, for he violently opposed everything I said. At the first hearing of my case no one came into court to support me; they all left me in the lurch; I pray that it may not be held against them. But the Lord stood by me and lent me strength, so that I might be his instrument in making the full proclamation of the Gospel for the whole pagan world to

hear; and thus I was rescued out of the lion's jaws. And the Lord will rescue me from every attempt to do me harm, and keep me safe until his heavenly reign begins.<sup>h</sup> Glory to him for ever and ever! Amen.

Greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

Erastus stayed behind at Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill at Miletus. Do try to get here before winter.

Greetings from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, and from all the brotherhood here.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all!

<sup>h</sup> Or from all that evil can do, and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

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to 1 Ti. 13: On *Troas*, see Acts 16.8; 20.6; 2 Cor.2.12. 14: *Retribution* (lit. payment): see Ps.28.4; Rom.2.6. 17: *Rescued out of the lion's jaws* may be used figuratively here, as it is in Ps.22.21. 19: *Prisca and Aquila*: see Acts 18.2 n. 21: During the *winter*, travel by sea was hazardous; see Acts 27.9(and n.)-44; 28.11 n.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS

Titus, like Timothy, was a trusted friend and companion of Paul. Born of Gentile parents (Gal.2.3), he accompanied Paul to the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Gal.2.1; see also Acts 15), and played a significant role in collecting money from the Corinthians (2 Cor.8.6, 16-23) for the poor in Jerusalem (see Gal.2.10). This document is the earliest evidence we have for the presence of the Christian faith on the island of Crete. For more information on this letter, see the Introduction to 1 Timothy.

## *Training for the Christian life*

1 **F**ROM PAUL, SERVANT OF GOD AND  
apostle of Jesus Christ, marked  
as such by faith and knowledge  
and hope—the faith of God’s chosen  
people, knowledge of the truth as our  
2 religion has it, and the hope of eternal  
life.<sup>a</sup> Yes, it is eternal life that God,  
3 and now in his own good time he has  
openly declared himself in the pro-  
clamation which was entrusted to me  
by ordinance of God our Saviour.  
4 To Titus, my true-born son in the  
faith which we share, grace and peace  
from God our Father and Christ Jesus  
our Saviour.  
5 My intention in leaving you behind  
in Crete was that you should set in  
order what was left over, and in  
particular should institute elders in each  
town. In doing so, observe the tests I  
6 prescribed: is he a man of unimpeach-  
able character, faithful to his one wife,<sup>b</sup>  
the father of children who are believers,  
who are under no imputation of loose  
7 living, and are not out of control? For  
as God’s steward a bishop must be a  
man of unimpeachable character. He  
must not be overbearing or short-  
tempered; he must be no drinker, no  
8 brawler, no money-grubber, but hos-

pitable, right-minded, temperate, just,  
devout, and self-controlled. He must 9  
adhere to the true doctrine, so that he  
may be well able both to move his  
hearers with wholesome teaching and  
to confute objectors.

There are all too many, especially 10  
among Jewish converts, who are out of  
all control; they talk wildly and lead  
men’s minds astray. Such men must be 11  
curbed, because they are ruining whole  
families by teaching things they should  
not, and all for sordid gain. It was a 12  
Cretan prophet, one of their own  
countrymen, who said, ‘Cretans were  
always liars, vicious brutes, lazy glut- 13  
tons’—and he told the truth! All the  
more reason why you should pull them  
up sharply, so that they may come to a  
sane belief, instead of lending their ears 14  
to Jewish myths and commandments of  
merely human origin, the work of men  
who turn their backs upon the truth.

To the pure all things are pure; but 15  
nothing is pure to the tainted minds of  
disbelievers, tainted alike in reason and  
conscience. They profess to acknowl- 16  
edge God, but deny him by their  
actions. Their detestable obstinacy dis-  
qualifies them for any good work.

*a* Or apostle of Jesus Christ, to bring God’s chosen people to faith and to a knowledge of the truth as our religion has it, with its hope for eternal life.  
*b* See note on 1 Timothy 3. 2.

**1.1-4: Salutation.** 1: *Knowledge of the truth*: see 2 Tim.3.7 n. 3: *His own good time* (or, at the appropriate time): the early Christians saw in the history of Israel and the coming of Jesus the unfolding of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. In accordance with this plan, God had sent Jesus at the time he (God) found appropriate; see Rom.5.6; Gal.4.4; Eph.1.10. 4: On *Titus*, see Introduction to 1 Tim.

**1.5-16: The need for Christian discipline.** 5: *Elders*: in 1 Tim.3.1-7, a similar list describes the qualifications of a bishop; see 1 Tim.3.2 n. 7: *Bishop* seems identical here to “elder” in v. 5. 9: *Wholesome teaching*: see 1 Tim.1.10 n. 10-11: The problems here are similar to those discussed in 1 Tim.1.3-4; 6.4-5; 2 Tim.2.14,16; 3.6-7. 12: *Cretan prophet*: probably Epimenides (sixth century B.C.). 14: *Jewish myths and commandments*: see 1 Tim.4.3 n. 15: *To the pure*: probably meant here in the sense that a man’s inner quality determines whether what he perceives and expresses will be good or evil; see Mt.7:16-18. Compare Rom.14.14, where it refers to dietary practices.

2 For your own part, what you say must be in keeping with wholesome doctrine. Let the older men know that they should be sober, high-principled, and temperate, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. The older women, similarly, should be reverent in their bearing, not scandal-mongers or slaves to strong drink; they must set a high standard, and school the younger women to be loving wives and mothers, temperate, chaste, and kind, busy at home, respecting the authority of their own husbands. Thus the Gospel will not be brought into disrepute.

6 Urge the younger men, similarly, to be temperate in all things, and set them a good example yourself. In your teaching, you must show integrity and high principle, and use wholesome speech to which none can take exception. This will shame any opponent, when he finds not a word to say to our discredit.

9 Tell slaves to respect their masters' authority in everything, and to comply with their demands without answering back; not to pilfer, but to show themselves strictly honest and trustworthy; for in all such ways they will add lustre to the doctrine of God our Saviour.

11 For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendour of our great God and Saviour<sup>c</sup> Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good.

These, then, are your themes; urge 15 them and argue them. And speak with authority: let no one slight you.

Remind them to be submissive to the 3 government and the authorities, to obey them, and to be ready for any honourable form of work;<sup>d</sup> to slander 2 no one, not to pick quarrels, to show forbearance and a consistently gentle disposition towards all men.

For at one time we ourselves in our 3 folly and obstinacy were all astray. We were slaves to passions and pleasures of every kind. Our days were passed in malice and envy; we were odious ourselves and we hated one another. But 4 when the kindness and generosity of God our Saviour dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of 5 our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of<sup>e</sup> the Holy Spirit. For he sent down the 6 Spirit upon us plentifully through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, justified by 7 his grace, we might in hope become heirs to eternal life. These are words 8 you may trust.

Such are the points I should wish you to insist on. Those who have come to believe in God should see that they engage in honourable occupations, which are not only honourable in themselves, but also useful to their fellowmen.<sup>f</sup> But steer clear of foolish 9 speculations, genealogies, quarrels, and controversies over the Law; they are unprofitable and pointless.

A heretic should be warned once, 10 and once again; after that, have done

<sup>c</sup> Or of the great God and our Saviour . . .

<sup>d</sup> Or ready always to do good.

<sup>e</sup> Or the water of rebirth and of renewal by . . .

<sup>f</sup> Or should make it their business to practise virtue. These precepts are good in themselves and useful to society.

2.1-3.2: All Christians must lead disciplined lives. 1: *Wholesome doctrine*: see 1 Tim.1.10 n. 5: *Respecting the authority of their own husbands*: see 1 Tim.2.11-14. 9: *Slaves*: see 1 Tim.6.1 n. 10: *God our Saviour*: see 1 Tim.1.1 n. 11: *For all mankind*: see 1 Tim.2.4 n. 12: These ideals also characterized the doctrine of much Hellenistic philosophy, although it did not speak of doing them by God's grace. 13: *God and Saviour* were titles regularly applied in the Hellenistic world to gods and emperors. 14: *A pure people marked out for his own*: see Exod.19.5; Deut.7.6; 14.2. 3.1: See Rom.13.1-7; 1 Tim.2.2. Cretans had a reputation as a turbulent people.

3.3-8a: *God is generous in mercy*. 4: *God our Saviour*: see 1 Tim.1.1 n. Hellenistic rulers frequently claimed *generosity* as a characteristic of their acts. 5: *Water of rebirth* means baptism; see Eph.5.26; 1 Pet.1.3. 8: *Words . . . trust*: see 1 Tim.1.15 n. The phrase refers here to vv. 4-7.

3.8b-15: *Concluding exhortations*. 8b-11: These verses serve as a summary of the author's counsel; we do not possess sufficient information to specify exactly what he meant by his references to *foolish speculations, genealogies, quarrels, and controversies over the Law* (see 1 Tim.1.4 n.). 10: See Mt.18.15-17; 2 Th.3.14-15. The word *heretic* appears only here in the



- 11 with him, recognizing that a man of that sort has a distorted mind and stands self-condemned in his sin. And our own people must be taught to 14 engage in honest employment to produce the necessities of life; they must not be unproductive.
- 12 When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, make haste to join me at Nicopolis, for that is where I have determined to spend the winter. Do your utmost to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their travels, and see that they are not short of anything. All who are with me send you 15 greetings. My greetings to those who are our friends in truth.<sup>g</sup> Grace be with you all!
- 13
- g Or our friends in the faith.*

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NT; it is probably not meant in the formal sense it later acquired, but simply designates one whose views the author finds unacceptable. 12: It is uncertain to which of several cities named *Nicopolis* this refers. 13: *Apollos*: see Acts 18.24-19.1; he is also mentioned frequently in 1 Cor. chs. 1-4.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

This most personal of all the Pauline letters—his plea for a runaway slave—was written during an imprisonment of the apostle, probably his house arrest at Rome (61–63 A.D.). Philemon was a leading member of his community, at whose house the Christians met for worship. That he was a resident of Colossae is indicated by Col.4.7–9. It tells that Paul’s companion Tychicus would carry his letter to the Colossians, and “with him comes Onesimus,” the slave mentioned in Philem.11–16.

Onesimus has run away; the penalty for this on recapture was severe. Paul is sending him back and appeals to Philemon to receive Onesimus without punishment. He does not speak against the institution of slavery, but reminds Philemon that since Onesimus has become a Christian their relations have changed—they are now brothers in Christ.

## *A runaway slave*

1 FROM PAUL, A PRISONER OF CHRIST  
Jesus, and our colleague Timothy,  
2 to Philemon our dear friend and  
fellow-worker, and Apphia our sister,  
and Archippus our comrade-in-arms,  
and the congregation at your house.

3 Grace to you and peace from God  
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God always when I  
5 mention you in my prayers, for I hear  
of your love and faith towards the Lord  
Jesus and towards all God’s people.

6 My prayer is that your fellowship with  
us in our common faith may deepen the  
understanding of all the blessings that  
our union with Christ brings us.<sup>a</sup> For I  
am delighted and encouraged by your  
love; through you, my brother, God’s  
people have been much refreshed.

8 Accordingly, although in Christ I  
might make bold to point out your  
9 duty, yet, because of that same love, I  
would rather appeal to you. Yes, I,  
Paul, ambassador as I am of Christ  
10 Jesus—and now his prisoner—appeal  
to you about my child, whose father I  
have become in this prison.

11 I mean Onesimus, once so little use  
to you, but now useful indeed, both to

you and to me. I am sending him back  
to you, and in doing so I am sending a  
12 part of myself. I should have liked to  
13 keep him with me, to look after me as  
you would wish, here in prison for the  
Gospel. But I would rather do nothing  
14 without your consent, so that your  
kindness may be a matter not of com-  
pulsion, but of your own free will. For  
15 perhaps this is why you lost him for a  
time, that you might have him back  
for good, no longer as a slave, but as  
16 more than a slave—as a dear brother,  
very dear indeed to me and how much  
dearer to you, both as man and as  
Christian.

If, then, you count me partner in the  
17 faith, welcome him as you would wel-  
come me. And if he has done you any  
18 wrong or is in your debt, put that down  
to my account. Here is my signature,  
19 PAUL; I undertake to repay—not to  
mention that you owe your very self to  
me as well. Now brother, as a Christian,  
20 be generous with me, and relieve my  
anxiety; we are both in Christ!

I write to you confident that you will  
21 meet my wishes; I know that you will  
in fact do better than I ask. And one  
22 thing more: have a room ready for me,

<sup>a</sup> Or that bring us to Christ.

1–3: **Salutation.** The form is usual in ancient letters. 2: *Congregation at your house*: as yet no church edifices existed.

4–7: **Prayer of thanksgiving.** Such prayers are usual in Paul’s letters; see Rom.1.8–15, where he begins with “thanking my God.”

8–21: **The plea for Onesimus.** 10: *Child . . . father*: see 1 Cor.4.15. 11: *Little use . . . useful indeed*: the name Onesimus means “the useful one”; the verse puns on the name. 13–14: Perhaps Paul is here hinting that Philemon should send the slave back to continue his service to the apostle. 15–16: Paul acknowledges Philemon’s right to have Onesimus *back for good*, although the apostle’s own hope is expressed in v. 14. In any case, Philemon will henceforth know Onesimus as a *brother*, rather than merely as a *slave*. 19: The *signature* is this verse and

for I hope that, in answer to your prayers, God will grant me to you.  
23 Epaphras, Christ's captive like myself, sends you greetings. So do Mark,  
24 Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit!

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perhaps the following ones: see 1 Cor.16.21-24 n. *Owe . . . to me*: an allusion to Paul's conversion of Philemon. **23-24**: These companions of Paul are mentioned also in Col.4.10,11,14.

# A LETTER TO HEBREWS

While the final paragraphs (see 13.18–25 n.) imply that Hebrews is a letter, in style and content it is a sermonic tract, an “exhortation” (13.22). The readers have endured great suffering because of their faith (10.32–34) and are now admonished to continue firm in their hope of salvation (e.g. 7.19), although apathy or even apostasy may seem the easier way. For backsliders into sin there is no second chance for salvation (6.4–8; 10.26–31).

The basis and content of hope is God’s gift of his Son (ch. 1), and the first chs. (1.1–10.18) expound the significance of Christ’s faithfulness (e.g. 2.18; 5.8–10) and death. The thesis is that Christ is the great high priest (8.1–2), the mediator of a new covenant (e.g. 8.6–13) who offers the one truly effective sacrifice (e.g. 9.11–14, 25–28). The last chs. (10.19–13.17) urge Christians to follow in “the new, living way” provided by Christ (10.20), as God’s pilgrim people, “seekers after the city which is to come” (13.14).

There have been many attempts to name the author of this tract (some early Christians even assigned it to Paul), but he remains anonymous. In spite of the traditional title the addressees were probably Gentile Christians. Earliest evidence of its use comes from Rome at the end of the first century, one possible clue as to its date and origin.

*Christ divine and human*

but of the Son,

8

1 **W**HEN IN FORMER TIMES GOD spoke to our forefathers, he spoke in fragmentary and varied fashion through the prophets.  
2 But in this the final age he has spoken to us in the Son whom he has made heir to the whole universe, and through whom he created all orders of existence:  
3 the Son who is the effulgence of God’s splendour and the stamp of God’s very being, and sustains<sup>a</sup> the universe by his word of power. When he had brought about the purgation of sins, he took his seat at the right hand of  
4 Majesty on high, raised as far above the angels, as the title he has inherited is superior to theirs.  
5 For God never said to any angel, ‘Thou art my Son; today I have begotten thee’, or again, ‘I will be father  
6 to him, and he shall be my son.’ Again, when he presents the first-born to the world, he says, ‘Let all the angels of  
7 God pay him homage.’ Of the angels he says,

‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,  
and the sceptre<sup>b</sup> of justice is the sceptre of his kingdom.  
Thou hast loved right and hated wrong;  
therefore, O God, thy God<sup>c</sup> has set thee above thy fellows,  
by anointing with the oil of exultation.’

9

And again,

10

‘By thee, Lord, were earth’s foundations laid of old,  
and the heavens are the work of thy hands.  
They shall pass away, but thou endurest;  
like clothes they shall all grow old; thou shalt fold them up like a cloak; yes, they shall be changed like any garment.  
But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.’

11

12

‘He who makes his angels winds,  
and his ministers a fiery flame’;

*a* Or bears along.  
*b* Or God is thy throne for ever and ever, and thy sceptre . . .  
*c* Or therefore God who is thy God . . .

1.1–3.6a: The supremacy of Christ and the significance of his suffering.  
1.1–14: Christ’s supremacy over the angels. 2–3a: See Jn.1.1–3; Wis.7.25. 3: The idea of Christ’s exaltation to a position of supreme authority (*right hand*) in the heavenly “court” is derived from Ps.110.1 which is quoted in v. 13; 5.6; 7.21 where it is applied to Christ. 4: Jesus’ title is “Son”; see vv. 2–3.5. 5: Ps.2.7 (see Mt.3.17); 2 Sam.7.14. 6: Deut.32.43 Sept. (see Ps.97.7). 7: Ps.104.4. 8–9: Ps.45.6–7. 10–12: Ps.102.25–27. 13: Ps.110.1.

13 To which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool'? What are they all but ministrant spirits, sent out to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

2 Thus we are bound to pay all the more heed to what we have been told, for fear of drifting from our course.

2 For if the word spoken through angels had such force that any transgression or disobedience met with due retribution, what escape can there be for us if we ignore a deliverance so great? For this deliverance was first announced through the lips of the Lord himself; those who heard him confirmed it to us, and God added his testimony by signs, by miracles, by manifold works of power, and by distributing the gifts of the Holy Spirit at his own will.

5 For it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, which is our theme. But there is somewhere a solemn assurance which runs:

'What is man, that thou rememberest him,  
or the son of man, that thou hast regard to him?

7 Thou didst make him for a short while lower than the angels; thou didst crown him with glory and honour;  
8 thou didst put all things in subjection beneath his feet.'

For in subjecting all things to him, he left nothing that is not subject. But in fact we do not yet see all things in subjection to man. In Jesus, however, we do see one who<sup>d</sup> for a short while was made lower than the angels, crowned now with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that, by God's gracious will, in tasting death he should stand<sup>e</sup> for us all.

It was clearly fitting that God for 10 whom and through whom all things exist should, in bringing many sons to glory, make the leader who delivers them perfect through sufferings. For a 11 consecrating priest and those whom he consecrates are all of one stock; and that is why the Son does not shrink from calling men his brothers, when he 12 says, 'I will proclaim thy name to my brothers; in full assembly I will sing thy praise'; and again, 'I will keep my trust 13 fixed on him'; and again, 'Here am I, and the children whom God has given me.' The children of a family share the 14 same flesh and blood; and so he too shared ours, so that through death he might break the power of him who had death at his command, that is, the 15 devil; and might liberate those who, through fear of death, had all their lifetime been in servitude. It is not 16 angels, mark you, that he takes to himself, but the sons of Abraham. And therefore he had to be made like 17 these brothers of his in every way, so that he might be merciful and faithful as their high priest before God, to expiate the sins of the people. For since 18 he himself has passed through the test of suffering, he is able to help those who are meeting their test now.

Therefore, brothers in the family of 3 God, who share a heavenly calling, think of the Apostle and High Priest of the religion we profess,<sup>f</sup> who was 2 faithful to God who appointed him. Moses also was faithful in God's household; and Jesus, of whom I speak, 3 has been deemed worthy of greater honour than Moses, as the founder of a house enjoys more honour than his household. For every house has its 4 founder; and the founder of all is God.

<sup>d</sup> Or in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who . . .

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read so that apart from God he should taste death . . .

<sup>f</sup> Or of him whom we confess as God's Envoy and High Priest.

2.1-18: The significance of Christ's suffering. 2: See, e.g. Acts 7.53. 3-4: There is a triple witness to salvation: Christ, the apostles, and God himself, whose power is manifest in many wondrous deeds and in diverse spiritual gifts. 6-8: Ps.8.4-6 Sept. 10: See 5.8-10. 11: Christ, the priest, and those whom he consecrates are all sons of God. 12: Ps.22.22. 13: Isa.8.17-18. 17: See 4.14-5.10. 18: Christ's sacrifice is effective for salvation because he, through the trials of temptation and persecution, is able to identify fully with human suffering. See 4.15.

3.1-6a: Christ's supremacy over Moses. 1: Christ is God's Apostle to men, and as High Priest he is the mediator between God and men. 2-6: The author supports Christ's supremacy by arguing that, while Moses was a servant in God's . . . household (Num.12.7), Jesus is the master's son.

5 Moses, then, was faithful as a servitor  
in God's whole household; his task was  
to bear witness to the words that God  
6 would speak; but Christ is faithful as a  
son, set over his household. And we are  
that household of his, if only we are  
fearless and keep our hope high.

7 'TODAY', THEREFORE, AS THE HOLY  
Spirit says—

'Today if you hear his voice,  
8 do not grow stubborn as in those  
days of rebellion,  
at that time of testing in the desert,  
9 where your forefathers tried me and  
tested me,  
and saw<sup>g</sup> the things I did for forty  
years.  
10 And so, I was indignant with that  
generation  
and I said, Their hearts are for ever  
astray;  
they would not discern my ways;  
11 as I vowed in my anger, they shall  
never enter my rest.'

12 See to it, brothers, that no one  
among you has the wicked, faithless  
heart of a deserter from the living God;  
13 but day by day, while that word  
'Today' still sounds in your ears,  
encourage one another, so that no one  
of you is made stubborn by the wiles  
14 of sin. For we have become Christ's  
partners<sup>h</sup> if only we keep our original  
confidence firm to the end.

15 When Scripture says, 'Today if you  
hear his voice, do not grow stubborn as  
16 in those days of rebellion', who, I ask,  
were those who heard and rebelled?  
All those, surely, whom Moses had led  
17 out of Egypt. And with whom was  
God indignant for forty years? With  
those, surely, who had sinned, whose  
bodies lay where they fell in the desert.

And to whom did he vow that they 18  
should not enter his rest, if not to those  
who had refused to believe? We per- 19  
ceive that it was unbelief which pre-  
vented their entering.

Therefore we must have before us the 4  
fear that while the promise of entering  
his rest remains open, one or another  
among you should be found to have  
missed his chance. For indeed we have 2  
heard the good news, as they did. But  
in them the message they heard did no  
good, because it met with no faith in  
those who heard it. It is we, we who 3  
have become believers, who enter the  
rest referred to in the words, 'As I  
vowed in my anger, they shall never  
enter my rest.' Yet God's work has  
been finished ever since the world was  
created; for does not Scripture some- 4  
where speak thus of the seventh day:  
'God rested from all his work on the  
seventh day'?—and once again in the 5  
passage above we read, 'They shall  
never enter my rest.' The fact remains 6  
that someone must enter it, and since  
those who first heard the good news  
failed to enter through unbelief, God 7  
fixes another day. Speaking through  
the lips of David after many long years,  
he uses the words already quoted:  
'Today if you hear his voice, do not  
grow stubborn.' If Joshua had given 8  
them rest, God would not thus have  
spoken of another day after that.  
Therefore, a sabbath rest still awaits 9  
the people of God; for anyone who 10  
enters God's rest, rests from his own  
work as God did from his. Let us then 11  
make every effort to enter that rest, so  
that no one may fall by following this  
evil example of unbelief.

For the word of God is alive and 12  
active. It cuts more keenly than any

<sup>g</sup> Or though they saw . . .  
<sup>h</sup> Or have been given a share in Christ.

**3.6b-4.13: The danger of unbelief.** Characteristically, this author turns from theological exposition (1.1-3.6a) to ethical exhortation. He begins with a lengthy exposition of Scripture (3.7-11) which is applied to the readers' present needs. **6b:** God's people must keep their *hope high* lest they fall into unbelief (see vv.14,18-19; 4.11). **7-11:** Ps.95.7-11. **12-13:** Israel's misadventures in the wilderness should serve as warning to Christians who may be faced with the temptation to apathy or apostasy. **14:** Christians are *Christ's partners* if they remain loyal sons in God's household; see v. 1; 2.11-17. **15:** See vv. 7-8. **17:** Num.14.29. **18:** The *rest* which awaited those who were obedient (v. 11; Num.14.22-23) was the promised land of Canaan. **4.1-2:** God's *rest* (3.18) is interpreted as the final promised salvation which Christians, like Israel, can attain only by faithfulness. **3:** Ps.95.11. **4:** Gen.2.2. **5:** See v. 3. **6:** Israel disobeyed, but the promise was renewed. **7:** Ps.95.7-8 (see 3.7-11). **8:** Joshua's settlement of Canaan

two-edged sword, piercing as far as the place where life and spirit, joints and marrow, divide. It sifts the purposes and thoughts of the heart. There is nothing in creation that can hide from him; everything lies naked and exposed to the eyes of the One with whom we have to reckon.

14 Since therefore we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the religion we profess.

15 For ours is not a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who, because of his likeness to us, has been tested every way,<sup>i</sup> only without sin. Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help.

### *The shadow and the real*

5 FOR EVERY HIGH PRIEST IS TAKEN FROM among men and appointed their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to bear patiently with the ignorant and erring, since he too is beset by weakness; and because of this he is bound to make sin-offerings for himself no less than for the people. And nobody arrogates the honour to himself: he is called by God, as indeed Aaron was.

5 So it is with Christ: he did not confer upon himself the glory of becoming high priest; it was granted by God, who said to him, 'Thou art my Son; today I have begotten thee'; as also in another place he says, 'Thou art a priest for ever, in the succession of Mel-

chizedek.' In the days of his earthly life he offered up prayers and petitions, with loud cries and tears, to God who was able to deliver him from the grave. Because of his humble submission his prayer was heard: son though he was, he learned obedience in the school of suffering, and, once perfected, became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, named by God high priest in the succession of Melchizedek.

About Melchizedek we have much to say, much that is difficult to explain, now that you have grown so dull of hearing. For indeed, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the ABC of God's oracles over again; it has come to this, that you need milk instead of solid food. Anyone who lives on milk, being an infant, does not know<sup>j</sup> what is right. But grown men can take solid food; their perceptions are trained by long use to discriminate between good and evil.

Let us then stop discussing the rudiments of Christianity. We ought not to be laying over again the foundations of faith in God and of repentance from the deadness of our former ways, by instruction<sup>k</sup> about cleansing rites and the laying-on-of-hands, about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement. Instead, let us advance towards maturity; and so we shall, if God permits.

For when men have once been enlightened, when they have had a taste of the heavenly gift and a share in the

*i* Or who has been tested every way, as we are.  
*j* Or is incompetent to speak of . . .  
*k* Or, according to some witnesses, laying the foundations over again: repentance from the deadness of our former ways and faith in God, instruction . . .

(Deut.31.7; Josh. ch. 22) did not fulfill the promise, for it had to be issued again "through . . . David" (v. 7); see Ps.95.7-8. 12-13: The word of God probes and judges all creation.

4.14-5.10: Christ, the great high priest. This is the author's most important way of interpreting the meaning of Christ's redemptive work. The development of the idea is interrupted temporarily by exhortations (5.11-6.12; see 3.6b-4.13 n.), but then resumed at 6.13. 14-16: God's mercy and grace are sure because Christ himself withstood the trials of our weaknesses . . . without sin, and thereby serves as the effective mediator between men and God. See 2.17-18. 5.1-4: See Ex.28.1; Lev.9.7; 16.6. 5: See 1.5 n. 6: Ps.110.4. See 7.1-10 n. 7-8: See the stories of Jesus' passion, e.g. Mt.26.36-46. 9-10: See 9.24-28.

5.11-6.12: Warning against backsliding. 11-14: The explanation of Melchizedek's priesthood is deferred (see ch. 7). First, the readers need to be nurtured by the milk of some basic instruction about discerning good and evil. 6.1-3: Certain rudiments of Christianity, like faith, repentance, resurrection and judgement, ought to be self-evident. (It is not clear what cleansing rites and the laying-on-of-hands refer to.) Once the basic Christian doctrines have been understood, it is essential that one advance towards maturity, i.e. give himself over to that perfect consecration to God's service which Christ's sacrifice has made possible (10.12-14). 4-8: For sins committed after

5 Holy Spirit, when they have experienced the goodness of God's word and the spiritual energies of the age to come, and after all this have fallen away, it is impossible to bring them again to repentance; for with their own hands they are crucifying<sup>l</sup> the Son of God and making mock of his death.

7 When the earth drinks in the rain that falls upon it from time to time, and yields a useful crop to those for whom it is cultivated, it is receiving its share of blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and God's curse hangs over it; the end of that is burning. But although we speak as we do, we are convinced that you, my friends, are in the better case, and this makes for your salvation. For God would not be so unjust as to forget all that you did for love of his name, when you rendered service to his people, as you still do. But we long for every one of you to show the same eager concern, until your hope is finally realized. We want you not to become lazy, but to imitate those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, he swore by himself, because he had no one greater to swear by: 'I vow that I will bless you abundantly and multiply your descendants.' Thus it was that Abraham, after patient waiting, attained the promise. Men swear by a greater than themselves, and the oath provides a confirmation to end all dispute; and so God, desiring to show even more clearly to the heirs of his promise how unchanging was his purpose, guaranteed it by oath. Here, then, are two irrevocable acts in which

God could not possibly play us false, to give powerful encouragement to us, who have claimed his protection by grasping<sup>m</sup> the hope set before us. That hope we hold. It is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure. It enters in through the veil, where Jesus<sup>20</sup> has entered on our behalf as forerunner, having become a high priest for ever in the succession of Melchizedek.

THIS MELCHIZEDEK, KING OF SALEM, 7 priest of God Most High, met Abraham returning from the rout of the kings and blessed him; and Abraham gave 2 him a tithe of everything as his portion. His name, in the first place, means 'king of righteousness'; next he is king of Salem, that is, 'king of peace'. He 3 has no father, no mother, no lineage; his years have no beginning, his life no end. He is like the Son of God: he remains a priest for all time.

Consider now how great he must be 4 for Abraham the patriarch to give him a tithe of the finest of the spoil. The 5 descendants of Levi who take the priestly office are commanded by the Law to tithe the people, that is, their kinsmen, although they too are descendants of Abraham. But Melchizedek, 6 though he does not trace his descent from them, has tithed Abraham himself, and given his blessing to the man who received the promises; and beyond 7 all dispute the lesser is always blessed by the greater. Again, in the one 8 instance tithes are received by men who must die; but in the other, by one whom Scripture affirms to be alive. It 9

<sup>l</sup> Or crucifying again.

<sup>m</sup> Or to give to us, who have claimed his protection, a powerful incentive to grasp . . .

baptism no amount of repentance will suffice; backsliders have no second chance (see 10.26-31; 2 Pet.2.20-22). They remain under a curse like Adam (vv. 7-8; see Gen.1.11-12; 3.17-18). 9-12: Here the writer addresses those who, however, still show *faith, hope* and *love* and for whom *salvation* is still in prospect if they remain true to their baptismal vows.

6.13-10.18: The new covenant. The writer now returns (see 4.14-5.10) to his theological discussion. His aim in what follows is to demonstrate that Christ mediates, and by his death effectively seals, a new covenant for forgiveness of sins (10.16-18). This point is made by contrasting the redemptive character of Jesus' life, death, and exaltation with the inferior rites of the Jewish sacrificial system.

6.13-8.13: Christ is a new high priest. 13-18: *Two irrevocable acts* show God's faithfulness to Abraham, his promise and his oath; see Gen.22.16-17. 19-20: *The veil* of the Temple in Jerusalem guarded its innermost sanctuary which was entered only once a year and only by the high priest; see 9.1-5. This priestly function of opening an approach to God for the people is now served by Jesus; see 4.14-5.10. 7.1-10: *Melchizedek* (see Gen.14.17-20) is called a *priest for all time* (v. 3) because Scripture happens to say nothing about either his birth or his death. He is thus the prototype of Christ, the eternal high priest (see vv. 23-25). 8: The Levitical priests



might even be said that Levi, who receives tithes, has himself been tithed through Abraham; for he was still in his ancestor's loins when Melchizedek met him.

11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for it is on this basis that the people were given the Law), what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising, in the succession of Melchizedek, instead of the succession of Aaron? For a change of priesthood must mean a change of law. And the one here spoken of belongs to a different tribe, no member of which has ever had anything to do with the altar. For it is very evident that our Lord is sprung from Judah, a tribe to which Moses made no reference in speaking of priests.

15 The argument becomes still clearer, if the new priest who arises is one like Melchizedek, owing his priesthood not to a system of earth-bound rules but to the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. For here is the testimony: 'Thou art a priest for ever, in the succession of Melchizedek.' The earlier rules are cancelled as impotent and useless, since the Law brought nothing to perfection; and a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

20 How great a difference it makes that an oath was sworn! There was no oath sworn when those others were made priests; but for this priest an oath was sworn, as Scripture says of him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not go back on his word, "Thou art a priest for ever."' How far superior must the covenant also be of which Jesus is the guarantor! Those other priests are appointed in numerous succession, because they are prevented by death from continuing in

office; but the priesthood which Jesus holds is perpetual, because he remains for ever. That is why he is also able to save absolutely those who approach God through him; he is always living to plead on their behalf.

Such a high priest does indeed fit our condition—devout, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, raised high above the heavens. He has no need to offer sacrifices daily, as the high priests do, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; for this he did once and for all when he offered up himself. The high priests made by the Law are men in all their frailty; but the priest appointed by the words of the oath which supersedes the Law is the Son, made perfect now for ever.

NOW THIS IS MY MAIN POINT: JUST SUCH a high priest we have, and he has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens, a ministrant in the real sanctuary, the tent pitched by the Lord and not by man. Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence, this one too must have<sup>n</sup> something to offer. Now if he had been on earth, he could not even have been a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts which the Law prescribes, though they minister in a sanctuary which is only a copy and shadow of the heavenly. This is implied when Moses, about to erect the tent, is instructed by God: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.' But in fact the ministry which has fallen to Jesus is as far superior to theirs as are the covenant he mediates and the promises upon which it is legally secured.

<sup>n</sup> Or must have had.

are mortal, Melchizedek is not. 11-14: The inferiority of the old priesthood required the institution of a new order of priests which, in turn, involved a *change of law*. Under the old law priests were chosen only from the tribe of Levi (see Num.18.21-24), but Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. 15-19: Christ's priesthood depends on no legal statute of the Pentateuch, but rather on the uniqueness of his own person as God's eternal Son (see 1.1-4; 13.8). Therefore he secures for the people a *better hope* (v. 19). 17: Ps.110.4. 20-25: The author resumes his argument that Jesus' priestly office was conferred by a divine oath (Ps.110.4; see 6.13-18). Because death does not terminate his service he is *able to save absolutely*. 26-28: The preceding argument is summarized: Christ's priestly mediation is alone redemptive because he is God's *Son*, himself without sin, *appointed to his office by . . . the oath*, not *the Law*, and because he offers the *once and for all sacrifice* of his own life and subsequently is *raised high above the heavens* to be with God. See 9.11-12.

8.1-13: Christ exercises his priesthood in the Lord's sanctuary, not in man's. This intensifies

7 Had that first covenant been faultless, there would have been no need to look  
8 for a second in its place. But God, finding fault with them, says, 'The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will conclude a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.  
9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; because they did not abide by the terms of that covenant, and I abandoned  
10 them, says the Lord. For the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, is this: I will set my laws in their understanding and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be  
11 my people. And they shall not teach one another, saying to brother and fellow-citizen,<sup>o</sup> "Know the Lord!" For all of them, high and low, shall know  
12 me; I will be merciful to their wicked deeds, and I will remember their sins  
13 no more.' By speaking of a new covenant, he has pronounced the first one old; and anything that is growing old and ageing will shortly disappear.

9 THE FIRST COVENANT INDEED HAD ITS ordinances of divine service and its sanctuary, but a material sanctuary.  
2 For a tent was prepared—the first tent—in which was the lamp-stand, and the table with the bread of the Presence; this is called the Holy Place.  
3 Beyond the second curtain was the tent called the Most Holy Place. Here was a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant plated all over with gold, in which were a golden jar containing the manna, and Aaron's staff which once budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it the cherubim of God's glory, overshadowing the place of expiation. On these we cannot now enlarge.

Under this arrangement, the priests 6 are always entering the first tent in the discharge of their duties; but the 7 second is entered only once a year, and by the high priest alone, and even then he must take with him the blood which he offers on his own behalf and for the people's sins of ignorance. By this the 8 Holy Spirit signifies that so long as the earlier tent still stands, the way into the sanctuary remains unrevealed. All 9 this is symbolic, pointing to the present time. The offerings and sacrifices there prescribed cannot give the worshipper inward perfection. It is only a matter 10 of food and drink and various rites of cleansing—outward ordinances in force until the time of reformation.

But now Christ has come, high priest 11 of good things already in being.<sup>p</sup> The tent of his priesthood is a greater and more perfect one, not made by men's hands, that is, not belonging to this created world; the blood of his sacrifice 12 is his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves; and thus he has entered the sanctuary once and for all and secured an eternal deliverance. For if the blood 13 of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer have power to hallow those who have been defiled and restore their external purity, how much greater 14 is the power of the blood of Christ; he offered himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice; and his blood will cleanse our conscience from the deadness of our former ways and fit us for the service of the living God.

And therefore he is the mediator of 15 a new covenant, or testament, under which, now that there has been a death to bring deliverance from sins committed under the former covenant, those whom God has called may

<sup>o</sup> Some witnesses read brother and neighbour.

<sup>p</sup> Some witnesses read good things which were (or are) to be.

the author's view that there is a new covenant by which the old cultus has been rendered obsolete, a theme developed in several ways in the tract. 8–12: Jer. 31. 31–34.

9.1–10.18: A new and better sacrifice is offered by Christ. 1–10: These verses provide an idealized picture of the earthly place of sacrifice. 1–5: See Ex. chs. 25–26. 6–9: Under the old system only the high priest is permitted into the inmost sanctuary (beyond the second curtain), and he must first atone for his own and his family's sins (v. 7; Lev. ch. 16). 10–12: The new covenant brings a time of reformation (v. 10), for with Christ as high priest (v. 11) the annual rites are replaced by one perfect sacrifice effective for eternal deliverance (v. 12). 13–14: This priest's sacrificial offering is without blemish (see 4.15; 5.9) and it therefore achieves an inward cleansing for God's people. 15–22: God's new covenant with his people is compared to a human testament which is

receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testator it is necessary for the death of the testator to be established. A testament is operative only after a death: it cannot possibly have force while the testator is alive. Thus we find that the former covenant itself was not inaugurated without blood. For when, as the Law directed, Moses had recited all the commandments to the people, he took the blood of the calves, with water, scarlet wool, and marjoram, and sprinkled the law-book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you.' In the same way he also sprinkled the tent and all the vessels of divine service with blood. Indeed, according to the Law, it might almost be said, everything is cleansed by blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

If, then, these sacrifices cleanse the copies of heavenly things, those heavenly things themselves require better sacrifices to cleanse them. For Christ has entered, not that sanctuary made by men's hands which is only a symbol of the reality, but heaven itself, to appear now before God on our behalf. Nor is he there to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the sanctuary year by year with blood not his own. If that were so, he would have had to suffer many times since the world was made. But as it is, he has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is the lot of men to die once, and after death comes judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the burden of men's sins,<sup>q</sup> and will appear a second time, sin done away, to bring salvation to those who are watching for him.

**10** FOR THE LAW CONTAINS BUT A SHADOW, and no true image,<sup>r</sup> of the good things

which were to come; it provides for the same sacrifices year after year, and with these it can never bring the worshippers to perfection for all time.<sup>s</sup> If it could, these sacrifices would surely have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any sense of sin. But instead, in these sacrifices year after year sins are brought to mind, because sins can never be removed by the blood of bulls and goats.

That is why, at his coming into the world, he says:

'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire,  
but thou hast prepared a body for me.  
Whole-offerings and sin-offerings thou didst not delight in.  
Then I said, "Here am I: as it is written of me in the scroll,  
I have come, O God, to do thy will."'

First he says, 'Sacrifices and offerings, whole-offerings and sin-offerings, thou didst not desire nor delight in'—although the Law prescribes them—and then he says, 'I have come to do thy will.' He thus annuls the former to establish the latter. And it is by the will of God that we have been consecrated, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.

Every priest stands performing his service daily and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never remove sins. But Christ offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat at the right hand of God, where he waits henceforth until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are thus consecrated. Here we have also the testimony of the Holy Spirit: he first says, 'This is the

<sup>q</sup> Or to remove men's sins.

<sup>r</sup> One witness reads a shadow and likeness . . .

<sup>s</sup> Or bring to perfection the worshippers who come continually.

*operative only after the testator's death.* Similarly, the *new covenant* is inaugurated by Christ's death. 18–22: Ex.24.3–8. 23–28: The main points of the discussion are again summarized (see vv. 26–28), and attention is directed to the salvation which awaits believers (v. 28). 10.1–18: The Law does not lead to salvation. It betrays its own inferiority in dealing with sin by providing for repeated sacrifices. In contrast, Christ's sacrifice is *once and for all* (v. 10), therefore, self-validating. 5–7: Ps.40.6–8 Sept., cited as Jesus' own words. 8–10: In Christ's sacrifice the old system is annulled and God's people are now *consecrated* for true obedience. 12–13: Ps.110.1. 16–17: Jer.31.33–34. 18: See vv. 11–12.

covenant which I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will set my laws in their hearts and write them on their understanding'; then he adds, 'and their sins and wicked deeds I will remember no more at all.' And where these have been forgiven, there are offerings for sin no longer.

19 SO NOW, MY FRIENDS, THE BLOOD OF Jesus makes us free to enter boldly into the sanctuary by the new, living way which he has opened for us through the curtain, the way of his flesh.<sup>1</sup> We have, moreover, a great priest set over the household of God; so let us make our approach in sincerity of heart and full assurance of faith, our guilty hearts sprinkled clean, our bodies washed with pure water. Let us be firm and unswerving in the confession of our hope, for the Giver of the promise may be trusted. We ought to see how each of us may best arouse others to love and active goodness, not staying away from our meetings, as some do, but rather encouraging one another, all the more because you see the Day drawing near.

26 For if we wilfully persist in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains: only a terrifying expectation of judgement and a fierce fire which will consume God's enemies. If a man disregards the Law of Moses, he is put to death without pity on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Think how much more severe a penalty that man will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was consecrated, and affronted God's gracious Spirit! For we know who it is that has said, 'Justice is mine: I will repay'; and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Remember the days gone by, when, newly enlightened, you met the challenge of great sufferings and held firm. Some of you were abused and tormented to make a public show, while others stood loyally by those who were so treated. For indeed you shared the sufferings of the prisoners, and you cheerfully accepted the seizure of your possessions, knowing that you possessed something better and more lasting. Do not then throw away your confidence, for it carries a great reward. You need endurance, if you are to do God's will and win what he has promised. For 'soon, very soon' (in the words of Scripture), 'he who is to come will come; he will not delay; and by faith my righteous servant shall find life; but if a man shrinks back, I take no pleasure in him.' But we are not among those who shrink back and are lost; we have the faith to make life our own.

*A call to faith*

AND WHAT IS FAITH? FAITH GIVES substance<sup>2</sup> to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.

It is for their faith that the men of old stand on record.

By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.

By faith, Abel offered a sacrifice greater than Cain's, and through faith his goodness was attested, for his offerings had God's approval; and through faith he continued to speak after his death.

By faith Enoch was carried away to another life without passing through

<sup>1</sup> Or through the curtain of his flesh.  
<sup>2</sup> Or assurance.

10.19-13.17: Exhortations to live as God's pilgrim people. The theological discussion now gives way entirely to practical appeals. The hope enshrined in the new covenant and sealed by Christ's sacrifice should sustain and shape the life of God's people in this world. 19-39: The author renews his plea that Christians remain firm and unswerving in the face of their difficulties. The exalted Christ is their new, living way to God (compare Jn.14.6). 26-31: See 6.4-8 n. 28: See, e.g. Deut.17.6. 30: Deut.32.35-36; Ps.135.14. 31: See 12.29. 32-39: Earlier post-conversion zeal should not be abandoned. 37-38: Hab.2.3-4.

11.1-40: Examples of faith from Scripture are rehearsed to support the preceding exhortations. 1: Faith, in this writer's view, means primarily holding fast to hope. See, e.g. vv.22-23; 6.11-12,19; 7.18-19. 3: Gen. ch. 1. 4: Gen.4.3-10. 5: Gen.5.21-24. 7: Gen.6.13-22. 8-9: Gen.12.1-8.

death; he was not to be found, because God had taken him. For it is the testimony of Scripture that before he was taken he had pleased God, and without faith it is impossible to please him; for anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him.

By faith Noah, divinely warned about the unseen future, took good heed and built an ark to save his household. Through his faith he put the whole world in the wrong, and made good his own claim to the righteousness which comes of faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed the call to go out to a land destined for himself and his heirs, and left home without knowing where he was to go. By faith he settled as an alien in the land promised him, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs to the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith even Sarah herself received strength to conceive, though she was past the age, because she judged that he who had promised would keep faith; and therefore from one man, and one as good as dead, there sprang descendants numerous as the stars or as the countless grains of sand on the sea-shore.

All these persons died in faith. They were not yet in possession of the things promised, but had seen them far ahead and hailed them, and confessed themselves no more than strangers or passing travellers on earth. Those who use such language show plainly that they are looking for a country of their own. If their hearts had been in the country they had left, they could have found opportunity to return. Instead, we find them longing for a better country—I mean, the heavenly one. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has a city ready for them.

By faith Abraham, when the test

came, offered up Isaac: he had received the promises, and yet he was on the point of offering his only son, of whom he had been told, "Through the line of Isaac your descendants shall be traced."<sup>v</sup> For he reckoned that God had power even to raise from the dead—and from the dead, he did, in a sense, receive him back.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau and spoke of things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshipped God, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, spoke of the departure of Israel from Egypt, and instructed them what to do with his bones.

By faith, when Moses was born, his parents hid him for three months, because they saw what a fine child he was; they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, preferring to suffer hardship with the people of God rather than enjoy the transient pleasures of sin. He considered the stigma that rests on God's Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for his eyes were fixed upon the coming day of recompense. By faith he left Egypt, and not because he feared the king's anger; for he was resolute, as one who saw the invisible God.

By faith he celebrated the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the destroying angel might not touch the first-born of Israel. By faith they crossed the Red Sea as though it were dry land, whereas the Egyptians, when they attempted the crossing, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled on seven successive days. By faith the prostitute Rahab escaped the doom of the un-

<sup>v</sup> Or: God's call shall be for your descendants in the line of Isaac.

10: The *city* is the new, spiritual Jerusalem; see, e.g. Rev. ch. 21. 11: Gen.18.9-15; 21.2. 12: Gen.15.5; 22.17-18. 13-16: Faith is hopeful pilgrimage toward the city of God, i.e. into God's presence; see 13.14. 17: Gen. ch. 22. 18: Gen.21.12. 19: Isaac was offered but did not die (Gen.22.13). 20: Gen.27.27-29,39-40. 21: Gen. ch. 48; 47.31 Sept. 22: Gen.50.24-25. 23: Ex.2.2; 1.22. 24-26: Moses' suffering is regarded as obedience to the example of Jesus, *God's Anointed*, who also shared the lot of *the people of God* (see Rom.15.3; Ex.2.10-15). 27: Ex.12.40-51. 28: Ex.12.21-30. 29: Ex.14.5-31. 30: Josh. ch. 6. 31: The basis is Josh.2.1-21; 6.22-25.

believers, because she had given the spies a kindly welcome.

32 Need I say more? Time is too short for me to tell the stories of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets. 33 Through faith they overthrew kingdoms, established justice, saw God's promises fulfilled. They muzzled ravenging lions, quenched the fury of fire, escaped death by the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength, they grew powerful in war, they put foreign armies to rout. Women received back their dead raised to life. Others were tortured to death, disdaining release, 34 to win a better resurrection. Others, again, had to face jeers and flogging, even fetters and prison bars. They were stoned,<sup>w</sup> they were sawn in two, they were put to the sword, they went about dressed in skins of sheep or goats, in 38 poverty, distress, and misery. They were too good for a world like this. They were refugees in deserts and on the hills, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. These also, one and all, are commemorated for their faith; and yet they did not enter upon the promised 40 inheritance, because, with us in mind, God had made a better plan, that only in company with us should they reach their perfection.

12 AND WHAT OF OURSELVES? WITH ALL these witnesses to faith around us like a cloud, we must throw off every encumbrance, every sin to which we cling,<sup>x</sup> and run with resolution the race 2 for which we are entered, our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom faith depends from start to finish: Jesus who, for the sake of the joy that lay ahead of him,<sup>y</sup> endured the cross, making light of its disgrace, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Think of him who submitted to such 3 opposition from sinners: that will help you not to lose heart and grow faint. In your struggle against sin, you have 4 not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. You have forgotten the 5 the text of Scripture which addresses you as sons and appeals to you in these words:

'My son, do not think lightly of the Lord's discipline, nor lose heart when he corrects you; for the Lord disciplines those whom 6 he loves; he lays the rod on every son whom he acknowledges.'

You must endure it as discipline: God 7 is treating you as sons. Can anyone be a son, who is not disciplined by his father? If you escape the discipline in 8 which all sons share, you must be bastards and no true sons. Again, we 9 paid due respect to the earthly fathers who disciplined us; should we not submit even more readily to our spiritual Father, and so attain life? They disciplined us for this short life 10 according to their lights; but he does so for our true welfare, so that we may share his holiness. Discipline, no doubt, 11 is never pleasant; at the time it seems painful, but in the end it yields for those who have been trained by it the peaceful harvest of an honest life. Come, 12 then, stiffen your drooping arms and shaking knees, and keep your steps 13 from wavering. Then the disabled limb will not be put out of joint, but regain its former powers.

Aim at peace with all men, and a 14 holy life. for without that no one will

<sup>w</sup> Some witnesses insert they were put to the question.  
<sup>x</sup> Or every clinging sin: one witness reads the sin which all too readily distracts us.  
<sup>y</sup> Or who, in place of the joy that was open to him, . . .

32: *Gideon*: Judg. chs. 6-8. *Barak*: Judg. chs. 4-5. *Samson*: Judg. chs. 13-16. *Jephthah*: Judg. chs. 11-12. *David*: 1 Sam. chs. 16-30; 2 Sam. chs. 1-24; 1 Kgs.1.1-2.12. *Samuel*: 1 Sam. chs. 1-12; 15.1-16.13. 33-34: *Lions* . . . *fire*: see Dan. chs. 6; 3. 35: 1 Kgs.17.17-24; 2 Kgs.4.25-37; 2 Macc.6.18-7.42. 36: Jer.20.2; 37.15; 38.6-13. 37: 2 Chr.24.20-21; 1 Kgs.19.10; Jer.26.23; 2 Macc.5.27. 38: 2 Macc.6.11; 10.6. 39-40: The *better plan* was for a new covenant mediated by Christ (9.15-28).

12.1-17: *The discipline of faith*. 1: The readers, like the *witnesses to faith* just recalled (ch. 11), should *run . . . the race* for salvation with disciplined *resolution*; see 10.39. 2: Jesus' *joy* was to be seated at God's *right hand*. See 1.3 n. 5-6: Prov. 3.11-12. 11-13: After dealing with *discipline* in a familial context (vv. 7-10), the author returns to the analogy of the athletic contest (see vv. 1-2). 12: Isa.35.3. 15: Deut.29.18 Sept. 16-17: Gen.25.29-34; 27.30-40.

15 see the Lord. Look to it that there is no one among you who forfeits the grace of God, no bitter, noxious weed  
 16 growing up to poison the whole, no immoral person, no one worldly-minded like Esau. He sold his birthright for  
 17 a single meal, and you know that although he wanted afterwards to claim the blessing, he was rejected; though he begged for it to the point of tears, he found no way open for second thoughts.

18 **REMEMBER WHERE YOU STAND: NOT** before the palpable, blazing fire of Sinai, with the darkness, gloom, and  
 19 whirlwind, the trumpet-blast and the oracular voice, which they heard, and  
 20 begged to hear no more; for they could not bear the command, 'If even an animal touches the mountain, it must  
 21 be stoned.' So appalling was the sight, that Moses said, 'I shudder with fear.'  
 22 No, you stand before Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly  
 23 Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of good men  
 24 made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, whose sprinkled blood has better things to tell than the  
 25 blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse to hear the voice that speaks. Those who refused to hear the oracle speaking on earth found no escape; still less shall we escape if we refuse to hear the One who speaks from heaven.  
 26 Then indeed his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Yet once again I will shake not earth alone, but  
 27 the heavens also.' The words 'once again'—and only once—imply that the shaking of these created things means their removal, and then what is not

shaken will remain. The kingdom we 28 are given is unshakable; let us therefore give thanks to God, and so worship him as he would be worshipped, with reverence and awe; for our God is a de- 29 vouring fire.

**NEVER CEASE TO LOVE YOUR FELLOW- 13 Christians.**

Remember to show hospitality. There 2 are some who, by so doing, have entertained angels without knowing it.

Remember those in prison as if you 3 were there with them; and those who are being maltreated, for you like them are still in the world.

Marriage is honourable; let us all keep 4 it so, and the marriage-bond inviolate; for God's judgement will fall on fornicators and adulterers.

Do not live for money; be content 5 with what you have; for God himself has said, 'I will never leave you or desert you'; and so we can take courage 6 and say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear; what can man do to me?'

Remember your leaders, those who 7 first spoke God's message to you; and reflecting upon the outcome of their life and work, follow the example of their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, 8 today, and for ever. So do not be swept 9 off your course by all sorts of outlandish teachings; it is good that our souls should gain their strength from the grace of God, and not from scruples about what we eat, which have never done any good to those who were governed by them.

Our altar is one from which<sup>z</sup> the 10 priests of the sacred tent have no right to eat. As you know, those animals 11 whose blood is brought as a sin-offering

<sup>z</sup> Or one like that from which . . .

**12.18-29: The true worship of God** is enabled by the new covenant, not by the old. **18-21:** The old covenant produces fear; see Ex.19.12-22; 20.18-20. **22-29:** Glorious as the new covenant is (vv. 22-24,28), there is all the more reason for the disobedient to fear. **22:** See 11.10 n. **24:** Christ's blood means forgiveness, not revenge; see Gen.4.10. **26:** Hag.2.6. **29:** Deut.4.24.

**13.1-17: Concluding admonitions.** **1:** See 10.24. **2:** Itinerant Christian teachers should be accommodated; see 3 Jn.5-8. The mention of *angels* recalls Gen. chs. 18-19. **3:** See Mt.25.31-46. The Christians' pilgrimage toward heaven (see, e.g. v. 14) does not exempt them from being actively concerned about the welfare of those in distress, for during the time of their pilgrimage they are still in the world. **5:** Josh.1.5. **6:** Ps.118.6. **7:** The *leaders* mentioned here are probably not the heroes and heroines of faith cataloged in ch. 11, but Christian preachers and teachers, perhaps including both the original apostles (2.3) and those who now exercise leadership in the church (v. 17). **8:** See 1.12. **9:** See Col.2.16-23. **11:** *Sin-offering . . . outside:* see Lev.16.27.

by the high priest into the sanctuary, have their bodies burnt outside the camp, and therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the stigma that he bore. For here we have no permanent home, but we are seekers after the city which is to come. Through Jesus, then, let us continually offer up to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the tribute of lips which acknowledge his name, and never forget to show kindness and to share what you have with others; for such are the sacrifices which God approves.

Obey your leaders and defer to them; for they are tireless in their concern for you, as men who must render an account. Let it be a happy task for them, and not pain and grief, for that would bring you no advantage.

Pray for us; for we are convinced that our conscience is clear; our one

desire is always to do what is right. All the more earnestly I ask for your prayers, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in all goodness so that you may do his will; and may he make of us what he would have us be through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

I beg you, brothers, bear with this exhortation; for it is after all a short letter. I have news for you: our friend Timothy has been released; and if he comes in time he will be with me when I see you.

Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Greetings to you from our Italian friends.

God's grace be with you all!

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12-14: Christians are a pilgrim people consecrated by Christ, *seekers after* the new Jerusalem (see 11.10). 15-16: The true *sacrifice of praise* (see Lev.7.12) is offered by Christians and is manifest in their conduct. See Jas.1.27.

13.18-25: Epistolary conclusion. Some or all of these last paragraphs may have been added by a later editor, for the writing overall has more characteristics of a homily than of a letter. 23: *Timothy*: see Acts 16.1 n.



# A LETTER OF JAMES

This writer is concerned to rescue sinners from their "crooked ways" (5.20) by providing a manual for Christian conduct. Many topics are handled in fairly miscellaneous fashion, although four points receive more sustained attention: the evil of showing partiality (2.1-12), the need for works along with faith (2.14-26), the danger of loose talk (3.1-12), and the sins of the rich (4.13-5.6). This manual has been sent out to the church as a whole, and its purpose is completely practical. Doctrinal matters are not taken up, and the content of the moral advice does not reveal much about the author's own theological point of view. Most of his teaching is common to other Hellenistic Wisdom literature of his day.

If the writing is indeed from James, the Lord's brother (see 1.1 n.), a date no later than about 60 A.D. is required. However, because the ritual and cultic concerns attributed to James elsewhere (see Gal.2.12) are absent and because the overall cast is so Hellenistic, many scholars question the traditional view of authorship. Some have held that the tract is of Jewish origin, subsequently lightly Christianized. More often, it is ascribed to a Christian writer of the late first or early second century. There is no consensus as to the place of writing.

## *Practical religion*

1 FROM JAMES, A SERVANT OF GOD AND  
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greetings to the Twelve Tribes  
dispersed throughout the world.

2 My brothers, whenever you have to  
face trials of many kinds, count your-  
selves supremely happy, in the knowl-  
3 edge that such testing of your faith  
breeds fortitude, and if you give  
4 fortitude full play you will go on to  
complete a balanced character that  
5 will fall short in nothing. If any of you  
falls short in wisdom, he should ask  
God for it and it will be given him, for  
God is a generous giver who neither  
6 refuses nor reproaches anyone. But he  
must ask in faith, without a doubt in  
7 his mind; for the doubter is like a heav-  
ing sea ruffled by the wind. A man of  
that kind must not expect the Lord to  
8 give him anything; he is double-minded,  
and never can keep<sup>a</sup> a steady course.

9 The brother in humble circum-  
stances may well be proud that God  
10 lifts him up; and the wealthy brother  
must find his pride in being brought  
low. For the rich man will disappear

like the flower of the field; once the sun 11  
is up with its scorching heat the flower  
wITHERS, its petals fall, and what was  
lovely to look at is lost for ever. So  
shall the rich man wither away as he  
goes about his business.

Happy the man who remains stead- 12  
fast under trial, for having passed that  
test he will receive for his prize the gift  
of life promised to those who love God.  
No one under trial or temptation should 13  
say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for  
God is untouched by evil,<sup>b</sup> and does not  
himself tempt anyone. Temptation 14  
arises when a man is enticed and lured  
away by his own lust; then lust con- 15  
ceives, and gives birth to sin; and sin  
full-grown breeds death.

Make no mistake, my friends. All 16,17  
good giving, every perfect gift, comes<sup>c</sup>  
from above, from the Father of the  
lights of heaven. With him there is no  
variation, no play of passing shadows.<sup>d</sup>  
Of his set purpose, by declaring the 18  
truth, he gave us birth to be a kind of  
firstfruits of his creatures.

<sup>a</sup> Or anything; a double-minded man never keeps ...

<sup>b</sup> Or God cannot be tempted by evil.

<sup>c</sup> Or All giving is good, and every perfect gift comes ...

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read no variation, or shadow caused by change.

**1.1: Salutation.** *James*: probably the brother of Jesus (Mt.13.55; see Jude 1), although this is not specified. The church is in the world like the *Twelve Tribes* of Israel.

**1.2-27: Miscellaneous topics:** *fortitude* (vv. 2-4), *wisdom* (vv. 5-8), *wealth* (vv. 9-11), *trial* (v. 12), *temptation* (vv. 13-15), *God's beneficence* (vv. 16-18), *anger* (vv. 19-21), *true religion* (vv. 22-27). **2-4:** *Fortitude*: see 5.7-11; Prov.3.11-12. **5-8:** *Wisdom* is understood by James as moral purity; see 3.13-17. *Faith* is belief in God; see 2.19. **9-11:** The theme of the *wealthy* and the *humble* is important in this tract; see 2.1-7; 4.13-5.6. **10-11:** Isa.40.6-7. **12:** Outward trials; see Dan.12.12 Sept.; Rev.2.10; 1 Pet.5.4. **18:** As *firstfruits* Christians are heralds of a new age;

19 Of that you may be certain, my friends. But each of you must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry. For a man's anger cannot promote the justice of God. Away then with all that is sordid, and the malice that hurries to excess, and quietly accept the message planted in your hearts, which can bring you salvation.

22 Only be sure that you act on the message and do not merely listen; for that would be to mislead yourselves. A man who listens to the message but never acts upon it is like one who looks in a mirror at the face nature gave him. He glances at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he looked like. 24 But the man who looks closely into the perfect law, the law that makes us free, and who lives in its company, does not forget what he hears, but acts upon it; and that is the man who by acting will find happiness.

26 A man may think he is religious, but if he has no control over his tongue, he is deceiving himself; that man's religion is futile. The kind of religion which is without stain or fault in the sight of God our Father is this: to go to the help of orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself untarnished by the world.

2 MY BROTHERS, BELIEVING AS YOU DO IN our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns in glory, you must never show snobbery. 2 For instance, two visitors may enter your place of worship, one a well-dressed man with gold rings, and the other a poor man in shabby clothes. 3 Suppose you pay special attention to the well-dressed man and say to him, 'Please take this seat', while to the poor man you say, 'You can stand; or you may sit here<sup>e</sup> on the floor by my foot-stool', do you not see that you are in-

consistent and judge by false standards?

Listen, my friends. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he has promised to those who love him? And yet you have insulted the poor man. Moreover, are not the rich your oppressors? Is it not they who drag you into court and pour contempt on the honoured name by which God has claimed you?

If, however, you are observing the sovereign law laid down in Scripture, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', that is excellent. But if you show snobbery, you are committing a sin and you stand convicted by that law as transgressors. For if a man keeps the whole law apart from one single point, he is guilty of breaking all of it. For the One who said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery', said also, 'Thou shalt not commit murder.' You may not be an adulterer, but if you commit murder you are a law-breaker all the same. Always speak and act as men who are to be judged under a law of freedom. In that judgement there will be no mercy for the man who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement.

MY BROTHERS, WHAT USE IS IT FOR A MAN to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it? Can that faith save him? Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat', but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing.

But someone may object: 'Here is one who claims to have faith and an-

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read Stand where you are or sit here . . . ; others read Stand where you are or sit . . .

see Rom.8.23; 11.16. 19-21: On *anger*, see 3.1-12. 21: The *message* is the gospel. 22-25: On moral *action*, see 2.14-26. 25: The gospel is *the perfect law . . . that makes us free*, and demands studied attention and obedience. 26: On false speech, see 3.1-12. 27: True religion is defined here, not as doctrine or knowledge or ritual, but as moral action. *World*: see 2.5; 3.6; 4.4.

2.1-13: On *partiality and privilege*. No favors should be accorded the rich. 5: See 1 Cor. 1.26-31. 6-7: Christians are reminded of the social and economic exploitation for which rich nonbelievers are responsible; see 5.4-6. *The honoured name* is "Christ." 8: The *sovereign law*: either *Scripture* as a whole or the love commandment in particular (Lev.19.18). 11: Ex.20.13-14. 12: *Freedom*: see 1.25 n. 13: See, e.g. Mt.5.7.

2.14-26: On *faith and works*. 14-17: If *faith* only means belief in God (see v. 19) it is as meaningless as if one were to wish the needy well without lending a hand. 18: *Someone*: a

other who points to his deeds.' To which I reply: 'Prove to me that this faith you speak of is real though not accompanied by deeds, and by my deeds I will prove to you my faith.' You have faith enough to believe that there is one God. Excellent! The devils have faith like that, and it makes them tremble. **20** But can you not see, you quibbler, that faith divorced from deeds is barren? **21** Was it not by his action, in offering his son Isaac upon the altar, that our father **22** Abraham was justified? Surely you can see that faith was at work in his actions, and that by these actions the integrity **23** of his faith was fully proved. Here was fulfilment of the words of Scripture: 'Abraham put his faith in God, and that faith was counted to him as righteousness'; and elsewhere he is **24** called 'God's friend'. You see then that a man is justified by deeds and not by **25** faith in itself. The same is true of the prostitute Rahab also. Was not she justified by her action in welcoming the messengers into her house and sending **26** them away by a different route? As the body is dead when there is no breath left in it, so faith divorced from deeds is lifeless as a corpse.

**3** MY BROTHERS, NOT MANY OF YOU should become teachers, for you may be certain that we who teach shall ourselves be judged with greater strictness. **2** All of us often go wrong; the man who never says a wrong thing is a perfect character, able to bridle his whole being. **3** If we put bits into horses' mouths to make them obey our will, we can direct **4** their whole body. Or think of ships: large they may be, yet even when driven by strong gales they can be directed by a tiny rudder on whatever course the **5** helmsman chooses. So with the tongue.

It is a small member but it can make huge claims.<sup>f</sup>

What an immense stack of timber<sup>g</sup> can be set ablaze by the tiniest spark! And the tongue is in effect a fire. It represents among our members the world with all its wickedness; it pollutes our whole being; it keeps the wheel of our existence red-hot, and its flames are fed by hell. Beasts and birds of every kind, **7** creatures that crawl on the ground or swim in the sea, can be subdued and have been subdued by mankind; but no **8** man can subdue the tongue. It is an intractable evil, charged with deadly venom. We use it to sing the praises of **9** our Lord and Father, and we use it to invoke curses upon our fellow-men who are made in God's likeness. Out **10** of the same mouth come praises and curses. My brothers, this should not be so. Does a fountain gush with both **11** fresh and brackish water from the same opening? Can a fig-tree, my brothers, **12** yield olives, or a vine figs? No more does salt water yield fresh.

WHO AMONG YOU IS WISE OR CLEVER? **13** Let his right conduct give practical proof of it, with the modesty that comes of wisdom. But if you are harbouring **14** bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, consider whether your claims are not false, and a defiance of the truth. This is not the wisdom that **15** comes from above; it is earth-bound, sensual, demonic. For with jealousy **16** and ambition come disorder and evil of every kind. But the wisdom from **17** above is in the first place pure; and then peace-loving, considerate, and open to reason; it is straightforward and sincere, rich in mercy and in the kindly deeds that are its fruit. True **18**

<sup>f</sup> Or it is a great boaster. <sup>g</sup> Or What a huge forest . . .

hypothetical inquirer who misunderstands the point that the same person must give evidence of both faith and action (v. 17). **21**: See Gen.22.9-19; Heb.11.17-19. **23**: Jewish teaching (see 1 Macc.2.52) associated Gen. ch. 22 with the commendation of Abraham's *righteousness* in Gen.15.6. Whereas Paul interpreted *counted* (Gen.15.6) to mean God's free gift of acquittal (Rom.4.3-5), here it is interpreted as God's acceptance of Abraham's works. *Friend*: a common description of Abraham; see 2 Chr.20.7; Isa.41.8. **25**: *Rahab*: see Josh. ch. 2; 6.17; Heb.11.31.

**3.1-12**: On the evils of the tongue. **6**: See 1.27. *Wheel of our existence*: a phrase borrowed from the Hellenistic mystery religions, used here to describe the orderly design of man's life. **7**: See Gen.9.2-3. Elsewhere it is presumed one's tongue can be controlled (vv. 2-4; 1.26). **9**: *In God's likeness*: see Gen. 1.26-27.

**3.13-5.20**: Miscellaneous topics.

**3.13-18**: On true wisdom. The essence of wisdom is moral uprightness. **17**: See Paul's description of love, 1 Cor. ch. 13. **18**: See Prov.11.30; 13.2; Phil.1.11.

justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace.

4 What causes conflicts and quarrels among you? Do they not spring from the aggressiveness of your bodily desires? You want something which you cannot have, and so you are bent on murder; you are envious, and cannot attain your ambition, and so you quarrel and fight. You do not get what you want, because you do not pray for it. Or, if you do, your requests are not granted because you pray from wrong motives, to spend what you get on your pleasures. You false, unfaithful creatures! Have you never learned that love of the world is enmity to God? Whoever chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy. Or do you suppose that Scripture has no meaning when it says that the spirit which God implanted in man turns towards envious desires? And yet the grace he gives is stronger. Thus Scripture says, 'God opposes the arrogant and gives grace to the humble.' Be submissive then to God. Stand up to the devil and he will turn and run. Come close to God, and he will come close to you. Sinners, make your hands clean; you who are double-minded, see that your motives are pure. Be sorrowful, mourn and weep. Turn your laughter into mourning and your gaiety into gloom. Humble yourselves before God and he will lift you high.

11 Brothers, you must never disparage one another. He who disparages a brother or passes judgement on his brother disparages the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not keeping it but sitting in judgement upon it. There is only one law-giver and judge, the One who is able to save life and destroy it. So who are you to judge your neighbour?

A WORD WITH YOU, YOU WHO SAY, 13 'Today or tomorrow we will go off to such and such a town and spend a year there trading and making money.' Yet 14 you have no idea what tomorrow will bring. Your life, what is it? You are no more than a mist, seen for a little while and then dispersing. What you ought 15 to say is: 'If it be the Lord's will, we shall live to do this or that.' But instead, 16 you boast and brag, and all such boasting is wrong. Well then, the man who 17 knows the good he ought to do and does not do it is a sinner.

Next a word to you who have great 5 possessions. Weep and wail over the miserable fate descending on you. Your 2 riches have rotted; your fine clothes are moth-eaten; your silver and gold have 3 rusted away, and their very rust will be evidence against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have piled up wealth in an age that is near its close. The 4 wages you never paid to the men who mowed your fields are loud against you, and the outcry of the reapers has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in wanton 5 luxury, fattening yourselves like cattle—and the day for slaughter has come. You have condemned the innocent and 6 murdered him; he offers no resistance.

Be patient, my brothers, until the 7 Lord comes. The farmer looking for the precious crop his land may yield can only wait in patience, until the autumn and spring rains have fallen. You too must be patient and stout- 8 hearted, for the coming of the Lord is near. My brothers, do not blame your 9 troubles on one another, or you will fall under judgement; and there stands the Judge, at the door. If you want a 10 pattern of patience under ill-treatment, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord; remember: 'We 11 count those happy who stood firm.'

4.1-5: On friendship with the world. 3: See Mt.17.20. 4: See 1.27; 2.23. 5: It is unclear what Scripture reference is meant.

4.6-10: On drawing near to God. 6: Prov.3.34; see 1 Pet.5.5. 7-8: See 1 Pet.5.8-9; Heb.10.22. 9-10: The penitent sinner receives God's forgiveness.

4.11-12: On judging a neighbor. The law demands love, not judgment (Lev.19.18; see 2.9-13).

4.13-5.6: On the sins of the rich. 13-17: Traveling merchants are criticized for their worldliness. 5.1-6: Wealthy landholders are criticized for their greed and indifference to social justice. Compare Eccles.29.10-13. 6: See Wis.2.10-20.

5.7-11: On patience. 7: The Lord: perhaps a reference to God (v. 4; 3.9), but probably a reference to Christ's return. 9: See 4.1-12. 10: See Heb.11.32-38. 11: See Job ch. 1; 42.10-16.

You have all heard how Job stood firm, and you have seen how the Lord treated him in the end. For the Lord is full of pity and compassion.

- 12 ABOVE ALL THINGS, MY BROTHERS, DO not use oaths, whether 'by heaven' or 'by earth' or by anything else. When you say yes or no, let it be plain 'Yes' or 'No', for fear that you expose yourselves to judgement.
- 13 Is anyone among you in trouble? He should turn to prayer. Is anyone in good heart? He should sing praises. Is one of you ill? He should send for the elders of the congregation to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will save the sick man, the Lord will raise him from his bed, and any sins he

may have committed will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and then you will be healed. A good man's prayer is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man with human frailties like our own; and when he prayed earnestly that there should be no rain, not a drop fell on the land for three years and a half; then he prayed again, and down came the rain and the land bore crops once more.

My brothers, if one of your number should stray from the truth and another succeed in bringing him back, be sure of this: any man who brings a sinner back from his crooked ways will be rescuing his soul from death and cancelling innumerable sins.

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5.12: On oaths. See Mt.5.34-37.

5.13-18: On prayer. 14: See Mk.6.13. 15: See 1 Cor.13.2. 17-18: 1 Kgs. chs. 17-18 says nothing about Elijah's prayers; the reference is to noncanonical Jewish traditions.

5.19-20: On restoring sinners. 19: The *truth*: the gospel; see 1.18. 20: See 1 Pet.4.8 n.

# THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

This letter is directed to congregations of predominantly Gentile Christians scattered throughout several Roman provinces in Asia Minor. It is an appeal to Christians to “stand fast” in the gospel (5.12) and to rejoice in whatever sufferings they are called upon to endure for their faith (4.12–16).

Following the salutation (1.1–2) a prefatory section focuses on the reality and responsibilities of the new life in Christ (1.3–2.10). Subsequently, a number of specific exhortations are issued which deal with the Christian’s conduct in his daily affairs (2.11–4.6) and with his relationship to others in the church itself (4.7–11). Finally, the writer summarizes the meaning of suffering as a Christian (4.12–19) and concludes with some specific matters (5.1–14).

If Peter himself wrote this letter, or caused it to be written by Silvanus (5.12), it perhaps reflects Nero’s persecution of Christians about 64 A.D. Some scholars, however, believe the good Greek style and the theological point of view preclude Petrine authorship or sponsorship. In this case the author would be an anonymous Christian concerned for the church’s tribulations during the reign either of Domitian (81–96 A.D.) or of Trajan (98–117 A.D.), and would perhaps be using some traditional liturgical and catechetical materials (1.3–4.11).

## *The calling of a Christian*

1 FROM PETER, APOSTLE OF JESUS  
Christ, to those of God’s scat-  
tered people who lodge for a while  
in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,  
2 and Bithynia—chosen of old in the pur-  
pose of God the Father, hallowed to his  
service by the Spirit, and consecrated  
with the sprinkled blood of Jesus  
Christ.

Grace and peace to you in fullest  
measure.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of  
our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great  
mercy gave us new birth into a living  
hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ  
4 from the dead! The inheritance to  
which we are born is one that nothing  
can destroy or spoil or wither. It is kept  
5 for you in heaven, and you, because  
you put your faith in God, are under  
the protection of his power until sal-  
vation comes—the salvation which is  
even now in readiness and will be  
revealed at the end of time.

6 This is cause for great joy, even  
though now you smart for a little while,  
if need be, under trials of many kinds.

7 Even gold passes through the assayer’s

fire, and more precious than perishable  
gold is faith which has stood the test.  
These trials come so that your faith  
may prove itself worthy of all praise,  
glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is  
revealed.

You have not seen him, yet you love 8  
him; and trusting in him now without  
seeing him, you are transported with a  
joy too great for words, while you reap 9  
the harvest of your faith, that is, salva-  
tion for your souls. This salvation was 10  
the theme which the prophets pondered  
and explored, those who prophesied  
about the grace of God awaiting you.  
They tried to find out what was the 11  
time,<sup>a</sup> and what the circumstances, to  
which the spirit of Christ in them  
pointed, foretelling the sufferings in  
store for Christ and the splendours to  
follow; and it was disclosed to them 12  
that the matter they treated of was not  
for their time but for yours. And now  
it has been openly announced to you  
through preachers who brought you the  
Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit  
sent from heaven. These are things that  
angels long to see into.

<sup>a</sup> Or who was the person . . .

1.1–2: **Salutation.** Christians are temporary residents of this world, for they belong to God; see 2.9–10. *Sprinkled blood* refers to baptism into Christ’s death; see Heb.9.13–14.

1.3–9: **The new birth.** 4: Our *inheritance* is God’s continuing love, accepted through baptism. 5: *Salvation* is sure, but comes fully only in the future. 6: The *trials* faced by Christians could include even persecution; see Introduction.

1.10–12: **The testimony of the prophets.** Salvation has always been God’s purpose; even the prophets preached the gospel; see 1.23–25.

13 You must therefore be mentally stripped for action, perfectly self-controlled. Fix your hopes on the gift of grace which is to be yours when Jesus  
 14 Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not let your characters be shaped any longer by the desires you cherished  
 15 in your days of ignorance. The One who called you is holy; like him, be  
 16 holy in all your behaviour, because Scripture says, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'  
 17 If you say 'our Father' to the One who judges every man impartially on the record of his deeds, you must stand  
 18 in awe of him while you live out your time on earth. Well you know that it was no perishable stuff, like gold or  
 19 silver, that bought your freedom from the empty folly of your traditional  
 20 ways. The price was paid in precious blood, as it were of a lamb without mark or blemish—the blood of Christ.  
 21 Predestined before the foundation of the world, he was made manifest in this last period of time for your sake.  
 22 Through him you have come to trust in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, and so your faith and hope are fixed on God.  
 23 Now that by obedience to the truth you have purified your souls until you feel sincere affection towards your brother Christians, love one another whole-heartedly with all your strength.  
 24 You have been born anew, not of mortal parentage but of immortal, through the living and enduring word of God.<sup>b</sup> For (as Scripture says)

'All mortals are like grass;  
 all their splendour like the flower of the field;  
 the grass withers, the flower falls;  
 but the word of the Lord endures for evermore.'

And this 'word' is the word of the Gospel preached to you.

Then away with all malice and deceit, 2 away with all pretence and jealousy and recrimination of every kind! Like the 2 new-born infants you are, you must crave for pure milk (spiritual milk, I mean), so that you may thrive upon it to your souls' health. Surely you have 3 tasted that the Lord is good.

So come to him, our living Stone— 4 the stone rejected by men but choice and precious in the sight of God. Come, 5 and let yourselves be built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple; become a holy priesthood,<sup>c</sup> to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands written: 6

'I lay in Zion a choice corner-stone of great worth.  
 The man who has faith in it will not be put to shame.'

The great worth of which it speaks is 7 for you who have faith. For those who have no faith, the stone which the builders rejected has become not only the corner-stone,<sup>d</sup> but also 'a stone to 8 trip over, a rock to stumble against'. They fall when they disbelieve the Word. Such was their appointed lot!

But you are a chosen race, a royal 9 priesthood, a dedicated nation, and a people claimed by God for his own, to proclaim the triumphs of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You are now the 10 people of God, who once were not his people; outside his mercy once, you have now received his mercy.

DEAR FRIENDS, I BEG YOU, AS ALIENS IN 11 a foreign land, to abstain from the lusts

<sup>b</sup> Or through the word of the living and enduring God.

<sup>c</sup> Or a spiritual temple for the holy work of priesthood.

<sup>d</sup> Or the apex of the building.

1.13–2.10: The responsibilities of obedient children. 13–16: Hope should conform one's life to the holiness of God himself; see Lev.11.44–45; Eph.2.1–3. 17: *Our Father*: the Lord's Prayer. 20: See 1.10–12 n. 21: See 1.2–3. 22: *Now . . . purified*: in baptism; see vv. 1–2 n., 4 n. 25: The *Gospel* is that God remains active for salvation (Isa.40.6–9); see 1.10–12. 2.2: *Pure milk*: the Lord's goodness (2.3); see Ps.34.8. 4: *Our living Stone*: the risen Christ; see Ps.118.22; Isa. 8.14; 28.16, passages frequently applied to Christ in the early church. 5: Since Christ is a new temple, replacing the one in Jerusalem (see Jn.2.19–22), Christians are its *living stones*, and are a new *priesthood*, replacing the Jerusalem priests. *Spiritual sacrifices*: Christian obedience (see Rom.12.1). 6: Isa.28.16. 7: Ps.118.22. 8: Unbelievers will be judged; see Isa.8.14–15. 9–10: See the images in Isa.43.20–21; Ex.19.6; Hos. chs. 1–2. God's people are not passive. 2.11–4.6: Christian conduct in the world. 11–12: *As aliens*: see 1.1–2 n.; Rom.12.2.

of the flesh which are at war with the  
12 soul. Let all your behaviour be such as  
even pagans can recognize as good, and  
then, whereas they malign you as  
criminals now, they will come to see  
for themselves that you live good lives,  
and will give glory to God on the day  
when he comes to hold assize.

13 Submit yourselves to every human  
institution for the sake of the Lord,  
whether to the sovereign as supreme,  
14 or to the governor as his deputy for the  
punishment of criminals and the com-  
15 mendation of those who do right. For  
it is the will of God that by your good  
conduct you should put ignorance and  
stupidity to silence.

16 Live as free men; not however as  
though your freedom were there to  
provide a screen for wrongdoing, but as  
17 slaves in God's service. Give due  
honour to everyone: love to the  
brotherhood, reverence to God, honour  
to the sovereign.

18 Servants, accept the authority of  
your masters with all due submission,  
not only when they are kind and con-  
siderate, but even when they are  
19 perverse. For it is a fine<sup>e</sup> thing if a man  
endure the pain of undeserved suffering  
20 because God is in his thoughts. What  
credit is there in fortitude when you  
have done wrong and are beaten for it?  
But when you have behaved well and  
suffer for it, your fortitude is a fine  
21 thing<sup>f</sup> in the sight of God. To that you  
were called, because Christ suffered<sup>g</sup>  
on your behalf, and thereby left you an  
example; it is for you to follow in his  
22 steps. He committed no sin, he was  
23 convicted of no falsehood; when he  
was abused he did not retort with  
abuse, when he suffered he uttered no  
threats, but committed his cause to the  
24 One who judges justly. In his own per-  
son he carried our sins to<sup>h</sup> the gibbet,  
so that we might cease to live for sin  
and begin to live for righteousness. By  
25 his wounds you have been healed. You  
were straying like sheep, but now you

have turned towards the Shepherd and  
Guardian of your souls.

In the same way you women must 3  
accept the authority of your husbands,  
so that if there are any of them who dis-  
believe the Gospel they may be won  
over, without a word being said, by 2  
observing the chaste and reverent be-  
haviour of their wives. Your beauty 3  
should reside, not in outward adorn-  
ment—the braiding of the hair, or  
jewellery, or dress—but in the inmost 4  
centre of your being, with its imperish-  
able ornament, a gentle, quiet spirit,  
which is of high value in the sight of  
God. Thus it was among God's people 5  
in days of old: the women who fixed  
their hopes on him adorned themselves  
by submission to their husbands. Such 6  
was Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and  
called him 'my master'. Her children  
you have now become, if you do good  
and show no fear.

In the same way, you husbands must 7  
conduct your married life with under-  
standing: pay honour to the woman's  
body, not only because it is weaker,  
but also because you share together in  
the grace of God which gives you life.  
Then your prayers will not be hindered.

To sum up: be one in thought and 8  
feeling, all of you; be full of brotherly  
affection, kindly and humble-minded.  
Do not repay wrong with wrong, 9  
abuse with abuse; on the contrary,  
retaliate with blessing, for a blessing is  
the inheritance to which you yourselves  
have been called.

'Whoever loves life and would see 10  
good days  
must restrain his tongue from evil  
and his lips from deceit;  
must turn from wrong and do good, 11  
seek peace and pursue it.  
For the Lord's eyes are turned 12  
towards the righteous,

<sup>e</sup> Or creditable.

<sup>f</sup> Or is creditable.

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read died.

<sup>h</sup> Or on.

13–15: *Human institution*: the political order, which deserves support when it functions for the public good. See also Rom.13.1–7. 16–17: See Rom.6.15–23. 18–25: The death of Christ, identified here with that of the "suffering servant" of Isa.53.5–12, is first advanced as an *example* of trust (see Eph.6.5–8; Col.3.22–25). 24–25: Christ's death is also redemptive (see 3.18; Rom.5.6–11; Col.2.14). 3.1–7: See Eph.5.21–33; Col.3.18–19. 6: Gen.18.12. 8–12: *Brotherly affection* is the sign of the new birth; see 1.22. 9: Lk.6.27–28; Rom.12.17. 10: Ps.34.12–16.



his ears are open to their prayers;  
but the Lord's face is set against  
wrong-doers.'

13 WHO IS GOING TO DO YOU WRONG IF  
14 you are devoted to what is good? And  
yet if you should suffer for your virtues,  
you may count yourselves happy. Have  
no fear of them:<sup>i</sup> do not be perturbed,  
15 but hold the Lord Christ in reverence  
in your hearts.<sup>j</sup> Be always ready with  
your defence whenever you are called  
to account for the hope that is in you,  
but make that defence with modesty  
16 and respect. Keep your conscience  
clear, so that when you are abused,  
those who malign your Christian con-  
17 duct may be put to shame. It is better  
to suffer for well-doing, if such should  
be the will of God, than for doing  
18 wrong. For Christ also died<sup>k</sup> for our  
sins<sup>l</sup> once and for all. He, the just,  
suffered for the unjust, to bring us to  
God.

In the body he was put to death; in  
19 the spirit he was brought to life. And  
in the spirit he went and made his pro-  
clamation to the imprisoned spirits.  
20 They had refused obedience long ago,  
while God waited patiently in the days  
of Noah and the building of the ark,  
and in the ark a few persons, eight in  
all, were brought to safety through the  
21 water. This water prefigured the water  
of baptism through which you are now  
brought to safety. Baptism is not the  
washing away of bodily pollution, but  
the appeal made to God by a good  
conscience; and it brings salvation  
through the resurrection of Jesus  
22 Christ, who entered heaven after re-  
ceiving the submission of angelic au-  
thorities and powers, and is now at the  
right hand of God.

4 Remembering that Christ endured  
bodily suffering, you must arm your-  
selves with a temper of mind like his.

When a man has thus endured bodily  
suffering he has finished with sin, and  
2 for the rest of his days on earth he may  
live, not for the things that men desire,  
but for what God wills. You had time  
3 enough in the past to do all the things  
that men want to do in the pagan world.  
Then you lived in licence and de-  
bauchery, drunkenness, revelry, and  
tippling, and the forbidden worship  
of idols. Now, when you no longer  
4 plunge with them into all this reckless  
dissipation, they cannot understand it,  
and they vilify you accordingly; but  
5 they shall answer for it to him who  
stands ready to pass judgement on the  
living and the dead. Why was the  
6 Gospel preached to those who are  
dead? In order that, although in the  
body they received the sentence com-  
mon to men, they might in the spirit  
be alive with the life of God.

The end of all things is upon us, so  
7 you must lead an ordered and sober life,  
given to prayer. Above all, keep your  
8 love for one another at full strength,  
because love cancels innumerable sins.  
Be hospitable to one another without  
9 complaining. Whatever gift each of you  
may have received, use it in service to  
one another, like good stewards dis-  
pensing the grace of God in its varied  
forms. Are you a speaker? Speak as if  
11 you uttered oracles of God. Do you  
give service? Give it as in the strength  
which God supplies. In all things so act  
that the glory may be God's through  
Jesus Christ; to him belong glory and  
power for ever and ever. Amen.

MY DEAR FRIENDS, DO NOT BE BEWIL- 12  
dered by the fiery ordeal that is upon  
you, as though it were something

<sup>i</sup> Or Do not fear what they fear.

<sup>j</sup> Or hold Christ in reverence in your hearts, as Lord.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read suffered.

<sup>l</sup> Some witnesses read for sins; others read for sins on our behalf.

13-17: See 2.11-12. 18: See 2.24-25 n. 19-20: *Imprisoned spirits*: either Noah's disobedient contemporaries (Gen. chs. 6-9), or specifically the disobedient *Nephilim* (see Gen.6.1-4 n.); perhaps both. The idea is that the gospel is withheld from no one; but the exact meaning remains problematic. 21-22: As *water* was decisive in Noah's career, so it is in saving the Christian, the latter through *baptism*. 4.3: The *past*: before conversion to Christ. 5: For Christ as judge, see Acts 10.42; 2 Tim. 4.1. 6: See 3.19-20 n.

4.7-11: *Christian conduct in the church*. 7: *The end*: the day of judgment and salvation; see 1.5,7,13. 8: Where love is active sin subsides. See Prov. 10.12; Eccles. 3.30; Jas. 5.19-20. 9: *Be hospitable*: to Christian travelers; see Heb. 13.2 n.

4.12-19: *The meaning of suffering as a Christian*. 12: *Ordeal*: persecution; *fiery* implies "bitter."

13 extraordinary. It gives you a share in Christ's sufferings, and that is cause for joy; and when his glory is revealed, 14 your joy will be triumphant. If Christ's name is flung in your teeth as an insult, count yourselves happy, because then that glorious Spirit which is the Spirit 15 of God is resting upon you. If you suffer, it must not be for murder, theft, or sorcery,<sup>m</sup> nor for infringing the 16 rights of others. But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he should feel it no disgrace, but confess that name to the honour of God.

17 The time has come for the judgement to begin; it is beginning with God's own household. And if it is starting with you, how will it end for those who 18 refuse to obey the gospel of God? It is hard enough for the righteous to be saved; what then will become of the 19 impious and sinful? So even those who suffer, if it be according to God's will, should commit their souls to him—by doing good; their Maker will not fail them.

5 And now I appeal to the elders of your community, as a fellow-elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, and also a partaker in the splendour that is to be 2 revealed. Tend that flock of God whose shepherds you are, and do it, not under 3 compulsion, but of your own free will, as God would have it; not for gain but 4 out of sheer devotion; not tyrannizing over those who are allotted to your care, but setting an example to the flock. And

then, when the Head Shepherd appears, you will receive for your own the unfading garland of glory.

In the same way you younger men 5 must be subordinate to your elders. Indeed, all of you should wrap yourselves in the garment of humility towards each other, because God sets his face against the arrogant but favours the humble. Humble yourselves then 6 under God's mighty hand, and he will lift you up in due time. Cast all your 7 cares on him, for you are his charge.

Awake! be on the alert! Your enemy 8 the devil, like a roaring lion, prowls round looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, firm in faith, and 9 remember that your brother Christians are going through the same kinds of suffering while they are in the world. And the God of all grace, who called 10 you into his eternal glory in Christ, will himself, after your brief suffering, restore, establish, and strengthen you on a firm foundation. He holds do- 11 minion for ever and ever. Amen.

I write you this brief appeal through 12 Silvanus, our trusty brother as I hold him, adding my testimony that this is the true grace of God. In this stand fast.

Greetings from her who dwells in 13 Babylon, chosen by God like you, and from my son Mark. Greet one another 14 with the kiss of love.

Peace to you all who belong to Christ!

<sup>m</sup> Or other crime.

13–19: Joyful acceptance of undeserved suffering demonstrates trust in God's ultimate faithfulness; see 2.18–25 n. 14: Isa.11.2. 16: *Christian*: see Acts 11.26 n. 18: Prov.11.31.

5.1–14: *Concluding matters*. 1–7: Harmony should prevail as the church awaits in hope the coming of Christ, *the Head Shepherd* (see also 2.25). 5: Prov.3.34. 7: Ps.55.22. 8–11: The church under persecution must stand united against unbelief (*the devil*; see Job.1.7). 12: *Silvanus*, the stenographer, is probably "Silas" (Acts 15.22). 13: *From her . . . in Babylon*: the church in Rome; see Rev.17.1–5,15. In early Christian tradition *Mark* was regarded as Peter's spiritual heir; see Acts 12.12. 14: *Kiss of love*: a liturgical gesture, the "holy kiss" (e.g. Rom.16.16).

# THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

In form, this writing is Peter's "last will and testament," a passionate attempt to support orthodox Christian doctrines, especially beliefs in the glorious return of Christ. The purpose, style, and point of view sharply distinguish this testament from 1 Peter, and most scholars have concluded that it was written in Peter's name by a later churchman interested in representing its teaching as well-established apostolic tradition. The salutation (1.1-2) is followed by a preface which stresses the writer's authority (1.3-15). In 1.16-3.10 (here are various arguments assembled to show that the hope of the Lord's coming is sure, and the readers are admonished in conclusion to be ready for that day (3.11-18).

Virtually all the arguments in 2 Peter duplicate those in Jude 3-18. The majority of interpreters believe that the author of 2 Peter has drawn on Jude in formulating his own appeal. That 2 Peter used Jude (not Jude, 2 Peter) is suggested by the absence from 2 Peter of a passage in Jude 9 which alludes to a legend about Moses' body; that 2 Peter omitted this seems to scholars more likely than that Jude added it. Dependence on Jude and the association of Paul's letters with Scripture (3.16) suggest a date for 2 Peter well into the second century, perhaps about 150 A.D.

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## *The remedy for doubt*

1 FROM SIMEON PETER, SERVANT AND  
apostle of Jesus Christ, to those  
who through the justice of our  
God and Saviour Jesus Christ share our  
faith and enjoy equal privilege with  
ourselves.

2 Grace and peace be yours in fullest  
measure, through the knowledge of  
God and Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has bestowed on  
us everything that makes for life and  
true religion, enabling us to know the  
One who called us by his own splendour  
4 and might. Through this might and  
splendour he has given us his promises,  
great beyond all price, and through  
them you may escape the corruption  
with which lust has infected the world,  
and come to share in the very being  
of God.

5 With all this in view, you should try  
your hardest to supplement your faith  
with virtue, virtue with knowledge,  
6 knowledge with self-control, self-  
control with fortitude, fortitude with  
7 piety, piety with brotherly kindness,  
and brotherly kindness with love.

8 These are gifts which, if you possess  
and foster them, will keep you from

being either useless or barren in the  
knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The man who lacks them is short-  
sighted and blind; he has forgotten 9  
how he was cleansed from his former  
sins. All the more then, my friends, 10  
exert yourselves to clinch God's choice  
and calling of you. If you behave so,  
you will never come to grief. Thus you 11  
will be afforded full and free admission  
into the eternal kingdom of our Lord  
and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And so I will not hesitate to remind 12  
you of this again and again, although  
you know it and are well grounded in  
the truth that has already reached you.  
Yet I think it right to keep refreshing 13  
your memory so long as I still lodge in  
this body. I know that very soon I must  
leave it; indeed our Lord Jesus Christ 14  
has told me so.<sup>a</sup> But I will see to it that 15  
after I am gone you will have means of  
remembering these things at all times.

It was not on tales artfully spun that 16  
we relied when we told you of the power  
of our Lord Jesus Christ and his  
coming; we saw him with our own eyes  
in majesty, when at the hands of God 17  
the Father he was invested with  
honour and glory, and there came to  
a Or I must leave it, as our Lord Jesus Christ told me.

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1.1-2: Salutation.

1.3-15: The writer's purpose and authority. 5: See Jude 3. 9: Sins are cleansed at baptism. 12: The truth: Christian doctrine; see Jude 5. 13-14: Perhaps a reference to the prediction of Jn. 21.18-19. 15: The view that Mark's Gospel is derived from Peter may be reflected here.

1.16-3.10: The hope of the Lord's coming is no myth. 16-18: Peter was one of those present

him from the sublime Presence a voice which said: 'This is my Son, my Beloved,<sup>b</sup> on whom my favour rests.'

18 This voice from heaven we ourselves heard; when it came, we were with him on the sacred mountain.

19 All this only confirms for us the message of the prophets,<sup>c</sup> to which you will do well to attend, because it is like a lamp shining in a murky place, until the day breaks and the morning star rises to illuminate your minds.

20 **BUT FIRST NOTE THIS: NO ONE CAN** interpret any prophecy of Scripture by  
21 himself. For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God.

2 But Israel had false prophets as well as true; and you likewise will have false teachers among you. They will import disastrous heresies, disowning the very Master who bought them, and bringing  
2 swift disaster on their own heads. They will gain many adherents to their dissolute practices, through whom the true way will be brought into disrepute.  
3 In their greed for money they will trade on your credulity with sheer fabrications.

But the judgement long decreed for them has not been idle; perdition waits  
4 for them with unsleeping eyes. God did not spare the angels who sinned, but consigned them to the dark pits of hell,<sup>d</sup> where they are reserved for judgement.  
5 He did not spare the world of old (except for Noah, preacher of righteousness, whom he preserved with seven others), but brought the deluge upon  
6 that world of godless men. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah God burned to ashes, and condemned them to total destruction, making them an object-lesson for godless men in future  
7 days. But he rescued Lot, who was a good man, shocked by the dissolute  
8 habits of the lawless society in which he lived; day after day every sight, every

sound, of their evil courses tortured that good man's heart. Thus the Lord  
9 is well able to rescue the godly out of trials, and to reserve the wicked under punishment until the day of judgement.

Above all he will punish those who  
10 follow their abominable lusts. They flout authority; reckless and headstrong, they are not afraid to insult celestial beings, whereas angels, for all  
11 their superior strength and might, employ no insults in seeking judgement against them before the Lord.

These men are like brute beasts,  
12 born in the course of nature to be caught and killed. They pour abuse upon things they do not understand; like the beasts they will perish, suffering  
13 hurt for the hurt they have inflicted. To carouse in broad daylight is their idea of pleasure; while they sit with you at table they are an ugly blot on your company, because they revel in their own deceptions.<sup>e</sup>

They have eyes for nothing but  
14 women, eyes never at rest from sin. They lure the unstable to their ruin; past masters in mercenary greed, God's curse is on them! They have abandoned  
15 the straight road and lost their way. They have followed in the steps of Balaam son of Beor, who consented to take pay for doing wrong, but had  
16 his offence brought home to him when the dumb beast spoke with a human voice and put a stop to the prophet's madness.

These men are springs that give no  
17 water, mists driven by a storm; the place reserved for them is blackest darkness. They utter big, empty words,  
18 and make of sensual lusts and debauchery a bait to catch those who have barely begun to escape from their heathen environment. They promise  
19 them freedom, but are themselves

<sup>b</sup> Or This is my only Son.

<sup>c</sup> Or And in the message of the prophets we have something still more certain.

<sup>d</sup> Some witnesses read consigned them to darkness and chains in hell.

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read in their love-feasts.

at the transfiguration, Mt.17.1-8. 19: Christ will dawn as the *morning star* on the day of his return. 20-21: See 3.16 n.

2.1-22: **False teachers will be punished.** See Jude 4,5-16 nn. 7-8: See Gen.19.4-29. 11: In Jude 9 the angel Michael is named, but here the reference is more general (see Introduction). 18-22: New converts are especially vulnerable to false teaching. Backsliders are worse off than

slaves of corruption; for a man is the slave of whatever has mastered him. 20 They had once escaped the world's defilements through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; yet if they have entangled themselves in these all over again, and are mastered by them, their plight in the end is 21 worse than before. How much better never to have known the right way, than, having known it, to turn back and abandon the sacred commandments delivered to them! For them the 22 proverb has proved true: 'The dog returns to its own vomit', and, 'The sow after a wash rolls in the mud again.'

3 THIS IS NOW MY SECOND LETTER TO YOU, my friends. In both of them I have been recalling to you what you already know, to rouse you to honest thought. 2 Remember the predictions made by God's own prophets, and the commands given by the Lord and Saviour through your apostles.

3 Note this first: in the last days there will come men who scoff at religion 4 and live self-indulgent lives, and they will say: 'Where now is the promise of his coming? Our fathers have been laid to their rest, but still everything continues exactly as it has always been since the world began.'

5 In taking this view they lose sight of the fact<sup>f</sup> that there were heavens and earth long ago, created by God's word 6 out of water and with water; and by water that first world was destroyed, 7 the water of the deluge. And the present heavens and earth, again by God's word, have been kept in store for burning; they are being reserved until the day of judgement when the godless will be destroyed.

8 And here is one point, my friends, which you must not lose sight of: with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one

day. It is not that the Lord is slow in 9 fulfilling his promise, as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance.

But the Day of the Lord will come; 10 it will come, unexpected as a thief. On that day the heavens will disappear with a great rushing sound, the elements will disintegrate in flames, and the earth with all that is in it will be laid bare.<sup>g</sup>

Since the whole universe is to break 11 up in this way, think what sort of people you ought to be, what devout and dedicated lives you should live! Look eagerly for the coming of the 12 Day of God and work to hasten it on; that day will set the heavens ablaze until they fall apart, and will melt the elements in flames. But we have his 13 promise, and look forward to new heavens and a new earth, the home of justice.

With this to look forward to, do your 14 utmost to be found at peace with him, unblemished and above reproach in his sight. Bear in mind that our Lord's 15 patience with us is our salvation, as Paul, our friend and brother, said when he wrote to you with his inspired wisdom. And so he does in all his other 16 letters, wherever he speaks of this subject, though they contain some obscure passages, which the ignorant and unstable misinterpret to their own ruin, as they do the other scriptures.<sup>h</sup>

But you, my friends, are forewarned. 17 Take care, then, not to let these unprincipled men seduce you with their errors; do not lose your own safe foothold. But grow in the grace and in the 18 knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.<sup>i</sup> To him be glory now and for all eternity!

<sup>f</sup> Or They choose to overlook the fact . . .

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read will be burnt up.

<sup>h</sup> Or his other writings.

<sup>i</sup> Or But grow up, by the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and by knowing him.

are the unconverted. See also Heb.6.4-6; 10.26-31. 22: *Dog returns to its own vomit*: see Prov.26.11.

3.1-10: *Predicted events have occurred*. See Acts 20.29-30. 1: *Second letter*: the first is presumed to be 1 Pet. 3-4: See 2.1-3. 5-7: See Gen.1.1-10; chs. 7-8. 8: Ps.90.4. 10: Compare, e.g. Mt.24.43-44; Zeph.1.18; 3.8.

3.11-18: *Exhortations to prepare for the end*. 12: See Isa.34.4. 13: See, e.g. Isa.65.17; Rev.21.1ff. 14: See Jude 24. 15: See v. 9. Perhaps Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are in mind, or passages like 1 Cor.1.7-9. 16: Heretics are false interpreters of the *scriptures* (see 1.19-21), within which Paul's letters are included (see Introduction).

# THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

Unlike 2 and 3 John, this book is not a letter but a tract, occasioned by the denial of the reality of the incarnation (2.22; 4.2–3,15) by some heretical Christians (2.19). These claim to be superior in knowing God (2.3–4), in love for God (4.20), and in communion with God (1.6).

The treatise may well be from the same hand that wrote 2 and 3 John. Its style and themes also recall those of the Fourth Gospel: centrality of the incarnation, the mission of the only Son, the Word (1.1). Still, no mention is made of the Holy Spirit as personal (Jesus is the “Advocate” in 2.1), or of “glory,” or of “judging,” all important in the Gospel. This may indicate that the tract had an earlier origin than the Gospel, or that it was written by a different author from the same school of thought. Tradition has associated the tract with Asia Minor and the name of John.

The main body of the book is enclosed between a prologue (1.1–4) and an epilogue (5.13–21). Three aspects of God are developed in concentric circles: God is “Light” (1.5–2.27), the “Holy One” (2.28–4.6), “Love” (4.7–5.12).

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## Recall to fundamentals

1 **I**T WAS THERE FROM THE BEGINNING; we have heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt it with our own hands; and it is of this we tell. Our theme is the  
2 word of life. This life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony; we here declare to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was  
3 made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus  
4 Christ. And we write this in order that the joy of us all may be complete.  
5 Here is the message we heard from him and pass on to you: that God is light, and in him there is no darkness  
6 at all. If we claim to be sharing in his life while we walk in the dark, our  
7 words and our lives are a lie; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the

light, then we share together a common life, and we are being cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus his Son.

If we claim to be sinless, we are self-<sup>8</sup> deceived and strangers to the truth. If<sup>9</sup> we confess our sins, he is just, and may be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every kind of wrong; but if we say we have committed no sin,<sup>10</sup> we make him out to be a liar, and then his word has no place in us.

My children, in writing thus to you<sup>2</sup> my purpose is that you should not commit sin. But should anyone commit a sin, we have one to plead our cause<sup>a</sup> with the Father, Jesus Christ, and he is just. He is himself the remedy for the<sup>2</sup> defilement of our sins, not our sins only but the sins of all the world.

Here is the test by which we can<sup>3</sup> make sure that we know him: do we keep his commands? The man who<sup>4</sup> says, ‘I know him’, while he disobeys his commands, is a liar and a stranger

*a* Literally we have an advocate . . .

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1.1–4: The prologue. 1: The impersonal *it* refers to *the word of life*, which may denote the gospel, since *word* is not as clearly a title for Jesus Christ as in Jn. (see Jn.1.1, 14 nn.). However, *from the beginning* (the creation) suggests the preexistence of Christ (see 2.13–14). As in Jn.1.14, the pronoun *we* indicates the apostolic witnesses, who attest their personal experience of Jesus’ earthly life. The *theme* is that announced in Jn.1.1–18. 2: *This life*, described as *eternal*, which *dwelt with the Father* (see Jn.1.1–2), has become *visible* through the incarnation (see Jn.1.14). 3: The key Gk. term behind the phrase, *share in a common life*, is found only here and in vv. 6–7 in Johannine literature, but is characteristic of Paul (e.g. 1 Cor.1.9). However, the idea of *life which we share with the Father and his Son* is very Johannine (see Jn.5.26; 14.6). 4: *The joy* communicated by Christ is mentioned in Jn.15.11; 16.22; 17.13.

1.5–2.27: God is Light. 5: *Light and darkness*, a frequent antithesis in Jn., signify truth and error and reflect a moral dualism (see Jn.1.5; 3.19). 7: The *common life* is not created by man’s goodwill, but by Christ’s redemptive act (see Rev.1.5). 9: Jas.5.16 also urges the confession of sins. 2.1: The Gospel of Jn. (e.g. 14.16) calls the Holy Spirit the Advocate (see Tfn. a). 2: Only here and at 4.10 in Johannine literature is Jesus called *the remedy for the defilement of our sins*.

5 to the truth; but in the man who is obedient to his word, the divine love has indeed come to its perfection.

6 Here is the test by which we can make sure that we are in him: whoever claims to be dwelling in him, binds himself to live as Christ himself lived.  
7 Dear friends, I give you no new command. It is the old command which you always had before you; the old command is the message which you  
8 heard at the beginning. And yet again it is a new command that I am giving you—new in the sense that the darkness is passing and the real light already shines. Christ has made this true, and it is true in your own experience.

9 A man may say, 'I am in the light'; but if he hates his brother, he is still in the dark. Only the man who loves his  
10 brother dwells in light: there is nothing to make him stumble. But one who  
11 hates his brother is in darkness; he walks in the dark and has no idea where he is going, because the darkness has made him blind.

12 I write to you, my children, because your sins have been forgiven for his sake.<sup>b</sup>

13 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is and has been from the beginning.<sup>c</sup>

I write to you, young men, because you have mastered the evil one.

To you, children, I have written because you know the Father.

14 To you, fathers, I have written because you know him who is and has been from the beginning.<sup>c</sup>

To you, young men, I have written because you are strong; God's word remains in you, and you have mastered the evil one.

15 Do not set your hearts on the godless

world or anything in it. Anyone who loves the world is a stranger to the Father's love. Everything the world  
16 affords, all that panders to the appetites or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life, springs not from the Father but from the godless world. And that world  
17 is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does God's will stands for evermore.

MY CHILDREN, THIS IS THE LAST HOUR! 18  
You were told that Antichrist was to come, and now many antichrists have appeared; which proves to us that this  
19 is indeed the last hour. They went out from our company, but never really belonged to us; if they had, they would have stayed with us. They went out, so that it might be clear that not all in our company truly belong to it.<sup>d</sup>

You, no less than they, are among  
20 the initiated;<sup>e</sup> this is the gift of the Holy One, and by it you all have knowledge.<sup>f</sup> It is not because you are ignorant of  
21 the truth that I have written to you, but because you know it, and because lies, one and all, are alien to the truth.

Who is the liar? Who but he that  
22 denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, for he denies both the  
23 Father and the Son: to deny the Son is to be without the Father; to acknowledge the Son is to have the Father too.  
24 You therefore must keep in your hearts that which you heard at the beginning; if what you heard then still dwells in  
25 you, you will yourselves dwell in the Son and also in the Father. And this is the promise that he himself gave us, the promise of eternal life.

So much for those who would mis-  
26 lead you. But as for you, the initiation<sup>g</sup> 27  
which you received from him stays with

<sup>b</sup> Or forgiven, since you bear his name.

<sup>c</sup> Or him whom we have known from the beginning.

<sup>d</sup> Or that none of them truly belong to us.

<sup>e</sup> Literally have an anointing (Greek *chrism*).

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read you have all knowledge.

<sup>g</sup> Literally the anointing.

The meaning is that by Jesus' death (see 1.7) God has revealed his gracious, loving forgiveness of man. The atoning power of Christ's death is limitless. 5: Jn.14.15 and 15.10 assert that Christian love implies obedience. 7-8: The *old yet new command*: see Jn.13.34. 16: *The world* here is opposed to God (see Jn.3.16 n.) and is exemplified by three common evil tendencies in man: lust, avarice, arrogant self-sufficiency. 18: *Antichrist*, found only in 1 and 2 Jn., is a personification of "enmity to Christ." 20-21: The presence of the Spirit in the Christian brings *knowledge of divine truth* (see Jn.14.26; 16.13-15). 22-23: The denial of the incarnation is the basic heresy attacked by the author. 27: Jer.31.33-34 promises a new covenant when men will be divinely taught and *need no other teacher*.

you; you need no other teacher, but learn all you need to know from his initiation, which is real and no illusion. As he taught you, then, dwell in him.

28 Even now, my children, dwell in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you must recognize that every man who does right is his child.

3 How great is the love that the Father has shown to us! We were called God's children, and such we are;<sup>h</sup> and the reason why the godless world does not recognize us is that it has not known him. Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed<sup>i</sup> we shall be like him,<sup>j</sup> because we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope before him purifies himself, as Christ is pure.

4 To commit sin is to break God's law: sin, in fact, is lawlessness. Christ appeared, as you know, to do away with sins, and there is no sin in him. No man therefore who dwells in him is a sinner; the sinner has not seen him and does not know him.

7 My children, do not be misled: it is the man who does right who is righteous, as God is righteous; the man who sins is a child of the devil, for the devil has been a sinner from the first; and the Son of God appeared for the very purpose of undoing the devil's work.

9 A child of God does not commit sin, because the divine seed remains in him; he cannot be a sinner, because he is God's child. That is the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil: no one who does not do right is God's child, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

11 For the message you have heard from the beginning is this: that we should love one another; unlike Cain, who was a child of the evil one and murdered his

brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were wrong, and his brother's were right.

My brothers, do not be surprised if the world hates you. We for our part have crossed over from death to life; this we know, because we love our brothers. The man who does not love is still in the realm of death, for everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and no murderer, as you know, has eternal life dwelling within him. It is by this that we know what love is: that Christ laid down his life for us. And we in our turn are bound to lay down our lives for our brothers. But if a man has enough to live on, and yet when he sees his brother in need shuts up his heart against him, how can it be said that the divine love<sup>k</sup> dwells in him?

My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action. This is how we may know that we belong to the realm of truth, and convince ourselves in his sight that even if our conscience condemns us, God is greater than our conscience<sup>l</sup> and knows all.

Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, then we can approach God with confidence, and obtain from him whatever we ask, because we are keeping his commands and doing what he approves. This is his command: to give our allegiance to his Son Jesus Christ and love one another as he commanded. When we keep his commands we dwell in him and he dwells in us. And this is how we can make sure that he dwells within us: we know it from the Spirit he has given us.

*h* Or We are called children of God! Not only called, we really are his children.

*i* Or when he appears.

*j* Or we are God's children, though he has not yet appeared; what we shall be we know, for when he does appear we shall be like him.

*k* Or that love for God . . .

*l* Or and reassure ourselves in his sight in matters where our conscience condemns us, because God is greater than our conscience . . . ; or and yet we shall do well to convince ourselves that if even our own conscience condemns us, still more will God who is greater than conscience . . .

**2.28-4.6: God is the Holy One.** 28: This is the only place in the Johannine writings which speaks unambiguously of Christ's (future) coming; but see Jn.16.16 n. 3.1-3: *The love that the Father has shown* by Jesus' redemptive mission has made the Christian one of God's children; yet this sonship remains a mystery and a *hope* until Christ appears. 9: *The divine seed* is probably the Spirit of v. 24 and 4.13. The Christian *cannot be a sinner* in the fundamental sense that he must remain united to God (v. 6); that, in fact, he commits sin is affirmed in 1.8-10. 12: *Cain*: Gen.4.3-8. 19-20: A life spent in loving service for others proves our union with God, whose



4 BUT DO NOT TRUST ANY AND EVERY spirit, my friends; test the spirits, to see whether they are from God, for among those who have gone out into the world there are many prophets  
 2 falsely inspired. This is how we may recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from  
 3 God, and every spirit which does not thus acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is what is meant by 'Anti-christ';<sup>m</sup> you have been told that he was to come, and here he is, in the world already!

4 But you, my children, are of God's family, and you have the mastery over these false prophets, because he who  
 5 inspires you is greater than he who inspires the godless world. They are of that world, and so therefore is their teaching; that is why the world listens  
 6 to them. But we belong to God, and a man who knows God listens to us, while he who does not belong to God refuses us a hearing. That is how we distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error.

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows  
 8 God, but the unloving know nothing  
 9 of God. For God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us  
 10 life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for  
 11 the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are  
 12 bound to love one another. Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection within us.

Here is the proof that we dwell in 13 him and he dwells in us: he has imparted his Spirit to us. Moreover, we 14 have seen for ourselves, and we attest, that the Father sent the Son to be the saviour of the world, and if a man 15 acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he dwells in God. Thus we have come to know 16 and believe the love which God has for us.

God is love; he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. This 17 is for us the perfection of love, to have confidence on the day of judgement, and this we can have, because even in this world we are as he is. There is no 18 room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear. For fear brings with it the pains of judgement, and anyone who is afraid has not attained to love in its perfection. We love because he 19 loved us first. But if a man says, 'I love God', while hating his brother, he is a liar. If he does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen. And 21 indeed this command comes to us from Christ himself: that he who loves God must also love his brother.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is 5 the Christ is a child of God, and to love the parent means to love his child; it 2 follows that when we love God and obey his commands we love his children too. For to love God is to keep 3 his commands; and they are not burdensome, because every child of God is 4 victor over the godless world. The victory that defeats the world is our faith, for who is victor over the world 5 but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

*m Or This is the spirit of Antichrist.*

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love and mercy keeps us from despair, *even if our conscience condemns us.* 4.1-6: The author's admonition to *test the spirits* is an example of the church's distinction between types of "spiritual phenomena" (see 1 Cor.12.3; 1 Th.5.19-22).

4.7-5.21: **God is Love.** While 1 Jn. in many respects displays a less sophisticated theology than the Fourth Gospel, this cannot be said of its understanding of Christian love. 9-10: The statement that *God is love* is not a definition of God, but a description of his redemptive action in Christ. 11-12: The way to "see" the invisible God (compare Jn.1.14,18) in this life is to *love one another*. 14-16: The authenticity of our love is derived from our grasp of the reality of the incarnation and our redemption by Christian faith. The theme of the mutual indwelling of God and the believer is characteristically Johannine (see 3.24; Jn.15.5). 5.1: Faith in the incarnate Son as *the Christ* enables us to recognize others as God's *children* and leads to true Christian love. 4: The acknowledgment by *our faith* of Jesus' true character (v. 5) is what

- 6 This is he who came with water and blood: Jesus Christ. He came, not by water alone, but by water and blood; and there is the Spirit to bear witness, 7,8 because the Spirit is truth. For there are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement. We accept human testimony, but surely divine testimony is stronger, and this threefold testimony is indeed that of God himself, the 9 witness he has borne to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his own heart, but he who disbelieves God, makes him out to be a liar, by refusing to accept God's 11 own witness to his Son. The witness is this: that God has given us eternal life, and that this life is found in his 12 Son. He who possesses the Son has life indeed; he who does not possess the Son of God has not that life.
- 13 THIS LETTER IS TO ASSURE YOU THAT YOU have eternal life. It is addressed to those who give their allegiance to the Son of God.
- 14 We can approach God with confidence for this reason: if we make requests which accord with his will he listens to us; and if we know that our requests are heard, we know also that the things we ask for are ours. 15
- If a man sees his brother committing a sin which is not a deadly sin, he should pray to God for him, and he will grant him life—that is, when men are not guilty of deadly sin. There is such a thing as deadly sin, and I do not suggest that he should pray about that; but although all wrongdoing is sin, not all sin is deadly sin. 16
- We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him. 17
- We know that we are of God's family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one. 18
- We know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, this is eternal life. My children, be on the watch against false gods. 19 20 21

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*defeats the world*, which opposes God. 6: Jesus was proclaimed *the Son of God* after his baptism with water (Mt.3.17); but Jn.19.34–35 attests that *by water and blood* Jesus was revealed as Savior of men. 7–8: An ancient trinitarian formula (which identifies “Father, Word, and Spirit” as “heavenly witnesses”) was a gloss inserted into this passage in some Latin versions. 13: This statement of purpose recalls Jn.20.31. 14–15: Christian *confidence* in being heard is an important element of petitionary prayer. 16: The *deadly sin*, not specified by the author, is of such a nature as to defy forgiveness, possibly that cited in 2.18–29. 20: By *him who is real*, the author means God.

# THE SECOND LETTER OF JOHN

This is a real letter, written to a specific Christian community by "the Elder." A man of authority in his own church, the author feels a certain responsibility for the faith of another community. It is all but impossible to discover the date, place of origin, or destination of this note. Its purpose is to alert the church addressed to the dangers of the heretical denial of the incarnation. To counter these dangers, it urges fidelity to the traditional commandment of fraternal love, which involves obedience to apostolic authority. Stylistic similarities suggest that this writer also composed 3 John; he may be the author of 1 John also.

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## *Truth and love*

1 **T**HE ELDER TO THE LADY CHOSEN BY  
God, and her children, whom I  
love in truth—and not I alone  
2 but all who know the truth—for the  
sake of the truth that dwells among us  
and will be with us for ever.

3 Grace, mercy, and peace shall be  
with us from God the Father and from  
Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in  
truth and love.

4 I was delighted to find that some of  
your children are living by the truth, as  
we were commanded by the Father.

5 And now I have a request to make of  
you. Do not think I am giving a new  
command; I am recalling the one we  
have had before us from the beginning:  
6 let us love one another. And love  
means following the commands of  
God. This is the command which was  
given you from the beginning, to be  
your rule of life.

7 Many deceivers have gone out into

the world, who do not acknowledge  
Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.  
These are the persons described as the  
Antichrist, the arch-deceiver. Beware 8  
of them, so that you may not lose all that  
we worked for, but receive your reward  
in full.

Anyone who runs ahead too far, and 9  
does not stand by the doctrine of the  
Christ, is without God; he who stands  
by that doctrine possesses both the  
Father and the Son. If anyone comes 10  
to you who does not bring this doctrine,  
do not welcome him into your house  
or give him a greeting; for anyone 11  
who gives him a greeting is an accomplice  
in his wicked deeds.

I have much to write to you, but I 12  
do not care to put it down in black and  
white. But I hope to visit you and talk  
with you face to face, so that our joy  
may be complete. The children of your 13  
Sister, chosen by God, send their  
greetings.

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1-3: **Address and wish.** 1: *Elder*: a term used elsewhere to designate the leader(s) of a local church (see Acts 14.23; 20.17; 1 Tim.5.17; Ti.1.5). The community addressed is called *the Lady*, which in Gk. is the feminine equivalent of "Lord." The title may be related to the familiar imagery of the church as the "bride of Christ" (see 2 Cor.11.2; Eph.5.26-27; Rev.19.7). The phrase *chosen by God* (used here of the church) indicates Jesus in Jn.1.34. 2: *The truth* is the divine presence; its possession is assured by fidelity to the *doctrine of the Christ* (v. 9).

4-12: **The body of the letter.** 4: Since only *some* are *living by the truth*, the heresy has made serious inroads into the community. 5: The writer's remedy is faithfulness to the *command of fraternal love* (see 1 Jn.2.7-10; Jn.13.34). 6: This association of *love with the commands of God* is characteristic of Johannine thought (see Jn.14.23). 7: See 1 Jn.2.22. *Antichrist*: see 1 Jn.2.18 n. 9: The heretic *runs ahead too far* by minimizing the reality of the incarnation.

13: **Final greeting.** *The children of your Sister*: the members of the Elder's church.

# THE THIRD LETTER OF JOHN

This genuine letter is addressed to an individual member of a Christian church, whose leader, Diotrephes, has refused to receive the emissaries of the Elder led by Demetrius. Gaius, the addressee, a man of probity, is asked to provide hospitality for Demetrius and his companions. The author is the same Elder who wrote 2 John, as the vocabulary and style indicate; also, the two letters are of equal length.

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## *Trouble in the church*

1 **T**HE ELDER TO DEAR GAIUS, WHOM  
I love in truth.  
2 My dear Gaius, I pray that  
you may enjoy good health, and that  
3 it goes well with your soul. I was  
delighted when friends came and told  
4 you are true in your whole life. No-  
thing gives me greater joy than to hear  
that my children are living by the truth.  
5 My dear friend, you show a fine  
loyalty in everything that you do for  
6 these our fellow-Christians, strangers  
though they are to you. They have  
spoken of your kindness before the  
7 congregation here. Please help them  
on their journey in a manner worthy of  
the God we serve. It was on Christ's  
8 work that they went out; and they  
would accept nothing from pagans.  
We are bound to support such men,  
and so play our part in spreading the  
truth.

I sent a letter to the congregation, 9  
but Diotrephes, their would-be leader,<sup>a</sup>  
10 will have nothing to do with us. If I  
come, I will bring up the things he is  
doing. He lays baseless and spiteful  
charges against us; not satisfied with  
that, he refuses to receive our friends,  
and he interferes with those who would  
do so, and tries to expel them from the  
congregation.

My dear friend, do not imitate bad 11  
examples, but good ones. The well-  
doer is a child of God; the evil-doer  
has never seen God.

Demetrius gets a good testimonial 12  
from everybody—yes, and from the  
truth itself. I add my testimony, and  
you know that my testimony is true.

I have much to write to you, but I 13  
do not care to set it down with pen and  
ink. I hope to see you very soon, and 14  
we will talk face to face. Peace be with  
you. Our friends send their greetings.  
Greet our friends one by one.

*a Or who enjoys being their leader.*

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1-2: **Address and prayer.** 1: *Gaius*, an exemplary Christian, has already aided itinerant preachers (v. 6). To *love in truth* is to love as a Christian.

3-14: **The body of the letter.** 4: In 2 Jn.4 the phrase *living by the truth* means obedience to the Father. 5: The writer recommends Demetrius (v. 12) and his associates to Gaius' care as *our fellow-Christians*. 9: *Diotrephes* is not heretical but he is a foe of the Elder, overambitious, unjust, and uncharitable. 11: The Christian *well-doer* is called a *child of God* in 1 Jn.3.9. 13-14: See 2 Jn.12-13. The note ends with a wish of *peace*, the sum total of all Christ's blessings.

# A LETTER OF JUDE

Most New Testament letters are addressed to one or more specific congregations. This author, however, writes to all Christians. Following the salutation (vv. 1–2) he gives his reasons for writing: to urge Christians everywhere to defend the faith against false teaching (v. 3) and to oppose “the enemies of religion” (v. 4). In vv. 5–16 the effectiveness of God’s judgment of evil is stressed, while in vv. 17–23 the readers are urged to take action to prevent themselves and others from falling into error. An impressive doxology (vv. 24–25) gives assurance of God’s aid in holding fast to the faith.

Although this author is concerned to safeguard right doctrine, he offers no systematic refutation of false teaching, but rather condemns the immorality of those who espouse it. A similar tactic and some of the same points are present in 2 Peter (see Introduction there). The author calls himself “Jude” the “brother of James,” and probably means for the readers to infer that he is therefore one of the brothers of Jesus himself (see Mt.13.55; Mk.6.3). Most scholars, however, believe that the style, content, and probable date of this tract (late first or early second century) require the conclusion that Jude’s name has been used by a later writer to lend authority to his urgent appeal.

## *The danger of false belief*

- 1 FROM JUDE, SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST and brother of James, to those whom God has called, who live in the love of God the Father and in the safe keeping of Jesus Christ.
- 2 Mercy, peace, and love be yours in fullest measure.
- 3 My friends, I was fully engaged in writing to you about our salvation—which is yours no less than ours—when it became urgently necessary to write at once and appeal to you to join the struggle in defence of the faith, the faith which God entrusted to his people
- 4 once and for all. It is in danger from certain persons who have wormed their way in, the very men whom Scripture long ago marked down for the doom they have incurred. They are the enemies of religion; they pervert the free favour of our God into licentiousness, disowning Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.<sup>a</sup>
- 5 You already know it all, but let me remind you how the Lord,<sup>b</sup> having once delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, next time destroyed those who

were guilty of unbelief. Remember too the angels, how some of them were not content to keep the dominion given to them but abandoned their proper home; and God has reserved them for judgement on the great Day, bound beneath the darkness in everlasting chains. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring towns; like the angels, they committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts; and they paid the penalty in eternal fire, an example for all to see.

So too with these men today. Their dreams lead them to defile the body, to flout authority, and to insult celestial beings. In contrast, when the archangel Michael was in debate with the devil, disputing the possession of Moses’s body, he did not presume to condemn him in insulting words,<sup>c</sup> but said, ‘May the Lord rebuke you!’

But these men pour abuse upon 10 things they do not understand; the things they do understand, by instinct like brute beasts, prove their undoing.

<sup>a</sup> Or disowning our one and only Master, and Jesus Christ our Lord.

<sup>b</sup> Some witnesses read Jesus (which might be understood as Joshua).

<sup>c</sup> Or to charge him with blasphemy.

1–2: Salutation. See Introduction.

3–4: Preface. 3: *The faith* is the Christian doctrinal tradition entrusted to God’s people (perhaps a specific reference to the apostles). 4. A warning against *certain* false teachers who, in particular, deny that Jesus is *Master and Lord*: see 2 Jn.7. *Scripture*: see vv. 14–15 n., 17–18 n.

5–16: *The judgment of God*. 5: See Num.14.11–35. 6: See Gen.6.1–4; Deut.32.8; 1 Enoch (an ancient noncanonical book) chs. 6–10; 18.14–16; 21.2. 7: See Gen.19.23–25; Deut.29.23; Wis.10.6. 8: Angelic powers, in this writer’s view, deserve respect; contrast Eph.1.21–22; Col.2.15–19. 9: The literary source of the legend referred to is now lost, but perhaps stood in

- 11 Alas for them! They have gone the way of Cain; they have plunged into Balaam's error for pay; they have rebelled like Korah, and they share his doom.
- 12 These men are a blot on your love-feasts, where they eat and drink without reverence. They are shepherds who take care only of themselves. They are clouds carried away by the wind without giving rain, trees that in season bear no fruit, dead twice over and pulled up by the roots. They are fierce waves of the sea, foaming shameful deeds; they are stars that have wandered from their course, and the place for ever reserved for them is blackest darkness.
- 14 It was to them that Enoch, the seventh in descent from Adam, directed his prophecy when he said: 'I saw the Lord come with his myriads of angels, to bring all men to judgement and to convict all the godless of all the godless deeds they had committed, and of all the defiant words which godless sinners had spoken against him.'
- 16 They are a set of grumblers and malcontents. They follow their lusts. Big words come rolling from their lips, and they court favour to gain their ends.
- 17 But you, my friends, should remember the predictions made by the apostles of

our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the warning they gave you: 'In the final age there will be men who pour scorn on religion, and follow their own godless lusts.'

These men draw a line between spiritual and unspiritual persons, although they are themselves<sup>d</sup> wholly unspiritual. But you, my friends, must fortify yourselves in your most sacred faith. Continue to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, and look forward to the day when our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy will give eternal life.

There are some doubting souls who need your pity;<sup>e</sup> snatch them from the flames and save them.<sup>f</sup> There are others for whom your pity must be mixed with fear; hate the very clothing that is contaminated with sensuality.

Now to the One who can keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory, jubilant and above reproach, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, might and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all time, now, and for evermore. Amen.

<sup>d</sup> Or These men create divisions; they are . . .

<sup>e</sup> Some witnesses read There are some who raise disputes; these you should refute.

<sup>f</sup> So one witness; the rest read some you should snatch from the flames and save.

the incompletely preserved writing, "Assumption of Moses." 11: *Cain* symbolizes lust and self-indulgence (e.g. Wis.10.3). *Balaam's error* was covetousness (Num. chs. 22-24); *Korah* led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Num. ch. 16). 12-13: *Love-feasts* were church meals probably separate from the "Lord's Supper." *Dead twice over*: see Rev.20.14; 21.8. For other images used here, see Prov.25.14; Isa.14.12-15; 57.20; the nonbiblical book 1 Enoch 18.12-16; 21.3ff. 14-15: See the nonbiblical book 1 Enoch 1.1-9; 5.4; 27.2; 60.8; 93.2.

17-23: **The need for right doctrine.** 17-18: See, e.g. Paul in Acts 20.29-30. 20. *Sacred faith*: see v. 3 n. 21-22: *The day* of Christ's return will bring both mercy and judgment. 23: *Fleshly lusts* should be despised; see Zech.3.2-7.

24-25: **Doxology.** See Rom.16.25-27.

THE REVELATION  
OF JOHN

1941



# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

The Revelation of John encourages Christians to keep faith in the face of trial and persecution. The author is a Christian prophet, John, who is persecuted himself and writes from exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea to churches in what is now western Turkey. He often employs the visionary and symbolic language characteristic of apocalyptic ("unveiling," revelatory) literature to give his readers confidence that God, not Satan or the Roman emperor, is the Lord of history. Though there are symbolic images that seem to refer to Nero (54–68 A.D.) and parts may have been written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the book in its present form probably was written during the reign of Domitian (81–96 A.D.), a period when emperor worship was geographically extensive and coercive.

Among New Testament writings, Revelation is unique as a thoroughly apocalyptic document; it has forerunners in parts of such Old Testament books as Daniel, Isaiah, and Zechariah. Its very structure and language seem strongly influenced by Ezekiel. Like other apocalyptic writings composed in times of crisis and danger and portraying a struggle between God and his adversaries, Revelation veils its message to hide it from pagan foes. Yet, the purpose of the symbols is to unveil or reveal to believers God's ultimate victory and to encourage their loyalty to him. Steeped in Old Testament references, many of the seemingly cryptic statements are clarified when the reader consults these Scriptures.

The structure of Revelation is dominated by series of sevens, the biblical number of fullness or completeness. In powerful imagery and sometimes moving liturgical language, history is portrayed as unfolding toward that ultimate fullness of God's triumph in his new heaven and new earth. God and the Lamb (Jesus Christ) are "the first and the last." To them belong "praise and honor, glory and might forever." Such a message, though rooted in the first century, has been spiritually uplifting to poets, musicians, artists, and ordinary Christians through the ages.

1 **T**HIS IS THE REVELATION GIVEN BY God to Jesus Christ. It was given to him so that he might show his servants what must shortly happen. He made it known by sending his angel  
2 to his servant John, who, in telling all that he saw, has borne witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ.<sup>a</sup>  
3 Happy is the man who reads, and happy those who listen to the words of this prophecy and heed what is written in it. For the hour of fulfillment is near.

*A message from Christ to the churches*

JOHN TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN THE 4 province of Asia.

Grace be to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come, from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. 5

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins with his life's blood, who 6

*a Or has borne his testimony to the word of God and to Jesus Christ.*

1.1–3: **The foreword.** The opening declares the ultimate source of the revelation, its purpose (to show . . . what must shortly happen), and the manner of its mediation to John (see 22.6,16). 1: *Servants* (lit. slaves) is a recurrent way of speaking of God's agents (compare Amos 3.7). The delivery of the revelation by an *angel* reflects the motif in postexilic prophecy that God's distant majesty required mediating messengers (see Zech.1.19). 2: *Here the word of God* means God's message; in 19.13 (see Jn.1.1) Jesus is the Word of God. 3: *Happy* (or, blessed) introduces one of seven blessings in Rev.; here (as in 22.7) it blesses those who read and hear the revelation in public worship.

1.4–8: **Greeting, confession, and doxology.** The traditional greeting of *grace* and *peace* (see Rom.1.7 n.) is expanded into a confession of God's past, present, and future reign, as well as of the lordship of Jesus Christ; they, not Satan or Caesar, are the true rulers of history. 5: *The seven spirits* (see 3.1; 4.5; 5.6) point to the fullness of God's reigning power (*throne*). *Faithful witness* (or, martyr) implies Jesus' faithfulness unto death. *First-born from the dead*: see Rom. 8.29; Col.1.15,18; compare Ps.89.27. *Ruler of the kings*: see 11.15–18; 19.16. 6: *Royal house* and *priests* apply OT political and cultic designations of Israel to Christians; see Exod.19.6;

made of us a royal house, to serve as the priests of his God and Father—to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen.

7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds! Every eye shall see him, and among them those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the world shall lament in remorse. So it shall be. Amen.

8 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the sovereign Lord of all.

9 I, John, your brother, who share with you in the suffering and the sovereignty and the endurance which is ours in Jesus—I was on the island called Patmos because I had preached God's word and borne my testimony to Jesus.

10 It was on the Lord's day, and I was caught up by the Spirit; and behind me I heard a loud voice, like the sound

11 of a trumpet, which said to me, 'Write down what you see on a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, 12 Philadelphia, and Laodicea.' I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me; and when I turned I saw seven standing 13 lamps of gold, and among the lamps one like a son of man, robed down to his feet, with a golden girdle round his 14 breast. The hair of his head was white as snow-white wool, and his eyes flamed 15 like fire; his feet gleamed like burnished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice

was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, 16 and out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and his face shone like the sun in full strength.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as 17 though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me and said, 'Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, and I am the 18 living one; for I was dead and now I am alive for evermore, and I hold the keys of Death and Death's domain. Write down therefore what you have 19 seen, what is now, and what will be hereafter.

'Here is the secret meaning of the 20 seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and of the seven lamps of gold: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamps are the seven churches.

**TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH AT 2 Ephesus write:**

“These are the words of the One who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven lamps of gold: I know all your ways, your toil 2 and your fortitude. I know you cannot endure evil men; you have put to the proof those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. Fortitude you have; you have borne 3 up in my cause and never flagged. But I have this against you: you 4 have lost your early love. Think from 5

Isa.61.6; compare Rev.5.10; 1 Pet.2.9. 7: *Coming with the clouds*: see Dan.7.13; Mt.24.30. *Pierced, lament*: Zech.12.10; compare Jn.19.37. *So it shall be* translates the Heb. *Amen*. 8: *Alpha and Omega* (applied again to God in 21.6 and to Jesus in 22.13) are the first and last letters of the Gk. alphabet; compare “first” and “last” in 1.17; Isa.44.6; 48.12.

1.9–20: *John's vision and commission*. 10: *The Lord's day*: Sunday. *Caught up by the Spirit* reflects ecstatic experience; see Ezek.3.12. 11: *Trumpet*: compare Exod.19.16,19; as related to the end-time see Mt.24.37; 1 Cor.15.52; 1 Th.4.16. *Write down*: compare Isa.30.8. 12: *Seven . . . lamps* (see Exod.25.37; Zech.4.2) are identified in v. 20 as the seven churches. These churches, named in v. 11, stood on a great road that circumscribed the west-central region of the province of Asia. 13–15: *Son of man* (see 14.14), a figure in Dan.7.13, here and especially in the Gospels is applied to Jesus; the description of him (see Dan.7.9–10,12–13; 10.5–6; Ezek.1.24–8; 43.2) expresses priesthood, kingship, eternity, omniscience, strength. 16: *Right hand* is a symbol of power; Christ, not Caesar, holds the *seven stars* (identified in v. 20 as the angels, perhaps guardian angels, of the churches); the stars are perhaps contrasted with the seven stars which appear on Roman coins as a symbol of imperial power. *Sword* suggests the power of his word; see Isa.11.4; 49.2; Eph.6.17; Heb.4.12. *Shining face*: compare Dan.10.6; Mt.13.43; 17.2. 17: *Fell at his feet*: compare Dan.10.9; Ezek.1.28; Mt.17.6; Lk.5.8. 18: The affirmation that Christ is *first and last* (see v. 8 n.) here includes his victory over death.

2.1–3.22: *The seven letters*. Each contains initial descriptions of Christ, followed by encouragement, admonition, and promise.

2.1–7: *Ephesus*: Roman Asia's chief city. 1: *Angel*: see 1.20. *One*: the risen Christ; see 1.17–18. *Stars*: see 1.16 n., 1.20. *Lamps*: see 1.12 n., 1.20. 2: *Apostles*: missionaries; on *false apostles*, compare 2 Cor.11.12–15. 4: *Early love*: initial, waning enthusiasm; see Jer.2.2; Hos.2.14–16.

what a height you have fallen; repent, and do as you once did. Otherwise, if you do not repent, I shall come to you and remove your lamp from its place.

6 Yet you have this in your favour: you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, as

7 I do. Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches! To him who is victorious I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that stands in the Garden of God.”

8 “To the angel of the church at Smyrna write:

“These are the words of the First and the Last, who was dead and came

9 to life again: I know how hard pressed you are, and poor—and yet you are rich; I know how you are slandered by those who claim to be Jews but are

10 not—they are Satan’s synagogue. Do not be afraid of the suffering to come. The Devil will throw some of you into prison, to put you to the test; and for ten days you will suffer cruelly. Only be faithful till death, and I will give you

11 the crown of life. Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches! He who is victorious cannot be harmed by the second death.”

12 “To the angel of the church at Pergamum write:

“These are the words of the One who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know where you live; it is the place where Satan has his throne. And yet you are holding fast to my cause. You did not deny your faith in me even at the time when Antipas, my faithful witness, was killed in your city, the home

14 of Satan. But I have a few matters to

bring against you: you have in Pergamum some that hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put temptation in the way of the Israelites. He encouraged them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication, and in the same way you also

15 have some who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. So repent! If you do not, 16 I shall come to you soon and make war upon them with the sword that comes out of my mouth. Hear, you who have

17 ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches! To him who is victorious I will give some of the hidden manna; I will give him also a white stone, and on the stone will be written a new name, known to none but him that receives it.”

“To the angel of the church at Thyatira write:

“These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes flame like fire and whose feet gleam like burnished brass: I know all your ways, your love and

19 faithfulness, your good service and your fortitude; and of late you have done even better than at first. Yet I

20 have this against you: you tolerate that Jezebel, the woman who claims to be a prophetess, who by her teaching lures my servants into fornication and into eating food sacrificed to idols. I have

21 given her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. So I will throw her on to a bed of pain,<sup>b</sup> and plunge her lovers into terrible suffering, unless they forswear what she is doing;

22

<sup>b</sup> One witness reads into a furnace.

6: The *Nicolaitans* apparently taught that Christians were free to eat meat offered to idols and to practice immorality; see vv. 14–15. 7: *The tree of life* (Gen.2.9; 3.22) suggests paradise restored; see 22.14.

2.8–11: *Smyrna*. Modern Izmir. 8: *The First . . . Last*: see 1.8,18 nn. *Poor—and yet you are rich*: see the opposite in 3.17. 9: *Satan’s synagogue* refers to false Jews who spurred the authorities to persecute those who refused to worship at Smyrna’s emperor cult shrine. 10: *Ten days*: a short period; see Dan.1.12. 11: *Second death*: final condemnation; see 20.14; 21.8. *Crown of life*: an athletic symbol of ultimate victory; see 3.11; Jas.1.12 (translated “gift of life”).

2.12–17: *Pergamum*. That it was the first center of emperor worship in Asia Minor may explain *where Satan has his throne* (v. 12). 12: *The two-edged sword*: see 1.16 n. 14–15: *Balaam* (see Num. chs. 22–24; 31.16), here related to the *Nicolaitans* (vv. 6 n., 15), was regarded in NT times as the forerunner of all corrupt teachers. 17: *Manna*: bread from heaven (see Exod. ch. 16). Jews believed that the gift of manna would be repeated in the messianic age; see 2 Baruch 29.8 (noncanonical); compare Jn.6.47–51. *White* (like “light” and “brightness”) is a frequent symbol for good in Rev.; see 1.14; 3.5; 7.9; 19.14; 20.11. The *white stone* may be related to the lot-casting Urim and Thummim; see Exod.28.15 n. Is it here for those who “cast their lot” with God? *A new name*: compare Isa.62.2; see 3.12 n.

2.18–29: *Thyatira*. A city renowned for its trade guilds and idolatrous feasts (see Acts 16.14). 18: *Fire . . . bronze*: see Dan.10.6. 20: *Jezebel*: name of Ahab’s wicked, idolatrous queen

23 and her children I will strike dead. This will teach all the churches that I am the searcher of men's hearts and thoughts, and that I will reward each one of you according to his deeds. And now I speak to you others in Thyatira, who do not accept this teaching and have had no experience of what they like to call the deep secrets of Satan; on you I will impose no further burden. 25 Only hold fast to what you have, until I come. To him who is victorious, to him who perseveres in doing my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—that same authority which I received from my Father—and he shall rule them with an iron rod, smashing them to bits like earthenware; and I will give him also the star of dawn. 29 Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!"

3 "To the angel of the church at Sardis write:

"These are the words of the One who holds the seven spirits of God, the seven stars: I know all your ways; that though you have a name for being alive, 2 you are dead. Wake up, and put some strength into what is left, which must otherwise die! For I have not found any work of yours completed in the eyes of my God. So remember the teaching you received; observe it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I shall come upon you like a thief, and you will not know the moment of my coming. 4 Yet you have a few persons in Sardis who have not polluted their clothing. They shall walk with me in white, for 5 so they deserve. He who is victorious shall thus be robed all in white; his name I will never strike off the roll of the living, for in the presence of my

Father and his angels I will acknowledge him as mine. Hear, you who have 6 ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!"

"To the angel of the church at 7 Philadelphia write:

"These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who holds the key of David; when he opens none may shut, when he shuts none may open: I know 8 all your ways; and look, I have set before you an open door, which no one can shut. Your strength, I know, is small, yet you have observed my commands and have not disowned my name. So 9 this is what I will do: I will make those of Satan's synagogue, who claim to be Jews but are lying frauds, come and fall down at your feet; and they shall know that you are my beloved people. Because you have kept my command 10 and stood fast, I will also keep you from the ordeal that is to fall upon the whole world and test its inhabitants. I am coming soon; hold fast what you 11 have, and let no one rob you of your crown. He who is victorious—I will 12 make him a pillar in the temple of my God; he shall never leave it. And I will write the name of my God upon him, and the name of the city of my God, that new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name. Hear, you who have 13 ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!"

"To the angel of the church at 14 Laodicea write:

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the prime source of all God's creation: I know 15 all your ways; you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were either hot

(1 Kgs.16.31; 18.1-5; 19.1-3; 21.5-24). 23: *Her children*: those who follow her teaching. *Searcher . . . deeds*: compare Jer.17.10. 24: *Deep secrets of Satan*: heretical teachings (see v. 20). 27: See Ps.2.9. 28: *Star of dawn*: Christ himself (see 22.16).

3.1-6: *Sardis*. A city known as carefree, wealthy, immoral. 1: *Alive . . . dead*: nominal, not true, Christians. 3: *Like a thief*: 1 Th.5.1-2 n.; Mt.24.42-44. 4: *Polluted their clothing* is an image of unfaithfulness; the faithful are *in white* (see 2.17 n.). 5: *The roll of the living*: a register of the faithful (see 13.8; 17.8; 20.12,15; compare Exod.32.32; Ps.69.28; Dan.12.1; Mal.3.16; Lk.10.20); see Phil.4.3 n. *Acknowledge him*: compare Mt.10.32.

3.7-13: *Philadelphia*. A small city (compare v. 8). 7: *Key of David*: symbol of authority; see Isa.22.22. 9: *Satan's synagogue*: see 2.9 n. *Fall down at your feet*: compare Isa.49.23; 60.14. 10: *Ordeal*: see 7.14; Dan.12.1; Mk.13.19-20. It refers to the three and a half years of the beast's rule; see 13.5-10. 12: *New Jerusalem*: see 21.2. *New name*: see 2.17; 19.12; 22.4 n.; compare Ezek.48.35.

3.14-22: *Laodicea*. A proud and wealthy city near Colossae (Col.4.13-16). 14: Here, as in 2 Cor.1.20, Jesus is the *Amen*, God's "Yes" to man's hope (see Isa.65.16; compare 1.7 n.).

16 or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'How rich I am! And how well I have done! I have everything I want.' In fact, though you do not know it, you are the most pitiful wretch, poor, blind, and naked. So I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, to make you truly rich, and white clothes to put on to hide the shame of your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so that you may see. All whom I love I reprove and discipline. Be on your mettle therefore and repent. 20 Here I stand knocking at the door; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me. To him who is victorious I will grant a place on my throne, as I myself was victorious and sat down with my Father 22 on his throne. Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches!"

#### The opening of the sealed book

4 AFTER THIS I LOOKED, AND THERE BEFORE my eyes was a door opened in heaven; and the voice that I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here, and I will show you 2 what must happen hereafter.' At once I was caught up by the Spirit. There in heaven stood a throne, and on the 3 throne sat one whose appearance was like the gleam of jasper and cornelian; and round the throne was a rainbow, 4 bright as an emerald. In a circle about

this throne were twenty-four other thrones, and on them sat twenty-four elders, robed in white and wearing crowns of gold. From the throne went out flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. Burning before the throne were seven flaming torches, the seven spirits of God, and in front of it stretched what seemed a sea of glass, like a sheet of ice.

In the centre, round the throne itself, were four living creatures, covered with eyes, in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, the second like an ox, the third had a human face, the fourth was like an eagle in flight. The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, had eyes all over, inside and out; and by day and by night without a pause they sang:

'Holy, holy, holy is God the sovereign Lord of all, who was, and is, and is to come!'

As often as the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to the One who sits on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before the One who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; and as they lay their crowns before the throne they cry:

'Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because thou didst create all things; by thy will they were created, and have their being!'

*The prime source*: compare Jn.1.3; Col.1.15-18; Heb.1.2. 17: *Rich . . . poor*: contrast with 2.9; compare Hos.12.8. 18: Famous for its wealth, wool, and medical school, Laodicea is now to receive true *gold . . . white clothes . . . ointment* from Christ. 19: *Reprove*: see Prov.3.11-12; Heb.12.5-6. 20: The *supper* can refer both to the Lord's Supper (see Mt.26.26-29) and to the future messianic banquet. 21: The faithful will share Christ's *throne* and power; compare 2.26-27; Lk.22.30.

4.1-5.14: A vision of the heavenly worship (see Isa.6.1-3).

4.1-11: The praise of God the Creator. 1: *Voice*: compare 1.10. *Trumpet*: see 1.11 n. *Come up here*: the writer is transplanted to heaven, a conventional motif in ancient apocalyptic literature. 2: *Throne*: a symbol of sovereignty occurring more than forty times in Rev.; compare Ezek.1.26-28; Jer.17.12. 4: *Twenty-four elders* may refer to the twelve tribes and twelve apostles, symbolizing the unity of old and new covenant peoples: see 21.13-14. 5: *Lightning . . . thunder*: compare Exod.19.16. *Seven spirits*: see 1.5 n. 6: *Sea of glass*: probably conceived as before the "throne" in the heavenly temple; see 1 Kgs.7.23-26. *Four living creatures* (see Ezek.1.5) symbolize the created world. *Covered with eyes* (see Ezek.1.18) symbolizes all-seeing watchfulness. 7: *Lion . . . ox . . . face of a man . . . eagle* (see Ezek.1.10): in later Christian tradition, related respectively to Mk., Lk., Mt., and Jn. 8: *Holy, holy, holy*: see Isa.6.3. 10: *The One*: see vv. 2.9. *Throne*: see v. 2 n.

5 Then I saw in the right hand of the One who sat on the throne a scroll, with writing inside and out, and it was sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?' There was no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth able to open the scroll or to look inside it. I was in tears because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look inside it. But one of the elders said to me: 'Do not weep; for the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Scion of David, has won the right to open the scroll and break its seven seals.'

6 Then I saw standing in the very middle of the throne, inside the circle of living creatures and the circle of elders,<sup>c</sup> a Lamb with the marks of slaughter upon him. He had seven horns and seven eyes, the eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out over all the world. And the Lamb went up and took the scroll from the right hand of the One who sat on the throne. When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders had a harp, and they held golden bowls full of incense, the prayers of God's people, and they were singing a new song:

10 'Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God men of every tribe and language, people and nation; thou hast made of them a royal house, to serve our God as priests; and they shall reign upon earth.'

11 Then as I looked I heard the voices of countless angels. These were all

round the throne and the living creatures and the elders. Myriads upon myriads there were, thousands upon thousands, and they cried aloud: 12

'Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and might, honour and glory and praise!'

Then I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, all that is in them, crying:

'Praise and honour, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever!'

And the four living creatures said, 14 'Amen', and the elders fell down and worshipped.

THEN I WATCHED AS THE LAMB BROKE 6 the first of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' And there 2 before my eyes was a white horse, and its rider held a bow. He was given a crown, and he rode forth, conquering and to conquer.

When the Lamb broke the second 3 seal, I heard the second creature say, 'Come!' And out came another horse, 4 all red. To its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and make men slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword.

When he broke the third seal, I heard 5 the third creature say, 'Come!' And there, as I looked, was a black horse;

<sup>c</sup> Or standing between the throne, with the four living creatures, and the elders . . .

**5.1-14: The praise of the Lamb the Redeemer.** 1: *A scroll . . . sealed*: see Isa.29.11; Ezek.2.9-10. The *seven seals* are to be opened to reveal the secrets of the future. 5: *Lion from the tribe of Judah* (see Gen.49.9), *the Scion (descendant) of David* (see Isa.11.1) are messianic titles. 6: *Lamb with the marks of slaughter* refers to Jesus' death, though now he is at the *throne*; see 3.21. The title *Lamb* appears nearly thirty times in Rev.; compare Isa.53.7; Jn.1.29,36 (though a different Gk. word is used). *Seven horns* and *seven eyes* portray authority and omniscience; see Zech.4.10; Dan.7.7-8,20. 8: *Incense . . . and prayers*: see Ps.141.2. 9: *By thy blood didst purchase*: redemption was won at the cost of Christ's life; see 1.5; 12.11; 1 Cor.6.19-20. 10: *A royal house . . . as priests*: see 1.6 n. 12: *Worthy is the Lamb*: the Redeemer is offered the same kind of worship as the Creator. The Lamb, not the beast (emperor), shares the divine sovereignty.

**6.1-17: The opening of the first six seals.** As the first four seals are opened, horsemen (compare Zech.1.7-17; 6.1-8) appear, portraying coming disasters; all six correspond to the scheme of Mk.13.7-8, 24-25 (compare Lev.26.21-39). 2: *A white horse, and its rider* (in 19.11 the rider is Jesus) symbolize victory. 4: *Another horse, all red* promotes war. 5-6: *A black horse* brings a

and its rider held in his hand a pair of  
 6 scales. And I heard what sounded like  
 a voice from the midst of the living  
 creatures, which said, 'A whole day's  
 wage for a quart of flour, a whole day's  
 wage for three quarts of barley-meal!  
 But spare the olive and the vine.'  
 7 When he broke the fourth seal, I  
 heard the voice of the fourth creature  
 8 say, 'Come!' And there, as I looked,  
 was another horse, sickly pale; and its  
 rider's name was Death, and Hades  
 came close behind. To him was given  
 power over a quarter of the earth, with  
 the right to kill by sword and by  
 famine, by pestilence and wild beasts.  
 9 When he broke the fifth seal, I saw  
 underneath<sup>d</sup> the altar the souls of those  
 who had been slaughtered for God's  
 word and for the testimony they bore.  
 10 They gave a great cry: 'How long,  
 sovereign Lord, holy and true, must it  
 be before thou wilt vindicate us and  
 avenge our blood on the inhabitants  
 11 of the earth?' Each of them was given a  
 white robe; and they were told to rest a  
 little while longer, until the tally should  
 be complete of all their brothers in  
 Christ's service who were to be killed  
 as they had been.  
 12 Then I watched as he broke the sixth  
 seal. And there was a violent earth-  
 quake; the sun turned black as a funeral  
 pall and the moon all red as blood;  
 13 the stars in the sky fell to the earth, like  
 14 figs shaken down by a gale; the sky  
 vanished, as a scroll is rolled up, and  
 every mountain and island was moved  
 15 from its place. Then the kings of the  
 earth, magnates and marshals, the rich  
 and the powerful, and all men, slave or  
 free, hid themselves in caves and  
 16 mountain crags; and they called out to  
 the mountains and the crags, 'Fall on  
 us and hide us from the face of the One

who sits on the throne and from the  
 vengeance of the Lamb.' For the great  
 17 day of their vengeance has come, and  
 who will be able to stand?

After this I saw four angels stationed  
 7 at the four corners of the earth, holding  
 back the four winds so that no wind  
 should blow on sea or land or on any  
 tree. Then I saw another angel rising  
 2 out of the east, carrying the seal of the  
 living God; and he called aloud to  
 the four angels who had been given the  
 power to ravage land and sea: 'Do no  
 3 damage to sea or land or trees until we  
 have set the seal of our God upon the  
 foreheads of his servants.' And I heard  
 4 the number of those who had received  
 the seal. From all the tribes of Israel  
 there were a hundred and forty-four  
 thousand: twelve thousand from the  
 5 tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from  
 the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand  
 from the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand  
 6 from the tribe of Asher, twelve thou-  
 sand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve  
 thousand from the tribe of Manasseh,  
 twelve thousand from the tribe of  
 7 Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe  
 of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe  
 of Issachar, twelve thousand from the  
 8 tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from  
 the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thou-  
 sand from the tribe of Benjamin.

After this I looked and saw a vast  
 9 throng, which no one could count,  
 from every nation, of all tribes, peoples,  
 and languages, standing in front of the  
 throne and before the Lamb. They were  
 robed in white and had palms in their  
 hands, and they shouted together: 10

'Victory to our God who sits on the  
 throne, and to the Lamb!'

<sup>d</sup> Or at the foot of . . .

famine of grain. 7-8: Another horse, sickly pale bears Death, and Hades (in 1.18 Hades is translated as "Death's domain"; compare Ezek.5.12). 9-11: Breaking the fifth seal discloses the souls of the martyred dead crying out for vengeance; see Ps.79.5-10; contrast Lk.23.34; Acts 7.60. Underneath the altar may reflect a Jewish saying: "The souls of the righteous are kept safely under the throne of glory." Until the tally should be complete: compare 2 Esd.4.35-37. 12-17: Breaking the sixth seal brings cosmic catastrophe. 12: See Joel 2.31; Acts 2.20. 14: Isa.34.4. 15: Isa.2.10. 16: Hos.10.8. 17: Joel 2.11; Mal.3.2.

7.1-17: The marking of God's servants falls between the sixth and seventh seals, securing the faithful from destruction. 1: The four winds: see Zech.6.5. 3: Set the seal . . . upon the foreheads: see Ezek.9.4. 4: A hundred and forty-four thousand is a "perfect" number (12 × 12 × 1000); it may symbolize Israel's future full participation in Christ (compare Rom.9.25-27) or the return of the ten "lost" tribes; see 2 Esd.13.40-48). 9: With throng, every nation the seer points

11 And all the angels stood round the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped  
 12 God, crying:

‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour, power and might, be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

13 Then one of the elders turned to me and said, ‘These men that are robed in white—who are they and from where do they come?’ But I answered, ‘My lord, you know, not I.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are the men who have passed through the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them  
 15 white in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they stand before the throne of God and minister to him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will dwell with them. They shall  
 16 never again feel hunger or thirst, the sun shall not beat on them nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb who is at the heart of the throne will be their shepherd and will guide them to the springs of the water of life; and God will wipe all tears from their eyes.’

8 Now when the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for what seemed half an hour.  
 2 Then I looked, and the seven angels that stand in the presence of God were given seven trumpets.

3 Then another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all God’s people upon the golden altar in  
 4 front of the throne. And from the angel’s hand the smoke of the incense went up before God with the prayers

of his people. Then the angel took the  
 5 censer, filled it from the altar fire, and threw it down upon the earth; and there were peals of thunder, lightning, and an earthquake.

*The powers of darkness conquered*

THEN THE SEVEN ANGELS THAT HELD THE 6 seven trumpets prepared to blow them.

The first blew his trumpet; and there  
 7 came hail and fire mingled with blood, and this was hurled upon the earth. A third of the earth was burnt, a third of the trees were burnt, all the green grass was burnt.

The second angel blew his trumpet; 8 and what looked like a great blazing mountain was hurled into the sea. A third of the sea was turned to blood, a  
 9 third of the living creatures in it died, and a third of the ships on it foundered.

The third angel blew his trumpet; 10 and a great star shot from the sky, flaming like a torch; and it fell on a third of the rivers and springs. The  
 11 name of the star was Wormwood; and a third of the water turned to wormwood, and men in great numbers died of the water because it had been poisoned.

The fourth angel blew his trumpet; 12 and a third part of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that the third part went dark and a third of the light of the day failed, and of the night.

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle 13 calling with a loud cry as it flew in mid-heaven: ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth when the trumpets sound which the three last angels must now blow!’

below Israel (vv. 4–8) to the Gentile world (see Dan.7.14). 12: Note the seven-fold ascription; compare 5.12. 14: *The great ordeal*: see 3.10 n. *The blood of the Lamb*: see 5.9 n.; 1 Jn.1.7. 15: Compare 21.3. 16: 21.4; Ps.121.6; Isa.25.8; 49.10. 17: *Shepherd*: see Ps.23.1–2; Ezek.34.23. *Springs of the water of life*: see 21.6; 22.1,17; compare Jn.4.10; 7.37–38.

8.1–5: *The opening of the seventh seal* introduces the *seven trumpets* (v. 2). 1: *Silence in heaven*: the calm before the storm. 2: *Seven angels*: probably the seven archangels; compare Tob.12.15. 3: *Incense*: see Ps.141.2. *Golden altar*: see Exod.30.1–3. 5: *Took the censer . . . and threw it*: compare Ezek.10.2.

8.6–9.21: *The first six trumpets* proclaim catastrophes in nature as judgment on the wicked. 6–13: Compare the plagues in Egypt, as in Exod.7.17–21; 9.23,25; 10.21–23. 6–7: In connection with several trumpet blasts, a *third* of creation is affected. 8–9: The volcanic island of Thera, visible from Patmos, may have suggested a *blazing mountain . . . hurled into the sea*. 10: *Great star*: shooting star or meteor. 11: *Wormwood*: a bitter drug; see Jer.9.15; 23.15. 13: The three



9 Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet; and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and the star was given the key of the shaft of the abyss.  
 2 With this he opened the shaft of the abyss; and from the shaft smoke rose like smoke from a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by  
 3 the smoke from the shaft. Then over the earth, out of the smoke, came locusts, and they were given the powers that  
 4 earthly scorpions have. They were told to do no injury to the grass or to any plant or tree, but only to those men who had not received the seal of God  
 5 on their foreheads. These they were allowed to torment for five months, with torment like a scorpion's sting;  
 6 but they were not to kill them. During that time these men will seek death, but they will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.  
 7 In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like golden crowns; their faces were like human  
 8 faces and their hair like women's hair; they had teeth like lions' teeth, and wore breastplates like iron; the sound of their wings was like the noise of horses and chariots rushing to battle;  
 10 they had tails like scorpions, with stings in them, and in their tails lay their power to plague mankind for five  
 11 months. They had for their king the angel of the abyss, whose name, in Hebrew, is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon, or the Destroyer.  
 12 The first woe has now passed. But there are still two more to come.  
 13 The sixth angel then blew his trumpet; and I heard a voice coming from between the horns of the golden altar that stood in the presence of God.  
 14 It said to the sixth angel, who held the trumpet: 'Release the four angels held

bound at the great river Euphrates!' So the four angels were let loose, to kill 15 a third of mankind. They had been held ready for this moment, for this very year and month, day and hour. And 16 their squadrons of cavalry, whose count I heard, numbered two hundred million.

This was how I saw the horses and their riders in my vision: They wore breastplates, fiery red, blue, and sulphur-yellow; the horses had heads like lions' heads, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and sulphur. By 18 these three plagues, that is, by the fire, the smoke, and the sulphur that came from their mouths, a third of mankind was killed. The power of the horses lay 19 in their mouths, and in their tails also; for their tails were like snakes, with heads, and with them too they dealt injuries.

The rest of mankind who survived 20 these plagues still did not abjure the gods their hands had fashioned, nor cease their worship of devils and of idols made from gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of 21 their murders, their sorcery, their fornication, or their robberies.

THEN I SAW ANOTHER MIGHTY ANGEL 10 coming down from heaven. He was wrapped in cloud, with the rainbow round his head; his face shone like the sun and his legs were like pillars of fire. In his hand he held a little scroll un- 2 rolled. His right foot he planted on the sea, and his left on the land. Then he 3 gave a great shout, like the roar of a lion; and when he shouted, the seven thunders spoke. I was about to write 4 down what the seven thunders had said; but I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Seal up what the seven thunders have 5 said; do not write it down.' Then the

woes correspond to the last three trumpet blasts. 9.1: Since stars were identified as angels (1.20), a star that had fallen may refer to Satan as a fallen angel; see v. 11; Isa.14.12-16; Lk.10.18. 2-5: Locusts: compare Exod.10.12-15; Joel 1.4; 2.10. 4: The seal . . . on their foreheads: see 7.3 n. 7: Like horses: see Joel 2.4. 8: Teeth like lions': Joel 1.6. 9: Chariots: Joel 2.5. 11: Abaddon (or, Destruction) in the OT is equivalent to Sheol or Hades; see Job 26.6; 28.22; Prov.15.11. 13: Golden altar: see Exod.30.1-3. 14: The four angels (not those in 7.2) are here at the Euphrates, whence Rome feared a Parthian invasion; compare "the kings from the east" in 16.12. 20: Compare the view of idolatry here with Ps.115.4-7; 135.15-17; Dan.5.23. As frequently in the Bible, idolatry leads (v. 21) to further sin.

10.1-11.14: The little scroll and the two witnesses. This section falls between the sixth and seventh trumpets. 4: Seal up . . . do not write: see Dan.12.4,9. 5-6: The angel . . . swore: Dan.12.7.

- angel that I saw standing on the sea and the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them: 'There shall be no more delay; but when the time comes for the seventh angel to sound his trumpet, the hidden purpose of God will have been fulfilled, as he promised to his servants the prophets.'
- Then the voice which I heard from heaven was speaking to me again, and it said, 'Go and take the open scroll in the hand of the angel that stands on the sea and the land.' So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, 'Take it, and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, although in your mouth it will taste sweet as honey.' So I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it did taste sweet as honey; but when I swallowed it my stomach turned sour.
- Then they said to me, 'Once again you must utter prophecies over peoples and nations and languages and many kings.'
- I was given a long cane, a kind of measuring-rod, and told: 'Now go and measure the temple of God, the altar, and the number of the worshippers. But have nothing to do with the outer court of the temple; do not measure that; for it has been given over to the Gentiles, and they will trample the Holy City underfoot for forty-two months. And I have two witnesses, whom I will appoint to prophesy, dressed in sackcloth, all through those twelve hundred and sixty days.' These

are the two olive-trees and the two lamps that stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. If anyone seeks to do them harm, fire pours from their mouths and consumes their enemies; and thus shall the man die who seeks to do them harm. These two have the power to shut up the sky, so that no rain may fall during the time of their prophesying; and they have the power to turn water to blood and to strike the earth at will with every kind of plague. But when they have completed their testimony, the beast that comes up from the abyss will wage war upon them and will defeat and kill them. Their corpses will lie in the street of the great city, whose name in allegory is Sodom, or Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three days and a half men from every people and tribe, of every language and nation, gaze upon their corpses and refuse them burial. All men on earth gloat over them, make merry, and exchange presents; for these two prophets were a torment to the whole earth. But at the end of the three days and a half the breath of life from God came into them; and they stood up on their feet to the terror of all who saw it. Then a loud voice was heard speaking to them from heaven, which said, 'Come up here!' And they went up to heaven in a cloud, in full view of their enemies. At that same moment there was a violent earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake; the rest in terror did homage to the God of heaven.

The second woe has now passed. But the third is soon to come.

8-10: On the eating of the scroll compare Ezek.2.8-3.3. 11: The writer's sweet-sour (vv. 8-10; sweet for the faithful, sour for the faithless) *prophecies* (see Jer.1.10) unfolds in chs. 12-22. 11.1-14: The scene seems to reflect material from the time of the Jewish War (66-70 A.D.) prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D. 1: *Measure the temple*: see Ezek.40.3-42.20; Zech.2.1-5. 2: *Forty-two months* is equivalent to 1,260 days, or three and a half years, or "a time and times and half a time"; see Dan.7.25 n.; 9.27 n.; 12.7. Dan. divides seven years in half, with three and a half years of acute persecution prior to 168 B.C. (when Antiochus IV set up an image of Zeus in the Temple), and three and a half years of deliverance after. These events came to be regarded as foreshadowing the time of the Antichrist. 3-6: *Two witnesses*: probably Elijah (see 1 Kgs.17.1; Mal.4.5-6) and Moses (see Exod.7.17-21; Deut. 18.15-18); compare Mk.9.11-13. It was a Jewish expectation that Elijah and Moses would return before the end of the age. In v. 4 Elijah and Moses are the *olive trees and lamps* (though in Zech. ch. 4 these symbols represent Zerubbabel and Joshua). 7: *The beast . . . from the abyss*: see 17.7-8 n. 8: *The great city . . . Sodom, or Egypt*, is here Jerusalem; see Isa.1.9-10; Ezek.23.27. 11: *The breath of life . . . came upon them*: see Ezek.37.5,10. 12: See 2 Kgs.2.11. 14: *Second woe*: see 8.13 for the prediction of three woes, associated with the last trumpet blasts.

- 15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet; and voices were heard in heaven shouting:
- ‘The sovereignty of the world has passed to our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!’
- 16 And the twenty-four elders, seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying:
- ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God, sovereign over all, who art and who wast, because thou hast taken thy great power into thy hands and entered upon thy reign. The nations raged, but thy day of retribution has come. Now is the time for the dead to be judged; now is the time for recompense to thy servants the prophets, to thy dedicated people, and all who honour thy name, both great and small, the time to destroy those who destroy the earth.’
- 19 Then God’s temple in heaven was laid open, and within the temple was seen the ark of his covenant. There came flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a storm of hail.
- 12 NEXT APPEARED A GREAT PORTENT IN heaven, a woman robed with the sun, beneath her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant, and in the anguish of her labour she cried out to be delivered.
- 3 Then a second portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns; on his heads were seven diadems, and with his tail he swept
- down a third of the stars in the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when her child was born he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, who is destined to rule all nations with an iron rod. But her child was snatched up to God and his throne; and the woman herself fled into the wilds, where she had a place prepared for her by God, there to be sustained for twelve hundred and sixty days.
- Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left them in heaven. So the great dragon was thrown down, that serpent of old that led the whole world astray, whose name is Satan, or the Devil—thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him.
- Then I heard a voice in heaven proclaiming aloud: ‘This is the hour of victory for our God, the hour of his sovereignty and power, when his Christ comes to his rightful rule! For the accuser of our brothers is overthrown, who day and night accused them before our God. By the sacrifice of the Lamb they have conquered him, and by the testimony which they uttered; for they did not hold their lives too dear to lay them down. Rejoice then, you heavens and you that dwell in them! But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, knowing that his time is short!’
- When the dragon found that he had been thrown down to the earth, he went

*c* Or the word of God to which they bore witness.

11.15–19: The seventh trumpet brings the heavenly proclamation of God’s sovereignty, indirectly introducing the final woe of chs. 12–19. 15: *Our Lord and his Christ*: note v. 18, and compare Ps.2.1–2. 19: *Ark of his covenant*: see 1 Kgs.8.1–6.

12.1–17: The woman, child, and dragon. The struggle between Satan and God’s people is described in imagery possibly drawn from a widespread ancient myth. 1: Here, the woman represents Israel from whom Jesus sprang (v. 5). *Twelve stars*: the twelve tribes. 2: *The anguish of her labour*: see Isa.66.7; Mic.4.9–10. 3: *A great red dragon*: Satan (see v. 9; compare descriptions of the beast in 13.1). *Ten horns*: see Dan.7.7. 5: *A male child*: Jesus, destined to rule all nations (see 2.27; 19.15; Ps.2.9); reference is made only to his birth and ascension! 6: The woman, now probably seen as Jewish Christians, is to be safe during the three and a half years of Satan’s persecution (see v. 14; 11.2 n.; compare Mk.13.14–20). 7–17: The dragon’s defeat is portrayed (see Lk.10.18; Jn.12.31), though he still is active for a short time (vv. 12,14). 7: The archangel Michael is Israel’s champion (see Dan.10.13,21; 12.1). 9: *That serpent of old*: an allusion to Gen.3.1,14–15. 10: *The accuser*: Satan; see Job 1.6–12; Zech.3.1. 11: *Sacrifice of the lamb*: lit. blood; see 5.9 n. 12: *Rejoice then, you heavens*: compare Isa.44.23; 49.13.

14 in pursuit of the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two great eagle's wings, to fly to the place in the wilds where for three years and a half she was to be sustained, out of reach of the serpent.  
 15 From his mouth the serpent spewed a flood of water after the woman to sweep her away with its spate. But the earth came to her rescue and opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon spewed from his mouth.  
 17 At this the dragon grew furious with the woman, and went off to wage war on the rest of her offspring, that is, on those who keep God's commandments and maintain their testimony to Jesus.  
 13 He took his stand on the sea-shore.

Then<sup>f</sup> out of the sea I saw a beast rising. It had ten horns and seven heads. On its horns were ten diadems, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw was like a leopard, but its feet were like a bear's and its mouth like a lion's mouth. The dragon conferred upon it his power and rule, and great authority. One of its heads appeared to have received a death-blow; but the mortal wound was healed. The whole world went after the beast in wondering admiration. Men worshipped the dragon because he had conferred his authority upon the beast; they worshipped the beast also, and chanted, 'Who is like the Beast? Who can fight against it?'  
 5 The beast was allowed to mouth bombast and blasphemy, and was given the right to reign for forty-two months.  
 6 It opened its mouth in blasphemy against God, reviling his name and his heavenly dwelling.<sup>g</sup> It was also allowed

to wage war on God's people and to defeat them, and was granted<sup>h</sup> authority over every tribe and people, language and nation. All on earth will worship it, except those whose names the Lamb that was slain keeps in his roll of the living, written there since the world was made.

Hear, you who have ears to hear! 9 Whoever is to be made prisoner, a 10 prisoner he shall be. Whoever takes the sword to kill, by the sword he is bound to be killed. This is where the fortitude and faithfulness of God's people have their place.

Then I saw another beast, which 11 came up out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb's, but spoke like a dragon. It wielded all the authority of 12 the first beast in its presence, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship this first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. It worked great 13 miracles, even making fire come down from heaven to earth before men's eyes. By the miracles it was allowed to 14 perform in the presence of the beast it deluded the inhabitants of the earth, and made them erect an image in honour of the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived. It was allowed to give breath to the 15 image of the beast, so that it could speak, and could cause all who would not worship the image to be put to death. Moreover, it caused everyone, 16 great and small, rich and poor, slave and free, to be branded with a mark on

<sup>f</sup> Some witnesses read . . . testimony to Jesus. Then I stood by the sea-shore and . . .

<sup>g</sup> Some witnesses read reviling his name and his dwelling-place, that is, those that live in heaven.

<sup>h</sup> Some witness read It was granted . . . (omitting the words was also . . . them, and).

14: *Eagle's wings*: see Exod.19.4. 17: *The rest of her offspring* (probably Gentile Christians): Jewish Christians are "sealed" but others must bear "the great ordeal" (compare ch. 7).

13.1-18: **The two beasts.** Chs. 4-5 portrayed God and the Lamb; chs. 12-13 portray their evil counterparts, the dragon and the beast (Satan and Rome). 1: *The beast* is Rome. The empire is identified with the emperor Nero whose return was popularly expected; his persecution of Christians made him a dreaded figure (see ch. 17; compare Dan.7.1-6). *Ten horns*: (Parthian) kings who conspire with Nero; compare 17.12; Dan.7.7. *Seven heads*: seven hills of Rome or seven kings (see 17.9-10). *A blasphemous name*: the divine title claimed by the emperor. 2: On the animals, see Dan.7.4-6. *The dragon . . . conferred his power*: i.e. Satan works through the beast. 3: *Death-blow . . . wound was healed* (see vv. 12,14) points to Nero's rumored survival of suicide and return (see 17.8; compare with Jesus in 1.18; 5.6). 5: *Bombast*: boastful words (see Dan.7.8). *Forty-two months*: see 11.2 n. 7: Compare 5.9; Dan.7.21. 8: *Roll of the living*: see 3.5 n. 9-10: This may indicate that Christians are not to strike a blow in their own defense; compare Mt.26.52; Jer.15.2. 11-18: The second *beast* (called "the false prophet" in 19.20) may refer to the priesthood that supported emperor worship (see v. 12); compare Dan.3.1-7; 2 Th.2.9-10. 16: *Branded with a mark*: compare the marking of the faithful (see 7.3; 14.1).

17 his right hand or forehead, and no one was allowed to buy or sell unless he bore this beast's mark, either name or number. (Here is the key; and anyone who has intelligence may work out the number of the beast. The number represents a man's name, and the numerical value of its letters is six hundred and sixty-six.)

*Visions of the end*

14 THEN I LOOKED, AND ON MOUNT ZION stood the Lamb, and with him were a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. I heard a sound from heaven like the noise of rushing water and the deep roar of thunder; it was the sound of harpers playing on their harps. There before the throne, and the four living creatures and the elders, they were singing a new song. That song no one could learn except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who alone from the whole world had been ransomed. 4 These are men who did not defile themselves with women, for they have kept themselves chaste, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been ransomed as the firstfruits of humanity for God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their lips; they are faultless. 6 Then I saw an angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those on earth, to every nation and tribe, language and people. He cried in a loud voice, 'Fear God and pay him homage; for the hour of his judgement has come! Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the water-springs!'

8 Then another angel, a second, followed, and he cried, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all nations drink the fierce wine of her fornication!'

9 Yet a third angel followed, crying out loud, 'Whoever worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on his forehead or hand, he shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured undiluted into the cup of his vengeance. He shall be tormented in sulphurous flames before the holy angels and before the Lamb. The smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever, and there will be no respite day or night for those who worship the beast and its image or receive the mark of its name.' This is where the fortitude of God's people has its place—in keeping God's commands and remaining loyal to Jesus.

13 Moreover, I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write this: "Happy are the dead who die in the faith of Christ! Henceforth",<sup>j</sup> says the Spirit,<sup>k</sup> "they may rest from their labours; for they take with them the record of their deeds."'

14 Then as I looked there appeared a white cloud, and on the cloud sat one like a son of man. He had on his head a crown of gold and in his hand a sharp sickle. Another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud: 'Stretch out your sickle and reap; for harvest-time has come, and earth's crop is over-ripe.' So he who sat on the cloud put his sickle to the earth and its harvest was reaped.

17 Then another angel came out of the heavenly temple, and he also had a

<sup>i</sup> Or drink the wine of God's wrath upon . . .

<sup>j</sup> Or Assuredly.

<sup>k</sup> Some witnesses read "... the dead who henceforth die in the faith of Christ!" "Yes," says the Spirit . . .

18: In Heb., the letters of the name "Nero Caesar" have numerical values which total six hundred and sixty-six.

14.1-20: Three visions of reassurance, admonition, and the harvest. 1-5: The ransomed. 1: Mount Zion: the heavenly Jerusalem; see Heb.12.22. A hundred and forty-four thousand: here, not Israel (as in 7.4-8), but those who alone from the whole world had been ransomed (v. 3). 3: A new song: see 5.8-10. 4: Chaste: lit. virgins. It may mean celibacy, either literally or symbolically (see 2.20-22; compare 2 Cor.11.2; Mt.19.12); it could refer to abstinence from such pollutions as are prohibited in Deut.27.20-30. Firstfruits: see Exod.23.19; Jas.1.18. They are here the first part of the ransomed, with the whole to come later. 6-13: Judgment and warning. 8: Babylon the great (see Isa.21.9): here, Rome is meant (see ch.18). 10: Wine of God's wrath: see Jer.25.15-16. Sulphurous flames: see 19.20; 20.10. Smoke of their torment: compare Isa.34.10. 14-20: The harvest: a familiar symbol of judgment (see Joel 3.13; Mt.13.30). 14: One like a son of man: see 1.13-15 n. 17-20: Grape-harvest: see 19.15; Isa.63.1-6.

18 sharp sickle. Then from the altar came yet another, the angel who has authority over fire, and he shouted to the one with the sharp sickle: 'Stretch out your sickle, and gather in earth's grape-harvest, for its clusters are ripe.' So the angel put his sickle to the earth and gathered in its grapes, and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. The winepress was trodden outside the city, and for two hundred miles around blood flowed from the press to the height of the horses' bridles.

15 Then I saw another great and astonishing portent in heaven: seven angels with seven plagues, the last plagues of all, for with them the wrath of God is consummated.

2 I saw what seemed a sea of glass shot with fire, and beside the sea of glass, holding the harps which God had given them, were those who had won the victory over the beast and its image and the number of its name.

3 They were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, as they chanted:

4 'Great and marvellous are thy deeds, O Lord God, sovereign over all; just and true are thy ways, thou king of the ages.<sup>1</sup> Who shall not revere thee, Lord, and do homage to thy name? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship in thy presence, for thy just dealings stand revealed.'

5 After this, as I looked, the sanctuary of the heavenly Tent of Testimony was thrown open, and out of it came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were robed in fine linen, clean and shining, and had golden girdles round their breasts. Then one of the four

living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever; and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and his power, so that no one could enter it until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Then from the sanctuary I heard a loud voice, and it said to the seven angels, 'Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.'

So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth; and foul malignant sores appeared on those men that wore the mark of the beast and worshipped its image.

The second angel poured his bowl on the sea, and it turned to blood like the blood from a corpse; and every living thing in the sea died.

The third angel poured his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they turned to blood.

Then I heard the angel of the waters say, 'Just art thou in these thy judgements, thou Holy One who art and wast; for they shed the blood of thy people and of thy prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. They have their deserts!' And I heard the altar cry, 'Yes, Lord God, sovereign over all, true and just are thy judgements!'

The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun; and it was allowed to burn men with its flames. They were fearfully burned; but they only cursed the name of God who had the power to inflict such plagues, and they refused to repent or do him homage.

The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast; and its kingdom was plunged in darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony, but they only

<sup>1</sup> Some witnesses read king of the nations.

15.1-8: Introduction to the seven plagues of the seven bowls. 2: *The sea of glass*: see 4.6 n. *Those who* (like Jesus) *had won the victory*: the martyred faithful (compare Jn.16.31-33). 3: *Song of Moses . . . song of the Lamb* combines the first deliverer, Moses (see Exod.15.1-18; Ps.145.17), with the second, Jesus (the new exodus, a central NT theme): Moses' victory over Pharaoh foreshadows victory over the beast; compare Ps.145.17. 4: Compare Ps.86.9-10; Jer.10.7. 5: *Tent of Testimony*: forerunner of the Temple (see Exod.40.34). 8: *Filled with smoke*: see Isa.6.4.

16.1-21: *The seven bowls of God's wrath* (similar to the ten plagues of Exod. chs. 7-11). 1: *From the sanctuary . . . loud voice . . . pour*: compare Isa.66.6; Ps.69.24. 2: *Sores*: see Exod. 9.10-11; Deut.28.27. 3-4: *Sea . . . springs . . . turned to blood*: see Exod.7.17-21. 5: *Just art thou*: see Ps.119.137. 7: *I heard the altar cry*: see 6.9-10. 8-12: While the plagues here are not fully parallel to those in Exod., on the fifth (v. 10, *darkness*), compare Exod.10.21-23. 10: *The throne*

- cursed the God of heaven for their sores and pains, and would not repent of what they had done.
- 12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.
- 13 Then I saw coming from the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet, 14 three foul spirits like frogs. These spirits were devils, with power to work miracles. They were sent out to muster all the kings of the world for the great day of battle of God the sovereign 15 Lord. ('That is the day when I come like a thief! Happy the man who stays awake and keeps on his clothes, so that he will not have to go naked and 16 ashamed for all to see!') So they assembled the kings at the place called in Hebrew Armageddon.
- 17 Then the seventh angel poured his bowl on the air; and out of the sanctuary came a loud voice from the 18 throne, which said, 'It is over!' And there followed flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, like none before it in human 19 history, so violent it was. The great city was split in three; the cities of the world fell in ruin; and God did not forget Babylon the great, but made her drink the cup which was filled with the 20 fierce wine of his vengeance. Every island vanished; there was not a 21 mountain to be seen. Huge hailstones, weighing perhaps a hundredweight, fell on men from the sky; and they cursed God for the plague of hail, because that plague was so severe.
- THEN ONE OF THE SEVEN ANGELS THAT 17 held the seven bowls came and spoke to me and said, 'Come, and I will show you the judgement on the great whore, enthroned above the ocean. The kings 2 of the earth have committed fornication with her, and on the wine of her fornication men all over the world have made themselves drunk.' In the 3 Spirit he carried me away into the wilds, and there I saw a woman mounted on a scarlet beast which was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The 4 woman was clothed in purple and scarlet and bedizened with gold and jewels and pearls. In her hand she held a gold cup, full of obscenities and the foulness of her fornication; and written on her forehead was a name 5 with a secret meaning: 'Babylon the great, the mother of whores and of every obscenity on earth.' The woman, 6 I saw, was drunk with the blood of God's people and with the blood of those who had borne their testimony to Jesus.
- As I looked at her I was greatly astonished. But the angel said to me, 7 'Why are you so astonished? I will tell you the secret of the woman and of the beast she rides, with the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast you have 8 seen is he who once was alive, and is alive no longer, but has yet to ascend out of the abyss before going to perdition. Those on earth whose names have not been inscribed in the roll of the living ever since the world was made will all be astonished to see the 9 beast; for he once was alive, and is

*of the beast*: Rome. 12: *Dried up*: compare Exod.14.21; Isa.11.15-16. Perhaps the drying up of the *Euphrates* alludes to opening the way for the expected return of Nero with the *kings from the east*. See 13.1,3 nn.; 17.15-18. 13: *Dragon . . . beast . . . false prophet*: a trinity of evil over against God, the Lamb and the Spirit (the inspirer of true prophets). 14: *All the kings of the world* (not the kings from the east; compare 17.15-18; 19.19-21): see Ps.2; Joel 3.2; Zech.14.1-3. 15: *Like a thief*: 1 Th.5.1-2 n. 16: *Armageddon* ("Hill of Megiddo," a strategic military post in antiquity; see Judg.5.19; 2 Kgs.23.29-30; 2 Chr.35.22); in apocalyptic literature, the scene of the final battle between good and evil (compare 19.17-21). 17-21: The seventh bowl pours out judgments similar to the seven trumpets (chs. 8-11). 19: *Babylon*: Rome. *Fierce wine*: 14.10 n. 21: *Hail*: Exod.9.23.

17.1-18: **The future fall of Babylon/Rome. 1**: The description of a great, sinful city as a *whore* goes back to the prophets (compare Isa.23.16; Ezek.16.15; Nah.3.4); here, the city is Rome, destroyed by the beast (Nero) in v. 16; contrast the bride (New Jerusalem) in 19.7; 21.2,9. *Enthroned above the ocean* echoes Jer.51.13. 2: *Fornication*: here, emperor worship, not just idolatry in general. 3: *A woman . . . on a scarlet beast*: the city, Rome, and its imperial power. *Blasphemous names*: see 13.1 n. *Seven heads . . . ten horns*: defined in vv. 9-12. 4: *A gold cup*: see Jer.51.7. 6: *Drunk with the blood* may once have referred to the Jewish War (see 11.1-14 n.); here it is applied to later persecution. 7-18: *The beast* destroys the *whore*. 7-8: This perhaps

- alive no longer, and has still to appear.
- 9 'But here is the clue for those who can interpret it. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.
- 10 They represent also seven kings,<sup>m</sup> of whom five have already fallen, one is now reigning, and the other has yet to come; and when he does come he is
- 11 only to last for a little while. As for the beast that once was alive and is alive no longer, he is an eighth—and yet he is one of the seven, and he is going to
- 12 perdition. The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet begun to reign, but who for one hour are to share with the beast the exercise of royal
- 13 authority; for they have but a single purpose among them and will confer their power and authority upon the
- 14 beast. They will wage war upon the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and his victory will be shared by his followers, called and chosen and faithful.<sup>n</sup>
- 15 Then he said to me, 'The ocean you saw, where the great whore sat, is an ocean of peoples and populations,
- 16 nations and languages. As for the ten horns you saw, they together with the beast will come to hate the whore; they will strip her naked and leave her desolate, they will batten on her flesh
- 17 and burn her to ashes. For God has put it into their heads to carry out his purpose, by making common cause and conferring their sovereignty upon the beast until all that God has spoken is
- 18 fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that holds sway over the kings of the earth.'
- 18 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven; he came with great authority and the earth was lit up with
- 2 his splendour. Then in a mighty voice

he proclaimed, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, for every vile and loathsome bird. For all nations have drunk <sup>3</sup> deep of<sup>o</sup> the fierce wine of her fornication; the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and merchants the world over have grown rich on her bloated wealth.'

Then I heard another voice from <sup>4</sup> heaven that said: 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins and share in her plagues. For her sins are <sup>5</sup> piled high as heaven, and God has not forgotten her crimes. Pay her back in <sup>6</sup> her own coin, repay her twice over for her deeds! Double for her the strength of the potion she mixed! Mete out <sup>7</sup> grief and torment to match her voluptuous pomp! She says in her heart, "I am a queen on my throne! No mourning for me, no widow's weeds!" Because <sup>8</sup> of this her plagues shall strike her in a single day—pestilence, bereavement, famine, and burning—for mighty is the Lord God who has pronounced her doom!'

The kings of the earth who com- <sup>9</sup> mitted fornication with her and wallowed in her luxury will weep and wail over her, as they see the smoke of her conflagration. They will stand at a <sup>10</sup> distance, for horror at her torment, and will say, 'Alas, alas for the great city, the mighty city of Babylon! In a single hour your doom has struck!'

The merchants of the earth also will <sup>11</sup> weep and mourn for her, because no one any longer buys their cargoes, cargoes of gold and silver, jewels and <sup>12</sup> pearls, cloths of purple and scarlet,

<sup>m</sup> Or emperors.

<sup>n</sup> Or ... kings, and his followers are faithful men, called and selected for service.

<sup>o</sup> Other witnesses read have been ruined by ...

identifies Domitian as the "returned Nero"; see 13.1,3 nn. 9: Rome was built on *seven hills*. 10: *Seven kings*: This is difficult to decipher; probably Domitian (81–96 A.D.) is seen as the *one ... now reigning*. 11: *An eighth—and yet he is one of the seven*: Nero. 12: *The ten kings* are Nero's companions from the east; see 16.12 n. 14: *Will wage war on the Lamb*: i.e. in the future (see 19.19–21), but before that they will destroy Rome (vv. 16–18). *Lord of lords*: Deut.10.17; Dan.2.47. 16: *Batten*: feed gluttonously. *Burn her to ashes*: see 18.16; Nero was suspected of starting the destructive fire in Rome in 64 A.D.

18.1–24: *The fall of and lament over Babylon* (compare the dirge over Tyre in Ezek. chs. 26–27). Elements of several OT prophecies against Babylon are woven into a condemnation of Rome. 2: *Fallen, fallen*: see Isa.13.19–22; 21.9. 4: *Come out of her*: compare Jer.50.8; 51.45. 7–8: Compare the boast with Isa.47.7–9. 9–10: See Ezek.26.16–18. 11: Ezek.27.31. 12–16: Ezek.27.15–16. Rome's power as a world trade center is vividly depicted in the list of rich goods.



silks and fine linens; all kinds of scented woods, ivories, and every sort of thing made of costly woods, bronze, iron, or marble; cinnamon and spice, incense, perfumes and frankincense; wine, oil, flour and wheat, sheep and cattle, horses, chariots, slaves, and the lives of men. 'The fruit you longed for', they will say, 'is gone from you; all the glitter and the glamour are lost, never to be yours again!' The traders in all these wares, who gained their wealth from her, will stand at a distance for horror at her torment, weeping and mourning and saying, 'Alas, alas for the great city, that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, bedizened with gold and jewels and pearls! Alas that in one hour so much wealth should be laid waste!'

Then all the sea-captains and voyagers, the sailors and those who traded by sea, stood at a distance and cried out as they saw the smoke of her conflagration: 'Was there ever a city like the great city?' They threw dust on their heads, weeping and mourning and saying, 'Alas, alas for the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich on her wealth! Alas that in a single hour she should be laid waste!'

But let heaven exult over her; exult, apostles and prophets and people of God; for in the judgement against her he has vindicated your cause!

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea and said, 'Thus shall Babylon, the great city, be sent hurtling down, never to be seen again! No more shall the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute-players and trumpeters, be heard in you; no more shall craftsmen of any trade be found in you; no more shall the sound of the mill be heard in you; no more shall the light of the lamp be seen in you; no more shall the voice of the bride and bridegroom be heard in you! Your traders were once the merchant princes of the world, and

with your sorcery you deceived all the nations.'

For the blood of the prophets and of God's people was found in her, the blood of all who had been done to death on earth.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a vast throng in heaven; and they were shouting:

'Alleluia! Victory and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgements! He has condemned the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged upon her the blood of his servants.'

Then once more they shouted:

'Alleluia! The smoke goes up from her for ever and ever!'

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God as he sat on the throne, and they too cried:

'Amen! Alleluia!'

Then a voice came from the throne which said: 'Praise our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, both great and small!'

Again I heard what sounded like a vast crowd, like the noise of rushing water and deep roars of thunder, and they cried:

'Alleluia! The Lord our God, sovereign over all, has entered on his reign! Exult and shout for joy and do him homage, for the wedding-day of the Lamb has come! His bride has made herself ready, and for her dress she has been given fine linen, clean and shining.'

(Now the fine linen signifies the righteous deeds of God's people.)

17-20: Contrast vv. 17-19 with v. 20. 18: *Was there ever a city*: see Ezek.27.32. 19: *Dust on their heads*: see Ezek.27.30. 21: *A great millstone*: compare Jer.51.63-64. 22-24: See Jer.25.10.

19.1-5: *Rejoicing over Rome's destruction*. 2: *Alleluia*: the Gk. transliteration of Heb. *hallelujah*, "Praise God," found only in this ch. in the NT.

19.6-10: *The marriage of the Lamb*. 7-8: The OT sometimes sees Israel as God's *bride* (e.g. Jer.2.2); here the *bride* of the Lamb is the church (compare 2 Cor.11.2; Eph.5.25-33).

9 Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: "Happy are those who are invited to the wedding-supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the very words of God.' At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'No, not that! I am but a fellow-servant with you and your brothers who bear their testimony to Jesus. It is God you must worship. Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets.'<sup>p</sup>

11 THEN I SAW HEAVEN WIDE OPEN, AND there before me was a white horse; and its rider's name was Faithful and True, for he is just in judgement and just in war. His eyes flamed like fire, and on his head were many diadems. Written upon him was a name known to none but himself, and he was robed in a garment drenched in blood.<sup>q</sup> He was called the Word of God, and the armies of heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and shining. From his mouth there went a sharp sword with which to smite the nations; for he it is who shall rule them with an iron rod, and tread the winepress of the wrath and retribution of God the sovereign Lord. And on his robe and on his thigh there was written the name: 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried aloud to all the birds flying in mid-heaven: 'Come and gather for God's great supper, to eat the flesh of kings and commanders and fighting men, the flesh of horses and their riders, the flesh of all men, slave and free, great and small!' Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies mustered to do battle with the Rider and his army. The beast was taken prisoner, and so was the false

prophet who had worked miracles in its presence and deluded those that had received the mark of the beast and worshipped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire with its sulphurous flames. The rest <sup>21</sup> were killed by the sword which went out of the Rider's mouth; and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Then I saw an angel coming down <sup>20</sup> from heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hands. He <sup>2</sup> seized the dragon, that serpent of old, the Devil or Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years; he threw him <sup>3</sup> into the abyss, shutting and sealing it over him, so that he might seduce the nations no more till the thousand years were over. After that he must be let loose for a short while.

Then I saw thrones, and upon them <sup>4</sup> sat those to whom judgement was committed. I could see the souls of those who had been beheaded for the sake of God's word and their testimony to Jesus, those who had not worshipped the beast and its image or received its mark on forehead or hand. These came to life again and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, though the rest <sup>5</sup> of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over. This is the first resurrection. Happy indeed, and <sup>6</sup> one of God's own people, is the man who shares in this first resurrection! Upon such the second death has no claim; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him for the thousand years.

When the thousand years are over, <sup>7</sup> Satan will be let loose from his dungeon; and he will come out to seduce <sup>8</sup> the nations in the four quarters of the

<sup>p</sup> Or . . . worship. For testimony to Jesus is the spirit that inspires prophets.

<sup>q</sup> Some witnesses read spattered with blood.

10: *God you must worship*: there is to be no worship of angelic beings; see 22.8-9; Col.2.18. 19.11-21: *Christ's victory over the beast*. 11: *A white horse*: see 6.2. 12: *Eyes . . . like fire*: see 2.18. 13: *A garment drenched in blood*: see Isa.63.1-6. *The Word of God*: see 1.2 n. 15: *A sharp sword*: see 1.16 n.; 2.12. *An iron rod*: Ps.2.9. *Winepress*: see 14.10 n., 17-20. 16: *Lord of lords*: Deut.10.17; Dan.2.47. 17-21: Compare Ezek.39.17-20. 19: The final battle anticipated in 16.14-16. 20: *The lake of fire*: see 14.10; 20.10.

20.1-15: *The events of the last Judgment*. 2-4: With *Satan* bound (v. 2), the martyred dead (others later; see v. 5) are to rise and reign with Christ (following a Jewish messianic expectation). 2: *Thousand years*: the millennium (from Latin *mille*, thousand, and *annus*, year). 4: *Thrones . . . judgement*: see Dan.7.9,22,27; Mt.19.28; Lk.22.30. 6: *The second death*: defined in v. 14; see 2.11. 7: The short release of Satan (see v. 3) may follow the Babylonian legend of Tiamat, the sea monster of chaos who is to be released at the end of history to be defeated again by Marduk, the god of light. 8: *The hosts of Gog and Magog* (see Ezek. chs. 38-39) are identified

earth and to muster them for battle, yes, the hosts of Gog and Magog, countless as the sands of the sea. So they marched over the breadth of the land and laid siege to the camp of God's people and the city that he loves. But fire came down on them from heaven and consumed them; and the Devil, their seducer, was flung into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been flung, there to be tormented day and night for ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne, and the One who sat upon it; from his presence earth and heaven vanished away, and no place was left for them.

12 I could see the dead, great and small, standing before the throne; and books were opened. Then another book was opened, the roll of the living. From what was written in these books the dead were judged upon the record of their deeds. The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up the dead in their keeping; they were judged each man on the record of his deeds. Then Death and Hades were flung into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death; and into it were flung any whose names were not to be found in the roll of the living.

21 THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had vanished, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne: 'Now at last God has his dwelling among men! He will dwell

among them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.<sup>r</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain; for the old order has passed away!'

Then he who sat on the throne said, 'Behold! I am making all things new!' (And he said to me, 'Write this down; for these words are trustworthy and true. Indeed they are already fulfilled.') 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. A draught from the water-springs of life will be my free gift to the thirsty. All this is the victor's heritage; and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, and the vile, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars of every kind, their lot will be the second death, in the lake that burns with sulphurous flames.'

Then one of the seven angels that held the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke to me and said, 'Come, and I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' So in the Spirit he carried me away to a great high mountain, and showed me the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God; it had the radiance of some priceless jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great high wall, with twelve gates, at which were twelve angels; and on the gates were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates to the east, three to the north, three to the south, and three to the west. The city wall had

<sup>r</sup> Some witnesses read God-with-them shall himself be their God (see Isaiah 7. 14: 8. 8).

with the nations who gather for the final battle against God's people; this also provides an opportunity to depict a final siege of the city, i.e. Jerusalem (v. 9); see Zech. ch. 14. 9: *Fire came down*: compare 2 Kgs. 1.10-12. 10: The *Devil, beast, and false prophet* are defeated forever. 11-15: Here is the last judgment by the books (see 3.5 n.; compare Dan. 7.9-10; Mt. 16.27; 25.31-46; Rom. 2.6) in connection with the "second resurrection" (see v. 5); and *Death and Hades* (Death's domain; see 1.18) are vanquished (see 21.4).

21.1-21: The new heaven and earth and the new Jerusalem. 1: The future holds promise of a transformation so complete that there will be a new heaven and . . . earth; see Isa. 65.17; 66.22; Rom. 8.19-21. *No longer any sea*: perhaps, as in Babylonian legend, the sea is regarded as hostile. 2: The new Jerusalem is not in heaven but comes down from it (see v. 10; 3.12). *Bride*: see 19.7-8 n. 3: *God has his dwelling among men*: compare Ezek. 37.27. 4: *Wipe away every tear*: see 7.17; Isa. 25.8; 35.10. 5: Only here and in 1.8 does God himself speak. *All things new*: Isa. 43.19. 6: *Alpha and Omega*: see 1.8 n. *To the thirsty . . . water*: see 7.17 n.; 22.1; Isa. 55.1. 7: *His God . . . my son*: Pss. 2.7; 89.27-28. 10: *Showed me the holy city*: compare Ezek. 40.2. 12-14: The juxtaposition of *twelve tribes* (v. 12) and *twelve apostles* (v. 14) points to old and

twelve foundation-stones, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

- 15 The angel who spoke with me carried a gold measuring-rod, to measure the  
16 the city, its wall, and its gates. The city was built as a square, and was as wide as it was long. It measured by his rod twelve thousand furlongs, its length and  
17 breadth and height being equal. Its wall was one hundred and forty-four cubits high, that is, by human measurements,  
18 which the angel was using. The wall was built of jasper. while the city itself was of pure gold, bright as clear glass.  
19 The foundations of the city wall were adorned with jewels of every kind, the first of the foundation-stones being jasper, the second lapis lazuli, the third chalcadony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth cornelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh turquoise, and the twelfth  
21 amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate being made from a single pearl. The streets of the city were of pure gold, like translucent glass.  
22 I saw no temple in the city; for its temple was the sovereign Lord God and the Lamb. And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine upon it; for the glory of God gave it light, and  
24 its lamp was the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk, and the kings of the earth shall bring into it all their splendour. The gates of the city shall never be shut by day—and there will  
26 be no night. The wealth and splendour of the nations shall be brought into it; but nothing unclean shall enter, nor  
27 anyone whose ways are false or foul,

but only those who are inscribed in the Lamb's roll of the living.

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's street. On either side of the river stood a tree of life, which yields twelve crops of fruit, one for each month of the year; the leaves of the trees serve for the healing of the nations. Every accursed thing shall disappear. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see him face to face, and bear his name on their foreheads. There shall be no more night, nor will they need the light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will give them light; and they shall reign for evermore.

THEN HE SAID TO ME, 'THESE WORDS ARE trustworthy and true. The Lord God who inspires the prophets has sent his angel to show his servants what must shortly happen. And, remember, I am coming soon!'

Happy is the man who heeds the words of prophecy contained in this book! It is I, John, who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell in worship at the feet of the angel who had shown them to me. But he said to me, 'No, not that! I am but a fellow-servant with you and your brothers the prophets and those who heed the words of this book. It is God you must worship.' Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, for the hour of fulfilment is near. Meanwhile, let the evil-doer go on doing evil and the filthy-

new covenant peoples; see 4.4 n. 15: *A gold measuring rod*: see Ezek.40.5. 16: The dimensions correspond to the Temple's Holy of Holies, but there is no longer to be a temple (see 21.22) and all (as priests; see 1.6 n.; Isa.61.6), not only the high priest, have access to God. 18-20: Exod.28.15-21; Isa.54.11-12.

21.22-22.5: *A city of light and life*. 23: *No need of sun*: see Isa.60.19. 24: Isa.60.3,5. 25: Isa.60.11. 26: Isa.60.3-9. 27: *Nothing unclean*: see Isa.52.1. 22.1: *The river of the water of life*: compare Ezek.47.1-12, where it flows from the Temple; here it flows from the throne (see Zech.14.7-8). 2: *A tree of life*: see 2.7 n.; Ezek.47.7. *Healing of the nations*: compare Ezek.47.12, Sept.; also Isa.49.6. 3: *Every accursed thing shall disappear*: in Gen.3.17-18 it is man who is accursed; now he is redeemed in a new paradise with access to the tree of life. 4: *They shall see him face to face*: Ps.17.15; 1 Cor.13.12. *Bear his name* . . . : see 3.12 n.; in Exod.28.36-38 the high priest has "Holy to the Lord" on his forehead, but now all are priests and bear his name.

22.6-21: *Final admonitions and promises*. 6: *Sent his angel*: see 1.1; 22.16. 7: *I am coming soon*: see 16.15. 8: *I, John*: see Introduction; 1.1,4,9. 9: *No, not that*: see 19.10 n. 10: *Do not seal up* . . . *the hour* . . . *is near*: the command to conceal in Dan.8.26; 12.4,9 is reversed because of the anticipation of the imminent end. 11: There is no time for change; compare Dan.12.10.

12 minded wallow in his filth, but let the good man persevere in his goodness and the dedicated man be true to his dedication.'

12 'Yes, I am coming soon, and bringing my recompense with me, to requite everyone according to his deeds! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'

14 Happy are those who wash their robes clean! They will have the right to the tree of life and will enter by the gates of the city. Outside are dogs, sorcerers and fornicators, murderers and idolaters, and all who love and practise deceit.

16 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the scion and offspring of David, the bright star of dawn.'

17 'Come!' say the Spirit and the bride.

'Come!' let each hearer reply.

Come forward, you who are thirsty; accept the water of life, a free gift to all who desire it.

For my part, I give this warning to 18 everyone who is listening to the words of prophecy in this book: should anyone add to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book; should anyone take away from the 19 words in this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and the Holy City, described in this book.

He who gives this testimony speaks: 20 'Yes, I am coming soon!'

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with 21 you all.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>s</sup> Some witnesses read with all; others read with all God's people; others read with God's people; some add Amen.

12: *Requite everyone*: see 20.11–15 n.; compare Isa.40.10; Jer.17.10. 14: *Who wash their robes*: see 7.14. 15: *Outside*: compare Mt.8.12. *Dogs*: impure persons; compare Phil.3.2. *Sorcerers*: lit. poisoners; see 21.8. 16: *I, Jesus*: see 1.1–2. *Scion and offspring of David*: see 5.5 n. *Morning star*: see 2.28; compare Num.24.17. 17: *The bride*: see 19.7–8 n. 18–19: *Should anyone add . . . should anyone take away*: compare Deut.4.2; 12.32. 20: *Come, Lord Jesus*: compare 1 Cor.16.22 n.



# SPECIAL ARTICLES





## READING THE BIBLE

The passing of centuries has both hallowed the words of the Bible and created gaps of time and space between Scripture and the modern reader. Only as these gaps narrow, and hopefully close, can the fullness of the meaning and feeling of this repository of exalted literature permeate his being. Surely the heart of man has not changed from ancient times; man's ability to think, despite countless historic shifts in the modes and manner of thought, remains constant. But can today's reader overcome hundreds, indeed thousands of years, and the distance of thousands of miles, and make the words, the sentences, the books of so long ago his very own? Not without tools.

He needs tools of different kinds, some perhaps ready at hand and as tangible as a carpenter's ruler, others available only in whatever native gifts a person chances to possess, perhaps the chief of which is imagination—a fertile mind figuratively to cross over space and time.

The Bible emerged from the hearts and minds of living human beings. An Isaiah spoke to *people* gathered at the Temple; a Jesus preached to *people* assembled on a mount; the Psalmist was a *man* who burst into rapture as he saw the beauties of nature; and in Proverbs a concerned *father* wished to convey to his *son* the ripeness of the wisdom distilled from human experience. A harassed Jeremiah wrote a letter of sound counsel to his fellow Jews spiritually adrift in alien Babylon, and a Paul ended an epistle to a church divided by factions with personal regards to specific friends and acquaintances. Imagination is the ability to recognize that the recorded words come from flesh and blood people and to transport one's self to that time and place when the ancient words were first spoken or written. Imagination, in this sense, is a gift purely within the reader, and much as he can benefit from help that may come from outside him, only his own creative mind will cultivate and foster his readings.

It is important to apply imagination to all literature and especially so to Scripture. Unlike some other worthy writings of the ancient past, Scripture remains constant in our learning and in our everyday way of living and speaking. Even more profoundly, Scripture touches on, or deals penetratingly with, man's experiences. There are first his natural, personal experiences—when he is born, as he grows in strength, when he passes his prime, and when he becomes aware that his span of life is limited. Then Scripture is concerned with the community, the corporate body, called the Israel of God (Gal.6.16). That Scripture deals so centrally with God's people—individually and collectively—gives the Bible its eminence over all other literatures.

It is natural for Scripture to be spoken of as “inspired,” a word often used in two related but different senses. In the first sense, inspiration signifies some super-human, even divine, quality. Many religious communities regard Scripture as inspired in this specific sense. From this standpoint, however, much as these sacred writings may be regarded as the product of men, it was God acting behind

these men, or through them, that gives Scripture its special quality and special authority.

A second sense of “inspired” is somewhat different. If a painting is flat, dull, unable to reach out to us or move us, we would not call it “inspired.” We use the word, rather, in awe of genius. That a Beethoven could have written a Ninth Symphony, or that a da Vinci could have painted a Last Supper, or that man could have conquered space, is awesome. So we restrict the word “inspired” in this sense to just such extraordinary creations and feats because we marvel at such rare and unexpected peaks of attainment. It is no exaggeration to say that much, indeed very much, of Scripture represents an artistry and power in its architectonic quality that richly merits the accolade “inspired.” Yet only as we cultivate our imagination can we attune to the aesthetic beauty of Scripture.

Just as the carpenter’s ruler is a most useful tool in building, so also is some basic knowledge useful in reading Scripture. To begin with, a reader must know that Scripture is not simply one book, but that it is an assembly of books, indeed, an assembly of assemblies, a veritable library. The Bible can be read without this information, but how easily it can also be misread! The books of Scripture were written over a span of at least a thousand years. They not only reflect the very moments of the times when they were written; they also speak to men in all ages. We can, therefore, share in the misery and despair which moved the author of Lamentations to record his sense of calamity at the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 587 B.C., but his poetry awakens within us too a misery and despair transcending the tragedy itself. It is possible to read Lamentations without knowing anything about the history of Israel, but to know about the event that prompted the dirge increases its power and beauty.

Similarly, to know why one speaks of “up from Jericho into the hill-country” (Josh.16.1) alerts us to a very ancient city in the Jordan valley, below the hills of Judah, in which Jerusalem nestled. It helps to know that the coast of Palestine was flat, bounded on the east by low-lying hills; that the southern area of the Holy Land was better suited for raising sheep than for farming, but that in the north, where the fertile great Plain of Esdraelon was located, agriculture flourished. A minimum of knowledge about the history and geography of the Bible, and about when the individual books were written and why, is an inescapable necessity. But the richer our store of knowledge, the richer our appreciation. The annotations in this edition, although restricted in scope because of space limitations, provide a good measure of such knowledge and enrichment.

The information contained in the annotations, useful as it is, is a matter of the relevant externals. The internal matter is the content of Scripture. However exalted sacred writing is as writing, it is the idea *behind* the writing that is the crux. The biblical mode of thought differs from the Greek and Latin modes so influential on us, in that the biblical manner is concrete rather than abstract; biblical authors expressed their thoughts through stories and poems, through striking incidents and memorable characters, and not through philosophical ideas. These writers viewed definitions as unnecessary, and differentiation through precise formulation as needed only in matters of law. Books as diverse as Genesis, Samuel, the Gospel According to Matthew, and Acts of the Apostles all convey their content by narration. Their stories, however, were always more

than merely stories, and their poems far more than wondrous lyrical outbursts. Their subjects were God and man, and sin and righteousness, and the purpose and mystery of living.

The Bible puts forth no philosophical inquiry about God. His existence is presumed without any effort to prove it. He is not directly defined, but in repudiating idolatry and polytheism, the Bible does define him. Affirmatively, Scripture speaks of what it regards as his actions in history, of his control of history, of its conviction that the march of history has revealed him. Its objective was not to *define* revelation, but rather to assert that in specific given events, God partly, or fully, revealed to men his power, or his uniqueness, or his very essence. Where the Greeks sought for ultimates through analyzing the physical nature of a static world, or a world revolving in great circles of time, the biblical authors sought such quintessence in the events of history, in the one-way flow of time toward a purpose and goal. God was at work—in the biblical view in the call of Abraham, in the Exodus, in Sinai, in the entry into Canaan, in the rise and fall of monarchy, in Jesus, and in Paul (and, for the ancient Jewish sages, in the oral revelation which inspired the rabbis). In the Bible, history is never only a record of an event in itself; it also is the meaning of that human event in relationship to God. And so we find that biblical modes of thought are no less profound than those found in the formalities of Greek or Latin philosophy.

So long a span of time is represented in the Bible that a phenomenon needs to be observed: Chronicles was written on the basis, and made use, of Samuel and Kings. Conversely, Samuel–Kings influenced Chronicles. Similarly, Genesis–Exodus influenced some psalms. More significantly, the Old Testament influenced the Apocrypha and the New Testament. In a sense, the New Testament is a commentary on, and an extension of, the Old Testament.

This matter of influence, at points extending to derivation, has two meanings. First, the phenomenon lends some sense of unity to books of disparate ages and content. Second, the later books, in exhibiting the influence on them of earlier books, provide a continuity with them.

The ancient mode of commentary-explanation was not that of bare factual definition. Rather, in early Christian times, both Jews and Christians appear to have addressed themselves to the question, What does this Old Testament passage *signify* (predict)? rather than, What does this passage *mean* (at present)? Jews and Christians readily understood that Abraham left Ur; but they wanted to know what his departure from the land *signified*. Both Jews and Christians of two thousand years ago saw in Abraham's departure the decisive step by means of which the patriarch abandoned idolatry for the worship of the true God; both traditions viewed Abraham as the father of all true believers. Much of the thought in the Gospels and in the Epistles acquires specific substance from the Old Testament literature from which it is directly derived, and without which the later writings would be unintelligible. With the Old Testament, we know that when John the Baptist declares that God can raise true sons of Abraham from stones (Lk.3.7–8), or that when Paul speaks of Christ as the Passover sacrifice (1 Cor.5.7), or that when rabbis in the Mishnah (a legal commentary on Scripture) specify what activities are inadmissible on the Sabbath, they are

extending the thoughts they inherited, and merging them with their own perceptions.

For today's student, not only the glory, but also the "problem" in Scripture is, on the one hand, its antiquity, which would seem to allocate it to the past; and is on the other hand its unending relevance for all generations, including his own. Translation became a necessity more than twenty centuries ago, when Jews moved to Greek-speaking lands where they continued to cherish Scripture, yet had forgotten the ancestral Hebrew tongue. Translation is a vehicle for understanding, and understanding is the first step toward applying the insights of the ancient writings to a later age and milieu.

Many Bibles have been translated into English, some so long ago that even though they are in our own tongue, we have trouble understanding these old renderings. Hence, the continual need for new translations expedient to new times. There is an essential difference between the New English Bible and other modern versions. In their determination to avoid the pitfall of simply converting a Hebrew or Greek word into an English equivalent, the translating panels boldly chose to translate the *ideas* behind the words. As a result, they have achieved a remarkably high approximation of the tone and feeling and thought of the Hebrew and Greek originals.

One reads to be entertained, or to learn, or to be lifted to some high level of aspiration and dedication. The Bible, like no other literature, offers just such an extensive range of rewards; and in it the reader may hear the echo of, or indeed, the very voice of God himself.

# LITERARY FORMS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible can be read from many perspectives. From a historical view, one can read it to learn about the past; from the standpoint of religion, one can read it to clarify or strengthen faith; from a literary angle, one can appreciate its poetry, its narrative style, and its use of imagery. Another kind of concern is developed here—an attempt to acquaint the reader with the many literary forms which the Bible represents.

Awareness of literary form is fundamental to understanding. In reading poetry we do not look for the same thing that we look for in reading novels; legal contracts use language different from that which is used in short stories. Moreover, because in a typical biblical book various kinds of material stand side by side, the reader must know what the natural unit is. Furthermore, later use frequently obscured the original shape of the material; but awareness of the form can help the student distinguish earlier from later layers. The Bible is such a rich and diverse book that only a general sketch, with a few examples, can be undertaken here, with the hope that the reader will be encouraged to pursue the study of literary form on his own.

In terms of literary form, the Bible as a whole ought not to be taken for granted. We shall therefore begin by noting its structure and history. From there we shall look at the kinds of books in the Bible, then to the kinds of literary forms within the individual books. Finally, we shall reflect on the value of pursuing this kind of analysis.

## THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

WHAT IS THE BIBLE? From a literary point of view the Bible is an anthology, or a collection of literature, containing narratives, poetry, prophetic books, letters, and apocalypses. It is not organized according to types of literature; rather, different kinds of literature (called “books”) stand side by side. Furthermore, many individual books themselves juxtapose narratives, poetry, and legal codes. Understanding the Bible from a literary point of view requires us to see the character of the anthology as a whole, and how it came to be what it now is.

In the first place, the contents of the collection depend on whose Bible we are talking about. What Jews call “the Bible,” Christians call “the Old Testament”; moreover, because of the Apocrypha, Christians have not always agreed among themselves, nor with the Jews, on what constitutes the Old Testament. Roman Catholics have always included the Apocrypha in the Old Testament, but Protestants sometimes printed the books between the Old and New Testaments, or omitted them entirely. (They are now part of The New English Bible, placed between the two Testaments.) The reasons for this are complex, but

the facts are simple enough: the Protestant Old Testament is the Bible of the Palestinian synagogue as determined by the rabbis after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The Apocrypha, on the other hand, was part of the Bible of the Greek synagogues. This Bible in turn became the Scripture of the Greek-speaking church; later it was translated into Latin. However, in the sixteenth century, Reformation Protestants reverted to the Palestinian canon for their Old Testament, and relegated the Apocrypha to the status of books "good and useful to read," while denying them full authority as Scripture, but at the Council of Trent Catholics denied to continue to include them in the Old Testament.

Nor did Christians always agree about the content of the New Testament. The earliest list of books which agrees with our present New Testament comes from 367 A.D., yet it was not until many centuries later that all Christians—Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox—agreed on what constituted the New Testament. From this rudimentary sketch, it is clear that what the word "Bible" refers to depends on the particular religious community one has in view, and on the history of these communities with their Scriptures.

In the second place, the way in which the anthology called the Bible is organized also depends on whether one has in mind the Jewish or the Christian Bible. The Hebrew Bible, quite apart from the placement of the Apocrypha, is structured differently from the Christian Old Testament. It has three divisions: the Torah ("the Law"), the Prophets (subdivided into "the former prophets" and "the latter prophets"), and the Writings. When Christians adopted the Greek Bible, they also accepted a different order, which today is preserved in Catholic editions. For example, in the Christian Old Testament, the literary prophets (called "latter prophets" in the Hebrew Bible) come at the very end.

In the third place, the present order of books in the New Testament results from historical factors, especially the rejection of Marcion, a second-century heretic. Marcion demanded that Christians discard the Synagogue Bible altogether and rely solely on a Christian Bible consisting of the Gospel of Luke and the Letters of Paul (from both of which he had deleted passages favorable to Judaism and the God of the Old Testament). In rejecting Marcion, the church retained the Old Testament; it also insisted that the New Testament should have four gospels and the letters of more than one apostle. Eventually the Book of Revelation was included as well. These factors, succinctly stated here, explain why "the Bible" refers to several anthologies, and why the tables of contents vary as they do.

It is difficult to classify a piece of literature precisely if it was edited subsequently, or if it is itself a compilation of several writings. But this is exactly what we have in most books of the Bible. On the one hand, some works came to be divided into several books. For example, what we now know as 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah were originally a single work. The long work became divided and the divided parts acquired individual names. On the other hand, books which are essentially compilations are common. In the Hebrew Bible the twelve (minor) prophets are a single "book" which compiled the individual works into one scroll. 2 Corinthians combines parts of at least five letters, none of which is preserved entirely.

Broadly speaking, nonetheless, we may classify the books of the Bible into

five kinds of literature: 1. Narrative books (e.g. Genesis, Samuel, Kings, Maccabees, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles); 2. Poetry (e.g. Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs); 3. Prophetic books; 4. Epistles (e.g. the Letters of Paul); 5. Apocalypses (Daniel, Revelation, 2 Esdras [4 Ezra]). Each of these will be discussed below. First, however, several considerations merit attention.

To begin with, the distribution is of interest. Narrative and apocalypse are found throughout the Old and New Testaments, and the Apocrypha. On the other hand, except for the Letter of Jeremiah in some manuscripts, epistles as separate writings are found only in the New Testament, while only the Old Testament has books of poetry and collections of proverbs. Second, many types of literature do not appear in the Bible at all: drama, satire, autobiography, myth (an extended narrative about the gods), commentaries. Third, none of the literary types found in the Bible is peculiarly biblical. Therefore, the study of types or genres of literature in general, and especially those of antiquity, illumines the particular biblical literature. Fourth, most of the books contain several literary forms. For example, Exodus contains narrative, laws, and poetry; Jeremiah contains narrative, poetry, and letters; some of the epistles, such as 1 Corinthians ch. 13, contain poetic passages.

There are various reasons for the existence of multiple literary forms within a given book. The book may be a compilation (e.g. Daniel begins with narratives about pious Jews in Babylon, and then adds reports of visions). Or, the book may use diverse kinds of materials, including earlier documents. For example, the Deuteronomic history (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings) used earlier documents, such as annals and previous histories.

**AUTHORSHIP.** Finally, the above observations affect the questions of "authorship." In belles-lettres, an author chooses the form in which he wants to express himself, moving from various poetic to prose forms as content requires, or as he wishes to experiment. There is no reason to consider the biblical writers in this light, for they were not self-conscious literary figures writing for a public, nor were they writing to express their personal views. They were either writing for religious communities which they sought to address as effectively as possible, or else they were recording fixed traditions. They were not professional authors who earned their livelihood by writing. Indeed, to what extent the writers were self-conscious "authors" is highly uncertain. We know few of their names. The vast majority of the books are anonymous; "authors" were assigned to them at a later date by the communities as acts of piety. Thus, the Pentateuch was attributed to Moses, the Psalms to David, Proverbs to Solomon, the Gospels to apostles or their associates. Furthermore, some of the literature was actually written in the name of well-known figures. All apocalypses, except the Revelation of John, claim to be written by persons long dead. Certain letters of Paul (Ephesians, Timothy, Titus), and probably the letters of James, Jude, Peter, and John were written in the name of these apostles. More important, the identity of none of the compilers is known, nor are the names of the writers whose works have been incorporated in books which we now have. In many instances it is not at all clear whether the compilation was done by an individual or by a group. For example, it is customary to speak of "the Yahwist" or "the Priestly writer" of

certain strata of the Pentateuch, or of the "author" of the Fourth Gospel. But no one knows whether these works represent the efforts of a single mind or of a group. Similarly, the Gospels are end products of a process of development to which several persons or groups made their contribution. For example, Matthew appropriated most of Mark, some of which he rewrote, and supplemented it with a collection (itself restructured) of Jesus' teachings and with other material. Most of the individuals who wrote the literature of the Bible drew on materials already known. The creativity of the writer usually lay in how he used his material. Thus, biblical literature is much less the product of creative writing than the product of creative editing done within the context of communities of faith.

## TYPES OF BOOKS

**NARRATIVE WORKS.** Many of the books are essentially narratives. As such, they include at least the rudiments of a plot, an indication of where the events transpired, and some greater or lesser portrayal of the characters. Ordinarily the larger narratives have a chronological order. The various narrative genres may be distinguished from one another on the basis of plot, setting, and characterization, and on the basis of specific purposes. Was a work composed in order to entertain, to edify, or to transmit factual information?

A great many different narrative genres appear in the Bible. A number of the books and literary works may be classified as histories, though not in the modern scholarly sense. A history is a written narrative of past events which is governed by facts, as far as the writer could ascertain and interpret them, and not by thematic or aesthetic organization. It will, then, in most cases be chronological in sequence. Most of the biblical histories are popular histories; that is, the writer's determination of the facts was not based on critically assessed and reliable sources (such as eye-witness testimony or accurate records), but on traditional material (such as stories and legends). Much of the popular history of the Bible could also be called salvation history, since it aims at showing how the sequence of events was directed by God. A major example of history in these senses is the Deuteronomic sequence (see above), which includes many diverse literary types, but viewed as a whole comprises a single interpretative account of the history of Israel from the Exodus to the Exile. The Tetrateuch ("four books": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers) likewise is such a history, though its sequence is not so neatly ordered because of its history of composition; furthermore, it includes within its historical framework a considerable amount of legal material. Critical analysis of the Tetrateuch has shown that it is composed of two or more originally separate but complete histories of salvation, the works of the Yahwist and Priestly writer. Other major examples of salvation histories are the Chronicler's work (1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah), 1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, and Acts.

Some narrative books are essentially stories, that is, their structure is determined primarily by plot. Stories create interest by arousing tension (suspense) and releasing it. In addition to stories, such as the Joseph narrative, employed in larger works, a number of separate books belong to this category. Many of these owe their content or shape to popular tradition, and thus may be called



tales. The Book of Ruth is a short story which probably rests on a folktale; Jonah is a didactic (teaching) story developed from legend. In terms of content, the Book of Esther could be called a historical novel, or in terms of purpose, a festival legend, since it seems to have been written to explain the meaning and significance of the Feast of Purim. In the Apocrypha the books of Tobit; Judith; Daniel and Susanna; and Daniel, Bel, and the Snake are imaginative didactic stories—works of fiction, novelistic in character, and written in order to convey lessons.

Generally speaking, gospels are narratives about Jesus. Their literary form is basically similar to ancient biographies of popular teachers. The title “gospel” was attached to a rather diverse body of narratives about Jesus, only four of which were included in the New Testament. The canonical Gospels generally narrate the public ministry of Jesus; each of them has its own structure, though they all culminate in the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The apocryphal gospels (those never included in the canon), on the other hand, vary considerably in content. Some, such as the infancy Gospel of Thomas or the Gospel of Peter, fill in “gaps,” that is, give information not provided by the canonical Gospels. Others claim to furnish secret traditions; one newly-found gospel, that of Thomas, is a collection of sayings but without any real narrative at all.

The canonical Gospels are the results of the transmission and use of traditions about Jesus, including his teachings. The so-called “Synoptics” (the first three Gospels) are interdependent, since Matthew and Luke used Mark; John apparently did not use the Synoptics but did have access to some materials found also in the others. Essentially, however, John’s traditions were independent of the Synoptics, and were developed in distinctive ways. The canonical Gospels were written forty to seventy years after the events which they report. All of the Gospels were probably developed for various uses in the Christian congregations, whose problems are reflected both in the selection of the individual traditions and in the emphases of the individual Gospels.

**POETIC BOOKS.** Many books of the Bible are poetic works, but this category is not adequate as a generic classification because there are several very distinct types. Moreover, though the prophetic books contain a considerable amount of poetry, they are sufficiently distinctive to merit a separate classification. Divided broadly, there are two kinds of poetic books: cultic poetry and Wisdom literature. The primary example of the former is the Book of Psalms, which is not simply a collection of poems but is the hymn and prayer book of the Temple in late Old Testament times. For the most part the psalms and cultic poems are lyrical, that is, meant to be sung (see below). The only other book of cultic poetry in the Old Testament is Lamentations, a collection of dirges and mourning liturgies concerning national disaster. In the Apocrypha, books of liturgical poetry are represented by the Prayer of Manasseh, a short devotional piece, and the Prayer of Azariah in the Song of the Three, added to the Book of Daniel on its translation into Greek.

The other poetic books are more difficult to classify. They generally are considered Wisdom literature, itself a wide range of types. The Song of Songs, for example, is lyrical poetry. Though sometimes interpreted as the liturgy of a

sacred marriage ceremony, it is in reality a collection of secular love poetry, perhaps assembled for use at weddings. Other Wisdom poetry ranges from the collection of sayings and poems in the Book of Proverbs (see below) through the lengthy instructions in the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus, to the carefully constructed poem of Job. Still other examples of this literature are Ecclesiastes and the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon. All of these works have in common a certain literary self-consciousness seldom found in other biblical literature. Behind these works often stand poets in the sense of creative individuals.

In The New English Bible, as in most modern translations, poetry can be recognized by its verse (metrical) form. This procedure enables the reader to see that the basic principle of Hebrew poetry is the parallelism of members, or the "thought rhyme" of two (or sometimes three) successive lines. For example, in Ps.29.8 we have

The voice of the LORD makes the wilderness writhe in travail;  
the LORD makes the wilderness of Kadesh writhe.

The second line introduces no new thought, but parallels the first. Scholars have recognized different types of parallelism. In the example cited, the two lines are synonymous. Others are antithetical, that is, the second line verbalizes the opposite of the first, or states negatively what the first had presented positively. Still others have been called synthetic or formal parallelism, for the second line may develop the thought of the first. Other poetic features more familiar to us, such as meter, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and the like appear, but they are not as basic as parallelism. There is usually some regularity of meter in the sense of balanced numbers of accented syllables, but this feature seems to be derived from the balancing of parallel lines.

**PROPHETIC BOOKS.** While prophets were found elsewhere in antiquity, no other culture, before or since, has developed prophetic literature as did ancient Israel. Prophets were known in ancient Mesopotamia, but not prophetic books. Books called prophecies were written in Egypt, but they are quite different from the Old Testament prophetic books. Neither are there prophetic books in the Apocrypha nor in the New Testament, though the Book of Revelation has some affinities with prophetic literature.

The prophetic books receive their distinctive stamp from the prophets' self-understanding as spokesmen for God. The prophets were men who, on the basis of a particular call and special revelations, announced God's word concerning his people, and other nations as well. They were preoccupied with declaring God's actions in the immediate future.

We must distinguish the prophetic words themselves from the prophetic books. Study of the prophets in recent generations has emphasized that they were not authors who wrote books, but speakers. It was usually their followers or other listeners who committed their words to writing. Occasionally we catch a glimpse of the way the spoken words were written down, eventually to form books or parts of books, as in Jeremiah ch. 36. Isaiah, when he was not heeded, gave instructions to "Fasten up the message, seal the oracle with my teaching"

(Isa.8.16). It seems clear from such texts and other indications that something new and significant had occurred when the words were written down. At least two factors were involved. First, writing the speeches preserved the revelation and kept it from being stifled when the prophet was either prevented from speaking, or ignored. Second, there arose a concern that future generations should know that what they were experiencing had already been set into motion by God's word once spoken through his prophets.

The first prophetic "books" doubtless were collections of the sayings of individual prophets. As we shall see, those sayings were of many different types, but for the most part they were short, poetic units. But the prophetic books contain other classes of literature as well, such as narratives. Most of these are reports of prophetic activities, either in autobiographical or biographical style. They range from short accounts, setting the occasions for particular speeches, to lengthy tales; from reports of the prophet's call to accounts of symbolic actions performed as messages. The third genre found in the prophetic books is prayer, such as the so-called complaints of Jeremiah in the Book of Jeremiah, or the hymnic fragments in the Book of Amos.

From the jotting down of the first prophetic utterance to the books we read today was a long journey. The details of that journey elude us, but some of the landmarks can be reconstructed from the evidence in the books themselves. In most cases, the first stage was the recording of individual speeches and small collections of sayings. Often we can recognize some of these earlier collections within the present books; Isa.2.1, for instance, appears to be the heading for such a unit. Then other materials were added, sometimes organized loosely on the basis of similar content or type, or on the basis of chronology. Most of these emerging books continued to be expanded by later additions which claimed the authority of the original man of God. As a result, most of the books now reflect the experience and the thought of several generations. At least two centuries after the death of Isaiah, for example, prophetic writings still were being added to the book which bears his name.

The prophetic books were read and expounded in the Israelite communities which developed and preserved them long before they were canonized as sacred Scriptures. When the Babylonian exiles in the sixth pre-Christian century heard the voice of Amos of the eighth century announcing punishment, they understood their experience as arising from God's activity, and they could turn to the future which they believed lay in his hands. Again, Jeremiah's pronouncements against Judah were used as texts for sermons exhorting obedience. And Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah chs. 40-55) argued that Israel's Lord was the only God of history and human affairs, for he had announced beforehand through his prophets what was to come.

**LETTERS.** The New Testament is dominated by letters. Of the twenty-seven books, twenty-one are called epistles (the Greek word for letters), most of which are linked to Paul. The letter form became the most important genre in early Christianity. This development is best appreciated when it is seen in light of the Hellenistic letter-writing conventions. Hebrew or Aramaic letters do not appear to have been as influential as the Greek.

Even before the emergence of Christianity, the Greek letter had already become a remarkably stable literary form, despite the diverse kinds of letters which were written. It is useful to distinguish private letters (correspondence between friends or business letters) from public letters. A considerable quantity of private correspondence, mostly on papyrus, has been preserved; much of it has been published since the late nineteenth century. The public letter could be an official correspondence between a public official and a city council, or a series of discussions of moral or political topics cast in letter form, a letter-essay, or a body of magical information made available as a letter. Almost any kind of material could be presented in the form of a public letter, for it was intended for publication and sale.

Both the private and the public letters followed established conventions, with considerable flexibility in detail. The Hellenistic letter had three main parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction normally named the writer and the recipient, stated a greeting, and may have included the writer's thanksgiving for deliverance from illness and/or a wish for the reader's health. The body could be short and to the point in private correspondence, or lengthy in essays cast as letters. The conclusion expressed greetings and wishes for the persons known to both the writer and the reader, a final greeting, and sometimes the date. Christian letters followed these conventions and modified them at the same time.

A rigid distinction between public and private letters will not work for Paul's correspondence because of the nature of his writing. Paul responded to particular issues by means of letters only because he could not deal with the issues face to face. His letters stand somewhere between private correspondence and public letters; they were not designed to be published and sold in the book stalls, but rather to be read to his congregations and then exchanged (in some cases at least) with other congregations.

Paul follows the convention of naming the writer and the readers (X to Y); but he modifies this by frequently naming his associates, by characterizing the receiving congregation, and by changing the greeting from "Greetings" (Greek *charein*) to "Grace" (*charis*) and by adding "peace" (from the Hebrew *shalom*). In Romans, possibly the last letter genuinely from Paul, the opening becomes more complex, for in it Paul summarized the Gospel in six verses before proceeding to write "to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has called to be his dedicated people." Generally, Paul also modified the thanksgiving; instead of expressing thanks for his own safety and health, he wrote his thanks for the life of the congregation, and did so in a way as to subtly indicate the theme of the body of the letter which followed. The body of the letter was developed according to the needs of the occasion, but regularly included exhortations and a section in which he spoke of his travel plans, expressing a desire to visit the congregation personally. The closing not only amplified the greeting pattern, but frequently included a personal word in his own hand (e.g. 1 Cor.16.21 ff.; Gal.6.11 ff.; Philem.19 ff.) in accord with the practice of official letters in Hellenistic times.

The post-Pauline generation not only imitated Paul's letter writing but developed the catholic (general) epistle to the church at large (e.g. 1 John) or to the churches of a region (1 Peter). The post-Pauline letters tended to become

letter-treatises, from which the personal touches are generally absent (e.g. Ephesians, Hebrews, 1 John, 2 Peter); 2 John and 3 John are exceptions. In the second century, the letter-writing tradition continued to flourish but did not enter the canon.

In the New Testament, the epistles stand in a clear order: first, those associated with Paul, with Hebrews standing at the end because it was once thought to be from Paul, and then the Catholic Epistles. Of the Pauline Epistles, those addressed to churches stand first, then come four letters addressed to individuals. The Catholic Epistles begin with James, traditionally thought to be Jesus' brother and head of the Jerusalem church, followed by letters attributed to Peter, John, and Jude. Thus the sequence of letters in the epistle section of the New Testament disregards chronological order.

**APOCALYPSES.** That there is a type of literature called "apocalypse" is inferred from the fact that there is a body of literature, mostly noncanonical, which is generally similar to one book in the Bible which calls itself an apocalypse—the Revelation of John (the word apocalypse means revelation). Although the word apocalyptic is used also to characterize certain theological ideas, we shall restrict ourselves here to a sketch of the chief features of that literature called apocalypses.

There are few pure examples of the genre. Even the apocalypse of John begins with seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor; the oldest apocalypse, Daniel (165 B.C.), begins with stories about Daniel and his friends; the truly apocalyptic material begins at chapter six. Fourth Ezra is an apocalypse only in chapters three to fourteen. Moreover, modern scholars often list with apocalyptic literature books which contain only sections regarded as apocalyptic because of their content (e.g. the Testament of the XII Patriarchs, Jubilees, the life of Adam and Eve [also called the Apocalypse of Moses]). Indeed, if the presence of a block of apocalyptic material justifies classifying whole books among apocalyptic literature, the list could include Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, the Synoptic Gospels, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Peter. From the observation of this diversity three conclusions can be drawn: 1. There is no clear definition of what constitutes an apocalypse. 2. The diversity results largely from the fact that these texts are either compilations or the result of drawing on diverse sources (oral and/or written). 3. Classifying a text as "apocalyptic" often reflects the theological content and tenor of a writing as much as the literary form.

Given this intriguing diversity, all attempts to draw up a list of features which make a book (or a section of a book) apocalyptic have only a rough preliminary value. Though it is easy to name exceptions, a general characterization will include the following items: 1. Apocalyptic literature is generally pseudonymous—it claims to be written by an ancient figure, such as Enoch, Moses, Ezra, Daniel, Baruch (Jeremiah's associate); however, the New Testament apocalypse openly identifies the author as John, a contemporary of the readers (and hence is known as the Revelation of John). The "War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness," one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, is anonymous. The hidden identity of the author reflects the view that contemporary events were disclosed long ago, thereby attesting to the belief that everything is happening according to the plan of God. 2. Apocalyptic literature contains visions which portray the

history of God's people, especially their experiences of suffering; these visions usually culminate in the overturning of the malign present and the impending vindication of faithfulness by the intervention of God. 3. Using an abundance of symbols, apocalypses generally express the view that "this age" is to be contrasted with the glorious "age to come." The language of apocalyptic literature expresses this contrast and discontinuity in dramatic and violent images: the return of primeval chaos (e.g. the stars will fall and the moon will turn to blood); unprecedented war, especially against the saints (e.g. Armageddon in the Revelation of John, or the war of the sons of light in the Dead Sea book), or the "birth pangs" of the messianic age. 4. What lies either at the end of history or even beyond the end, is sometimes portrayed in terms of the divine promise to Israel (the time of the Messiah), or sometimes in terms of a rejuvenated earth, or, as in Revelation, both "a new heaven and new earth." The obverse is the punishment of the wicked, sometimes portrayed in lurid images, as is the case in noncanonical writings, the Apocalypse of Peter and the Book of Enoch.

The core conviction, however, which spurred this florid imagery, is that the sovereign God is faithful despite his people's experiences of suffering and persecution. Apocalyptic literature flourished in times of suppression and insurrection. The theological tradition had asserted earlier that calamity was God's punishment for infidelity; now, it appeared that fidelity brought calamity. To interpret this, apocalyptists saw the historical experience of the faithful as part of a cosmic struggle of good and evil, traced either to Adam (as in 4 Ezra) or to the "fallen angels" (as in the Book of Enoch). Thus, the whole of mankind's history was involved; that is to say, a radical view of history brought with it a radical view about God and his ancient revelation of history's character and destiny. Thus, the literary form and its magnificent and dramatic imagery express a radical and daring theology, with form and content compatible throughout.

## GENRES WITHIN BOOKS

We have already noted that a given book may contain diverse types of materials either because it is a compilation or because the author used and reproduced diverse sources (documents); moreover, the utilized sources themselves contain various forms. Our task now is to suggest the range of diverse materials, and to account, in a sketchy way, for their inclusion in the biblical documents.

The diversity of genres is so rich and the problem of distinguishing one from the other sometimes so complex, that only a general sampling can be undertaken here. Nonetheless, it may show both the disparity in the Bible's forms, and the importance of paying attention to them for understanding the text itself. One fundamental factor must be borne in mind—that much of the content of the Bible was handed down by word of mouth (technically called 'oral tradition') before it was written.

**NARRATIVES.** It is important to recognize that there are different narrative genres within the biblical books, for they arose in different social settings and served different purposes. Histories, because they attempt to reconstruct the past on the basis of the best information available, are more reliable documents for the

modern historian than, for example, fables. And impersonal records or reports are more reliable still.

The Old Testament document which most closely approximates history in the modern sense is not the longer popular or salvation histories mentioned above, but the court history of David (2 Sam. chs. 9–20; 1 Kgs. chs. 1–2). Its writer had access to excellent sources, he reconstructed a segment of the past into a meaningful account, and he interpreted the events in terms of cause and effect. The sense of divine providence and activity is here implicit rather than explicit, as it is in the Book of Judges.

A great many of the individual narratives in the Bible are stories; as noted earlier, they generate interest by arousing tension and releasing it. Most stories in the Old Testament—such as those of the patriarchs in Genesis—are folktales; that is, they use motifs, patterns, and techniques supplied by the oral tradition. Stories serve many different purposes: to amuse, to teach, to enlighten, or to present the most profound theological affirmations. If a story is primarily concerned with the wonderful and aimed at edification, it is a legend (though a legend need not take the form of a story; it may be a simple report). Legends ordinarily deal with holy men, holy places, or religious ceremonies. They speak of the miraculous and the awesome. But the legends of Elisha, for example, do not mean to boast of the prophet's power as such, but to bear witness to the power of Israel's God made visible through him. Very often legends or other stories of sacred places or religious ceremonies are etiological, that is, they explain the sacredness of the place or the importance of the ritual by an account of its origin. For example, the story of Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen.28.10 ff.) is told—in part—to explain how the place was known to be holy, and how it got its name.

In the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels, many different traditional narrative genres are employed. Often the shape and content of these types are clues to their use in the oral tradition handed down by the earliest Christian communities. One genre is the pronouncement story or paradigm, a short, concise narrative which focuses upon a memorable saying of Jesus. The story provides the framework, the occasion, for the saying. Thus the story of the disciples eating grain on the Sabbath (Mk.2.23–28) is the framework for the saying, "The Sabbath was made for the sake of man, and not man for the Sabbath." Another kind is the miracle story, which concentrates either on Jesus himself (instead of on his sayings) or else on the other characters. Most of these stories tersely report the malady, the healing, and the onlookers' response of wonder. The Christian miracle stories are similar to those in Hellenistic culture generally, but unlike the latter, they seldom report the techniques of the miracle worker. The New Testament also contains narratives which are classed as legends because they express the church's esteem for the hero, such as the story of Peter's release from prison (Acts ch. 12) or the accounts of Jesus' temptations.

**PROPHETIC GENRES.** In understanding prophetic literature, the reader's first step, as noted above, must be an effort to distinguish the individual units from one another. The meaning of individual lines depends in large measure on the context to which they belong, including the limits of the unit of which they

are a part. (The chapter and verse divisions are misleading as often as they are helpful; anyway they date from medieval times.) In distinguishing one unit from another, the reader should be aware of the formulas and genres of prophetic literature, their typical structures, and intentions. Certain formulas, for example, indicate quite clearly the beginning of speeches. Among these are the call to attention, "Listen to these words . . .," and the expression, "The word of the Lord came to me . . ."

We have noted that generally speaking the prophetic books contain speeches, narratives, and a few prayers, but in order to recognize the units and interpret them we must be more specific. The range of types of speech found in prophetic utterance is wide; the prophets employed virtually every possible form of verbal communication known in their culture. While the freedom with which they borrowed and adapted from all spheres of life has led some to doubt that there is a distinctively prophetic form of speech, it is preferable to recognize that there are some genres which are particularly and intimately related to the prophetic role. The frequent recurrence of the messenger formula, "thus says the LORD," and the fact that the prophets speak for the LORD, often quoting him directly, have led many scholars in recent years to characterize prophetic address as messenger speech. Whether "messenger speech" or simply "prophecy" is the most apt description of the prophetic addresses, it is clear that these men regarded themselves as the LORD's spokesmen, both revealing and setting into motion his future activities.

One of the genres most frequently encountered in the preexilic prophets is the prophecy of punishment (or prophetic "*judgment* speech"). This type has two main elements, a statement of reasons for punishment (or accusation) and the announcement of punishment (or *judgment*), bound together by a transition which emphasizes that the latter is the result of the former. Such speeches were addressed to individuals, to groups, or to the nation as a whole. On the other hand, in later prophets such as Deutero-Isaiah and in the additions to the pre-exilic books, prophecies of salvation predominate. In these addresses the prophets announce the LORD's intervention on behalf of Israel, usually without giving reasons.

Other genres closely related to the prophetic office itself are reports of visions, reports of God's call of the prophet, and reports of symbolic actions. Vision reports range from the brief accounts in Amos to the lengthy and detailed descriptions in Ezekiel which often approach the imagery of apocalyptic literature, but they ordinarily include an account of what was seen and an interpretation of its meaning. The "call reports" are not presented in order to give autobiographical information, but rather to authenticate the prophet and his message. So, too, the symbolic action stories are not biographical or autobiographical, but means of communicating the prophetic word.

The prophet's freedom to employ forms of speech from all spheres of Israelite life seems unlimited, but when such genres were used they usually were modified. When Amos sings a dirge, for example, it has become an announcement of punishment: "She has fallen to rise no more, the virgin Israel, prostrate on her own soil, with no one to lift her up" (Amos 5.2). Proverbs, parables, and other forms of speech associated with Wisdom literature are employed freely. And



though the prophets should not be viewed primarily as preachers of repentance, but as proclaimers of God's future, they often instruct, admonish, exhort, and warn their hearers. Further, the image of the prophets as consistent opponents of the cult is tempered when we recognize their frequent use of cultic genres. Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55), for example, often speaks in the words of the "salvation oracle," a genre similar to the Old Testament priestly absolutions. Often, of course, the prophets employ cultic expressions to criticize the cult, as when Amos (4.4) uses a call to worship ironically. And frequently we recognize that the prophets are speaking in juridical terms, either in allusions to Israel's laws or in using expressions and motifs from the legal procedure.

**LEGAL GENRES.** Since the time of the Apostle Paul, Christians often have thought of the Old Testament, in whole or in part, as "the law." This impression stems in large measure from the Greek title of the first part of the Jewish canon, the Torah, which Greek Jews translated "law." But to characterize the Torah (the Pentateuch) as "law" obscures as much as it reveals. We have already observed that the first five books of the Bible are narratives, not law books. But a considerable body of legal material is presented within that narrative framework, either as the report of what was revealed at Sinai or—in Deuteronomy—as part of the report of the last will and testament of Moses.

In fact, none of the books of the Bible can be accurately described as a law book. What we do find, however, are legal codes of different kinds. It seems clear that most of these codes had been organized and handed down in the context of juridical and cultic activity long before they were placed in their present literary contexts. Some of these codes are quite short; they are the collections of ten or twelve laws found in Exodus chs. 20 and 34, and Deuteronomy ch. 5. Other codes are "the book of the covenant" (Exodus chs. 21–23), containing laws mainly concerned with what we would call civil and criminal matters; the Holiness Code (Leviticus chs. 17–26), which is not so much a code as sermons on law. (In view of its expansive literary character it is doubtful that we should call the large body of instructions in the Priestly document—Exodus ch. 25–Numbers ch. 10—a law code.) The old Testament law codes are similar in many ways to their Ancient Near Eastern predecessors: all are collections which tend to organize laws loosely on the basis of content and form; all are the results of many centuries of growth; and there are some distinct similarities of form and content.

In recent scholarship the individual laws in the Old Testament have been classified into two categories. The first is casuistic or case law. These laws closely parallel those in the Ancient Near Eastern codes both in form and content. Each has two main parts, a conditional clause describing a case and a conclusion specifying the penalty: "When [or if] a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, he shall repay five beasts for the ox and four sheep for the sheep" (Exod.22.1). Such laws must have been related to the everyday practice of law. The second genre has been called apodictic, absolute commands or prohibitions which require no accompanying argumentation since they are taken to be expressions of the will of God. As the Ten Commandments reveal, their content is not limited to specifically religious or cultic affairs, but include social relation-

ships. Whatever the origin of these different genres may have been, eventually all of Israel's laws were associated with Moses and the covenant at Sinai.

In addition to laws, the Old Testament contains a considerable body of material from the judicial process itself. This material is in the form of reports of legal proceedings, allusions to the practice of law in court and cult, and judicial genres and formulas employed in different contexts, such as prophetic speeches. Viewing this data as a whole gives us a picture of the formalities of the trial, of the way contracts were formalized, of the way priests instructed the laity concerning the interpretation or application of cultic laws, and of how law was related to the life of Israel.

**WISDOM AND INSTRUCTION.** The proverb is one of the most widely known forms of expression and its original oral character is beyond dispute. Proverbs are found in many parts of the Bible apart from the book bearing the name. Proverbs are folk wisdom distilled into pithy, memorable sayings. In isolation, a proverb expresses a general insight (e.g. "haste makes waste"); inevitably one can think of exceptions or of other proverbs which express an apparently conflicting insight. Thus, proverbs must not be treated as first principles but rather as practical wisdom gained from experience. In contrast with divine oracles and apocalyptic visions, proverbs themselves do not claim to be revealed knowledge but distilled human insight. Their specific meaning depends almost entirely on the context in which they are used.

Biblical proverbs or wisdom sayings have many forms. Some are simple declarative statements, such as, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" (Lk.17.37). More common is the doublet in which the second half contrasts with the first, as in, "A simple man believes every word he hears; a clever man understands the need for proof" (Prov.14.15). Others are structured according to the principle of synonymous parallelism, as in, "Experience uses few words; discernment keeps a cool head" (Prov.17.27). Sometimes a proverb is put in the form of a comparison, as, "Better sit humbly with those in need than divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov.16.19).

Because proverbs express wisdom, it is natural that in the Book of Proverbs wisdom itself is extolled, and even spoken of as if she (the word "wisdom" is feminine) were a person. Furthermore, the proverbs are then regarded as the counsel of wisdom: "My son, keep my words, store up my commands in your mind" (Prov.7.1). Wisdom can also tell a story (in poetic form), as occurs in Proverbs ch. 7 and especially in Ecclesiasticus. In the Wisdom of Solomon wisdom guides the history of Israel. Wisdom materials were originally secular; however, there developed the view that human wisdom is derived from divine Wisdom. Indeed, divine Wisdom—especially when personified—came to be regarded as the self-manifestation of God; inevitably, the sages came to regard both the Wisdom tradition and the Torah as revealed.

Wisdom materials are found in various biblical literature, especially in the Synoptic Gospels. Often proverbs have been expanded to make the meaning explicit, as in the case of "No servant can be the slave of two masters," to which has been added, "for either he will hate the first and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and think nothing of the second. You cannot serve God

and Money” (Mt.6.24). On the other hand, proverbs have also been added to teachings to provide a broader application. Thus, some form of “By gaining his life a man will lose it; by losing his life for my sake, he will gain it” (Mt.10.39), is added to various sayings of Jesus (Mt.16.25; Lk.17.33). Wisdom materials need to be read on two levels: the inherent meaning of the original material (usually discerned by noting the balanced structure of the phrases and ideas), and the specific meaning which the material receives from its present context.

The most famous genre associated with Jesus is the parable. He did not invent the parable form, of course, but developed it from the parabolic tradition of Judaism in the Old Testament. What we normally call a parable is distinguished from a metaphor and a simile in that it has a rudimentary plot. “You vipers’ brood” is a metaphor; “becoming like a child” is a simile. The parable, on the other hand, is a brief narrative whose plot implies an analogy between the story and another situation or dimension of reality. Because the point is not on the surface, so to speak, the parable demands insight and appropriation, and its point can be missed. What the New Testament calls “parable” translates a Hebrew term (*mashal*) which can refer to a variety of forms, such as the riddle and epigram. Thus Jesus’ saying, “Nothing that goes into a man from outside can defile him; no, it is the things that come out of him that defile a man” (Mk.7.15), is called a “parable” because like the word *mashal*, it means “epigram.”

It is customary to distinguish parables from allegories, though a *mashal* can also be an allegory. In an allegory, each item in the story stands for something else, so that one can “decode” the story into its true religious or theological meaning. For example, in the noncanonical Book of Enoch, the story of Israel is told as the history of sheep who endure all sorts of bad experiences from wolves, bears, etc. The reader quickly translates the story by equating Israel with the sheep and the series of enemies with the marauding animals. It is generally believed that Jesus himself used parables but not allegories, but that the parables were later allegorized by the church. Thus, the parable of the abundant harvest (Mk.4.3–8) was allegorized into the story of various kinds of soils (Mk.4.14–20). This is a clear case where sensitivity to literary forms enables the reader to distinguish layers of tradition.

There are sermons in the Bible, but we must not confuse the New Testament “sermon” with what comes to mind when we use the term today. Rather, the biblical sermon generally was an extended religious discourse. Also, largely because the preaching of both Jesus and the earliest church was anchored in synagogue preaching, which was as much instruction as it was proclamation, it is difficult to distinguish New Testament preaching from teaching. That synagogue preaching in turn doubtless was rooted in Old Testament instructional preaching, is best represented by the addresses exhorting obedience in Deuteronomy and the prose speeches in the Book of Jeremiah. In any case, even though Christianity spread by preaching, and even though Jesus is reported to have preached in the synagogue, the New Testament contains no transcripts of any sermon. It does, however, include a number of discourses which have been called “sermons.” On the one hand, the sermons of Jesus, including the Sermon on the Mount, are not real discourses but collections of sayings, clustered around certain themes. On the other hand, the speeches in Acts are not real sermons

either but discourses composed by the author and placed at key points in the narrative in accord with the Hellenistic practice of having key figures say what the writer believed was important to have said at that point. This does not rule out the likelihood that the author used old traditions in composing these speeches. Interestingly, the New Testament possibly contains parts of sermons elsewhere; for example, it has sometimes been suggested that 1 Peter is basically a baptismal sermon, or a part of one, which has been given the appearance of a letter.

**PRAYERS, HYMNS, AND RITUALS.** Many biblical passages are prayers—words addressed to God. However, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a prayer from a hymn because frequently both appear as poetry and are addressed to God. Hymns were presumably sung or chanted, probably by choirs, whereas prayers were spoken. While the Old Testament Psalms enshrine the hymns of the Temple at various stages of its life, there is no comparable Christian collection in the New Testament.

The rich cultic life of ancient Israel gave rise to a great many different types of song and prayer, preserved for the most part in the Book of Psalms (see above, “Poetic books”). These types usually reflect use in various liturgies, though the festival occasions themselves are not named. Approximately one third of the psalms are songs of individual complaints (frequently called “Laments”), in which the sufferer petitions God for relief and deliverance. On the basis of the structure of such songs—in particular, changes in speaker—and allusions to worship, it has been suggested recently that the individual complaints were used in prayer services for persons in distress. Similar are songs of communal complaint (see Introduction to the Psalms). Closely related to these types are the songs of individual and communal thanksgiving, which were employed in celebrations of deliverance from particular difficulties. We also recognize a great many hymns of praise, which were associated primarily with the regularly scheduled services of worship. The hymns characteristically call to praise, expound the reasons for praising God in terms of his acts or his nature, and conclude with the renewed summons to praise (see Psalm 113). The so-called “Enthronement Psalms” (e.g. Psalms 29–47, 93, 95–99) may have been developed for a New Year’s festival when God’s kingship was celebrated; these songs are characterized by the acclamation, “The LORD reigns!” There are also “Royal Psalms” which celebrate the king as the regent of God (e.g. Psalms 2, 20, 21, 45).

The variety of hymns and prayerlike poetry collected in the psalter is found in many other places in the Old Testament as well. For example, in Exodus ch. 15 we have two celebrations of the deliverance at the sea, a very old couplet in v. 21 (the Song of Miriam), and a more elaborate younger one in vv. 1–18. 2 Samuel 1.19–27 is the lament of David over the death of Saul and Jonathan, while 2 Samuel ch. 22 (virtually identical with Psalm 18) contains a victory song.

In the New Testament, hymnic materials are of three kinds: the messianic hymns, the christological hymns, and hymns of the eschatological victory. In Luke chs. 1 and 2 the evangelist used messianic hymns inherited from certain Jewish circles to express the hope for the coming redemption. There are three passages which appear to be christological hymns. Embedded in the prologue of John (1.1–18) is an earlier hymn to the Word, the Creator; Phil.2.5–11

celebrates the humiliation of the preexistent Christ and his subsequent exaltation; Col.1.15–20 celebrates the relation of the preexistent Christ to the cosmos. Fragments of hymns (or possibly confessional pieces) appear also in Eph.5.14 and 1 Tim.3.16. At key points in the Book of Revelation, the reader is apprised of hymns of deliverance being sung in heaven; these are usually considered to reflect the hymnody of the churches of Asia Minor.

In addition to poetic pieces used in ritual and liturgy, the Bible also contains narratives which were used in worship before they were included in the biblical text. By means of these narrative materials, the community recited fundamental events of its history and thereby celebrated its relation to God. Many scholars have seen in Joshua ch. 24 and other Old Testament texts the outlines of a covenant renewal ceremony by which the Israelite tribes recalled the Exodus and pledged their common fealty to God. These texts are for the most part narratives, but they mention either directly or indirectly the liturgical acts involved. Many of the steps in the liturgy of covenant renewal closely paralleled the points in Ancient Near Eastern treaties.

In the New Testament, the accounts of the Lord's Supper (Mt.26.17–29; Mk.14.12–24; Lk.22.7–38; 1 Cor.11.23–25) differ from one another because they reflect the actual usages of the churches; but they all center in the words of Jesus concerning the bread and the wine. None of these accounts is as liturgically complete as the account of the first Passover in Exodus ch. 12. Although the Book of Esther is traditionally associated with the Festival of Purim, the story itself does not refer explicitly to the festival. The books of Maccabees report the events that led up to the rededication of the Temple, celebrated as Hanukkah, but there are no clear Hanukkah observance materials in the Bible, just as there are no observances linked with Pentecost. Centuries later, Christians associated both the stories of Jesus' wine miracle at Cana and the coming of the Magi with January 6 (Epiphany), but, of course, this belongs to the history of the interpretation of the Bible. These stories did not originate in connection with Epiphany.

This introduction to the literary types of the Bible has, of necessity, been more illustrative than exhaustive. Many important forms of literary and oral expression have not been mentioned. But this basically literary approach, in addition to providing a description of some of the types of biblical literature, serves the serious reader of the Bible in several ways. In the first place, it opens up the historical depth of the biblical material. The Bible is a historical book not merely because it is preoccupied with history, but because its contents also have a history. This literary history of the materials has been recovered in large part because scholars have analyzed the individual literary genres and related these to the life of the communities in which they were used. In many cases we are able to reconstruct the history of the transmission of sayings and stories up to the way the text now reads. What emerges from such careful exploratory work is a keen appreciation of the fact that the Bible is the literary deposit of living tradition which reflects the beliefs and practices of real Israelite, Jewish, and Christian communities. So instead of reading the text in a "flat" way, simply for plot or for bare content, we can now recognize the texture of the matter, perceive its

layers, and know how the material functioned in various stages. Second, the concern with genres of literary and oral expression enables the reader to relate the stages of a text to the life of the communities which originated, used, and preserved it. Often particular genres can be located within certain social contexts, such as the worship in the Temple, the practice of law, or the missionary activity of the early church. In the process we see that behind each text stand not primarily creative writers—though there were such—but communities of faith, for which certain genres and particular texts served very important purposes. Finally, this kind of study can facilitate fruitful dialogues with the texts themselves. Posing these literary questions—What kind of text is it? Where did it come from? How was it used?—enables the texts to speak to us, and not simply to reflect our own expectations of them. By looking at the Bible in this way our appreciation and understanding of it should be both broadened and deepened.

# A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY OF THE LANDS OF THE BIBLE

In the centuries before and after Abraham, the mountains and hills and the valleys and plains of the Ancient Near East have remained relatively constant, as have the climate and the weather patterns. A few modifications have taken place: the soil of Sumer has become saline; modern Israel has planted palm trees in the Negeb around Beersheba; and Israeli engineers have dried up the swamps of Lake Huleh. Nevertheless, through all the convulsions of the last five thousand years in the countries of the Ancient East, the lands of the Bible have stood firm.

The Near Eastern centers of civilization in the period before Abraham were Egypt and Mesopotamia; the cities of Memphis and Babylon were the London and New York of the Ancient Near East. The backbone of these two lands was their rivers, along which cities grew up and nations were engendered. The river Nile made Egypt; the Tigris and Euphrates rivers produced Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria. Without the rivers, and the flat plains sheathing them, these nations could not have been born. Long before Israel had been even conceived, civilizations of enduring accomplishments had flourished and fallen. To these cultural centers of Egypt and Mesopotamia we owe the invention of writing and the beginnings of many of the literary, political, military, engineering, and astronomical arts we take for granted today.

In the third millennium B.C.E. (before the common era) while the Nile land and the land between the Tigris and Euphrates were prospering, Canaan was hardly more than a "place in the road" between the big cities. It was a narrow strip of land along the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea which joined Egypt with the land of Mitanni, later Syria. Prior to the second millennium this land, dotted with settlements called city-states, was not yet called Canaan; it was not unified, and it was not under the rule of any one country, although Egypt considered it in her sphere of influence.

The southern part of Canaan, later called Palestine, also had a river, the Jordan, for its spine. However, the very deep riverbed of the Jordan, with lofty plateaus to the east and high mountains to the west, made it of little use for agricultural purposes. The Jordan did not annually inundate broad alluvial plains as did the Nile, but large annual rainfall in Canaan, west of the mountains and north of Jerusalem, did make it a land flowing with milk and honey, especially for its neighbors who dwelt in the southern deserts of Negeb and Sinai and in the deserts east of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Since Canaan was the connecting link between Mesopotamia and Egypt, it became a well-traveled country. A fertile land of hills and valleys, Canaan was destined to be coveted by the homeless, the hungry, and the ambitious conqueror.

## ABRAHAM AND THE PATRIARCHS

In the latter part of the E.B. (Early Bronze Age) and through the M.B. (Middle Bronze Age, migrations of people were not uncommon in the Near East. At the end of the E.B. period a group of "westerners," the Amorites, took over the city-states of Mesopotamia as well as the city-states of Canaan. These Bedouin-type peoples may have come originally from the Syrian desert. Archaeological excavations and literary sources indicate that their penetration into the Canaanite cities was not always peaceful. Others besides the Amorites were probably moving into Canaan at this time also. It is easy to understand how Abraham could have migrated to Palestine from Mesopotamia, for history establishes such migrations as the order of the day in the late E.B. and throughout the M.B. periods.

The Bible connects Abraham with Ur and Charran (or Haran), two cultural and economic centers of Mesopotamia in the M.B. Both cities were under the patronage of the moon god, Sin. It has been shown repeatedly that Abraham's story and the other patriarchal narratives in Genesis reflect well the life and times of the M.B. in Palestine. The journey of Abraham from Ur to Palestine has been interpreted as the case of a man following a dream—the dream of a cult and culture free of capricious gods and stifling materialism (e.g. Speiser in *AB Genesis*). The biblical author with his simple faith says, "So Abram set out as the LORD had bidden him" (Gen.12.4). The wanderings of Abram led him down the length of Palestine from Shechem to the Negeb, into Egypt and back to Hebron where he settled at Mamre. The other patriarchal narratives are played out on a stage similar but wider. The stories of Isaac and Jacob require the addition of Transjordan to the stage.

In the last half of the M.B. (1900–1550 B.C.) new waves of people poured into Palestine. From the North came groups of diverse background—Hurrian, Semitic, Indo-Aryan—who flooded into many of the cities of Palestine, moved on, and left behind destroyed towns. Known to the Egyptians as "rulers of foreign countries" (called the Hyksos), this heterogeneous crowd poured into Egypt after their destruction of Canaanite cities. Part of the Hyksos success was due to their use of a new strategic weapon, the lightweight horse-drawn chariot. This weapon, of only limited value in mountainous country, was on the flat lands of Canaan and Egypt, a most formidable military tool in the first half of the second millennium. Between 1750–1550 B.C. the Hyksos played a dominant role in Egyptian affairs. They succeeded in setting up the ruling Fifteenth Dynasty and established as their capital, Avaris (which is possibly Zoan–Tanis). The entrance of Joseph and his brothers into Egypt is frequently associated with this south-westerly sweep of Semites, Hurrians, and Indo-Aryans who composed the Hyksos multitude. In Egypt the ancestors of the Israelites increased and multiplied and filled the land of Goshen until Pharaoh was frightened by the population explosion of the Hebrews. Accordingly, the Pharaohs made slaves of these fertile Semites. With their labor, building projects were undertaken and cities constructed. Some of the Semite slaves undoubtedly belonged to a class of people called *Hap/biru*, which name has recurrently been considered to be related etymologically to the word "Hebrew."



## THE EXODUS

From slavery in Egypt the Hebrews were liberated, probably in the reign of Ramesses II (1290–1224 B.C.). The Bible gives the belief of ancient Israel that this liberation was accomplished by the power of God who used Moses and Aaron as his spokesmen, and nature as his instrument. To tell what actually happened at the Exodus through the Reed Sea (not Red Sea as is found in the Greek text), is impossible for the historian, just as it is impossible for the geographer to locate with certainty the Reed Sea. The usual localizations of the sea are at the southern tip of Lake Menzaleh or in the vicinity of the Bitter Lakes. The data in the Old Testament on the route of the Exodus presents difficulties and irreconcilable conflicts. This much is certain, that by 1220 B.C. there was a people called "Israel" that had either escaped or had been expelled from Egypt. Lending credence to this conviction are these words on the Merneptah Stele (line 55): "Israel is laid waste; his seed is not."

These fugitives from Egypt, ancestors of the Israelites, had certain experiences in the desert of Sinai which determined all later history of Israel. At Mount Sinai (the exact location is uncertain) God revealed himself to this group and made known his will for them through Moses. Historians cannot determine what events were acts of God; they can, however, determine what a people believed about certain events. Israel believed, and her historians asserted, that God had made a "treaty" with them at Mount Sinai and that, like all treaties, it bound Israel to definite obligations toward God and neighbor. This treaty (in biblical language, covenant) was associated with Sinai in Israelite tradition. Whether the "treaty format" can be found in Exodus chs. 19–24; or whether the conceptualization of God's relationship to Israel as a covenant partner in the twelfth century B.C. is reliable or anachronistic; or, just when the notion of covenant became widespread in Israel, are matters of warm scholarly debate. Regardless of the answers to these questions, however, this can be said: some of the oldest records of Israel (e.g. Judges ch. 5 and Exodus ch. 15) do speak of one God, the LORD, Yahweh, as active in the nation's history.

After a generation of roaming in the desert the Israelite rebels entered the land of Canaan. The biblical narrative speaks of the entrance into Canaan as coming from Transjordan because Moses and his followers had been unsuccessful in their attempted entry from the South. Detoured from this southern penetration at Arad the Israelites traveled either the highlands of Edom and Moab, or else the deserts east of Edom and Moab, to arrive at the plains of Moab, just east of Jericho. According to biblical tradition Moses died at Mount Nebo at this time, and was succeeded by Joshua who led the children of Israel into the land of promise.

## OCCUPATION OF THE LAND

The Book of Joshua gives the clear impression that the Israelites captured Canaan by quick military conquest. Careful historical study suggests, rather, that the sons of Israel first moved, more or less peacefully, into the mountainous regions in central Palestine and then gradually spread throughout the land. The

slow infiltration led to a gradual assimilation of Canaanite culture, and a consequent transformation of the religious and political practices of the Canaanites to conform with their own faith. Rather than a war of conquest, there were limited battles, local engagements, incidental to the slow settlement of the Israelites in the land.

Moreover, insights gained from archaeological excavations (especially at Jericho, Gibeon, and Shechem) have helped us understand the biblical narrative of the conquest as a kind of epic. Some of the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan may have been ethnically related to the incoming Hebrews. It is possible that a flight from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Canaan had been made by many Semite serfs even before the time of Moses. Perhaps the Hebrews who entered Canaan under Joshua received a welcome on reunion with relatives already in the land; the peaceful occupation of Shechem by the forces of Joshua seems to hint that such was the case (compare Josh.8.30–35).

Particular sections within Canaan resisted Hebrew capture; these were the five principal Philistine cities: Gaza, Gath, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron. At the beginning of the Iron Age (1200 B.C.) the Philistines had settled on the Canaanite coast around Gaza. This people is part of a larger group referred to as “the Sea Peoples” whose place of origin is unknown, though Crete is often suggested. The introduction of iron into the Canaanite economy was due to these Philistines and because of their greater technology in weaponry and toolmaking they were a perennial threat to the Israelites until their power was broken by David. They gave their name to the land, Philistia–Palestine.

From the death of Joshua to the time of the first king, Saul, was a period of about 200 years (1200–1020 B.C.). During this time of Israelite consolidation in Canaan the tribes of Israel were ruled by “judges.” Such judges were charismatic leaders, designated to command the people in time of military need. The political organization of Israel in this period was based on a religious unity expressed both by the maintenance of a commonly recognized shrine (e.g. Shiloh), and by a sociological unity expressed by acknowledged membership in a tribe. The historical antecedents of the twelve tribes are clouded in uncertainty, but whatever be their origins, they formed the federation of Israel and the tribal organization persisted until replaced by a new form of government, monarchy. The land claims of the twelve tribes of Israel are extremely complex; modern interpretations of both their historical and geographic values are disparate.

## RISE OF THE MONARCHY

The Book of Judges closes with the complaint, “In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” Hebrews, like the author of this verse, wanted a monarchy; others passionately resisted kingship in Israel. Nevertheless, with the designation of Saul as king by the popular Samuel, as commanded by God (see 1 Sam.9.15–16), a monarchy came to Israel.

Kingship is an old institution in the Near East where it originated at the beginning of the third millennium from the need for a war leader. To the Hebrews of the eleventh century the charismatic “judges” did not seem adequate for main-

taining security; a permanent leader was needed. In the face of hostile pressure from the Philistines and a need for law and order, Israel adopted a monarchical form of government. Even after the adoption of a monarchy, however, the king, in Israel, needed divine approval mediated by a prophet.

The greatest of the kings in Israelite history and tradition was David. Widespread tales depicted his rise from shepherd to warrior and giant-killer, from musician and poet to king. Included in David's biography are his attempted assassination by Saul, his leadership of guerrillas in the Judean desert, his recognition first by two southern tribes as king, and then by the northern tribes, thus becoming king of all Israel.

David extended the boundaries of Israel farther than did Saul or subsequent kings. Longitudinally the boundaries were thought of as from Dan in the North to Beersheba in the South, 150 miles as the crow flies; David's territory exceeded this. Also, by subjugating all of Transjordan from Aram to Edom he more than doubled the width of his kingdom. (From the Sea of Galilee to the coast is 30 miles, from the northern tip of the Dead Sea to the coast is 50.)

Acceptance as king by both the North and the South required David to exhibit fairness to both. As a sign of belonging to both, yet owned by neither, David chose as his capital a non-Israelite town, Jerusalem, on the common border. It then became the chief political city of Judah, David's city, and after the Temple was built by David's son, Solomon, it became also the religious center of the united kingdom of all Israel.

Solomon reorganized the nation so that the remnants of the tribal federation were repressed. Through his successful political machinations and economic adventures peace and prosperity prevailed under him. Yet his was a despotic rule. High taxation and the limitation of individual liberty through forced labor were so characteristic of Solomon's reign that the division of the nation into two kingdoms after his death came readily. Despite the influence of the new Temple in Jerusalem, it could not counterbalance the revulsion away from the tyrannical ways of foreign kings.

## THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Solomon was succeeded by Rehoboam, against whom the northern tribes rebelled, with the leader, Jeroboam, becoming their king. The border tribe Benjamin joined Judah in loyalty to Rehoboam, while the other tribes and the Transjordan lands were loyal to the North. Judah was, accordingly, much smaller and more homogeneous than the Northern Kingdom; perhaps that is why throughout the history of Judah only one dynasty, David's, ruled, while in Israel to the North no dynasty survived longer than three generations. Assassination ended the lives of numerous kings of the North, for coups d'état were sporadic.

As the Arameans (Syrians), led especially by Damascus, became strong, Israel had to concern herself with defense against attacks from her northern neighbors. This particular threat to Israel was removed by the rising power of the neo-Assyrian Empire which became the master of satellite states in the neighborhood of Palestine after the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C.

The most prestigious royal line in Israel was that of Omri. For this reason the nation Israel in contemporary extrabiblical documents is called "the house of Omri." This dynasty (878–858 B.C.) selected Samaria as its capital. Religious centers were erected, at Dan in the northern edge, and Bethel in the southern extreme. The leaders of the North hoped that these two shrines would satisfy the religious needs of the Israelites, and obviate pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the capital of the South, and a reminder of the earlier national unity.

A number of charismatic individuals, known as prophets, appeared in Palestine. At times ecstatic, frequently antimonarchical, sometimes living in communities but more often loners, occasionally employed at a temple but most often anticlitic, the prophets spoke the word of Yahweh to their contemporaries, often in judgment and condemnation.

From the early ninth century, Assyrian domination spread in the Near East. At the battle of Qarqar the Assyrians defeated a coalition of Syrian and Palestinian armies. Thereafter, Assyria was a constant bridle on the independence of Israel, Judah, and the Arameans. For the next century city-states of the region attempted to free themselves from the Mesopotamian net. When, about 734 B.C., Damascus and Israel failed to persuade Judah to unite with them in a revolt against Assyrian rule, the two allied states resorted to pressure on the South for its participation. King Ahaz of Judah, frightened by these forceful neighbors, called for help to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. This monarch, named Pul in the Bible, marched westward in response, and this campaign was the beginning of the end for Israel (732 B.C.). Pul divided Syria into five provinces, each subject to an Assyrian governor, while the upper part of Israel became the Assyrian provinces of Dor, Megiddo, and Gilead. After the disasters of 732 B.C., Israel suicidally continued to seek liberation by political as well as by military means. Such machinations, however, so provoked Assyria that Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria in 724 B.C. Two years later Shalmaneser's general and successor, Sargon II, devastated stubborn Samaria. Thousands of Israel's citizens were deported to the east, and Israel ceased to exist as an independent state. After 722 B.C. biblical history is the story of Judah.

From Qarqar (853 B.C.) to the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.), Assyria dominated the Near East. In the year 612, the Babylonians and the Medes leveled Nineveh, the Assyrian capital.

From Samaria's collapse in 722 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., 135 years later, religious infidelity was, according to the Hebrew prophets, a constant phenomenon. The cultural assimilation of Yahwism to Canaanite fertility cults, the bending of Hebrew values to Mesopotamian and Canaanite ways of life, and the imitation of Egyptian and Assyrian methods of power politics were the grounds for the prophetic indictment of the nation. Occasional religious reformations, such as those under Hezekiah (about 705 B.C.) and Josiah (621 B.C.), did not last long, and the just punishment of God, said the prophets, must certainly come. When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, subjected Judah to his rule, and his general Nebuzaradan burned Jerusalem and dismantled her walls in 587 B.C., the oracles of doom spoken by the prophets were considered fulfilled. For many Judahites the razing of the Holy City occasioned the end of hope in their kings, their nation, and their God. The

Babylonian victors exiled 4,600 Jews to the area around Nippur, with many in Jerusalem believing that finis had been written on the history of Israel.

## EXILE AND RESTORATION

In war-torn Judah, sparsely populated and neglected, the rule by David's line ceased when the royal family was exiled to Babylon with the other deportees. Dwelling along the Chebar Canal in Babylonia, the transplanted Jews adapted to their new situation. A religion without Temple worship was developed; a rethinking of sacred and localized traditions, occasioned by enforced separation from Jerusalem, fostered a new understanding of old laws and produced insightful understanding of remembered prophetic sayings. Secretaries began to record old laws and new interpretations, oracles of deceased prophets, and sermons of living preachers. Out of the successively collected records of Israel's past and the writings of the scribes, the book we now know as the Bible began to take shape.

The Exile ended in 538 B.C. by decree of Cyrus the Great, king of the Persians, conqueror of Babylonia, and liberator of the Jews. Among the returnees to Judah (after 538 B.C.) were the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and the prince Sheshbazzar. They urged the Jewish community to rebuild the Temple, contending that renewed prosperity in the land depended on it. Yet the completion of the Temple in 515 B.C. did not fully satisfy, for the rebuilt structure seemed puny in comparison to Solomon's original.

Governor Nehemiah and Ezra, priest-scribe, came to Jerusalem from Babylon about the middle of the fifth century (but see Introduction to Ezra). In the religious chaos of that period both labored heroically to keep Jews faithful to God. Such efforts included a ban on mixed marriages. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, in spite of strong opposition from neighboring peoples like the Samaritans. The repatriated lived in the villages and cities located near Jerusalem. The settlement farthest from Jerusalem was less than thirty miles away. This clustering around Jerusalem reflects the insecurity of the Jews who had returned from Exile.

Palestinian sources from the time of Ezra–Nehemiah (450–390 B.C.) until the time of the Maccabees (168 B.C.) are so scarce that the fourth century in Judah is a dark age to us. From Greek sources much is known about the battles of Persians against Greeks at this time, and about the subsequent ascension to power of Alexander the Great, who subjected the entire Near East; many Hellenistic cities were developed in Palestine after Alexander crushed Gaza and Samaria in 332 B.C.

The motto of Alexander was "harmony"; hence, religious toleration and a modicum of political liberty were allowed in the conquered satrapies. When Alexander died at Babylon in 323 B.C., however, his generals began immediately to divide the empire which Alexander had formed. After the bickering and quibbling, one general, Seleucus, received Syria and Mesopotamia, while Egypt went to another, Ptolemy, son of Lagos. Palestine, in between the two, was disputed territory.

Though after the battle of Ipsus (301 B.C.) the Seleucidians were awarded

Palestine, the Ptolemies of Egypt actually controlled the land until 198 B.C. when Antiochus III, after a victory at the battle of Paneas, drove the Egyptians from Palestine. Under the Ptolemies the Jews had enjoyed religious autonomy. Given the right to emigrate, a colony had settled in Alexandria and prospered there. To this Greek-speaking Jewish community we owe the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, the first part of which translation is often dated in 250 B.C.

In Judea, however, conditions under the Seleucids were disquieting. The monarchs had a chronic need for money, because of large indemnities due to lost wars. The extortion of money from subjects marked the reigns of Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.) and Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.). Much of this income the Seleucids paid to Rome, which had newly become a force in the Near East. Rome, unhurriedly but firmly, annexed Seleucid possessions from the time of her first victory over the Greeks in Asia (Magnesia) in 190 B.C.; in 64 B.C. Pompey occupied Damascus and established the Roman province of Syria.

### THE MACCABEES

From the Judean standpoint, the worst of the Seleucids was Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Not only a robber of temples, he was also a tyrant who encouraged religious persecution and fostered cultural domination by Hellenism. Proclaiming himself a manifestation of Zeus, he erected an altar to his patron deity in the Jerusalem Temple. Revolt erupted, led by the zealous Mattathias and his five sons. The Maccabees attracted the zealous faithful to their guerrilla army. Three years of resistance under the leadership of Judas, the son of Mattathias, climaxed when the Maccabees liberated Jerusalem. The Temple was then repaired and purified (in December 164 B.C.) and its reopening thereafter observed as the Feast of Hanukkah (rededication). The Maccabeans had founded a dynasty.

The struggle for freedom, first under Judas, next under his brother Jonathan, then under another brother, Simon, occupied the following three decades for the Jews. Accounts of alliances, intrigues, raids, and negotiations are recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Not all Judeans agreed with the Maccabees' viewpoint. Some, for example, hospitable to Hellenistic culture, actively pursued it. At the other extreme the Hasidim (pious) neither wanted nor tolerated contact with Hellenism. The strict observance of the Law marked the Pharisees, a separatist group growing at this time, while the aristocratic and priestly Sadducees were receptive to the worldliness of the Greeks. On the fringes of Judean society, the Zealots wanted independence at any price; the Essenes chose to withdraw from normal living to the Qumran area of the wilderness. The multiplicity and diversity of socioeconomic, political, and religious viewpoints found in post-Maccabean Judaism urge that one be wary of facile, and hence false, simplifications of Judaism in the age of Jesus.

Rome, though present in the Near East after 198 B.C., did not frequently interject herself into Palestinian affairs during the reigns of the Maccabean monarchs. Busy with more dangerous enemies, and striving for richer spoils, Rome was not to be distracted by hinterland squabbles.

But irreconcilable conflicts among Jerusalem Jews occasioned the loss of Judean independence to the Romans. In 69 B.C., when the Jewish queen-mother,

Salome Alexandra, died, her two sons vied for the throne. Civil war resulted. One son, Hyrcanus II, accepted the support of, or machinations by, the Herodian family; the other had the backing of the Sadducees and of "nationalists." Pompey, wanting the civil strife in Jerusalem stopped, dispatched a peace mission to Jerusalem. When it failed, Pompey himself came to the Holy City, stopped the fighting by force, installed Hyrcanus as high priest of the Temple, and annexed Palestine to the province of Syria. The Roman legate at Syria became the (official) ruler of Judea.

Upheavals in Rome such as those during the Catiline conspiracies, the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., the rise of Augustus Caesar, and the love affair of Marc Antony with Cleopatra of Egypt all impinged on the Judean throne. Yet through all these tumultuous events, the family of Herod managed to retain the favor of those in power in Rome. This family, of Idumean extraction, was one of the most devious political families of antiquity. Accordingly, Herod the Great was named king of Judea by Augustus Caesar in 40 B.C., but actually began to reign three years later, and reigned until 4 B.C. A vassal of Rome, Herod was subject directly to the Emperor, rather than indirectly through the provincial governor of Syria. Herod used his direct access to Caesar with cunning, for Roman power and favor were the pillars of his kingdom. After his death, Caesar divided the territories, by now vastly increased, among Herod's three sons.

### CHRISTIAN BEGINNINGS

Christianity began within Judaism. And, although a significant part of the Christian movement was oriented to the Gentile world by the mid-first century, its history is intricately related to the experience of Judaism for most of the first century. Jesus of Nazareth was, of course, a Palestinian Jew. Born shortly before the demise of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., Jesus died during the period when Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea (26-36 A.D.). Our knowledge of Jesus' career is almost wholly dependent on the canonical Gospels. From a modern perspective, the traditions about Jesus preserved in the Gospels are both too meager and insufficiently circumstantial to permit the writing of a biography; nothing is known of his childhood that contributes to the understanding of his "development"; a sequence which would allow us to trace the unfolding of his career cannot be wrested from the sources. The Gospels were composed completely from the viewpoint of faith and reflect that faith in every line. Nevertheless, behind the figure to whom faith testifies, there is a recognizable human subject: Jesus' career was that of an itinerant teacher; the center of his message was the dawning of the Kingdom of God; his career was marked by fraternal association with sinners, whom many righteous people considered beyond the pale but to whom he proclaimed God's forgiveness; he performed mighty works; he was apparently somewhat lax about Sabbath observance; his death by crucifixion can only mean that he was condemned as an enemy of the state by Roman authorities.

Shortly after his death some of his disciples had experiences which convinced them that Jesus had been raised from the dead and began to proclaim him as the

Christ (Messiah). At first the movement remained within Judaism, distinguished by the belief that he was the Messiah, and by rites which included initiation by baptism and the sharing of a sacred meal. The impulse to share what these early disciples called the “good news” soon led to a mission beyond Palestine among non-Jews which resulted in the dramatic establishment of predominantly Gentile churches. By the middle of the first century the Gentile question (whether non-Jews could become Christian without submitting to circumcision and Jewish laws of purity) required a “Council” in Jerusalem, at which time Paul (himself a former Pharisee) was recognized as leader of the Gentile mission. The decision to admit Gentiles without requiring full compliance with Jewish legal requirements was adopted as a compromise but was in effect a victory of the Gentile mission. Nevertheless, the church continued to maintain its (doubtless strained) ties with Judaism, whose Scriptures (the Old Testament) it has shared over the centuries.

Through most of the first century, the story of the land of Palestine was one of restive Jewish submission to Roman domination. Living in a land covenanted to them by a God who intended their freedom, Palestinian Jews found foreign domination unnatural and eventually intolerable. In 66 A.D. the province revolted. The rebellion was suppressed in 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was taken by the Roman general Titus and the Temple was destroyed. A handful of Jews held on at the desert fortress, Masada, until it also fell in 73 A.D. During the conflict there was an exodus of Jews and Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.

The destruction of the Temple is a critical date for both Judaism and Christianity. After 70 A.D. the synagogue became the sole center of Jewish culture, as pharisaism-rabbinism attained full ascendancy in Jewish affairs. Before the end of the century, a normative list of sacred books (the Old Testament) was developed. Oral materials used in synagogue teaching began to be collected and recorded, eventuating in rabbinic literature.

In Christianity also, the period following 70 A.D. was a time of new development. The tension between synagogue and church increased and finally became a gap which separated the two, as the church became predominantly Gentile. There was a fresh outbreak of Christian literary activity—including the writing of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Paul’s letters (originally written around 50 A.D.) were collected, copied, and circulated. Out of the literary activity of the last quarter of the first century, the New Testament began to emerge.

The tragedy of Judea was still not at an end. In 132 A.D. the Emperor Hadrian’s order that a new city, *Aelia Capitolina*, be built on the ruins of Jerusalem brought on the so-called second revolt. The leader of the Jewish insurgents was popularly known as Bar-Cochba (Son of a Star), a nickname which apparently was related to the expectation that he might be the Messiah and deliverer of Israel. After three bloody years, the Roman legions again subdued the land and Jerusalem was rebuilt as a monument to Hadrian. Jews were no longer allowed in the city.

But beyond the city and the land, both Jews and Christians lived out their chosen lives and planted in the Mediterranean world a seed that was integral to the flowering of subsequent Western civilization.



# RECKONING TIME

## CHRONOLOGY

The ancient world produced no universal system of chronology. Rather, the method by which the time of an event's occurrence was recorded varied from culture to culture. In Babylon and Assyria, for example, each year was named after a different public official, and the events of the year were identified with the eponym (i.e. the name of the person associated with that year). Lists of the sequence of such eponyms were preserved and used as a basis for reckoning the length of time between events in those countries.

Frequently, events were dated by reference to the reigning monarch's accession to the throne; for example, "In the fourth year of Solomon's reign" (1 Kgs.6.37); "in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius" (Lk.3.1). This was true in Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, and Palestine.

Only relatively late did the "era" come into use. In an era, time is reckoned from an important event or a given point. Thus, for a while the Exodus served as the point from which time was calculated by the Israelites (Exod.16.1; Num.9.1; 1 Kgs.6.1).

A non-Jewish era used for reckoning time in Jewish history was the so-called Seleucid, which began in 312 B.C. (1 Macc.1.10; 2 Macc.1.7; 11.21). It was named for Seleucus Nicator who founded the Seleucid Kingdom in Syria after the death of Alexander the Great and the division of his empire, the major part of which was acquired by Seleucus.

It was usual for Roman historians to date events *ab urbe condita* ("from the founding of the city" of Rome), this indicated by the letters A.U.C. That date is generally fixed in terms of the Christian era at 753 B.C. The Greeks reckoned time by Olympiads, which were the four-year periods between Olympic contests in athletics, poetry, and music; the first Olympiad began in 776 B.C.

The Christian era is now generally used to construct a universal chronology. It is measured from the birth of Christ and indicated by the letters B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (anno Domini—in the year of our Lord—after Christ). Its use dates back to the sixth century A.D. when "Dennis the Short," a Roman monk, computed the birth of Christ to have occurred in 754 of the Roman era (A.U.C.). Dennis' computations, however, have been proved partly in error, so that the birth of Jesus is given by modern scholars about 6 B.C.

Today we can usually establish the dates of the reigns of kings of the Ancient Near East rather accurately in terms of the Christian era (that is, B.C. and A.D.) by correlating data concerning regnal years left by Babylon and Egypt, and by translating the results in terms of the chronology of Greece and Rome.

After the fifteenth century A.D., the Jewish community has normally used an older, sporadic chronology based on an era beginning with (the supposed date of) creation, which in Christian chronology would have been 3,761–3,760 B.C. This number was arrived at by computing such elements as the ages of the

patriarchs and the length of the reigns of kings as given in the Bible. In both Jewish and some non-Jewish usage, B.C.E. (before the common era) supplants B.C. and A.C.E. (after the common era) supplants A.D.

Certain Hebrew dates differ among scholars; for example, the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians is sometimes 587 B.C. and sometimes 586 B.C. The explanation for the disagreement is as follows: A year, e.g. 1925, in terms of the Western calendar, runs from January through December. Since the Hebrew calendar runs from fall to fall, the Hebrew equivalent of 1925 would in part be 5265 and in part 5266. Because of the lack of direct equivalence, some scholars have treated a Hebrew date so as to yield the year 586, while others have arrived at 587 for the same occasion. Either of these would be "correct," for there does not exist a uniform opinion among scholars. Indeed, some have sought to get around the lack of equivalence by a double date, e.g. 722/21 or 587/86.

### THE HEBREW YEAR

The basic Hebrew year had twelve months, each determined by the moon. Since a moon's cycle consists of approximately twenty-nine and a half days, a Hebrew year would contain approximately three hundred and fifty-four days. A solar year, i.e. one determined by the annual revolution of the sun, consists of approximately three hundred and sixty-five and one quarter days. Since it is the solar year which determines the seasons with their agricultural activities (with which the Hebrew festivals of firstfruits and harvest were inseparably bound), periodically another month had to be added to take care of the difference between three hundred and fifty-four and three hundred and sixty-five days. At first the addition of this extra "leap year" month was done for practical reasons, i.e. when it was determined that in a given year the barley would not be ripe for harvest if Nisan, the first month, directly followed the previous twelfth month, Adar. The insertion of the additional month created a leap year of three hundred and eighty-three days. Later a more fixed calendar resulted in a cycle of nineteen years respecting leap years, with every third, sixth, eighth, fourteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth being leap years.

There is evidence of varying Hebrew calendars; in general, however, the Hebrew *religious* year began in the spring with the month of Nisan, also called Abib (March–April; Exod.12.2, 18), while the *civil* year began with the seventh month, Tishri (September–October; Exod.23.16; 34.22; Lev.25.4).

### THE MONTH

The Hebrew month began with the appearance of the new moon as determined by visual observation rather than by astronomical calculation. As mentioned above, the period of the moon's revolution requires twenty-nine and a half days; hence the length of the Hebrew lunar months could be either twenty-nine or thirty days.

The months could be indicated either by number or by name. Ancient Canaanite names for four months occur in the Bible: Abib, the first month (Exod.13.4; 23.15; 34.18; Deut.16.1); Ziv, the second (1 Kgs.6.1, 37); Ethanim,

### *Reckoning Time*

the seventh (1 Kgs.8.2); Bul, the eighth (1 Kgs.6.38). After the Exile, Babylonian names as well as numbers were given to the lunar months; seven of the twelve names occur in the Bible: Nisan (alternate of Abib), the first month (Neh.2.1; Esther 3.7); Sivan, the third (Esther 8.9); Elul, the sixth (Neh.6.15); Kislev, the ninth (Neh.1.1; Zech.7.1); Tebeth, the tenth (Esther 2.16); Shebat, the eleventh (Zech.1.7); Adar, the twelfth (Ezra 6.15; Esther 3.7, 13; 8.12; 9.1, 15, 17, 19, 21).

Since the new moon marked the beginning of a natural division of time, it was observed as a holy day with joy and feasting (1 Sam.20.5); trumpets were blown (Ps.81.3); ordinary work was prohibited (Amos 8.5); additional sacrifices were offered (Num.28.11–14).

### THE WEEK

The Hebrew week consisted of seven days, the only one called by a name being the Sabbath (Mt.28.1); the others were indicated by numbers, e.g. first day. Nothing similar to the institution of the Sabbath existed in Babylon or Egypt. The Sabbath was probably observed even before Sinai (Exod.16.23). Thereafter its observance came to be considered a sign of God's covenant with Israel (Exod.31.12–13).

### THE DAY

Presumably because of the lunar orientation of the calendar, the Hebrews reckoned a day as beginning at sunset and lasting until the following sunset (Gen.1.5; Exod.12.18). Originally the night was divided into three watches (Judg.7.19: "middle watch") and the daylight into three equal parts: morning, noon, and evening (Ps.55.17; Dan.6.10), these sometimes indicated by such terms as "sunrise," "heat of the day" (2 Sam.4.5) or "sunset." Later, the Roman division of the day and night into four parts was used (Mt.14.25 mentions a fourth watch), as was also the division of daylight into twelve hours (Mt.20.1–6; Jn.11.9).



# SELECT INDEX TO PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THEMES IN THE BIBLE

This index is designed to enable the reader to locate *persons, places, and ideas* in the Bible. Biblical books (such as Job, Micah, Isaiah) do not appear, but references are listed to passages of primary significance concerning the men: Job in Ezekiel and James; Micah in Jeremiah; and Isaiah in Kings, Chronicles, and in some of the books of the Apocrypha and the New Testament. Passing mention of principal characters such as even Abraham in Gen.50.24, for example, is not included. Therefore, since the index is necessarily selective, it is suggested that a complete concordance to the Bible be consulted.

- Aaron: Exod.4.14-16, 27-30; 5.1-5; 6.13, 20-27; chs. 28-29; 32; 40.12-15; Lev. chs. 8-10; Num.3.1-4; ch. 12; 16.1-18.20; 20.23-29; Deut.9.20; 10.6; Ps.105.26; Eccles.45.6-22; Lk.1.5; Heb.5.4
- Abaddon: Job 26.6; 28.22; Prov.15.11; Rev.9.11
- Abarim: Num.21.11; 27.12; 33.44-48; Deut.32.49
- Abba: Mk.14.36; Rom.8.15; Gal.4.6
- Abdon: Judg.12.13-15
- Abed-nego: Dan.1.7; 2.49; 3.23; *see also* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego
- Abel: Gen.4.2-8
- Abiathar: 1 Sam.22.20-23; 23.6,9; 30.7; 2 Sam.8.17; 15.24-36; 19.11; 20.25; 1 Kgs.1.7; 2.26-27, 35; Mk.2.26
- Abihu: Exod.6.23; 24.1-9; Lev.10.1-5
- Abijah/Abijam: 1 Kgs.14.31-15.8
- Abimelech (of Gerar): Gen.20.2-21.32; 26.1-33
- Abimelech (Gideon's son): Judg.8.31-10.1
- Abinadab: 1 Sam.7.1; 2 Sam.6.3
- Abishag: 1 Kgs.1.3,15; 2.21-22
- Abishai: 1 Sam.26.6; 2 Sam.2.18,24; 10.10,14; 18.2-12; 21.17; 23.18
- Abner: 1 Sam.14.51; 17.55; 17.55; 26.7,14; 2 Sam.2.12-30; 3.6-4.1
- Abomination of Desolation: Dan.9.27; 11.31; 12.11; 1 Macc.1.54; 6.7; 2 Macc.6.2; Mt.24.15
- Abraham/Abram: Gen.11.26-25.19; 26.5; Exod.3.6.15-16; 32.13; Isa.24.22; 51.2; 63.16; Ezek.33.24; 2 Esd.7.36[106]; Eccles.44.19-23; S. of Three 12; Mt.3.9; Jn.8.56; Rom.4.1-25; Gal.3.6-29; Heb.7.1-10; 11.8,17; Jas.2.21,23
- Absalom: 2 Sam.13.1-19-25
- Abyss: Gen.7.11; Ps.33.7; Lk.8.31; Rom.10.7; Rev.9.11; 20.3
- Achaia: Acts 18.12,27; Rom.15.26; 1 Cor.16.15; 2 Cor.9.2; 11.10; 1 Th.1.7-8
- Achan: Josh.7.1-25
- Achior: Jdt.5.5-21
- Achish: 1 Sam.21.10-15; 27.5-6; 29.2,9; 1 Kgs.2.39-40
- Adam: Gen.1.27-5.5; 2 Esd.3.4-10,20-22; Tob.8.6; Rom.5.12-21; 1 Cor.15.22,45-49; 1 Tim.2.13-14
- Adonijah: 2 Sam.3.4; 1 Kgs.1.5-2.25
- Adoni-zedek: Josh.10.1-3
- Adullam: 1 Sam.22.1; 2 Sam.23.13; Mic.1.15
- Adultery: Exod.20.14; Lev.20.10; Num.5.11-31; Deut.5.18; 22.22-27; Hos.2.2-17; 3.1-5; Mt.5.27-32
- Advocate: Jn.14.16; 15.26; 16.7; 1 Jn.2.1
- Agag: Num.24.7; 1 Sam.15.8-32
- Agrippa: Acts.25.13-26.32
- Agur: Prov.30.1
- Ahab: 1 Kgs.16.28-22.40; 20.1-43; 2 Chr. ch. 18
- Ahasuerus: Ezra 4.6; Esther 1.1-2.4; 3.1,7,12; 6.1-10; 7.1-8.10; Tob.14.15
- Ahaz: 2 Kgs.16.1-20; 2 Chr.28.1-27; Isa.1.1; 7.1-25
- Ahaziah (of Israel): 1 Kgs.22.49-53
- Ahaziah (of Judah): 2 Kgs.8.25-29; 9.21-28; 2 Chr.22.1-9
- Ahijah: 1 Kgs.11.29-39; 12.15; 14.2-18; 2 Chr.9.29
- Ahikar: Tob.1.121; 11.18; 14.10
- Ahithophel: 2 Sam.15.12; 16.20-22; 17.1-23
- Ai: Gen.13.3; Josh.7.2-8.29
- Ajalon: Josh.10.12-13
- Akeldama/Blood Acre: Mt.27.8; Acts 1.19
- Alcimus: 1 Macc.7.5-25
- Alexander the Great: 1 Macc.1.1-8
- Aliens: Gen.23.4; Exod.2.22; 12.48-49; 18.3; 20.10; Lev.17.15; 19.33; Num.15.14-15; 19.10; Deut.7.3; 14.21; 10.19; 27.19; 1 Kgs.9.15-23; Ezra 10.2; Pss.94.6; 119.19; Ezek.47.22-23; Mal.3.5; Eph.2.12,19
- Alms: Tob.4.7-11; Eccles.3.30; 7.10; 12.1-7; 18.15-18; Mt.6.2-4; 19.21; *see also* Charity
- Alpha and Omega: Rev.1.8; 21.6; 22.13
- Altar: Exod.20.24-26; 24.6-8; 27.1-8; 30.1-10; 37.25-38.7; Num.7.10-89; Deut.27.5-8; Josh.8.30-31; 22.10-34; 1 Kgs.6.20-22; 1 Chr.21.18-22.1; Ezra 3.2-3; Ezek.43.13-27
- Amalek: Gen.36.12; Exod.17.8-16; Deut.25.17; 1 Sam.15.1-33
- Amaziah: 2 Kgs.14.1-22
- Ammon/Ammonites: Gen.19.38; Deut.23.3-4; Judg.10.9-11.33; 2 Sam.10.1-11.1; 12.26-31; 1 Kgs.11.1-7; Neh.13.23; Jer.49.1-6
- Amnon: 2 Sam.3.2; 13.1-33
- Amon: 2 Kgs.21.18-26
- Amorites: Gen.10.16; 15.16; Deut.20.17; Josh.3.10
- Anak: Num.13.33; Deut.9.2; Josh.15.14; Judg.1.20
- Anakim: *See* Nephilim
- Ananias (High Priest): Acts 23.2-24.1
- Ananias (and Paul): Acts 9.12-17
- Ananias (and Sapphira): Acts 5.1-11
- Anathoth: Josh.21.18; 1 Kgs.2.26; Jer.1.1; 11.23; 32.6-12
- Ancient in Years: Dan.7.21
- Andrew: Mt.4.18-20; Mk.1.16-18; Jn.1.40-44; 6.8; 12.22

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Angels: Gen.16.7; 18.1–19.26; 21.17; Exod.3.2; Num.22.22–35; Judg.13.3–23; Zech.1.12–21; 3.1–10; 4.1–3,11–14; 4.6,10; 5.1–11; 2 Esd.6.41; Tob.12.12–15; Pr.M.15b; 2 Macc.11.6; Mt.1.20; Lk.1.11,26,28; 2.8–12; 1 Cor.6.3; Col.2.18; Rev.19.10; 22.9
- Anna (the prophetess): Lk.2.36–38
- Annunciation: Lk.1.26–38
- Anoint: Gen.28.18; Exod.30.22–32; 40.9–15; Lev. 6.20–22; 8.10–12; 10.7; 1 Sam.9.16; 10.1; 16.12–13; 1 Kgs.1.39; 19.15–16; 2 Kgs.9.6; 11.12; Pss.2.2; 45.7; 105.15; Isa.45.1; Dan.9.24; Mk.14.3; Lk.4.18; 7.37–38; Jn.12.3
- Antichrist: 2 Th.2.3; 1 Jn.2.18,22; 4.3; 2 Jn.7; Rev. 11.7; 13.1–18; 17.7–14; 19.19–21
- Antioch: Acts 11.19–30; 13.1–2; 15.22–35; Gal. 2.11–14
- Antiochus IV Epiphanes: Dan.7.8; 8.9–14,23–25; 11.21–45; 1 Macc.1.10–64; 2 Macc.4.7–10.9
- Apehek: 1 Sam.4.1–11; 29.1; 1 Kgs.20.29–30; 2 Kgs. 13.17
- Apollos: Acts 18.24–28; 1 Cor.1.12; 3.4–6,22; 4.6; 16.12; Tit.3.13
- Apollyon: Rev.9.11
- Apostles: Mt.10.2–16; Lk.6.13–16; Jn.1.40–42; Acts 1.15–26; 15.2–29; Rom.1.1; 16.7; 1 Cor.9.1–12; 12.28–29; 13.28; Gal.1.1,17,19; 2 Pet.3.2; *see also* Disciples
- Aquila: Acts 18.2,26; Rom.16.3; 1 Cor.16.19; 2 Tim.4.19
- Aram/Aramaeans: Gen.10.22; 24.10; Deut.3.14; 26.5; Josh.12.5; 13.11; 1 Sam.14.47; 2 Sam. 8.3,10; 10.6; 1 Chr.18.3,5,7,9; 19.6
- Areopagus: Acts 17.19–23
- Ark of the Tokens (Covenant): Exod.25.10–25; 37.1–9; 40.19–21; Num.10.33–36; 14.44–45; Deut.10.1–6,8; Josh.3.14–15; 4.11; Judg.6.11; 1 Sam.3.3–7.2; 2 Sam.6.1–17; 1 Kgs.8.1–9; Ps.132.6–10; Jer.3.16–17; 2 Macc.2.4–8
- Ark, Noah's: Gen.6.14–8.19
- Armageddon: Rev.16.16
- Arnun: Num.21.13–14; 22.36; Deut.2.24; Judg.11.26; Isa.16.2; Jer.48.20
- Aroer: Num.32.34; 1 Sam.30.28; 2 Sam.24.5; Jer. 48.19
- Arpad: 2 Kgs.18.34; 19.13; Isa.10.9; 36.19; 37.13; Jer.49.23
- Artaxerxes: Ezra 7.1–26; 1 Esd.2.16–30
- Asa: 1 Kgs.15.11–24
- Asaph: 1 Chr.25.1–8; 2 Chr.29.30; 35.15; Neh.12.46
- Ascension of Jesus: *See* Jesus, Ascension of
- Ashdod: 1 Sam.5.1–8; 2 Chr.26.6; Neh.13.23–24; Isa.20.1; Jer.25.20; Amos.1.8; 3.9; Zeph.2.4; Zech.9.6
- Asher: Gen.30.13; 49.20; Num.1.41; 2.27; 13.13; Deut.27.13; 33.24; Josh.19.24–31; 21.6; Judg. 5.17; 6.35; 7.23; 1 Kgs.4.16; 1 Chr.12.36
- Asherah: Judg.3.7; 6.25–32; 1 Kgs.18.19
- Ashkelon: Judg.1.18; 14.19; 1 Sam.6.17; 2 Sam.1.20; Jer.25.20; 47.5; Amos.1.8; Zeph.2.4; Zech.9.5
- Asnapper: Ezra 4.10
- Asshur/Assyria: Gen.2.14; 10.22; 25.18; Num.24.24; 2 Kgs.16.7–9; 17.3; 19.36; Isa.8.1–9.1; 10.5–19; 14.24–26; Mic.5.6; Zeph.2.13
- Astrologers: Isa.47.13–15; Dan.2.2; 4.7; 5.7
- Athaliah: 2 Kgs.8.26; 11.1–16
- Atonement: *See* Expiation; Purification
- Atonement, Day of: Lev.16.1–34; 23.26–32; 25.9; Num.29.7–11
- Authority: Mt.7.29; 8.9; 21.23; Mk.1.22; 10.42; 11.27–28; Lk.4.36; 7.8; 9.1; 22.25; Jn.5.27; Acts 8.27; 9.14; 26.10–12; 1 Cor.15.24; 2 Cor. 10.8; 1 Tim.2.2,12; Ti.2.15; 1 Pet.3.22; Rev.13.2
- Azariah/Uzziah: 2 Kgs.14.21–22; 15.1–17
- Azazel: *See* Precipice
- Azotus: Acts 8.40; *see also* Ashdod
- Baal: Num. 22.41; 25.3–18; Deut.4.3; Judg.2.11–13; 6.25–32; 1 Kgs.16.31–33; 17.1; 18.17–26; 2 Kgs.1.2–6; Jer.9.13–16; Hos.2.1–17
- Baal of Peor/Baal-peor: Num.25.3–5; Deut.4.3; Ps.106.28–30; Hos.9.10
- Baalzebub (Beelzebub): 2 Kgs.1.2–6; Mt.10.25; 12.24; Mk.3.22; Lk.11.15
- Babel: *See* Babylon
- Babel, Tower of: Gen.11.1–9
- Babylon: Gen.10.10; 11.9; 2 Kgs.17.30; 20.12–18; chs. 24; 25; Ezra 1.1–2.1; Isa.13.1–14.23; chs. 39; 47; 48.20–22; Jer.25.1–14; 39.1–14; chs. 50–52; Dan.4.30; 5.30; 1 Esd.1.56; 4.61; 5.7; 2 Esd.3.1,28–31; 14.44; 15.1; Bar.1.2,5; Let. Jer.6.1; Dan. & Su.1; Dan. & Bel.3,23,35–36
- Babylon (Rome): 1 Pet.5.13; Rev.14.8; 16.19; 17.5; 18.2–3
- Balaam: Num.22.5–24.25; 31.8,16; Deut.23.4–5; Mic.6.5; 2 Pet.2.15; Jude 11; Rev.2.14
- Balak: Num.22.1–8,37–41; 23.1–30; 24.25
- Balm (of Gilead): Gen.37.25; 43.11; Jer.8.22; 46.11
- Ban: Num.31.1–18; Deut.13.12–18; Josh.6.17–21; 1 Sam.15.1–26
- Baptism: Mt.3.1–6,11,13–17; 28.19; Mk.1.4–8; Lk. 3.2–22; Acts 2.38–41; 19.1–5; Rom.6.3–4; 1 Cor.10.2; 12.13; Eph.4.5; Col.2.12; Ti.3.5; 1 Pet.3.21
- Barabbas: Mt.27.16–21,26; Mk.15.7–15; Lk.23.18; Jn.18.40
- Barak: Judg.4.4–16; ch. 5
- Barnabas: Acts 4.36; 11.22–30; 12.25–15.4,22–39; 1 Cor.9.6; Gal.2.13
- Barrenness: Gen.11.30; 25.21; 29.31; Exod.23.26; Judg.13.2–3; 1 Sam.1.2–20; Ps.113.9; Isa.54.1; 2 Esd.9.39–10.24; Lk.1.7,34–36
- Barsabbas: Acts 1.23
- Bartholomew: Mt.10.3; Mk.3.18; Lk.6.14; Acts 1.13
- Bartimaeus: Mk.10.46
- Baruch: Jer.32.13; 36.4–27; 43.6; 45.1–5
- Barzillai: 2 Sam.17.27; 19.31; 1 Kgs.2.7
- Bashan: Num.21.33; Deut.3.1; Ps.68.15,22
- Bathsheba: 2 Sam.11.2–5; 12.24; 1 Kgs.1.1–2.25
- Beatitudes: Mt.5.3–12; Lk.6.20–23
- Beelzebub: Mt.9.24; 10.25; 12.24; Mk.3.22; Lk.11.15; *see also* Baalzebub
- Beersheba: Gen.21.14; 22.19; 26.23–33; 28.10; 46.1; Josh.19.2; 1 Kgs.19.3; Amos 5.5; 8.14
- Bel: Isa.46.1; Jer.50.2
- Belial: Deut.13.13; Judg.19.22; 20.13; 1 Sam.1.6; 2.12; 10.27; 25.17,25; 30.22; 2 Sam.16.7; 20.1; 23.6; 1 Kgs.2.10,13; 2 Chr.13.7; 2 Cor.6.15
- Belshazzar: Dan.5.1–30; 7.1–28; 8.1–27; Bar.1.11
- Belteshazzar: Dan.2.26; 4.8,18; 5.12; 10.1; *see also* Daniel
- Benaiah: 2 Sam.23.22; 1 Kgs.1.32–38,43–44; 2.28–35; 4.4
- Benediction, Apostolic: 2 Cor.13.14
- Benediction, Priestly: Num.6.22–26
- Ben-hadad: 1 Kgs.15.18–20; 20.20–34
- Ben-hinnom, Valley of: Josh.15.8; 18.16; 2 Kgs. 23.10; 2 Chr.28.3; 33.6; Jer.7.31–32; 19.1–6; *see also* Hades; Hell; Sheol

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Benjamin: Gen.35.16–24; 43.14–45.22; 49.27; Deut. 33.12; Judg.19.16–21.24; 1 Sam.9.1
- Beroea: Acts 17.10–13
- Bethany: Mt.21.17; 26.6; Mk.11.1; Lk.19.29; Jn.11.18–44; 12.1
- Bethel: Gen.28.11–19; 35.1; Judg.1.22; 1 Kgs. 12.25–13.10; 2 Kgs.23.15–18; Amos 3.14; 7.10–17
- Bethlehem: Gen.35.16–20; Ruth 1.1–22; 4.11; 1 Sam.16.1–13; Mic.5.2; Mt.2.1–6; Lk.2.4–7; Jn.7.42
- Bethphage; Mt.21.1
- Bethsaida: Mt.11.21; Mk.6.45; 8.22; Lk.9.10–17; Jn.1.44; 12.21
- Beth-shemesh: 1 Sam.6.10–20; 2 Kgs.14.11
- Bethulia: Jdt.4.6
- Bilhah: Gen.29.29; 35.22; 37.2
- Birthright: Gen.25.31; Deut.21.15–17; *see also* Firstborn
- Bishop: 1 Tim.3.1–7; Ti.1.6–9
- Blasphemy: Exod.20.7; Lev.24.11–16; 1 Kgs.21.13; Mt.12.31–32; Mk.3.28–29; Lk.12.10; Jn. 10.33–36; *see also* Curse/Reville
- Blessing: Gen.12.3; 22.17; 27.29; 32.26; 48.3–15; Num.6.24; Deut.15.10; 33.1–29; 1 Cor.10.16; Eph.1.3
- Blood: Gen.9.4–6; Exod.23.18; 24.3–8; Lev.3.17; 7.26; 17.10; 19.26; Deut.12.16; 21.1–9; Mt. 26.28; Lk.22.20; Rom.3.25; 5.9; 1 Cor.11.25–27; Eph.2.13; Col.1.14; Heb.9.12–13.12; 1 Jn.1.7; Rev.7.14; 12.11
- Blood Acre: *See* Akeldama
- Boaz: Ruth 2.1–4.17; Mt.1.5; Lk.3.32
- Bones: Gen.2.23; Prov.25.15; Ezek.37.7; Mt.23.27; Lk.24.39; Jn.19.36
- Bondage: *See* Slavery
- Booths: *See* Feasts/Festivals; Tabernacles, Feast of
- Bozrah: Gen.36.33; Isa.34.6; 63.1; Jer.48.24; 49.12–22; Amos.1.12; Mic.2.12
- Bread: Lev. 7.12–15; Eccles.11.1; Jn.6.30–58; 1 Cor.10.16–17; 11.23–30  
of the Presence (showbread): Exod.25.30; 35.13; Lev.24.5–9; 1 Sam.21.6; Mt.12.3–4; Mk.2.25–26; Lk.6.3–4
- Unleavened: Gen.19.3; Exod.12.8; 13.7; Lev.2.4; 7.12; 8.26; 1 Sam.28.24; 2 Kgs.23.9; *see also* Passover
- Breast-piece (breastplate): Exod.28.15; 39.8; Eph. 6.14; 1 Th.5.8
- Breath: Gen.2.7; 6.17; 7.15; Job 4.9; 12.10; 33.4; Ps.33.6; 104.29; 146.4; 150.6; Isa.2.22; Ezek. 37.7–9; Acts 17.25
- Bribery: Exod.23.2; Deut.16.19; 1 Sam.8.3; Job 15.34; Prov.17.23; 29.4; Mt.26.14–15; 28.12
- Bridegroom: Ps.19.5; Isa.62.5; Mt.9.15; 25.1–13; Mk.2.19–20; Lk.5.34–35; Rev.18.23
- Burning Bush: Exod.3.1–6; Deut.33.16
- Byword: *See* Proverbs
- Caesarea: Acts 8.40; ch. 10; 21.8; 23.23
- Caesarea Philippi: Mt.16.13; Mk.8.27
- Caiaphas: Mt.26.3,57–58; Mk.14.63; Jn.11.49
- Cain: Gen.4.1–26; Wis.10.3–4; Heb.11.4; 1 Jn.3.12
- Cainan/Kenan: Gen.5.9; Lk.3.36
- Caleb: Num.13.6; 13.30–33; 14.6–10; 14.24,30,38; 26.65; 32.12; Deut.1.34–36; Josh.14.6–14; 15.13–18; Judg.1.12–20
- Calendar of Feasts: Exod.23.10–19; 34.18–26; Lev.23.1–44; Deut.16.1–17; *see also* Feasts/Festivals
- Calf, Golden: Exod.32.1–35; 1 Kgs.12.25–33; Ps. 106.19–23; Hos.8.5–6; Acts 7.41
- Calvary: *See* Golgotha
- Cana: Jn.2.1–11; 4.46
- Canaan/Canaanites: Gen.9.18–27; 10.19; 13.7,12; 19.5; 24.3,37; 36.2; 37.1; Exod.6.4; 15.15; Lev.18.3,6–30; Num.27.12; Deut.3.23–27; 32.48; Josh.5.12; ch.14
- Capernaum: Mt.4.13; 8.5; 11.23; 17.24; Mk.1.21; 2.1; Jn.4.46; 6.16,24,59
- Carchemish: 2 Chr.35.20; Jer.46.2
- Carmel: 1 Kgs.18.19–24; 2 Kgs.4.25; Isa.33.9; Amos 1.2; 9.3
- Census: Num. chs. 1; 26; 2 Sam. ch. 24; Lk.2.1–5
- Cephas: *See* Peter
- Chaldeans: 2 Kgs.24.2; 25.4; Job 1.17; Isa.23.13; 43.14; 47.1; 48.14; Jer.50.10; Ezek.23.14–16; Hab.1.6; *see also* Babylon
- Charity: Lev.19.18–20; 25.25–47; Deut.10.19; 15.7; Ps.41.1; Prov.19.17; *see also* Alms
- Chemosh: *See* Kemosh
- Cherub/Cherubim: Gen.3.24; Exod.25.18–20; 1 Sam. 4.4; 1 Kgs.6.23–28; 8.6–7; Ps.18.10; Ezek. 1.5–28; 10.3–22; 28.14–16; 41.18–19
- Chileab: 2 Sam.3.3
- Chinnereth: *See* Galilee, Sea of
- Christ: *See* Messiah
- Christ, Sacrifice of: Heb.9.11–10.18
- Christian (the name): Acts 11.26
- Church: Mt.16.18; Acts 8.1; 9.31; 12.5; Eph.1.22; 5.24–29; Col.1.18,26
- Churl: *See* Folly/Fool
- Cilicia: Acts 15.23,41; 21.39; 22.3; Gal.1.21
- Circumcision: Gen.17.9–27; Exod.4.24–26; 12.44, 48–49; Lev.12.3; Deut.10.16; 30.6; Josh. 5.2–9; Jer.4.3–4; 9.25–26; Lk.1.59; Acts 15.1–29; Rom.2.25–29; 1 Cor.7.18–19; Gal.5.2–6; 6.15; Col.2.11
- Cleanliness: Exod.22.31; Lev. ch. 11; 12.1–8; chs. 13–15; 18.22–30; 21.1–4,11; 22.3–8; Num. 19.6–22; Deut.14.3–21; Isa.1.16; Ezek.36.25; Hag.2.11–14; Mt.15.1–20; Mk.7.1–23; *see also* Defilement; Uncleaness
- Cloud: Exod.13.21; 14.20; 19.9; 24.15–18; 33.9–10; 40.34–38; Lev.16.2; Num.9.15–23; 10.11–12, 33–36; 14.14; Deut.4.11–12; 31.15; 1 Kgs. 8.10–11; Ps.105.39; Mt.17.5; Mk.9.7; Lk. 9.34–35; Acts 1.9; 1 Cor.10.1–2
- Comforter: *See* Advocate
- Commandments, Ten: *See* Ten Commandments
- Commission, The Great: Mt.28.18–20
- Compassion: *See* Pity
- Corban: Mk.7.11–13
- Corinth: Acts 18.1; 19.1; 1 Cor.1.2; 2 Tim.4.20
- Cornelius: Acts 10.1–48
- Council: *See* Sanhedrin
- Council, Apostolic: Acts 15.4–29
- Covenant: Exod.6.2–8; ch.19; 20.22–23.33; 24.1–12; 34.10–28; Deut.5.2–3; chs. 29–30; 31.9–13; Josh.24.1–28; 2 Kgs.11.17–18; 23.1–3; Nch. chs. 9–10; Isa.55.3–5; Jer.11.1–8; Ezek.16.8–14, 59–63; 34.17–31; Hos.2.18–23; 8.1; Bar.2.35; for specific covenants, *see below*
- Covenant:  
with Aaron: Num 18.1–19  
with Abraham: Gen.15.6–21; ch. 17  
with David: 2 Sam.7.5–16; 23.5; Pss.89.3–4,20–37; 132.11–12; Jer.33.19–23  
with Levi: Jer.33.18; Mal.2.4–8  
New: Jer.31.31–34; Mt.26.20–29; Mk.14.22–25;

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- 1 Cor.11.23-25; 2 Cor.3.4-18; Gal.4.21-28; Heb.8.7-13; 9.15  
 with Noah: Gen.6.18; 9.8-17  
 with Phinehas: Num.25.10-13; Eccus.45.23-24  
 Creation: Gen.1.1-2.25; Job 38.3-11; Pss.74.12-17; 89.5-14; Prov.3.19-20; 8.22-31; Isa.45.9-25; 51.9-16; 65.17-18; 66.22; 2 Esd.6.1-6,38-54; 7.7[5]; Wis.11.17; Eccus.39.12-35; 42.15-43.33; 2 Macc.7.28; Rom.4.17; 8.22; 2 Cor.5.17; Gal.6.15; Col.1.16; Heb.11.3; Rev.4.11; 21.1-4  
 Cross/Crucifixion: Deut.21.22-23; Mt.27.15-54; Mk.15.6-38; Lk.23.16-46; Jn.18.29-30; 1 Cor.1.18-24; 2.1-2; Gal.6.14; Eph.2.16; Col.2.13-15; Heb.6.6; 12.2  
 Curse/Revile: Gen.3.14-19; 4.11-12; 9.24-27; Exod.21.17; Deut.11.26-29; 27.14-26; 28.15-46; Job 3.1-10; Ps.109.8-19; Jer.20.14-18; *see also* Blasphemy  
 Cush: *See* Ethiopia  
 Cyprus: Acts 4.36-37; 11.19-20; 13.4-12; 15.39; 27.4  
 Cyrene: Mt.27.32; Mk.15.21; Lk.23.26; Acts 2.10; 6.9; 11.20; 13.1  
 Cyrus the Great: 2 Chr.36.22-23; Ezra 1.1-11; 5.13-15; 6.3-5; Isa.44.28; 45.1-7; 1 Esd.2.1-15; Dan. & Bel. 1  
 Dagon: Judg.16.23; 1 Sam.5.2-7; 1 Chr.10.10; 1 Macc.10.83; 11.4  
 Dalmanutha: Mk.8.10  
 Damascus: Gen.14.14-15; 15.2; 2 Sam.8.5-6; 1 Kgs.11.23-24; 19.15; 2 Kgs.8.7-9; 16.9-13; Isa.7.8; 8.4; 17.1-3; Jer.49.23-27; Ezek.27.18; Amos 1.3-5  
 Dan/Danites: Gen.14.14; 30.6; Num.1.38; 26.42; 34.22; Deut.33.22; Josh.19.40-48; Judg.18.1-31; 20.1; 1 Kgs.12.29; Jer.4.15; 8.16  
 Daniel/Daniel: Ezek.14.14,20; 28.3; *see also* Belshazzar  
 Darius I (the king): Ezra 4.5-6.15; Hag.1.1; 2.1,10; Zech.1.1,7; 7.1; 1 Esd.2.16-30; 3.1-5.6; (4.43-60)  
 Darnel: Mt.13.25-52  
 Dathan: Num.16.1-16; Deut.11.6; Ps.106.17  
 David: Ruth 4.17,22; 1 Sam.16.1-1 Kgs.2.12; 1 Chr. chs. 11-29; Pss.89.3-4,20-37; 132.1-18; Isa.9.7; 55.3; Jer.33.17-26; Amos 9.11; Zech.12.7-13.1; 2 Esd.38[108]; Eccus.47.1-11; Mt.1.1,20; 12.3-4; 21.9; 22.41-46; Mk.2.25-26; 11.9-10; 12.35-37; Lk.1.27; 6.3-4; 20.41-44; Jn.7.40-44  
 Day of the Lord: Isa.13.6-16; 22.5-25; Jer.30.1-9; 46.10; Ezek.7.5-14; 30.1-5; Joel 1.15; 2.28-3.21; Amos 5.19-20; 8.9-10; Obad.15-18; Zeph.1.7-18; 2.2-3; Zech. chs. 12-14; Rom.2.15,16; 1 Cor.1.8; 1 Th.5.2-4; 2 Th.2.1-12; 2 Pet.3.10  
 Deacons: Acts 6.2-6; Phil.1.1; 1 Tim.3.8-13  
 Deborah: Judg. chs. 4-5  
 Death: Gen.3.19; 9.5-6; Deut.30.15-20; Ps.13.3; 23.4; 89.48; 116.3,8,15; Eccus.2.14-16; 6.3; 7.1; Isa.25.7-8; 2 Esd.16.22-23; Wis.1.14-15; 4.7-8; 18.20-25; Eccus.10.11-12; 26.5; Jn.11.1-16; Rom.5.12-17; 6.9; 1 Cor.15.21-25; 1 Th.4.13-18; 2 Tim.1.10; Rev.2.11; 20.6,14  
 Decalogue: *See* Ten Commandments  
 Decapolis: *See* Ten Towns  
 Dedan/Rhodes: Gen.10.7; Isa.21.13; Ezek.27.15  
 Dedication: *See* Feasts/Festivals  
 Deep, The: *See* Abyss  
 Defilement: Gen.34.2-27; 49.4; Exod.31.14; Lev.5.2-3; 11.29-43; 13.45-46; 15.1-31; 21.1,3; Num.19.20; 35.30-34; Deut.21.22-23; Jer.2.7; 3.1-5; 16.18; Ezek.5.7-12; 22.1-16; 23.1-21; Dan.1.8; Mt.15.10-11; Mk.7.1-15; Jn.18.28; *see also* Cleanliness; Uncleaness  
 Delilah: Judg.16.4,18  
 Derbe: Acts 14.6,20; 16.1; 20.4  
 Desert: *See* Wilderness  
 Devil: *See* Satan  
 Diana: Acts 19.24-25  
 Dibon: Num.21.30; Neh.11.25  
 Didymus: *See* Thomas  
 Dinah: Gen. ch. 34  
 Dionysius: Acts ch. 17  
 Diotrefes: 3 Jn.9  
 Disciples: Mt.10.1; 26.56; Mk.2.18; 4.34; 16.7; Lk.6.13; Jn.2.11; Acts 2.41; 4.4; *see also* Apostles  
 Divination: Gen.44.5-15; Lev.19.26; Num.23.23; 24.1; Deut.18.9-13; 1 Sam.28.7; Isa.44.25; Jer.14.14; 27.9-10; Ezek.13.1-9; 21.21-22; Mic.3.5-12; Zech.10.2; Acts 16.16-19  
 Divorce: Deut.24.1-4; Ezra 10.3,44; Jer.3.1,8; Hos.2.2; Eccus.7.26; 25.26; Mt.1.19; 5.31-32; Mk.10.11-12; Lk.16.18; 19.3-9; 1 Cor.7.10-16  
 Doeg: 1 Sam.21.7; 22.18-22  
 Dorcas: Acts 9.36-39  
 Dothan: Gen.37.17; 2 Kgs.6.13  
 Dove/Pigeon: Gen.8.8-11; 15.9; Lev.12.6; 14.22; S. of S.1.15; 2.12-14; 4.1; 5.2; 6.9; Pss.55.6; 66.13; 74.19; Isa.38.14; Jer.48.28; Mt.3.16-18; 21.11-13; Mk.1.10-11; 11.15; Lk.3.22  
 Dragon: *See* Leviathan  
 Dream: Gen.15.12; 28.11-17; 37.5-11; Num.12.6-8; Deut.13.1-5; 1 Sam.3.3-14; Job 33.15-16; Jer.23.25-32; Dan.2.1-45; Wis.18.17-19; Eccus.34.1-8; 2 Macc.15.11-16; Mt.1.20-21; Acts 16.9; 2 Cor.12.1-5  
 Drought: *See* Famine  
 Drusilla: Acts 24.24  
 Dust: Gen.2.7; 3.19; 18.27; Job 2.12; 34.15; Pss.30.9; 103.14; Isa.40.12; Dan.12.2; Mt.10.14; Mk.6.11; Lk.9.5; Acts 13.51; Rev.18.19  
 Earth: Gen.1.10-11; 3.17; 6.12; Exod.9.29; Deut.10.14; 1 Sam.2.8; Job 19.25; 38.4; Pss.72.19; 99.1; Prov.8.23; Eccus.1.4; 12.7; Isa.40.12; 51.16; 66.1; Mt.5.5; Lk.2.14; 1 Cor.15.47; Eph.3.15; 2 Pet.3.7,13; Rev.20.9; 21.1  
 East/East Wind: Gen. 3.24; 41.6-27; Exod.10.13; 14.21; Job 1.3; Ezek.8.16; 43.1-3; 44.1-3; Hos.12.1; 13.15; Mt.2.2; 8.11; Lk.13.29  
 Ebal, Mount: Deut.11.29; 27.4,13; Josh.8.30,33  
 Ebed-melech: Jer.38.7; 39.16  
 Eben-ezer: 1 Sam.4.1-5.1; 7.12  
 Eber: Gen.10.21-24  
 Eden: Gen.2.8-15; 3.23-24; Isa.51.3; Ezek.28.13-16; 31.9,16-18; 36.35; Joel 2.3; *see also* Paradise  
 Edom/Edomites: Gen.25.30; 27.40; 36.1-43; Num.20.14-21; Deut.2.4-8; 23.7; 2 Sam.8.14; 1 Kgs.11.14-25; Pss.60.5-9; 108.6-9; 137.7-9; Isa.34.5-15; 63.1-6; Jer.49.7-22; Lam.4.21-22; Ezek.25.12-14; 35.1-15; 36.5; Amos 1.11-12; Obad.1-14; 1 Esd.4.49-50; 1 Macc.5.3; *see also* Esau  
 Edrei: Num.21.33  
 Eglon: Judg.3.12-30  
 Egypt/Egyptians: Gen.12.10-20; 15.13-14; 16.1; 37.36; 39-40-Exod.15.21; 2 Kgs.14.15; 23.29; Isa. ch. 19; 30.1-11; Jer.37.5; chs. 43-44; Ezek. chs. 29-30; 32; Hos.11.1-5; 1 Esd.1.25-33; 2 Esd.3.17; 16.1; Mt.2.13; Acts 21.38



*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Ehud: *Judg.* 3.12-30  
 Ekron: *Josh.* 13.3; *Judg.* 1.18; *1 Sam.* 5.10-12; 6.17; 17.52-53; *Amos* 1.8; *Zeph.* 2.4  
 Elah (king): *1 Kgs.* 16.8-10  
 Elah (valley): *1 Sam.* 17.1-54; 21.9  
 Elam: *Gen.* 10.22; 14.1; *Jer.* 49.34-39; *Dan.* 8.2  
 Elath: *Deut.* 2.8; 2 *Kgs.* 14.22; 16.6  
 Eldad and Medad: *Num.* 11.26-27  
 Elders: *Exod.* 3.16-18; 24.9-14; *Lev.* 4.15; *Num.* 11.16-17; 22.4; *Deut.* 5.22-31; 27.1; 31.9; *Ruth* 4.2-11; 2 *Sam.* 5.3; *Ezra* 5.5; 6.14; *Ps.* 107.32; *Prov.* 31.23; *Jer.* 29.1; *Ezek.* 14.1-3; *Mt.* 21.23; *Mk.* 11.27; 15.1; *Acts* 4.23; 6.12; 11.30; 14.23; 15.4-23; 16.4; *1 Tim.* 5.17-20; *Ti.* 1.5; *Jas.* 5.14; *Rev.* 4.4,10  
 Eleazar (son of Aaron): *Exod.* 6.23; 28.1; *Lev.* 10.16; *Num.* 16.36-40; 20.25-29; 27.18-23; 31.21-54; 34.16-17; *Deut.* 10.6; *Josh.* 17.4; 24.33  
 Eli: *1 Sam.* 1.17-4.18  
 Eliakim: *See* Jehoiakim  
 Eliashib: *Neh.* 3.1; 13.4  
 Elihu: *Job* chs. 32-37  
 Elijah: *1 Kgs.* chs. 17-19; 21; 2 *Kgs.* 1.1-2.14; 2 *Chr.* 21.12-15; *Mal.* 4.5-6; 2 *Esd.* 7.39[109]; *Ecclus.* 48.1-12; *Mt.* 16.14; 17.3-4,10-13; *Mk.* 8.28; 9.11-13; *Lk.* 1.17; 4.25-26; 9.19; *Jn.* 1.21; *Rom.* 11.2; *Jas.* 5.17  
 Elim: *Exod.* 15.27; 16.1; *Num.* 33.9-10  
 Elimelech: *Ruth* 1.2; 4.3  
 Elisha: *1 Kgs.* 19.16-17,19-21; 2 *Kgs.* 2.1-9.3; 13.14-21; *Ecclus.* 48.12-16; *Lk.* 4.27  
 Elizabeth: *Lk.* 1.5-7,39-45  
 Elkanah: *1 Sam.* ch. 1  
 Elymas: *Acts* 13.6-8  
 Emmaus: *Lk.* 24.13  
 En-dor: *Josh.* 17.11; *1 Sam.* 28.7-14  
 En-Gedi: *1 Sam.* 23.29-24.15; *S. of S.* 1.14; *Ezek.* 47.10; *Ecclus.* 24.14  
 Enoch: *Gen.* 5.17-24; *1 Chr.* 1.3; *Wis.* 4.10-13; *Ecclus.* 44.16; 49.14; *Jude* 14  
 Enosh (Enos): *Gen.* 4.26; 5.6-11; *Lk.* 3.38  
 Ephraim: *Col.* 1.7; 4.12; *Philem.* 23  
 Epaphroditus: *Phil.* 2.25-30; 4.18  
 Ephesus: *Acts* 18.19-20.17; *1 Cor.* 15.32; 16.8; 2 *Tim.* 1.18; *Rev.* 1.11; 2.1  
 Ephod: *Exod.* 28.6-31; 39.2-7; *Judg.* 8.24-28; 17.5; 18.14-20; *1 Sam.* 2.18; 22.18; 2 *Sam.* 6.14; *Hos.* 3.4  
 Ephraim and Manasseh: *Gen.* 41.50-53; *ch.* 48; *Deut.* 33.17; *Josh.* 17.14-18; *Ps.* 78.9,67  
 Ephraim/Ephraim: *Gen.* 35.16; 48.7; *Ruth* 1.2; 4.11; *1 Sam.* 17.2  
 Erastus: *Acts* 19.22; *Rom.* 16.23; 2 *Tim.* 4.20  
 Erech: *Gen.* 10.10; *Ezra* 4.9-10  
 Esarhaddon: 2 *Kgs.* 19.37; *Ezra* 4.2; *Isa.* 37.38; *1 Esd.* 5.69; *Tob.* 1.21-22  
 Esau: *Gen.* 25.22-34; 27.1-45; 33.1-16; *ch.* 36; *Mal.* 1.2-4; *Rom.* 9.11-13; *see also* Edom/Edomites  
 Esdraelon: *See* Jezreel  
 Eshcol: *Gen.* 14.13; *Num.* 13.23-24  
 Eternal Life: *Gen.* 1.9; *Mt.* 19.16-30; 25.46; *Mk.* 10.17-30; *Lk.* 18.18-24; *Jn.* 3.15-16; 6.40-58; *Acts* 13.48; *Rom.* 6.23; *1 Tim.* 6.12,19; *Ti.* 1.2; 3.7; *1 Jn.* 1.2; 2.25; 5.11-12; *see also* Resurrection  
 Ethiopian Eunuch: *Acts* 8.27  
 Ethiopia/Cush: *Gen.* 2.13; 10.6-8; 2 *Kgs.* 19.9; *1 Chr.* 1.8-9; *Esther* 1.1; *Job* 28.19; *Pss.* 68.31; 87.4; *Isa.* 11.11; 18.1; *ch.* 20; 37.9; *Jer.* 46.9; *Amos* 9.7  
 Eucharist: *See* Lord's Supper  
 Eunuch: *Isa.* 56.3-8; *Mt.* 19.10-12  
 Euphrates: *Gen.* 2.14; 15.18; *Deut.* 1.7; 11.24; *Josh.* 1.4; 2 *Sam.* 8.3; 2 *Kgs.* 23.29; 24.7; *Jer.* 46.2-6; 51.60-63; *Rev.* 9.14; 16.12  
 Eutychus: *Acts* 20.9-12  
 Eve: *Gen.* 3.20; 4.1; 2 *Cor.* 11.3; *1 Tim.* 2.1-3  
 Exile: *Deut.* 4.26-28; 30.3-4; 2 *Kgs.* 17.1-16; 24.12-16; 25.8-21,27-30; *Ps.* 137.1-6; *Jer.* ch. 29; 52.12-34; *Ezek.* 12.1-20; *1 Esd.* 2.1-15; *Bar.* 5.1-9  
 Exodus, The: *Exod.* 12.29-15.21; *Deut.* 11.1-5; 26.7-8; *Josh.* 24.5-7; *1 Sam.* 12.8; *Pss.* 78; 105.23-39; 106.8-12; 135.8-9; 136.10-15; *Isa.* 43.16-17; 51.10; 63.11-14; *Jer.* 2.6; *Ezek.* 20.5-8; *Hos.* 11.1; *Mic.* 6.4; 2 *Esd.* 1.12-14; *Jdt.* 5.12-14  
 Expiation: *Exod.* 29.36-37; 30.10; *Lev.* 1.4; 4.1-6.7; 7.1-17; *ch.* 16; 17.11; *Num.* 15.22-28; 35.33; *Deut.* 21.1-19; *Rom.* 3.21-26; *Gal.* 1.4-5; *Heb.* 2.17; 9.11-10.18; *1 Pet.* 1.17-21; 2.24; 3.18; *1 Jn.* 2.2; 4.10; *see also* Ransom/Ransomer; Reconciliation; Redeem/Redemption  
 Extirpation: *See* Ban  
 Ezra: *Neh.* 8.1-9.37; *1 Esd.* chs. 8-9; 2 *Esd.* chs. 1-2  
**Faith:** *Gen.* 12.4; 22.1-19; *Isa.* 26.3-6; *Hab.* 2.4; *Mt.* 9.12; 17.20; *Jn.* 1.12; 3.16; *Rom.* 1.16-17; 3.28; *ch.* 4; *Gal.* 3.2-23; *Heb.* 11.1-12.2; *Jas.* 2.14-26  
**Famine:** *Gen.* 12.10; 26.1; 41.1-49; 43.1; 47.13-22; *Deut.* 28.21-22; 2 *Sam.* 21.1; 24.10-16; 2 *Kgs.* 7.4; 8.1; 25.3; *Job* 5.20; *Ps.* 33.19; *Jer.* 5.12; 14.15-18; 24.10; 27.8; 29.17-18; *Ezek.* 5.12-17; 7.15; *Amos* 8.11; 2 *Esd.* 15.19; 16.46-47; *Mt.* 24.7; *Mk.* 13.8; *Lk.* 15.14; 21.11; *Rev.* 18.8  
**Favour:** *See* God, Grace of  
**Feasts/Festivals:**  
 of Dedication: *1 Macc.* 4.25-59; 2 *Macc.* 10.5-8; *Jn.* 10.22  
 of Passover: *Exod.* 12.1-27,43-49; 13.1-16; *Lev.* 23.5-6; *Num.* 9.2-14; 28.16; *Deut.* 16.1-8; *Josh.* 5.10-11; 2 *Chr.* 30.1-20; 35.1-19; *Ezra* 6.19-20; *Ezek.* 45.21; *1 Esd.* 1.1-22; 7.5-15; *Mt.* 26.2, 17-19; *Mk.* 14.1,12-16; *Lk.* 22.7-13; *Jn.* 18.28,39; 19.1-4; *Acts* 12.3; *1 Cor.* 5.7; *Heb.* 11.28  
 of Purim: *Esther* 9.20-32  
 of Tabernacles: *Exod.* 23.16; 34.22; *Lev.* 23.33-36, 39-43; *Num.* 29.12-38; *Deut.* 16.13-15; 31.10-11; *1 Kgs.* 8.2,65; *Ezra* 3.4; *Neh.* 8.13-18; *Zech.* 14.16,18-19; 2 *Macc.* 1.18; 10.6; *Jn.* 7.2  
 of Unleavened Bread: *See* Bread, Unleavened; Passover  
 of Weeks: *Exod.* 23.16; 34.22; *Lev.* 23.15-21; *Num.* 28.26-31; *Deut.* 16.9-12; 2 *Macc.* 12.31; *see also* Calendar of Feasts; Pilgrim Festivals  
**Felix:** *Acts* 23.24-24.27  
**Fire:** *Exod.* 3.2; 13.21; 19.18; 24.17; *Lev.* 6.9-13; 9.24; 10.1-7; *Num.* 11.1-3; 16.35; *Deut.* 4.11-15, 24; 5.22-26; *1 Kgs.* 18.23-38; 19.12; *Ps.* 97.3; *Dan.* 3.22-27; 2 *Esd.* 16.68,73; *S. of Three*; 2 *Macc.* 10.3; *Mt.* 3.11; *Lk.* 3.16; 12.49; *see also* Pillar of Cloud  
**First-born:** *Gen.* 22.1-19; 25.23; *Exod.* 4.22; 11.4-7; 13.1-2,11-13; 22.29-30; 34.19-20; *Num.* 3.12; 8.16; 11.1-3; *Deut.* 15.19-23; 21.16-17; *Pss.* 78.51; 89.27; *Jer.* 4.31; 31.9; *Ezek.* 20.26; *Mic.* 6.7; *Zech.* 12.10; 2 *Esd.* 6.58; *Lk.* 2.7; *Rom.* 8.29; *Col.* 1.15,18; *Heb.* 1.6; 11.28; *Rev.* 1.5; *see also* Birthright  
**Firstfruits:** *Exod.* 22.29; 23.16-19; 34.22-26; *Lev.* 2.12-14; 23.10-21; *Num.* 28.26; *Deut.* 18.4;

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- 26.10; 2 Kgs.4.42; Neh.10.35-37; 12.44; 13.31; Prov.3.9; Jer.2.3; Ezek.20.40; 44.30; 48.14; Mic.7.1; Rom.8.23, 11.16; 1 Cor.15.20-23; Jas.1.18; Rev.14.4
- Fish:** Mt.14.17; Jn.6.9
- Flesh** (body of man): Gen.2.21-24; 6.3; 9.4-5; Lev.13.1-46; ch. 15; Num.12.9-15; 19.11-22; Job 2.5; 10.4,11; Prov.4.22; Isa.31.3; Ezek. 11.2-12; Jn.6.51-58; Rom.7.21-25; 8.1-8; 1 Cor.5.5; Gal.4.14; Col.1.24
- Flesh** (man): Pss.78.39; 103.12-16; Ezek.11.19-20; 36.26-27; Jer.17.5; Mt.16.17; 1 Cor.15.50; Gal.1.16; Heb.2.14
- Flesh** (mankind, men, lives): Gen.6.13; Num.16.22; Judg.9.2; 2 Sam.5.1; 19.12; Job 10.11; 34.15; Pss.136.25; 145.21; Isa.40.5; 49.26; Jer.25.31; 32.26-27; 45.5; Ezek.20.48; Joel 2.28; Ecclus. 14.18; 17.31; Lk.3.6; Jn.17.2; Heb.2.14
- Flesh** (meat of animals): Gen.9.3; Exod. ch. 29; Lev.6.24-26; 7.19-21; 8.31-35; Num.11.4-23,31; 18.18; Ps.78.20,27; Ezek.4.14
- Fleshpot:** Exod.16.3; Prov.23.20
- Flog:** Josh.23.13; Isa.10.26; Mt.10.17; 20.19; 23.34; Jn.2.15; Acts 22.24
- Flood:** Gen.6.5-8.22; Isa.54.9; Wis.10.4; Ecclus. 44.17-18
- Folly/Fool:** Deut.32.6; 1 Sam.25.25; Job 2.10; Pss. 14.1; 39.8; 53.1; 92.6; Prov.5.23; 12.15; 13.16; 14.8,24,29; 15.2,5; 17.12,21,28; 26.4-5,11; Isa. 19.11-13; 35.8; 44.25; Jer.4.22; 5.21-22; Wis. 12.23-24; chs. 13-19; Ecclus.19.23-24; 20.15-17, 20; 21.16,25-26; 27.13; Mt.7.26; 23.17; 25.1-13; Mk.7.22; Lk.11.40; Rom.1.21-22; 1 Cor. 1.18-21,23-25; 2.4,14; 3.18-20; 2 Cor.11.1, 16-21; 12.6,11; Gal.3.1-3
- Foreigners:** *See* Aliens
- Forgiveness:** Gen.50.17; Exod.10.17; 34.7; Josh. 24.19; Pss.25.18; 32.1; 85.2; 86.5; 99.8; 130.4; Isa.2.9; 33.24; Jer.31.34; 36.3; Dan.9.9,19; Amos 7.2; Mt.6.12-15; 18.21-35; Mk.11.25; Lk.17.3; 23.34; Eph.4.32; Col.3.13; Jas.5.15; 1 Jn.1.9; 2.12
- Forty:** Gen.7.4; 18.29; 50.3; Exod.16.35; 24.18; 26.19-25; 34.28; Num.13.25; 14.33-34; Deut. 2.7; 8.2-4; 9.25; Josh.14.7; Judg.3.11; 5.31; 13.1; 1 Sam.4.18; 2 Sam.5.4; Ps.95.10; Ezek. 29.11-13; 41.2; 46.22; Amos 2.10; 5.25; Jonah 3.4; Mt.4.2; Mk.1.13; Lk.4.2; Acts 1.3; 4.22; 7.23-36; 13.8,21; 23.13,21; Heb.3.9,17
- Freewill Offering:** Lev.22.18,21-23; Num.15.3; Deut. 12.6,17; 16.10; 23.23; Ezra 1.4; 3.5; 7.16; 8.28
- Frontlets:** *See* Phylacteries
- Gabbatha:** Jn.19.13
- Gabriel:** Dan.8.16; 9.21; Lk.1.11-20,26-38
- Gad** (prophet): 1 Sam.22.5; 2 Sam.24.11-19; 1 Chr. 21.9,18; 29.29
- Gad** (tribe): Gen.30.11; 35.26; 49.19; Num.32.1-36; Deut.27.13; Josh.4.12; 22.9; Jer.49.1; Ezek. 48.27
- Gadarenes:** Mt.8.28; Mk.5.1; Lk.8.26,37
- Galatia:** Acts 16.6; 18.23
- Galilee/Galileans:** Josh.20.7; 21.32; 1 Kgs.9.11; 2 Kgs.15.29; Isa.9.1; Mt.2.22-23; 3.13; 4.12-23; 13.54-58; 26.32; 27.55; Mk.1.9,14-28; 6.1-6; 14.28; 15.41; Lk.13.1-3; Jn.4.3; 7.41-52; 12.21; Acts 1.11; 9.31; 10.37; 13.31
- Galilee, Sea of:** 1 Macc.11.67; Mt.4.18; 14.22-34; 15.29; Mk.1.16; Lk.5.1; Jn.6.1
- Gall:** Deut.29.18-19; Job 16.13; 20.25; Ps.69.21; Jer.8.14; 9.15; 23.15; Lam.3.19; Amos 6.12; Mt.27.34
- Gallio:** Acts 18.12-17
- Gamaliel:** Acts 5.34-39; 22.3
- Gath:** 1 Sam.5.8; 6.17; 27.4; 2 Sam.1.20; 21.22; 1 Kgs.2.39-40; 2 Kgs.12.17; Amos 6.2; Mic.1.10
- Gaza:** Deut.2.23; Josh.10.41; Judg.16.1-3,21-30; Jer.47.1-7; Amos 1.6-7; Zeph.2.4; Zech.9.5; Acts 8.26
- Gedaliah/Okidelus:** 2 Kgs.25.22-26; Jer.40.6-41.18; 1 Esd.9.22
- Gehazi:** 2 Kgs.4.8-37; 5.20; 8.1-6
- Gehenna:** *See* Ben-hinnom, Valley of; Hades; Hell; Sheol
- Genealogy** (of Jesus): Mt.1.1-16; Lk.3.23-38
- Genesareth:** *See* Galilee, Sea of
- Genile** (nations): *See* Nations
- Gentiles** (non-Jews, heathens): Mt.6.32; 10.5,18; 20.19; Mk.10.33; Lk.18.32; Acts 4.27; 10.45; 11.1-18; 14.1-2,5,27; 15.3-21; 18.6; 21.20-25; 28.28; Rom.2.14-16,24; 3.29-31; 11.11-13,25; 15.7-19; 1 Cor.12.2,13; Gal.2.2-14; Eph. 2.11-16; 3.1-9; 1 Th.2.16
- Gerasenes:** *See* Gadarenes
- Gerizim, Mount:** Deut.11.29; 27.12; Josh.8.33; Judg.9.7; Jn.4.20-21
- Gerar:** Gen.10.19; 20.1; 26.20
- Gershom:** Exod.2.22; 18.3
- Geshurite:** *See* Aram
- Gethsemane:** Mt.26.36; Jn.18.1
- Giants:** *See* Nephilim
- Gibeah:** Josh.15.57; Judg.19.12-20.39; 1 Sam. 10.26; 11.4-7; 14.2,16; 15.34; 2 Sam.23.29; Isa.10.29; Hos.9.9; 10.9
- Gibeon:** Josh.10.1-15; 2 Sam.2.12-16; 20.8; 1 Kgs. 3.4-15; 9.2; 1 Chr.8.29; 21.29; Isa.28.21; Jer. 28.1; 41.12
- Gideon:** Judg.6.11-8.35; Heb.11.32
- Gihon:** 1 Kgs. 1.33,38,45; 2 Chr.32.40
- Gilboa, Mount:** 1 Sam.28.4; 31.8; 2 Sam.1.6-8; 21.12
- Gilead:** Num.26.29-30; 27.1; 32.1,40; 36.1; Deut. 34.1; Judg.5.17; 10.17-18; 11.1-2; 2 Sam.2.9; 17.26; 1 Kgs.17.1; Pss.60.7; 108.8; S. of S.4.1; 6.5; Jer.50.19; Hos.6.8; 12.11; Amos 1.3,13; Mic.7.14; Zech.10.10; *see also* Balm of Gilead
- Gilgal:** Josh.4.19-20; 5.9-10; 9.6; 10.6-9,15,43; 1 Sam.13.4,8,12-15; 2 Sam.19.15,40; Hos.4.15; 9.15; 12.11; Amos 4.4; 5.5; Mic.6.5
- Girgashites:** Gen.10.16; 15.21; Deut.7.1; Josh.3.10; 24.11; 1 Chr.1.14; Neh.9.8
- Glean:** Lev.19.9-10; Deut.24.21; Judg.8.2; Ruth 2.2-17; Isa.17.6; Jer.49.9; Mic.7.1
- God:**
- Fatherhood of:** Hos.11.1-6; Mal.2.10; Mt.6.26; 18.35
- Glory of:** Exod.14.4,17-18; 16.6-7,10; 24.16-18; 33.18-23; 40.34-35; Lev.9.5-7,22-24; Num. 14.10-22; 1 Sam.4.21-22; 1 Kgs.8.10-13; Pss.8.1-9; 19.1-6; 24.7-10; 29.2-3,9; Isa.6.1-3; 48.11; 66.18-19; Ezek.3.12,23; 10.3-4,18; 39.21; 43.1-5; 44.4; Ecclus.49.8; Bar.5.9; Mt.16.27; 24.30; Mk.8.38; 10.37; 13.26; Lk.2.9,14; 9.31; 21.27; Jn.1.14; 2.11; 11.40; 17.5,24; Acts 7.2; 22.11; Rom.8.18; 9.4; 1 Cor.2.7-8; Eph.1.17-18; Phil.4.20; Rev.15.8; 21.11,23
- Grace of:** Gen.6.8; Exod.33.12-17; Num.11.4-15; Job 10.8-12; Pss.5.12; 30.5; 44.3; 89.17; 103.6-14; Lk.1.28-30; 2.40,52; Jn.1.14-17; Acts 14.3;

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- 15.11; 20.32; Rom.1.7; 3.21–24; 4.1–5; 5.1–2,13–17,20–21; 6.1,12–15; 11.5–6; 12.3,6; 1 Cor.1.3; 15.10; 2 Cor.1.2,12–13; 6.1–2; 12.8–9; Gal.1.3, 6–9,15–17; 2.9; 5.2–4; Eph.1.4–7; 2.4–7; 3.8; 6.24; 2 Tim.1.9; Ti.2.11; 3.7; Heb.4.16; 10.29; Jas.4.5–7; 1 Pet.1.8–10
- Holiness of: Lev.11.44–45; 19.2; 20.26; 21.8; 22.2; Josh.24.19; Pss.23.3; 99.3,5,9; Isa.5.16; 6.1–3; 40.25,26; 57.15; Ezek.36.20–23; Hos.11.9; Mt.6.9
- Image of: Gen.1.26–27; 5.1–3; 9.3–6; Wis.2.23–24; Eccus.17.3; 1 Cor.11.7; Jas.3.9
- Names for: Gen.2.5; 4.26; 14.18; 16.13; 17.1; 21.33; 22.14; 31.42; Exod.3.6,12–15; 6.3; Deut.32.30; 1 Sam.1.3; 2.10; Dan.2.20; 4.34; 6.26; 7.7,13,22
- Gog and Magog: Ezek. chs.38–39; Rev.20.8
- Golden Rule, The: Lev.19.19; Eccus.31.15; Tob.4.15; Mt.7.12; Lk.6.31
- Golgotha (Calvary): Mt.27.33; Mk.15.22; Lk.23.33; Jn.19.17–18
- Goliath: 1 Sam.17.4–54; 2 Sam.21.19; 1 Chr.20.5
- Gomer: Hos.1.3–11
- Gomorrhah: *See* Sodom and Gomorrhah
- Goshen: Gen.45.10; 46.28–47.27
- Grasshopper: *See* Locust
- Greatest Commandment: Lev.19.17–18; Deut.6.4–5; Mt.22.34–40
- Greece/Greek (Gentile): Dan.8.21; 10.20–11.2; Joel 3.6; 1 Macc.1.1–10,16–31,41–50; 3.10–41; 4.1–34; 6.1–17,28–31,48–63; 7.1–4,8–11,19–20, 26–50; 9.1–4,11–15,43–53,57,63–64; 10.1–6,15–20,22–58,67–77,88–89; 11.1–19,28–53,54–59,60–66; 12.39–43,49; 13.12–24,31–32,34–42; 14.1–3; ch.15; 16.11–22; 2 Macc.2.19–23; 4.7–22; 5.1–27; 6.1–6; 8.8–9,29; 10.10–13; 11.1–38; 12.32–36; 13.1–2,9,18–26; 14.1–26,37–46; 15.1–36; Mk.7.26; Jn.7.35; 12.20–22; Acts 6.1; 9.29; 13.44–14.7; 16.1–2; 18.4; 19.10–11; 20.2,20–21; 21.28; Rom.1.14–16; 10.11–12; 1 Cor.1.22–24; Gal. 2.1–3; 3.28; Col.3.11; *see also* Hellenists; Javan
- Guilt-offering: Lev.5.14–6.7; 7.1–7; 14.12–13; 19.21; Ezra 10.19
- Hadadezer: *See* Aram
- Hadassah: Esther 2.7
- Hades: Lk.16.23; Rev.20.13–15; *see also* Ben-hinnom, Valley of; Hell; Sheol
- Hagar: Gen.16.1–16; 21.8–21; Gal.4.21–31
- Hail: Exod.9.18–23; 10.5; Josh.10.11; Job 38.22; Pss.18.12–13; 78.47–48; 105.32; 148.8; Isa.28.2, 17; 30.30; Ezek.13.11–13; Hag.2.17; Rev.8.7; 11.19; 16.21
- Ham: Gen.5.32; 7.13; 8.18–22; 10.1,6–20; Pss.78.50–51; 105.23–27; 106.22; *see also* Shem, Ham, and Japheth
- Haman: Esther 3.1–15; 5.4–14; 6.6,12–13; 7.6–10; 8.1; 9.10; Rest of Est.11.2–12
- Hamath/Lebo-hamath: Num.13.21; 34.8; 2 Sam.9.8; 2 Kgs.14.28; 17.24–30; 18.34; 19.13; Isa.10.9; 11.11; Jer.39.5; 49.23; Ezek.47.16–17,20; Zech. 9.2
- Hamor: Gen.33.19; 34.2–26; Judg.9.28
- Hannah: 1 Sam.1.2–2.21
- Harran: Gen.11.31–32; 12.4–5; 27.43; 28.10; 29.4; 2 Kgs.19.12
- Hazel: 1 Kgs.19.15–17; 2 Kgs.8.8–9,13–15; 28–29; 10.32–33; 12.17–18; 13.1–3,7,22–24; Amos 1.4
- Heathens: *See* Nations
- Heaven: Gen.1.1,8,14–15,20; 7.11; 8.2; 14.19; 22.11; 28.17; Exod.24.10; Deut.4.26,32,36; 10.14; 1 Kgs.8.27; Job 11.8; 20.27; 22.14; 26.11; Pss.19.6; 69.34; Isa.40.12; 66.1; Ezek.8.3; Dan.7.13; 2 Esd.8.52; Mt.3.2,17; 5.3,12,19,45; 6.9–10; 8.11; 13.24; 18.23; 21.25; 23.22; 24.30–35; Mk.1.10; 11.30; 13.27,31; 14.62; Lk.3.21; 10.18; 11.2; 20.4; 21.26,33; Jn.1.32,51; 3.13,31; 6.38; Acts 1.11; 2.25; 9.3; 11.5,9; Rom.1.18; 1 Cor.15.47; Gal.1.8; 1 Th.4.16; 2 Th.1.7; Rev.3.12; 4.1–2; 5.3; 6.14; 8.1,10,13; 9.1; 10.4,6; 11.6,19; 12.7–10; 13.13; 16.17,21; 20.9,11; 21.1,10
- Hebrew (the name): Gen.14.13; 39.14,17; 40.15; 41.12; Exod.1.15–19; 2.6–7,11–13; 3.18; 5.3; 9.1,13; Deut.15.12; 1 Sam.4.6,9; 13.3,19; 14.11, 21; 29.3; Jer.34.9,14; Jonah 1.9; Acts 6.1; 2 Cor. 11.22; Phil.3.5
- Hebron/Kiriath-arba: Gen.23.2–17; 37.14; Num. 13.22; Josh.10.39; 14.15; 20.7; Judg.1.10; 2 Sam. 2.1,11,32; 3.2,32; 5.3,13; 15.7,10
- Hell: 2 Esd.7.[36],[70]; Mt.5.22,29–30; 10.28; 18.9; 23.15,33; Mk.9.43–48; Lk.9.12,25; Jas.3.6; 2 Pet.2.4; Rev.1.18; *see also* Ben-hinnom, Valley of; Hades; Sheol
- Hellenists: Acts 6.1; *see also* Greece/Greek; Javan
- Hephi-bah: Isa.62.4
- Hermon: Deut.4.48; Josh.13.11; Pss.89.12; 133.3; S. of S.4.8
- Herod Antipas: Mt.14.1–6; Mk.6.14–22; Lk.3.1,19; 9.7,9; 23.7–15; Acts 4.27
- Herod the Great: Mt.2.1–16; Lk.1.5
- Hezekiah: 2 Kgs.18.1–20.21; 2 Chr. chs. 29–32; Prov.25.1; Isa. chs. 36–39; Jer.26.18–19; Eccus.48.17–25; 2 Esd.7.40[110]
- Hill-shrines/High Places: Lev.26.30; Num.21.28; 22.41; 33.52; Deut.33.29; 1 Sam.9.12–14,19–25; 1 Kgs.3.1–4; 11.7; 12.31–32; 13.2,32–33; 14.23; 15.14; 22.43; 2 Kgs.18.4; 21.3; 23.4–14; Ps.78.58; Isa.36.7; Ezek.6.1–14; 16.16; Hos.10.8
- Hiram/Huram: 2 Sam.5.11; 1 Kgs.5.1,10–12; 7.13,40; 9.12,27; 10.11,22; 1 Chr.14.1
- Hittites: Gen.25.9; 26.34; 36.2; Josh.9.1; 11.3; 1 Sam.26.6; 2 Sam.11.6,21; 12.9–10; Ezek.16.3
- Hivites: Exod.3.8,17; 13.5; 23.23,28; Deut.7.1; 20.17; Josh.3.10; 9.1; Judg.3.5
- Hobab: *See* Jethro
- Holophernes: Jdt.2.4–14.13
- Holy of Holies/Most Holy Place: Exod.26.33; 1 Kgs.6.16; 7.50; 8.6; Ezek.41.4; 43.12; 45.3; Dan.9.24
- Holy Spirit: Num.11.24–29; 2 Kgs.2.9; Pss.51.11; 139.7; 143.10; Isa.11.2; 48.16; 63.10–14; Joel 2.28–29; Zech.4.6; Mt.1.18,20; 3.16; 12.32; 28.19; Mk.1.8,10; 3.29; 13.11; Lk.1.15,35,41,67; 3.22; 4.14–15,18; 11.13; Jn.1.33; 4.24; 14.26; 20.22; Rom.5.5; Eph.1.13; Heb.2.4
- Hope: Ezra 10.2; Job 4.6; 5.16; 11.18; 14.19; Pss.71.5,14; 119.116; 146.5; Prov.10.28; 13.12; Eccus.9.4; Hos.2.15; Zech.9.12; Acts 2.26; 23.6; 26.6–7; 28.20; Rom. 4.18; 5.1–5; 8.20–25; 15.4,13; 1 Cor.9.10; 13.7,13; 15.19; 2 Cor.3.12; 10.15; Eph.2.12; Col.1.5,27; Ti.1.2; 2.13; Heb.11.1; 1 Pet.1.3,21
- Hor, Mount: Num.20.22; 21.4; 33.37; Deut.32.50
- Horeb: Exod.3.1; 17.6; 33.6; Deut.1.2,6,19; 4.10,15; 5.2; 9.8; 18.16; 29.1; 2 Chr.5.10; Ps.106.19; Mal.4.4; *see also* Sinai
- Horites: Gen.14.6; 36.2; Deut.2.12,22
- Hormah: Num.14.45; 21.3; Deut.1.44; Josh.15.30; 19.4

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Hosanna: Ps.118.25; Mt.21.9; Mk.11.9–10; Jn.12.13  
 Hoshea: 2 Kgs.15.30; 17.1–4  
 Hosts, Lord of: 1 Sam.1.11; Isa.1.9; Rom.9.29; Jas.5.4  
 Huldah: 2 Kgs.22.14  
 Humility: Exod.10.3; Prov.15.33; Phil.2.3  
 Hypocrisy: Ecclus.27.22–24; Mt.6.2; Mk.7.6; Lk.12.1
- Ibzan: Judg.12.8–10  
 Ichabod: 1 Sam.4.21; 14.3  
 Iconium: Acts 13.51–14.7  
 Idolatry: Gen.31.19,30–35; 35.2–4; Exod.20.4–6; 32.1–35; 34.11–17; Lev.19.4; Num.25.1–18 Deut.4.12–31; 13.6–18; 1 Sam.7.3–4; 1 Kgs.12.28–32; Ps.115.3–8; Isa.2.8,18; 40.18–26; 44.9–20; Jer.1.16; 10.1–16; Ezek.8.10–12; 14.1–11; Hos. 13.1–3; Mic.1.7; Zeph.1.2–6; Rest of Est.14.6–11; Wis.13.10–19; Let. Jer.6.4–73; 1 Cor.10.14–22; Rev.2.14,20  
 Immanuel/Emmanuel: Isa.7.10–17; 8.8; Mt.1.23  
 Immortality: Wis.1.15; 3.4; 6.17–20; 1 Cor.15.53  
 Incense, Altar of: Exod.30.1,7–9; 31.8; 35.15; 37.25–29; Lev.16.12–13; 1 Chr.6.49; 28.18; Mal.1.11; Lk.1.10–11  
 Interest: Exod.22.25; Lev.25.36; Deut.23.19–20; Ps.15.5; Ezek.18.8,13,17; Mt.25.27; Lk.19.23  
 Isaac: Gen.17.19–21; 21.1–22.14; ch. 24; 25.19–28.5; 35.27–29; Amos 7.9,16; Ecclus.44.22; Rom.9.6–13; Gal.4.28; Heb.11.9,17–20  
 Isaiah: 2 Kgs.19.1–20.19; 1 Chr.26.22; 32.20,32; 2 Esd.2.18; Ecclus.48.17–25; Lk.4.14–21; Jn. 12.39–41; Acts 8.28; Rom.9.27–29  
 Ishbosheth: 2 Sam.2.8; 3.7,14; 4.8,12  
 Ishmael: Gen.16.1–16; 21.8–21; Gal.4.21–31  
 Israel:  
     Children of and collective: Gen.46.8; Exod.1.1,7; 4.22–23; 12.37–42,50–51; 14.5–31; Num.11.4–30; Deut.4.1–40; 5.1–5; 6.4–9; 33.10,26–29; Josh. 5.2–12; 7.1–26; 24.31; Judg.3.1–30; 4.1–24; 5.1–11; 11.12–27; 1 Sam.4.1–10; 7.2–8.22; 10.1,17–24; 13.1–2; 2 Sam.7.22–26; Pss.14.7; 81.11–13; 114.2; 121.4; 135.4; Isa.1.3; 40.27–31; 43.1–15; 44.5,21–23; 45.4,17,25; 48.1–22; 49.1–7  
     Elected by God: Deut.7.6–7; Ps.135.4; Isa.14.1; 41.8–10; 43.10–13; 44.1–5; 45.4; Ezek.20.5; Amos 3.2; 9.7–10; Mal.1.2–3; 2 Esd.7.[49]–[61]; Acts 13.17; Rom.11.1–18; Col.3.12; 1 Th.1.4; 2 Tim.2.10; Ti.1.1; 1 Pet.2.9; 2 Jn.1  
     Holiness of: Exod.19.6; Lev.19.2; 20.8,22–26; Deut.7.6; Jer.2.3; Rom.11.16; Col.3.12; 1 Pet. 1.15; 2.5,9; Rev.4.6–10  
     The name given Jacob: Gen.32.28; 35.10; 46.1–7; 47.29–31; Exod.32.13; Hos.12.12; *see also* Jacob  
     Northern territory of: 2 Sam.11.11; 19.41–20.2; 4.20–21; 1 Kgs.11.26–31,37; 12.1–17; 14.19–20; 15.16–22,25–34; ch. 16; 20.13–18; 22–43; 22.1–40; 2 Kgs.9.14–27,30–37; 10.1–36; 13.1–13,22–25; 14.23–29,15.8–31; 16.5–9; 17.1–23; Hos.4.15–16; 5.1–9; 7.1–10; 10.1–8; Amos 2.6–8  
     Issachar: Gen.30.18; 49.14; Num.1.8; Deut.27.12; 33.18; Josh.17.10–11; Judg.5.15; 10.1; 1 Kgs. 4.17; Ezek.48.25–26,33  
     Ithamar: Exod.6.23; 38.21; Num.4.28
- Jabbok: Gen.32.22; Deut.2.37  
 Jabesh-gilead: Judg.21.6–14; 1 Sam.11.1; 31.11; 2 Sam.2.4; 21.12  
 Jabin: Josh.11.1; Judg.4.2–24; Ps.83.9
- Jachin and Boaz: 1 Kgs.7.21; 2 Chr.3.17  
 Jacob: Gen.25.19–34; chs. 27–35; 37.1–50.11; Josh. 24.4,32; Mal.1.2; Ecclus.44.23–45.5; Jn.4.5–12  
 Jacob's Well: Jn.4.6  
 Jael: Judg.4.17–24; 5.24–27  
 Jair: Judg.10.3–5  
 Jairus: Mk.5.21–24,35–43; Lk.8.40–42,49–56  
 James the Brother of Jesus: Mt.13.55; Mk.6.3; Acts 12.17; 15.13–21; 21.16; 1 Cor.15.7; Gal. 1.19; 2.9,12  
 James the Son of Alphaeus: Mt.10.3; Mk.3.18; Lk.6.14; Acts 1.13  
 James the Son of Zebedee: Mt.4.21; 10.2; 17.1; Mk.1.19,29; 3.17; 5.37; 9.2; 10.35,41; 13.3; 14.33; Lk.5.10; 6.14; 8.51; 9.28,54; Acts 1.13; 12.2  
 Japheth: Gen.5.32; 6.10; 7.13; 9.18,20–27; 10.2–5; *see also* Ham; Shem, Ham, and Japheth  
 Jashar, Book of: Josh.10.12–13; 2 Sam.1.17–27  
 Javan: Gen.10.2,4; 1 Chr.1.5,7; Isa.66.19; Ezek.27.13; Dan.8.21; 10.20; Joel 3.6; Zech.9.13; *see also* Greece/Greek; Hellenists  
 Jebus/Jebusites: Gen.10.16; Exod.33.2; 34.11; Num. 13.29; Josh.18.16,28; Judg.1.21; 19.10–11; 2 Sam.24.16–18; 1 Chr.11.4–5; *see also* Jerusalem/Salem  
 Jeconiah: *See* Jehoiachin  
 Jehoahaz of Israel: 2 Kgs.10.35; 13.1–9  
 Jehoahaz (Shallum) of Judah: 2 Kgs.23.31–35; 2 Chr.36.2; Jer.22.10–12  
 Jehoiachin/Jeconiah: 2 Kgs.24.8–16; 25.27–30; Jer. 24.1; 28.4; 52.31–34; 1 Esd.1.34; Bar.1.3  
 Jehoiakim (Eliakim): 2 Kgs.23.34–24.7; 1 Esd.1.43  
 Jehonadab: *See* Jonadab  
 Jehovah: *See* God, Names for; Yahweh  
 Jehoram: *See* Joram  
 Jehoshaphat: 1 Kgs.15.24; 22.1–10,29–33,41–50; 2 Kgs.3.1,7–15; 2 Chr.17.1–21.1  
 Jehoshaphat, Valley of: Joel 3.2  
 Jehu (king): 2 Kgs. chs. 9–10  
 Jehu (prophet): 1 Kgs. 16.1–7; 2 Chr.19.2; 20.34  
 Jephthah: Judg.11.1–12.7; 1 Sam.12.11–16,18–19; 17.58; 20.30–31; 22.7–9; 2 Sam.20.1; 1 Kgs.12.16; Isa.11.1,10; Mt.1.5–6; Acts 13.22; Rom.15.12  
 Jeremiah: 2 Chr.35.25; 36.12,21–22; Dan.9.2; 1 Esd. 1.45–48; 2 Esd.2.18; Ecclus.49.5–7; 2 Macc.2.1–3; Mt.16.14  
 Jericho: Josh.2.1–3; 6.1–26; 24.11; 2 Sam.10.5; 1 Kgs.16.34; 2 Kgs.25.5; Mt.20.29; Mk.10.46; Lk.10.30; 18.35; 19.1; Heb.11.30  
 Jeroboam the Son of Nebat: 1 Kgs.11.26–12.20; 12.25–14.20; 15.34; 2 Chr.10.2–5,12–16; 13.1–20  
 Jerusalem/Salem: Gen. ch. 14; Josh.15.63; 18.28; Judg.1.8; 19.10–12; 2 Sam.5.6–10; 15.7–16.4; 1 Kgs.3.1; 11.13; 2 Kgs.21.10–13; ch. 25; Neh. chs. 1–3; Pss.122.2–6; 137.5–7; 147.2,12; Isa. 3.16–4.6; 31.4–9; 51.17–52.2; ch. 60; Jer. ch. 6; 51.1–27; Lam. ch. 1; Ezek. chs. 11; 24; 33.21–22; Zeph.3.1–7; Zech.1.8–17; chs. 12–14; 1 Esd.4.43–60; 2 Esd.10.25–28; Tob.13.8–9,16–18; Bar.4.30–5.9; Mt.21.10–17; 23.37–39; Mk.11.11; Lk.2.22–50; 13.34–35; Acts 1.4–8.3; 15.1–35; 20.16–23.30; Gal.1.18–2.10; 4.26; Heb.12.22; Rev.3.12; 21.1–21; *see also* Jebus/Jebusites  
 Jeshua: *See* Joshua  
 Jeshurun: Deut.32.15; 33.5,26; Isa.44.2  
 Jesse: Ruth 4.17,22; 1 Sam.16.1–13  
 Jesus:  
     Ascension of: Lk.24.50–51; Jn.6.62–63; 20.17; Acts 1.9–11; Eph.4.10; 1 Pet.3.22

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Baptism of: Mt.3.13-17; Mk.1.9-11; Lk.3.21-22  
 Birth of: Mt. 2.1-12; Lk.1.26-35  
 Crucifixion of: *See* Cross/Crucifixion  
 Death of: Mt.27.45-54; Mk.15.33-39; Lk.23.44-47; Jn.19.28-30  
 Resurrection appearances of: Mt.28.1-10; Lk.24.1-11; Jn.20.1-23; *see also* Risen Christ, The  
 Temptation of: Mt.4.1-11; Mk.1.12-13; Lk.4.1-13; Heb.2.18; 4.15  
 Trial of: Mt.26.57-75; Mk.14.53-72; Lk.22.54-71; Jn.18.12-19.16  
 Jethro/Reuel: Exod.2.16-22; 3.1; 4.18; 18.1-12; Num.10.29  
 Jews: 2 Kgs.25.25; Ezek.4.12; Esther 3.6; Mt.2.2; Mk.7.3; Jn.1.19; 2.13; Acts 2.10  
 Jezebel: 1 Kgs.16.31; 18.4.13,19; 19.1-2; 21.5-25; 2 Kgs.9.7-37; Rev.2.20  
 Jezreel (Esdraelon): Josh.17.16; Judg.6.33-7.23; 2 Sam.2.9; 4.4; Hos.1.5  
 Joab: 2 Sam.2.18-24; 3.22-34; 8.16; 11.1-25; ch. 14; 24.4-9; 1 Kgs.1.7; 2.28-34; 11.15-16; 1 Chr. 20.1-3; 21.1-6  
 Joash (king of Israel): 2 Kgs.13.10-19; 14.8-16  
 Joash (king of Judah): 2 Kgs.11.2; ch. 12  
 Job: Ezek.14.14,20; Jas.5.11  
 John the Baptist: Mt.3.1-15; 9.14; 11.2-19; 14.1-2; 17.12-13; 21.31-32; Mk.1.4-11; 2.18-22; 6.14-29; 8.28; 9.12-13; 11.30-33; Lk.1.57-80; 3.1-22; 7.18-35; 9.7-9; 11.1; 20.1-8; Jn.1.15,19-39; 3.22-30; 5.33-36; 10.40-41; Acts 11.16; 18.25; 19.1-7  
 Jonadab (Jehonadab) son of Rechab: 2 Kgs.10.15,23; Jer.35.6-19  
 Jonah: 2 Kgs.14.25; Mt.12.39-41; 16.4; Lk.11.29-30  
 Jonathan. David and: 1 Sam.18.1-4; 19.1-7; ch. 20; 23.16-18; 2 Sam.9.1,7  
 Joram (Jehoram) of Israel: 2 Kgs.3.1-3; 8.16-29  
 Joram (Jehoram) of Judah: 2 Kgs.1.17; 8.16-24; 2 Chr.21.2-20  
 Jordan River: Gen.32.10; Num.32.1-32; 35.1,9-15; Deut.1.1; 3.23-28; 9.1; Josh. chs. 3-4; Judg. 7.23-25; 12.5-6; 2 Sam.17.15-18.8; 2 Kgs.5.1-14; Pss.42.6; 114.3,5; Isa.9.1; Mt.3.5-6; 4.15; Mk.1.5,9; Jn.1.28; 3.26  
 Joseph: Gen.30.24; 37.2-50.26; Exod.1.8; 13.19; Deut.33.13-17; Ezek.37.16,19; 47.13; 48.32; Amos 5.15; 6.6; Jn.4.5; Acts 7.9-14; Heb.11.21-22; Rev.7.8  
 Joseph of Arimathaea: Mt.27.57-59; Mk.15.43-45; Lk.23.50; Jn.19.38  
 Joseph husband of Mary: Mt.1.16-24; 2.13-22; Lk.1.27; 2.4-18; 3.23; 4.22; Jn.1.45; 6.42  
 Joses (Joseph) brother of Jesus: Mt.13.55; 27.56; Mk.6.3; 15.40-47  
 Joshua: Exod.17.8-16; 33.11; Num.13.8,16; 14.30; 27.18-23; Deut.31.3-23; 2 Esd.7.37[107]; Ecclus. 46.1-10; 1 Macc.2.55; Heb.4.8  
 Joshua (priest): Ezra 3.2; Hag.1.1; Zech.3.1,3,8; 6.9-12  
 Josiah: 1 Kgs.13.2; 2 Kgs.21.24-23.30; 2 Chr.34.1-35.17; Jer.22.15-16; 1 Esd.1.1-33; Ecclus.49.1-3  
 Jotham (king): 2 Kgs.15.5-7.32-38; 2 Chr.26.21-27.9  
 Jotham (son of Gideon): Judg.9.5-21,57  
 Jubal: Gen.4.21  
 Jubilee Year: *See* Sabbatical and Jubilee Years  
 Judah (the kingdom): 2 Sam.5.5; 1 Kgs.12.17,20-24; 2 Kgs.25.21; Neh.2.5-7; 12.44; Pss.60.7; 114.2; Isa.3.1,8; 7.17; 11.12; Jer.3.18; 33.7; 42.15; 51.5; Hos.5.5; 6.4; Joel 3.20; Amos 2.4; Zech. 2.12; 12.7; Mal.2.11; 3.4  
 Judah (the man): Gen.29.35; 37.26; 38.1-26; 44.16-18; 49.8-9  
 Judah (the tribe): Num.2.3-9; 33.7; Josh.15.20-63; Judg.1.2-19; Heb.7.14  
 Judas the Galilean: Acts 5.37  
 Judas Iscariot: Mt.26.14-16,47-50; 27.3-5; Mk. 14.10-11,43-52; Lk.22.3-6,47-49; Jn.13.21-30; 18.5; Acts 1.15-18  
 Judas Maccabaeus: 1 Macc.2.4; 3.1-9.22; 2 Macc. 2.19-15.39  
 Judgement, The Last; The Great: Isa.2.9-19; 10.24-27; 27.1; Jer.25.15-38; Ezek. chs. 25-32; Hos. 4.1-2; Joel 3.1-16; Amos 5.18-20; Zeph.1.7-2.3; Dan.7.9-14; 2 Esd.7.[102]-[105]-36[106]-45[115]; Mt.19.16-30; 24.4-36; 25.31-46; Mk.10.17-31; 13.5-37; Lk.17.23,24,37; 18.18-30; 21.8-33; Jn.5.27-29; 1 Th.5.2; 2 Th.2.2; Rev.16.14; ch. 20  
 Judges (trial): Exod.18.13-27; Lev.19.15; Deut. 1.16-18; 16.18-20; 17.8-13; 1 Sam.8.5; 2 Chr. 19.5-7; Pss.7.8; 82.1; Ecclus.46.11-12  
 Justification (acquittal): Job 9.11-21; 13.15-18; 25.4; 32.2; 33.32; Pss.51.4; 143.2; Isa.43.9,26; 50.7-9; Acts 13.39-40; Rom.1.16-17; 3.21-31; 5.1-11; Gal.2.16; 3.24; Jas.2.21-25  
 Justice: Gen.18.19; Deut.10.18; 16.19-20; 32.4; 2 Sam.8.15; 15.4; 23.3; 1 Kgs.10.9; 1 Chr.18.14; 2 Chr.9.8; Neh.9.33; Job 8.3; 34.12,17; 37.23; Pss.10.18; 37.28; 101.1; 119.121; Prov.1.3; 8.15; 19.28; 21.3; Eccles.5.8; Isa.1.17; 9.7; 30.18; 56.1; 58.2; 59.4,9,14; 61.8; Jer.22.3,15; 23.5; Ezek.45.9; Amos 5.24; Mic.6.8; Wis. 9.1-18; Ecclus.35.12-20; Bar.2.18; Mt.23.23; Rom.3.5  
 Kadesh/Kadesh-barnea: Gen.14.7; Num.13.26; 20.16; 27.14; 32.8; 33.36; Deut.1.46; 9.23; 32.51; Josh. 10.41; 14.6-7; Ps.29.8; Ezek.47.19; 48.28  
 Kedar: Gen.25.13; Ps.120.5; S. of S.1.5; Isa.21.16-17; 42.11; 60.7; Jer.2.10; 49.28; Ezek.27.21  
 Kemosh: Num.21.29; Judg.11.24; Jer.48.7,13,46  
 Kenan: *See* Cainan  
 Kenaz: *See* Kenizzites  
 Kenites: Gen.4.17-18; 15.19; Num.24.21-22; Judg. 1.16; 4.11-17; 1 Sam.15.6; 27.10; 30.29  
 Kenizzites: Gen.15.19; Num.32.12; Josh.14.6,14  
 Keturah: Gen.25.1-6; 1 Chr.1.32-33  
 Kidron/Kedron: 2 Sam.15.23; 1 Kgs.15.13; 2 Kgs. 23.6,12; 2 Chr.15.16; 30.14; Jer.31.40; Jn.18.1  
 King: Deut.17.14-20; Judg.8.22-23; 9.6,8-21; 1 Sam. 2.10; 8.1-23; 9.15-16; 10.17-27; chs. 11-12; 24.4-7; 2 Sam.5.1-3; 7.5-29; 1 Kgs.11.12,29-39; 12.1; Hos.6.7; 13.10-11; Zeph.3.15; Zech.14.9, 16-17; Jdt.9.12; Jn.6.15  
 Kingdom of God/Heaven: Ps.145.11-13; Dan.2.44; 4.3; 7.14-27; Wis.6.20; Mt.5.20; 6.10,33; 7.21; 9.35; 11.11-12; 12.28; 13.31-32; 16.28; 18.1-14; Mk.1.14-15; 4.26-32; 9.1; Lk.11.2; 12.31; 13.18-19; 17.20-21; 22.29-30; 1 Cor.6.9-10; 15.50; Gal.5.21; Jas.2.5; Rev.11.17-18  
 Kiriath-arba: *See* Hebron  
 Kishon: Judg.4.7,13; 1 Kgs.18.40; Ps.83.9  
 Knowledge, Tree of: Gen.2.9,17  
 Korah: Num.16.1-40,49; 26.9-11; 27.3; Jude 11  
 Laban: Gen.24.29-30; 27.43; 27.46-28.5; 29.5-31.55; 32.4  
 Lachish: Josh.10.32; 12.11; 15.39; 2 Kgs.14.19; 18.14-17; 2 Chr.11.9; Isa.36.2; Jer.34.7; Mic. 1.13

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Laish (Dan): Judg.18.7-29; Isa.10.30  
Lamech: Gen.4.19-24; 5.25-31  
Lamp-stand (menorah): Exod.25.31-40; 37.17-24; 40.4-24; Num.8.1-4; Zech.4.2-3,11; 1 Macc. 4.48-51; Heb.9.2; Rev.1.12-2.5  
Laodicea: Col.4.15; Rev.3.14-22  
Last Supper: Mt.26.17-29; Mk.14.12-25; Lk.22.7-22; Jn.13.1-30; 1 Cor.11.17-34  
Law:  
James and the: Jas.2.14-26  
Jesus and the: Mt.5.17-48; 22.36,40; Lk.2.22-39; 16.16-17; Jn.7.19-51  
Mosaic: Exod. chs. 21-31; 34.1-36.1; Lev.1.1-9.7; 11.1-27.33; Num. chs. 5-6; chs. 8-9; 10.1-10; 15.1-40; 18.25-19.22; chs. 28-30; 31.21-30; ch. 35; Deut. chs. 12-19; Ecclus.3.1-16  
Noahic: Gen.9.1-4  
Paul and the: Rom.2.12-3.21; 2 Cor.3.4-15; Gal. 2.11-21  
Lazarus: Jn.11.1-44; 12.9-11  
Lazarus and the Rich Man: Lk.16.19-25  
Leah: Gen.29.16-32; 30.16; 31.4; 33.2; 49.31; Ruth 4.11  
Leaven: Exod.12.15-39; 13.3,7; 34.25; Lev.2.11; 6.16-17; Deut.16.3-4; Hos.7.4-6; Amos 4.5; Mt.13.33; 16.6,11-12; Mk.8.14-15; Lk.12.1; 13.20-21; 1 Cor.5.6-9; Gal.5.9  
Lebanon: Deut.3.25; Judg.3.3; 1 Kgs.5.6-14; 7.2; 10.17,21; 2 Kgs.14.9; 19.23; Pss.29.6; 72.16; 92.12; S. of S.3.9; 4.8,11,15; 5.15; 7.4; Isa.10.34; 29.17; 33.9; 35.2; 40.16; 60.13; Jer.18.14; 22.6; 20; Ezek.17.3; 31.15; Hos.14.5-6; Nahum 1.4; Hab.2.17; Zech.10.10; 11.1  
Lebbaeus: See Thaddaeus  
Lemuel: Prov.31.1,4  
Leprosy: Lev. ch. 13; 14.1-32; Num.12.9-15; Deut. 24.8-9; Kgs. ch. 5; 7.3-5; 15.5; 2 Chr.26.16-23; Mt.8.1-4; 10.8; 11.5; 26.6; Mk.1.40-45; 14.3; Lk.4.27; 5.12-16; 7.22; 17.11-19  
Leviathan (sea-serpent, rahab): Job 3.8; 7.12; 9.13; 26.13; Pss.74.14; 104.26; Isa.27.1; 2 Esd.6.49-52; *see also* Rahab (dragon)  
Levirate Marriage: Gen. ch. 38; Deut.25.5-10; Ruth 2.20; 3.9,12-13; 4.1-12; *see also* Marriage  
Levites: Gen.49.5-7; Exod.32.26-29; Lev.25.32-33; Num.1.47-53; 3.5-4.49; 8.5-26; ch. 18; 35.1-8; Deut.12.12,19; 14.27-29; 18.1-8; Josh.21.1-42; Judg.17.7-13; 19.1-20.11; 1 Chr. chs. 15-16; 23; 2 Chr.5.2-14; 11.13-16; 13.5-12; 35.1-19; Ezra 8.7-20; Neh.7.73b-8.12; 13.10; Jer.33. 18-22; Ezek.44.10; 48.11; 1 Esd.9.48; Lk.10.32; Jn.1.19; Heb.7.11  
Life: *See* Breath  
Life, Book of: *See* Living, Roll of the  
Life, Tree of: Gen.2.9; 3.22; Prov.3.18; 11.30; Rev.2.2,14,19  
Living, Roll of the: Exod.32.32-33; Pss.56.8; 69.28; Dan.12.1; Mal.3.16; Lk.10.20; Phil.4.3; Rev.3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12,15; 21.27  
Loaves: Mt.14.17  
Locust/Grasshopper: Exod.10.12-20; Lev.11.22; Num.13.30-33; Deut.28.38; Judg.6.5; 1 Kgs.8.37; 2 Chr.7.13; Pss.78.46; 105.34; 109.23; Isa.33.2-4; 40.22; Joel 1.2-4; 2.25-27; Amos 7.1-3; Nahum 3.15-17; Mt.3.4; Mk.1.6; Rev.9.3-11  
Lord's Prayer: Mt.6.9-13  
Lord's Supper: Mt.26.26-28; 1 Cor.10.16-21; 11.17-34  
Lot: Gen.11.27-13.14; ch. 19; Deut.2.9,19; Ps.83.8; Lk.17.28-32; 2 Pet.2.7  
Lots: Exod.28.15; Lev.16.7-10; Num.26.55-56; Josh.7.14; 14.2; 18.6-11; 1 Sam.10.20-21; 14.41-42; 1 Chr.25.8; Neh.10.34; Ps.22.18; Prov.16.33; 18.18; Job.3.3; Jonah 1.7; Nahum 3.10; Mt. 27.35; Lk.1.9; Jn.19.24; Acts 1.26; 8.21  
Love, Christ's: Jn.13.34; 15.9; Gal.2.20; Eph.5.25  
God's for Christ: Jn.3.35; 15.9; 17.23  
God's for the Church: 1 Jn.3.1  
God's for Israel: Deut.7.6-8; Isa.5.1-7; 54.8; Jer.31.3; Hos.11.1; Mal.1.2-3  
God's for Man: Jn.3.16; 17.23; Rom.5.8; 1 Jn. 4.7-12,16  
Man's for God: Exod.20.6; Deut.6.5; 7.9; 10.12-13; Mt.6.24; 22.37; Mk.12.30; Lk.10.27; 16.13; 1 Jn.4.19-21; 5.1-3  
Man's for Man: Lev.19.17-18; Mt.5.43-46; 22.39; Mk.12.31; Lk.6.27-35; Jn.13.34-35; 15.17; Heb.13.1; 1 Jn.4.7-12,19-21; 5.1-3  
Luke: Col.4.14; 2 Tim.4.11; Philem.24  
Luz: Gen.28.19  
Lycia: Acts 14.6  
Lycia: Acts 27.5  
Lydia: Acts 16.14-40  
Lysias: Acts 23.26; 24.7  
Lystra: Acts 14.6-19; 16.1-2  
Maacah: 2 Sam.3.3; 1 Kgs.15.13; 2 Chr.15.16  
Macedonia: Acts 16.9-40; ch. 20  
Machir: Gen.50.23; Num.32.39-40; Deut.3.15; Josh.13.31; 17.1; Judg.5.14  
Machpelah: Gen. ch. 23; 25.9; 49.30; 50.13  
Magi: Mt.2.7-12  
Magic: Gen.41.8; Exod.22.18; Lev.19.26,31; 20.6,27; Deut.18.10-14; 1 Sam.28.3-14; 2 Kgs.9.22; 21.9; Isa.3.2-3; Ezek.13.18-20; Dan.1.20; Mic. 3.5-11; 5.12  
Maher-shalal-hash-baz: Isa.8.1-3  
Mammon (money): Mt.6.24; Lk.16.9  
Mamre: Gen.13.18; 18.1  
Man (kind), Nature of: Gen.1.26-29,31; 2.7-8,18-23; 6.5; 8.21; Job 7.1-6; 10.8-12; 14.1-2; Pss. 8.3-8; 90.3-10; 103.13-16; Isa.40.6-8; 2 Esd. 3.20; 4.30; Ecclus.11.19-25; 40.1-11; 1 Cor. 15.44b-49  
Manasseh (king): 2 Kgs.21.1-18; 2 Chr.33.1-20  
Manasseh (tribe): Gen.41.51; ch. 48; Num.1.34-35; 32.33; 34.14; Josh. ch. 22; 1 Chr.7.14; 12.19  
Manna: Exod.16.14-36; Num.8.3; Josh.5.12; Neh. 9.20; Ps.78.24; Jn.6.31; 1 Cor.10.3; 2 Bar.29.8 (noncanonical); Rev.2.17  
Manoah: Judg.13.2; 16.31  
Maon: Josh.15.55; 1 Sam.23.24; 25.2; 1 Chr.2.45  
Marana-tha: 1 Cor.16.22; Rev.22.20  
Mark: Acts 12.12,25; 13.5; 15.37; Col.4.10; Philem. 24; 1 Pet.5.13  
Marriage: Gen.1.27-28; 2.24-25; Lev.18.6-18; Deut. 22.13-30; Isa.62.5; Mt.19.3-12; 1 Cor.7.1-16; Eph.5.21-33; 1 Th.4.4-5; Heb.13.4; *see also* Levirate Marriage  
Marriage, Mixed: Num.36.1-12; Ezra 9.1-10.17; 1 Esd.8.68-9.36; 1 Cor.7.12-16  
Mars Hill: *See* Areopagus  
Martha and Mary: Lk.10.38-42; Jn.11.5-46; 12.1-8  
Mary mother of Jesus: Mt.1.16-20; 2.11; 13.55; Mk.6.3; Lk.1.27-2.34; Jn.19.25-27; Acts 1.14  
Mary Magdalene/Mary of Magdala: Mt.27.55-56; 28.1; Mk.15.40; 16.1,9-10; Lk.8.2; 24.10; Jn. 19.25; 20.1,11-18  
Massah/Meribah: Exod.17.7; Deut.9.22; 33.8; Ps.95.8  
Matthew: Mt.9.9

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Matthias:** Acts 1.23,26  
**Media:** 2 Kgs.17.6; 18.11; Ezra 6.2; Esther 1.19; Dan.5.28-31; 9.1; Acts 2.9  
**Megiddo:** Josh.12.21; 17.11-12; 1 Kgs.9.15; 2 Kgs. 9.27; 23.29; Zech.12.11; Rev.16.16  
**Melchizedek:** Gen.14.18-24; Ps.110.4; Heb.5.6; 7.1-28  
**Memucan:** Esther 1.14,16,21  
**Mene Mene Tekel U-pharsin:** Dan.5.25  
**Mephiboseth:** 2 Sam.4.4; 9.1-13; 16.1-4; 19.24-30  
**Merab:** 1 Sam.14.49; 18.17-19  
**Mercy:** Deut.4.13; 2 Sam.24.14; 1 Chr.21.13; Pss.6.2; 51.1; 59.5; 77.9; Prov.28.13; Isa.9.17; 27.11; 47.6; Dan.2.17-18; 9.18; Hab.3.2; Wis.12.3-11; Ecclus.5.4-7; 35.12-20; Bar.2.27; 3.2; Pr. M. 6-8; Mt.5.7; 9.13; 12.7; 23.23; Lk.1.50,55,72; 18.13; Rom.9.15-16,18,23; 11.30-32; 15.9; 2 Cor.1.3; Gal.6.16; Eph.2.4; Phil.2.27; 1 Tim. 1.2,13,16; 2 Tim.1.2,16,18; Ti.3.5; Heb.2.17; 4.16; 8.12; Jas.2.13; 3.17; 1 Pet.1.3; 2.10; 2 Jn.3; Jude 2.21  
**Meribah:** *See* Massah  
**Meshach:** *See* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego  
**Messiah:** Isa.9.2-7; 11.1-9; 45.1; Dan.7.13-14; 9.25-26; 2 Esd.7.28-29; 12.31-34; 13.3-4,25-26; Mt.2.4-6; 16.13-17; 26.63-64; Jn.1.41; 4.25-26; 7.25-31; 10.24-26; Acts 2.36; 3.2; 4.25-29; 5.42; 8.5; 9.22; 18.5,28; *see also* Anointed  
**Methuselah:** Gen.5.21-27  
**Micah (the Ephraimite):** Judg. chs. 17-18  
**Micah (the prophet):** Jer.26.16-19  
**Michael:** Dan.10.13,21; 12.1; Jude 9; Rev.12.7  
**Michal:** 1 Sam.14.49; 18.27; 25.44; 2 Sam.3.13; 6.16,20  
**Midian/Midianites:** Gen.37.28,36; Exod.2.15-22; 3.1-4,23; 18.1; Num.22.1-8; 25.6-18; 31.1-18; Judg.6.2-8,25; Ps.83.10; Isa.9.4; 10.26; Hab.3.7  
**Milcom:** 1 Kgs.11.5,33; 2 Kgs.23.10-13  
**Miletus:** Acts 20.15-38; 2 Tim.4.20  
**Millennium:** Rev.20.4-6  
**Miriam:** Exod.15.20-21; Num. ch. 12; 20.1; Deut. 24.9; Mic.6.4  
**Mizpah:** Gen.31.45-49; Josh.18.26; Judg.10.17; 11.11,29; 1 Sam. 7.5-16; 1 Kgs. 15.16-22; 2 Kgs. 25.23; Neh.3.7,15,19; Jer. chs. 40-41; 1 Macc. 3.46  
**Moab/Moabites:** Gen.19.37; Deut.1.5; 23.3; Judg. 3.28-30; Ruth 1.1; 2 Sam.8.2; 2 Kgs.3.4-27; 13.21; Isa. chs. 15-16; Zeph.2.9-11  
**Molech/Moloch:** Lev.18.21; 1 Kgs.11.7; 2 Kgs.23.10; Jer.32.35; Acts 7.43  
**Mordecai/Mardocheus:** Ezra 2.2; Esther 2.5 ff.; Rest of Est.  
**Moriah:** Gen.22.2; 2 Chr.3.1  
**Moses:** Exod. 2.1-10; 2.23-4.18; chs. 5-11; Num. 11.29-22.1; 27.12-14; Deut.34.1-8; 1 Chr.23.15; Ezra 3.2; Neh.10.29; Ps. 99.6; Isa.63.11-12; Mic.6.4; 2 Esd.7.59[129]; Wis.18.5; Ecclus. 45.1-4; Mal.17.3-4; 23.2; Lk.16.29,31; 20.37; Jn.9.28-29; Acts 9.20-43; 2 Cor.3.7-18; Heb. 3.5-6; 11.23-28; Rev.15.3  
**Most Holy Place:** *See* Holy of Holies  
**Murder:** Exod.20.13; Num.35.9-34; Deut.5.17; Ps. 10.8; Isa.1.21; Jer.7.9; Hos.6.9; Mt.15.19; 19.18; 22.7; Mk.7.21; 15.7; Lk.23.19-25; Jn. 8.44; Acts 3.15; 7.52; 28.4; Rom.1.29; 1 Pet. 4.15; 1 Jn.3.15; Rev.9.21; 21.8; 22.15  
**Mysia:** Acts 16.7-8  
**Mystery:** Mk.4.11; Rom.11.25; 16.25; 1 Cor.4.1; 13.2; 15.51; Eph.1.9; 3.3; 5.32; 6.19  
**Naaman:** 2 Kgs. ch. 5  
**Nabal:** 1 Sam.25.10-38  
**Naboth:** 1 Kgs. ch. 21; 2 Kgs.9.4  
**Nadab:** 1 Kgs.14.20; 15.25  
**Nadab and Abihu:** Lev. ch. 10  
**Nain:** Lk.7.11-16  
**Naomi:** Ruth 1.2 ff.  
**Naphtali:** Gen.30.8; 35.25; 46.24; 49.21; Deut.33.23  
**Naphtali, Tribe of:** Num.1.42; 10.27; Judg.4.10; 5.18; 6.35; 2 Kgs. 15.29; Isa.9.1; Mt.4.13-15  
**Nathan:** 2 Sam.7.2-17; 12.1-25; 1 Kgs.1.8-45; 1 Chr. 17.1-15; 29.29; 2 Chr.9.29; Ps.51; Ecclus.47.1  
**Nathanael:** Jn.1.45; 21.2  
**Nations:** Gen.17.4-20; 18.18; 26.4; Exod.34.24; Lev.18.24-28; Num.14.15; Deut.4.27; 28.1-65; 1 Sam.8.20; Neh.13.26; Pss.67.4; 96.3; 113.4; 147.20; Mic.4.3; Zech.14.2-19; Mal.3.12; Mt. 28.19; Mk.11.17; Acts 2.5; 17.26; Gal. 3.8; Rev.5.9; 15.4; 22.2  
**Nazareth:** Mt.2.23; Mk.1.9; Lk.1.26; Jn.1.45  
**Nazirites:** Num.6.1-21; Judg.13.5,7; 16.17; 1 Sam. 1.27-28; Lam.4.7; Amos 2.11-12  
**Nebo:** Deut.32.49-52; 34.1  
**Nebuchadnezzar/Nebuchadrezzar:** 2 Kgs. chs. 24-25; Jer. chs. 21; 25; 27-28; 32; 34; 37-39; 52; Ezek.26.7; Dan. chs. 1-4; 2 Esd.2.1; Jdt. 1.1  
**Nebuzaradan:** 2 Kgs.25.8-20; Jer.52.30  
**Necho:** *See* Pharaoh Necho  
**Necromancy:** Lev.19.31; Deut.18.11; 1 Sam.28.3-20  
**Needle's Eye:** Mt.19.24; Mk.10.25; Lk.18.25  
**Nehemiah:** Neh.1.1; 8.9; 10.1; 12.26,47; 1 Esd. 5.40; Ecclus.49.13  
**Nephilim:** Gen.6.1-4; Num.13.33; Deut.1.28  
**Nethinim:** Ezra 2.36,40-43; 7.7,24; 8.17-20; Neh. 7.60; 10.28; 11.21  
**New Moon:** Num.10.10; Col.2.16  
**New Year:** Exod.12.1-2; Lev.23.24-25; Num.29.1-6; Neh.8.2  
**Nicanor, Day of:** 1 Macc.7.49; 2 Macc.15.36  
**Nicodemus:** Jn.3.1; 7.50; 19.39  
**Nicolaitans:** Rev.2.6-15  
**Nile:** Gen.41.1; Exod.1.22; Isa.18.2; Ezek.29.3; Zech.10.11  
**Nimrod:** Gen.10.9  
**Nineveh:** Jonah 1.1; 3.2-10; Nahum 1.1-2.8; Tob.1.3  
**Noah:** Gen.5.29-9.29; Isa.54.9; Ezek.14.14,20; Ecclus. 44.17-18; Mt.24.37-38; Lk.17.26-27; Heb.11.7; 1 Pet.3.20; 2 Pet.2.5  
**Nob:** 1 Sam.21.1; 22.9-19; Neh.11.32; Isa.10.32  
**Oaths:** Gen.24.1,8; 26.28-31; 47.29; Exod.20.7; 22.9-11; Lev.5.4; 19.12; Num.5.19-22; 30.2-15; Deut.7.8; 29.12,14; Josh.9.18-20; Ruth 1.17; 1 Sam.14.26,39-45; 1 Kgs.8.31; 2 Chr.6.22; 15.15; Neh.10.29; Job 31.4-34,38-40; Pss.7.3-5; 15.4; 105.9; 137.5-6; Ezek.17.13-21; 23.16-22; Ecclus.23.9-11; Mt.5.33-37; 14.7-9; 23.16-4.2; Mk.6.23; Acts 2.30; 2 Cor.1.23; Gal.1.20; Heb.6.16-17; Jas.5.12; *see also* Vows  
**Obedience/Disobedience:** Gen.22.18; 26.4-5; Exod. 19.5; Deut.11.13-14,27-28; 27.10; 1 Sam.15.22; Isa.1.19-20; Jer.7.22-25; 11.3-8; Zech.6.15; Mt.8.24-27; Mk.4.41; Lk.8.25; Rom.5.19; 6.17-19; Phil.2.8; Heb.5.8  
**Og:** Num.21.31-35; Deut.3.1-13; Josh.12.4-6; 13.12, 30-31; Neh.9.22; Pss.135.10-11; 136.18-20  
**Oils/Ointments:** Exod.27.20; 30.31; 37.29; Lev.2.1; 24.2; 1 Kgs.17.12-16; 2 Kgs.4.1-6; Ps.104.15; Mic.6.7; Mt.25.3; 26.7; Mk.14.3; Lk.23.56; Jn.12.3

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Olives, Mount of (Olivet): 2 Sam.15.20-32; 2 Kgs. 23.13; Ezek.11.23; Zech.14.4; Mt.21.1; 24.3; 26.30; Mk.11.1; 13.3; 14.26; 22.39; Acts 1.12
- Omri: 1 Kgs.16.15-28
- Onan: Gen.26.23; 38.4
- Onesimus: Col.4.9; Philem.10
- Ophir: 1 Kgs.9.28; 10.11; 22.48; 1 Chr.29.4; 2 Chr. 8.18; Job 22.24; Ps.45.9; Isa.13.12
- Paddan-aram /Aram-naharaim: Gen.24.10; 25.20; 28.26
- Pain: 2 Cor.12.7-9
- Pamphylia: Acts 2.10; 14.24; 15.38; 27.5
- Paphos: Acts 13.6-8
- Parable: Judg.9.7-15; 2 Sam.12.1-6; 14.6-11; 1 Kgs. 22.19-23; 2 Kgs.14.9; Isa.5.1-6; Ezek. ch. 37; Mt.13.1-30; Mk.4.1-20; Lk.8.4-10
- Pardon: *See* Forgiveness
- Paradise: 2 Esd.7.[70]; Lk.23.43; 2 Cor.12.3-4; Rev. 2.7; *see also* Eden
- Parousia: Mt.24.3-44; Mk.13.24-27; Lk.21.25-28; Acts 1.11; 1 Cor.1.8; 15.23; 16.22; 1 Th.4.13-5.10,23; 2 Th.1.7-2.12; Jas.5.7-8; 2 Pet.3.4; 1 Jn. 2.28; Rev.22.20; *see also* Day of the Lord
- Paschal Lamb: Exod.12.3-5,21,43,46-48; 13.1; Deut. 16.1-8; 2 Chr.30.1-18; 35.1-19; Ezra 6.19-20; 1 Esd.1.1-2,6-9; Mk.14.12; Lk.22.7; 1 Cor.5.7
- Passover (Feast of Unleavened Bread): Exod.12.1-27,43-49; 13.1-16; Lev.23.5-6; Num.9.2-14; 28.16; Deut.16.1-8; Josh.5.10-11; 2 Chr.30.1-20; 35.1-19; Ezra 6.19-20; Ezek.45.21; 1 Esd.1.1-22; 7.5-15; Mt.26.2,17-19; Mk.14.1,12-16; Lk. 22.7-13; Jn.18.28,39; 19.14; Acts 12.3; 1 Cor. 5.7; Heb.11.28
- Patmos: Rev.1.9
- Paul: Acts 7.58; 9.1-22; 13.14; 22.4-21; 26.4-18; 1 Cor.16.8; Gal.1.1,12-20; Phil.3.4-14; Col.1.23
- Pekah: 2 Kgs.15.27-31
- Pentecost: Tob.2.1; 2 Macc.12.31-32; Acts 2.1; 20.16; 1 Cor.16.8; *see also* Feasts/Festivals
- Peniel/Peniel: Gen.32.30-32; Judg.8.8-17; 1 Kgs. 12.25
- Perez: Gen.38.29; Num.26.20; 1 Chr.2.4-5; Ruth 4.12,18; Neh.11.4-6; Mt.1.3
- Pergamum (Pergamos): Rev.1.11; 2.12
- Perizzites: Gen.13.7; 15.20; Exod.3.8; 33.2; Deut. 20.17; Josh.9.1; 17.15; Judg.1.4-5; 3.5-6; 1 Kgs. 9.20-21; 2 Chr.8.7
- Persecution: Pss.31.15; 119.157,161; 142.6; Jer. 15.15; 17.18; Mt.5.44; 10.23; 13.21; Jn.15.20; Acts 8.1; 9.4; Rom.8.35; 12.14; 1 Cor.4.12; Gal. 1.13; Phil.3.6; 2 Th.1.4; 2 Tim.3.11-12
- Persia: 2 Chr.36.20; Ezra 1.1; Esther 1.3; Ezek.27.10; Dan.8.20
- Peter, Simon (Cephas): Mt.4.18-19; 8.14; 10.2; 14.29; 16.13-23; 17.1-7,24-26; 18.21; 19.27; 26.37,69-75; Mk.1.16-18,29-30; 3.16; 8.29-33; 9.2-6; 10.28; 14.33,66-72; 16.7; Lk.4.38-39; 5.1-8; 9.14,20,28-34; 18.28; 22.31-34,54-62; Jn.13.36-38; Acts 1.13; 2.14-36; 4.8-21; 5.8-10,15,29-32; 8.20-23; 10.5-48; 11.2-17; 12.3-18; 15.7-11; Gal.1.18; 2.7-9,11-21
- Pharaoh: in the days of Abraham: Gen.12.15-20 in the days of Joseph: Gen.37.36; 39.1; 40.1-42.16; 44.18; 45.2-50.7 during the Exodus: Exod.3.10-11; 4.21-15.9; 18.4-11; Deut.6.21-22; 7.8-18; 11.3; 29.2; 34.11; 2 Kgs.17.7; Neh.9.10; Pss.135.9; 136.15; Acts 7.10-21; Rom.9.17 during Moses' escape to Midian: Exod.2.15 during Moses' infancy: Exod.1.11-2.10 Pharaoh Necho: 2 Kgs.23.29-35; 2 Chr.35.20-22 Pharisees: Mt.3.7; 9.10-17; 12.1-14; 15.1-20; 22.15-22; 23.1-6; Mk.2.16-18,23-3.6; 7.1-23; 12.13-17; Lk.5.30-33; 6.1-11; 7.36-50; 13.31-33; 18.9-14; Jn.3.1-5; 7.45-52; Acts 23.6 Philip: Mt.10.3; Mk.3.18; Lk.6.14; Jn.1.43; 12.22; 14.8; Acts 6.5; 8.5,38 Philistines: Gen.10.14; 21.32; Judg. chs. 13-16; 1 Sam.4.1-7.14; 9.16; 13.1-11; ch. 17; 23.1-5, 27-28; chs. 27-29; 31.1-11; 2 Sam.5.17-25; 8.1; 21.15-22; 23.9-17; Isa.14.29-31; Jer. ch. 47; Amos 1.6-8; Zech.9.5-7 Phinehas: Num.25.10-13; 31.6; Josh.22.13,31-32; Judg.20.28; Ps.106.30; Ecclus.45.23-26 Phrygia: Acts 16.6; 18.23 Phylacteries: Exod.13.16; Deut.6.8; 11.18; Mt.23.5 Pilate, Pontius: Mt. 27.2-26,57-58; Mk.15.1-15, 42-45; Lk.3.1; 23.1-25,50-52; Jn.18.28-19.16,38 Pilgrim Festivals: Exod.3.18; 5.1-4; 23.14-17; 34.18, 22-24; Lev. ch. 23; Deut.16.1-17; *see also* Feasts/Festivals Pillar, Sacred: Gen.28.18-22; 31.13-52; 35.20; Exod. 24.4; 34.13; Lev.26.1; Deut.12.3; 16.22; 2 Sam. 18.18; 1 Kgs.14.23; 2 Kgs.3.2; 10.26-27; 17.10; 18.4; 23.14; Isa.19.19; Hos.3.4; 10.1-2; Mic.5.13 Pillar of Cloud/Fire: Exod.13.21-22; 14.19-20,24; 33.9-10; Num.12.5; 14.14; Deut.31.15; Neh. 9.12,19; Ps.99.7; 2 Esd.1.14; *see also* Fire Pillar of Salt: Gen.19.26 Pishgah: Num.21.20; Deut.3.17; Josh.12.3; 13.20 Pithom: Exod.1.11 Pity: Pss.69.20; 72.13; 102.13; 103.13; Isa.63.9; Hosea 1.6; Jonah 4.11; Mt.20.30-34; 1 Cor. 15.19; Jas.5.11 Plagues: Exod.7.14-11.10; 12.28-36; Num.14.37; 16.48-50; 25.8-26.1; Deut.28.58-61; 1 Sam. 5.9,12; 6.4-5; 2 Sam.24.21-25; Ps.106.29-30; Joel 1.2-2.17; Wis.11.5-14 ff; Rev.6.8; 9.20; 11.6; ch. 15; 16.9,21; 18.4,8; 21.9; 22.18 Poison: *See* Gall Pontus: Acts 2.9; 1 Pet.1.1 Poor: Exod.23.3; Lev.14.21; Deut.15.11; 1 Sam.2.7; Job 30.25; Pss.34.6; 40.17; 113.7; Prov.17.5; 22.2; 28.6,27; Eccles.9.15; Isa.3.15; 25.4; Ecclus. 4.1-10; Mt.5.3; 11.5; 26.11; Lk.16.20; 2 Cor. 6.10; 8.9; Jas.2.2; Rev.3.17 Power (strength, might, meaning God): Exod. 15.6; Num.14.17; 2 Sam.22.33; 2 Chr.25.8; Job 36.22; Pss.21.13; 29.4; 67.2; 106.8; 147.5; Jer.51.15; Mt.26.64; Mk.14.62; Lk.1.35; 5.17; 22.69; 1 Cor.1.24; Heb.1.3; Rev.7.12; 19.1-2 Prayer: Gen.25.21; Deut.3.23-25; 1 Sam.1.9-18; 12.23; 1 Kgs.8.22-54; 2 Chr.6.14-42; Pss.39.12; 65.2; 72.15; 88.2; 122.6; 141.2; Prov.15.29; Dan. 6.10; Jonah 2.7; Mt.6.5-7; 7.7-11,22; 26.36-46; Mk.14.32-42; Lk.11.2-4,9-13; 18.10-14; 19.24-25; 22.40-46; Acts 1.14; Rom.12.12; Eph.6.18; Phil.4.6; Col.4.2; 1 Th.5.17; Jas.5.16; 1 Pet. 3.12; Rev.5.8 Precipice: Lev.16.8-10.26 Priscilla/Prisca: Acts 18.2; Rom.16.3; 1 Cor.16.19; 2 Tim.4.19 Priests, Functioning of: Exod. chs. 28-29; 40.15; Lev.2.1; chs. 8-10; 21.1-22.16; Num. ch. 18; Deut.18.1-8; 24.8; 33.8; 1 Sam.2.12-17; Isa. 61.6; 66.21; Ezek. ch. 44; Hag.2.4-9; Mal.2.4-9; 1 Esd.8.54-60; Ecclus.45.6-26; 50.5-21; Heb. 7.11-24; 1 Pet. 2.5,9



*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Principalities (cosmic powers): Rom.8.38; Eph.3.10; 6.12; Col.1.16; 2.15
- Promise (resolve): Exod.3.17; Pss.119.38,57; 116; 148; Lk.24.49; Acts 1.4; 2.39; Rom.4.13; 2 Cor. 1.20; Gal.3.14-29; Eph.1.13; 2.12; Ti.1.2; Heb. 9.15; 11.11; Jas.1.12; 2 Pet.3.9; *see also* Vows
- Prophecy/Prophets: Gen.20.7; Exod.7.1-2; Num. 11.26-30; 12.5-8; Deut.18.15-22; 1 Sam.9.9; 10.5-13; 19.18-24; 1 Kgs.18.19-40; 22.5-28; 2 Kgs.22.11-20; Ps.74.9; Jer.2.5-10; 15.15-18; Amos 3.3-8; 7.14-15; 2 Esd.1.32.35-2.1; 2.18-21; Eccles.46.13-20; 48.1-14,22-49.3; 1 Macc. 4.46; 9.27; 14.41; Jn.6.14; 7.40; Acts 3.17-26
- Prophets, False: Deut.13.1-5; 18.20-22; 1 Kgs.22.19-28; Jer.5.30-31; 14.13-16; 23.9-40; 27.13-28.9; Ezek. ch. 13; Mic.3.5-8
- Proselytes: Isa.56.1-8; Jdt.14.10; Mt.23-15; Acts 2.10; 6.5; 13.43
- Prostitution: Lev.19.29; Deut.23.17-18; 1 Kgs.14.24; Jer.3.1-8; Hos.4.14; Let. Jer.6.43; Lk.7.36-50; 1 Cor.6.15
- Proverbs: Gen.10.9; Deut.28.37; 1 Sam.10.12; 1 Kgs. 4.32; Job 17.6; Ps.44.14; Jer.24.9; Ezek.16.44; 18.3; Lk.4.23; Jn.4.37; 2 Pet.2.22
- Purification/Purity: *See* Cleanliness; Expiation
- Purim: Esther 9.20-32
- Putcoli: Acts 28.11-16
- Quails: Exod.16.13; Num.11.31-32; Ps.105.40
- Quake/Earthquake: Gen.19.24-29; Exod.19.18; Num. 16.31; Judg.5.5; 1 Sam.14.15; 1 Kgs.19.11; Pss.60.2; 99.1; Isa.29.6; 64.1; Ezek.38.20; Amos 1.1; Zech.14.5; Mt.24.7; 27.51; 28.2; Mk.13.8; Lk.21.11; Acts 16.26; Rev.6.12; 8.5; 11.13
- Rameses: Exod.1.11; 12.37; Num.33.3-5
- Rabbah/Rabbath-Ammon: Deut.3.11; Josh.13.25; 2 Sam.11.1; 12.26-31; Jer.49.2-3; Ezek.21.20; 25.5; Amos 1.14
- Rabbi: Mt.23.7-8; Jn.1.38; 3.2; 9.2
- Rachel: Gen.29.6-35.25; 48.7; Jer.31.15; Mt.2.18
- Raguel: Tob.3.7; 7.1-11.1
- Rahab (dragon): Job 9.13; 26.12; Pss.87.4; 89.10; Isa.30.7; 51.9-10; *see also* Leviathan
- Rahab (woman): Josh.2.1; 6.17; Heb.11.31; Jas.2.25
- Rain: Gen.2.5; 7.4.12; Lev.26.3-4; Deut.11.10-17; 28.12.24; 1 Sam.12.17-18; 2 Sam.1.21; 1 Kgs. 8.35-36; 17.1,14; 18.41,44-45; 2 Kgs.3.17; Ezra 10.9,13; Job 5.10; 28.26; 29.23; 37.6; Pss.68.9; 84.6; 147.8; Prov.16.15; 26.1; Isa.5.6; 30.23; Jer.3.3; 5.24; 14.22; Hos.6.3; Joel 2.23; Amos 4.7; Zech.10.1; 14.17; Mt.5.45; Jas.5.17; Rev.11.6
- Rainbow: Gen.9.12-17; Ezek.1.28; Rev.4.3; 10.1
- Ramah: Josh.18.25; 1 Kgs.15.17.21-22; Ezra 2.26; Neh.11.33; Isa.10.29; Jer.31.15; 40.1; Hos.5.8; Mt.2.18
- Ram's Horn: *See* Trumpet
- Ramoth-gilead: Deut.4.43; Josh.20.8; 21.38; 1 Kgs. 4.13; 22.3-4; 2 Kgs.8.28; 9.1-15
- Ransom/Ransomer: Exod.15.13; 30.11-12; Pss.49.7-8,15; 69.18; Prov.21.18; Isa.35.9-10; 41.14; 44.22-24; 47.4; 52.9; Hos.13.14; Mt.20.28; Mk. 10.45; *see also* Redeem/Redeemer/Redemption
- Raphael: Tob.5.1-11.7
- Raven: Gen.8.7; 1 Kgs.17.4; Job 38.41; Ps.147.9; Isa.34.11; Lk.12.24
- Rebecca/Rebekah: Gen.22.23-29.12; 49.31; Rom.9.10
- Rebel/Rebellion: Num.14.9; Deut.9.24; 21.20; Josh 22.29; Pss.66.7; 78.8,40; 107.11; Prov.17.11; Isa.30.1; 63.10; Jer.2.29; 5.23; Lam.3.42; Ezek. 2.8; 5.6; 12.3; Hos.7.14; Zeph.3.1; 2 Th.2.3; Heb.3.16
- Rechab/Rechabites: 2 Kgs.10.15,23; Jer. ch. 35
- Reconciliation: Rom.5.8-11; 11.15; 2 Cor.5.16-21; Eph.2.11-16; Col.1.20-22
- Red (Reed) Sea: Exod.10.19; 13.18; 14.2-15.22; 23.31; Num.33.8-11; Deut.1.40; 2.1; 11.4; Neh.9.9-11; Pss.66.6; 78.13.53; 106.7,9,22; 136.13-15; Jdt. 5.13-14; Heb.11.29
- Redeem/Redeemer/Redemption: Gen.4.15-16; Exod. 6.6; 21.30; Lev.25.25,47-49; Num.18.15-16; 35.16-28; Deut.7.8; 9.26; 19.6; Ruth 2.20; 4.1-12; Job 19.25; Pss.19.14; 26.11; 69.18; Isa.49.26; 59.20; 60.16; 63.16; Jer.32.6-12; *see also* Ransom/Ransomer
- Refuge, Cities of: Exod.21.12-13; Num.35.9-15,25-32; Deut.4.41-43; 19.1-13; Josh.20.2-3; 21.13, 21,27,32,38; 1 Chr.6.57,67
- Rehoboam: 1 Kgs.11.43-14.31
- Release, Year of: Exod.21.2-6; Jer.34.8-15
- Remnant: 1 Kgs.19.18; 2 Kgs.19.29-31; Isa.1.9; 7.3; 10.21-22; 11.10-16; 28.5; 37.31-32; Jer. ch. 24; Amos 5.15; 9.9-15; Mic.5.7-8; Zeph.2.7; 3.12-13; Rom.11.5
- Repentance: 2 Sam.12.12-13; 1 Kgs.21.27-29; 2 Kgs. 22.19; Isa.1.18-20; 55.6-7; Jer.7.5-7; Ezek. 18.21-23,30-32; Hos.6.1-3; 14.1-3; Joel 2.12-14; Amos 4.6-11; Mt.3.1-12; 4.17; Mk.1.4-5,15; Lk.5.32; 15.7,10; 24.47; Acts 2.38; 3.19; 17.30-31; 26.20
- Rephidim: Exod. ch. 17; 19.2; Num.33.14-15
- Responsibility, Collective: Gen.18.23-33; Num. 16.25-33; Deut.21.1-9; Josh.7.24-25
- Responsibility, Individual: Gen.4.8-12; Deut.24.16 2 Kgs.14.6; Ps.1; Jer.31.29-30; Ezek.3.16-21; 14.12-23; ch. 18; 33.1-20
- Responsibility, Inherited: Exod.34.7; Lev.26.39-40; Deut.5.9
- Rest: Exod.34.21; Job 3.26; Pss.55.6; 116.7; Eccles. 2.23; Isa.63.14; Mt.11.28; Mk.6.31; 2 Cor.7.5; Heb.3.11; 4.9,11; Rev.14.11,13
- Resurrection: Ezek.37.1-12; Dan.12.2; 2 Esd.7.32 [37]; 2 Macc.7.9-29; 12.43-44; 28.6; Mt.22.23-33; Mk.12.18-27; 16.6; Lk.20.27-40; 24.7,15-49; Jn.11.1-44; 20.9; Acts 23.6-8; 1 Cor.15.12-57; Phil.3.10,11; Heb.6.2; 1 Pet.1.3; Rev.20.5-6
- Reuben: Gen.29.32; 35.22; 37.21-29; 49.3-4; Deut.33.6
- Reuben, The Tribe of: Num. ch. 32; Josh.13.8-23; Judg.5.15; Rev.7.5
- Reuel: *See* Jethro
- Reward and Punishment: Exod.34.7; Deut. ch. 28; Josh.1.7-8; Judg.2.11-23; Job. ch. 21; Ps.1; Prov.10.27-30; Tob.4.5-11; Wis.5.15-16; 2 Macc. 7.9; Mt.5.1-12; 25.31-46; Rom.2.6-11
- Rhoda: Acts 12.13
- Rhodes/Rodanim: Gen.10.4; Chr.1.7; Acts 21.1
- Riblah: Num.34.11; 2 Kgs.23.33; 25.6,19; Jer.39.5-7
- Righteousness, Divine: 2 Chr.12.6; Ezra 9.15; Neh. 9.8; Pss.7.9; 71.2-24; 98.2; 111.3; 116.5; 119.137, 142; 129.4; 145.17; Isa.5.16; Jer.12.1; 23.6; 31.23; 33.16; Lam.1.18; Dan.9.7; Mic.7.9; Mt.6.33; Jn.17.25; Rom.1.17; 3.22; 10.1-4; Phil.3.9; Rev.16.5,7
- Righteousness, Human: Gen.15.6; 18.26; Deut.9.5; 1 Sam.24.17; 2 Sam.22.25; Job 25.4; Pss.1.6; 11.3; 33.5; 52.6; 97.11; 112.6; 132.9; 143.2;

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Prov.10.25; 11.6,8; 12.5; 15.29; 21.3; Isa.32.1; Jer.23.6; 33.15; Ezek.18.24; Mt.5.6,20;13.43; Lk.5.32; Rom.4.5-6; Eph.6.14; Jas.5.16; 1 Pet. 2.24; 3.12-13
- Risen Christ, The: Mt.28.9-10,16-20; Mk.16.9,12, 14-16; Lk.24.13-51; Jn.20.11-29; 21.1-14; Acts 1.3-9; 9.3-8; 22.6-11; 26.12-18; 1 Cor.15.5-8; *see also* Jesus, Resurrection Appearances of
- Rome: Acts 2.10; 18.2; 28.14-31
- Rufus: Mk.15.21; Rom.16.13
- Ruth: Mt.1.5
- Sabaeans/Seba/Sheba: Gen.10.7,28; 1 Kgs.10.1,4,10, 13; 2 Chr.9.1; Job 1.15; 6.19; Ps.72.10; Isa.45.14; Jer.6.20; Ezek.23.42; 27.22; Joel 3.8; Mt.12.42
- Sabbath: Gen.2.2-3; Exod.16.22-30; 20.8-11; 23.12; 31.12-17; 34.21; Lev.19.3,30; 23.3; Num.15.32-36; 28.9-10; Deut.5.12-15; Neh.10.31; 13.15-22; Isa.1.13; 56.2-4; 58.13; Jer.17.19-27; Ezek.20. 12-24; 22.8,26; 46.1-2; 1 Macc.2.32-38; Mt. 12.1-14; Mk.2.23-3.6; Lk.6.1-11; Acts 13.27, 42,44
- Sabbatical and Jubilee Years: Exod.23.10-11; Lev. 25.1-7,10-54; 26.2,34-35,43; 27.17-24; Deut. ch. 15; 31.10-11; 1 Macc.6.49,53-54
- Sackcloth: Gen.37.34; Neh.9.1; Esther 4.1; Job 16.15; Pss.30.11; 35.13; Isa.15.3; 58.5; Jer.49.3; Dan. 9.3; Jonah 3.5; Mt.11.21; Rev.6.12
- Sacrifice, Human, to Molech: Gen.22.2; Exod.13.13; Lev.18.21; 20.2-5; Deut.12.31; 1 Kgs.16.34; 2 Kgs.3.27; 16.3; 23.10; Ps.106.37-38; Jer.7.31; 19.5; 32.35; Ezek.16.20-21; Wis.12.3-6
- Sacrifice/Offering: Gen.31.54; Exod.3.18; 5.17; 20. 24-25; 23.18; 29.10-28; 34.15; Lev. chs. 1-38; 8.11-12,22-35; 9.5-6; Num. chs. 28-29; Deut. 12.13-28; 1 Sam.2.29; 15.22; Ezra 4.2; Neh.4.2; Pss.4.5; 40.6; 51.16-17; 54.6; 107.22; 116.17; 118.27; Prov.15.8; 21.3; Eccles.5.1; 9.2; Isa.1.11; Jer.6.20; 33.11; Ezek.39.17; Dan.8.11; Hos.6.6; 8.13; Amos 5.25; Hab.1.16; Zeph.1.7; Eccles. 34.18-35.11; Mt.9.13; 12.7; Mk.9.49; 12.33; Acts 7.42; 14.13; Rom.12.1; 1 Cor.5.7; 8.4; 10.20; Eph.5.2; Phil.2.17; 4.18; Heb.9.26; 10.26; 13.15; 1 Pet.2.5; Rev.2.14,20
- Sadducees: Mt.3.7; 22.23-33; Acts 4.1-2; 23.6-8
- Salamis: Acts 13.5
- Salathiel: *See* Shealtiel
- Salem: Gen.14.17-19; Heb.7.1-4; *see also* Jerusalem
- Salome (daughter of Herodias): Mt.14.3-11
- Salome (wife of Zebedee): Mt.27.56; Mk.16.1
- Salt, Covenant of: Lev.2.13; Num.18.19; 2 Chr.13.5
- Salvation/Save: Exod.14.30; Pss.34.6; 68.19-20; 95.1; Isa.45.18-25; Jer.3.22-23; Mt.1.21; 19.25-26; Lk.1.68-79; 7.50; 19.9-10; Jn.3.17; Acts 4.12; Rom.1.16; 5.9-10; 10.9; 1 Cor.1.18,21; Eph. 2.5,8; 1 Th.5.8-9; 1 Tim.1.15; 2 Tim.2.10
- Samarita/Samaritans: 1 Kgs.16.23-28; 2 Kgs.17.1-6, 24-41; Ps.78.67-72; Isa.7.9; 8.4; Jer.23.13-14; Hos.7.1; 8.5-6; Amos 3.9; 4.1; 6.8; 8.14; Mic. 1.1-7; Mt.10.5; Lk.9.51-56; 10.33; 17.11-19; Jn.4.1-42; 8.48; Acts 1.8; 8.1-8; 9.31; 28.14
- Samos: Acts 20.15
- Samson: Judg.13.24; 14.1-16.30; Heb.11.32
- Samuel: 1 Sam. ch. 1; 2.18-26; 3.1-4.1; 7.3-12.25; 13.8-15; 15.1-16.13; 19.18-24; 25.1; 28.3-20; Ps.99.6; Jer.15.1; 2 Esd.7.38[108]; Eccles.46.13-20; Acts 3.24; 13.20; Heb.11.32
- Sanballat: Neh.2.10; 4.1-2.7-8; 6.1-14; 13.28
- Sanhedrin (Council): 2 Chr.19.5-11; Ezra 10.14-16; Jdt.11.14; Mt.26.59; Jn.3.1; 7.50-52; 11.47; Acts 4.5-21; 5.17-41; 6.12; 22.30; 23.15; 24.20
- Sapphira: Acts 5.1-12
- Sarah/Sarai: Gen.11.29-12.17; ch. 16; 17.15-18.15; 20.2-21.12; 23.1-25.12; 49.31; Isa.51.2; Rom. 4.19; 9.9; 1 Pet.3.6
- Sardis: Rev.1.11; 3.1,4
- Sargon II: Isa.20.1
- Satan: 1 Chr.21.1; Job 1.1-6; 2.1-7; Zech.3.1-2; Mt. 4.10; 12.26; 16.23; Mk.4.15; Lk.10.18; 13.16; 22.3,31; Jn.13.27; Acts 5.3; 26.18; Rom.16.20; 1 Cor.5.5; 7.5; 2 Cor.2.11; 11.14; 12.7; 2 Th.2.9; 1 Tim.1.20; Rev.2.13,24; ch. 20
- Saul: 1 Sam. chs. 9-11; chs. 13-22; 26.1-15; 28.3-25; ch. 31; 2 Sam.1.5-10; 2 Esd.7.38[108]; Eccles. 46.19-20; Acts 13.21
- Saul of Tarsus: *See* Paul
- Save/Saviour: *See* Salvation
- Sayings: *See* Proverbs
- Sceptre: Gen.49.10; Num.24.17; Esther 4.11; Ps.45.6; Mt.27.29
- Scava: Acts 19.14
- Scorpion: Deut.8.15; Lk.10.19; 11.12; Rev.9.5
- Scourge: *See* Flog
- Scribes (doctors of the Law): 1 Chr.27.32; Ezra 4.8; Neh.8.4; Jer.36.32; Eccles.38.24-39.11; Mt.8.19; 13.52; Mk.12.38; Acts 4.5; 6.12; 23.9
- Secundus: Acts 20.4
- Second Coming: *See* Parousia
- Seed: Gen.1.11; 3.15; 47.19; Deut.14.22; 28.38; Ps. 126.6; Eccles.11.6; Isa.30.23; 55.10; Mt.13.3-23; 13.24-39; 17.20; Mk.4.26-29; 1 Cor.15.20-23, 35-38
- Seir: Gen.36.8-9; Deut.2.1-12; Josh.24.4; Ezek. ch. 35; Eccles.50.26; *see also* Edom
- Sennacherib: 2 Kgs.18.13; 2 Chr.32.1; Isa.36.1; 37.37; 2 Esd.7.40[110]
- Seraphim: *See* Serpent
- Sergius Paulus: Acts 13.6-13
- Sermon on the Mount: Mt.5.3-7.27
- Serpent: Gen.3.1-15; Exod.4.3; 7.9-15; Num.21.6-9; 2 Kgs.18.4; Isa.6.2-6; 14.29; 30.6; Wis.16.5-6; Dan. & Bel; Mk.16.18; Lk.10.19; Jn.3.14; 2 Cor. 11.3; Rev.12.9
- Servant Songs: Isa.42.1-4; 49.1-6; 50.4-11; 52.13-53.12
- Seth: Gen.4.25-8
- Seven Evangelists: Acts 6.1-6
- Seven Churches: Rev.1.4,11,20; chs. 2-3
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego: Dan.1.6-7; 2.49; 3.12-30; S. of Three 66; 1 Macc.2.59
- Shallum (king of Israel): 2 Kgs.15.8-15
- Shalmaneser V: 2 Kgs.17.3; 18.9; Tob.1.2,15
- Shamgar: Judg.3.31; 5.6
- Shaphan: 2 Kgs.22.3-14; Jer.26.24; 39.14
- Sharon: 1 Chr.27.29; S. of S.2.1; Isa.35.2
- Shealtiel: 1 Chr.3.18; Ezra 3.2,8; 5.2; Neh.12.1; Hag.1.1,12,14; 2.2; 2 Esd.3.1; Mt.1.12; Lk.3.27
- Shear-jashub: Isa.7.3
- Sheba: *See* Sabaeans/Seba/Sheba
- Sheba (son of Bichri): 2 Sam.20.1-22
- Sheba, Queen of: 1 Kgs.10.1-13
- Shechem: Gen.12.6-7; 33.18-20; Josh.24.1,25.32; Judg. ch. 9; 1 Kgs.12.1,25; Ps.60.6; Eccles.50.26
- Sheep: Gen.4.3; 1 Sam.25.2; Job 1.3; Mt.18.12; Jn.2.14
- Sheep (figurative): Pss.44.22; 100.3; Isa.53.6; Jer.50.6; Mt.10.6; Jn.10.3,15-16; 21.17; Heb.13.20
- Shem, Ham, and Japheth: Gen.5.32; 9.18-27; 10.1-32; *see also* Ham; Japheth

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Shema:** Deut.6.4-9
- Sheol:** Num.16.30,33; Deut.32.22; 1 Sam.2.6; 2 Sam.22.6; Job 7.9; 11.8; 14.13; 24.19; Pss.6.5; 9.17; 16.10; 30.3; 49.14-15; 89.48; 139.8; Prov.5.5; 7.27; 9.18; Eccles.9.10; Isa.5.14; 14.9,11,15; 28.15,18; 57.9; Ezek.31.15-18; 32.21; Hos.13.14; Amos 9.2; Jonah 2.2; Mt.5.22,29-30; 10.28; 18.9; 23.15,33; Mk.9.43-45; Lk.12.5; Jas.3.6; *see also* Ben-hinnom, Valley of; Hades; Hell
- Shepherd:** Pss.23.1; 80.1; Isa.40.10-11; Jer.23.3-4; Ezek.34.2-23; Jn.10.1-30
- Sheshbazzar:** Ezra 1.8,11; 5.14-16
- Shibboleth:** Judg.12.6
- Shiloh:** Josh.18.1-10; 19.51; 21.2; 22.9,12; Judg. 18.31; 21.12,19-21; 1 Sam.1.3,9,24; 2.14; 3.21; 4.3,4,12; 1 Kgs.2.27; 14.2-4; Ps.78.60; Jer. 7.12-14; 26.6-9; 41.5
- Shimei:** 2 Sam.16.5-13; 19.16-23
- Shine/Shining:** Exod.34.29-35; Num.6.25; Job 22.28; Ps.31.16; Isa.60.1; Dan.12.3; Mt.13.43; 17.2; Jn.1.5; 2 Cor.4.6; Phil.2.15; Rev.21.23
- Ships:** Pss.104.26; 107.23; Prov.30.19; Jonah 1.3; Acts 27.44; Jas.3.4
- Shishak:** 1 Kgs.11.40; 14.25
- Shittim/Abel-shittim:** Num.25.1-16; 33.49; Josh.2.1; 3.1; Mic.6.5
- Shofar:** *See* Trumpet
- Showbread:** *See* Bread of the Presence
- Shunammite/Shulammite:** 1 Kgs.1.3-4,15; 2.13-25; S. of S.6.13
- Siddim:** Gen.14.3,8,10
- Sidon:** Gen.10.15; Josh.11.8; 2 Sam.24.6-7; Isa. 23.2-3; Jer.25.22; Mt.11.21; Acts.12.20
- Signs:** Gen.1.14; 9.12-17; 17.11; Exod.12.13; 13.9,16; 31.17; Num.14.11; Deut.13.1-3; Ps.65.8; Isa. 7.10-17; 8.18; Ezek.4.3; 2 Esd.5.1-13; 6.11; 14.8; Rest of Est.10.9; Mt.12.38-39; 16.1-4; 24.24; Mk.8.11-13; 13.22; Lk.11.29-32; 16.29-31; 17.20-21; Jn.2.11; 4.48,54; 6.14; Acts 2.22; 1 Cor.14.22
- Sihon:** Num.21.21-31; Deut.2.24-37; Josh.12.2-5; 13.10,21,27; Judg.11.19-21; Neh.9.22; Pss. 135.11; 136.19
- Silas/Silvanus:** Acts 15.22; 16.19; 18.5; 2 Cor.1.19; 1 Th.1.1; 2 Th.1.1; 1 Pet.5.12
- Siloam, Pool of:** 1 Kgs.20.20; Isa.22.9-11; Jn.9.7,11
- Silvanus:** *See* Silas/Silvanus
- Simeon:** Gen.29.33; 34.25; 42.24; 46.10; 49.5; Exod.6.15; Num.1.22; 26.12; 1 Chr.4.24; 12.25
- Simeon the Prophet:** Lk.2.25-32
- Simon Brother of Jesus:** Mt.13.55
- Simon of Cyrene:** Mk.15.21
- Simon the Leper:** Mt.26.6; Mk.14.3
- Simon Magus:** Acts 8.9-24
- Simon Peter:** *See* Peter
- Simon the Zealot:** Mt.10.4; Lk.6.15; Acts 1.13
- Sin:** Gen.4.7; Num.32.23; 2 Sam.12.13-14; Neh. 9.1-2; Pss.4.4; 32.1-5; 41.4; ch. 51; Isa.40.2; Dan.9.20,24; Mic.7.19; 1 Esd.8.75-77; 2 Esd. 3.21; Wis.15.1-2; Eccles.5.4-6; 21.2-3; Bar. 1.15-3.8; Pr. M.8.10,12; Mt.9.2-8; 12.31-32; Mk.2.1-12; 3.28-29; Lk.5.17-26; 12.10; Jn.1.29; Rom.3.9-20,23-26; 5.12-6.23; 7.7-8.4; Heb.4.15; 1 Pet.4.1,8
- Sinai:** Exod.16.1; 19.1-23; 24.16; 31.18; 34.2-32; Lev.7.38; 25.1; 26.46; 27.34; Num.1.1,19; 3.1,4, 14; 9.1,5; 10.12; 26.64; 28.6; 33.15-16; Deut. 33.2; Judg.5.5; Neh.9.13; Ps.68.8,17; Acts 7.30, 38; Gal.4.24-25; *see also* Horeb
- Sin-offering:** Exod.29.14,36; 30.10; Lev.4.1-5.13; 6.17,25,30; 7.7,37; 8.2,14; 9.2-22; 10.16-19; 12.6,8; 14.13-31; 15.15,30; 16.3-27; 23.19; Num. 6.11-8.12; 15.24-27; 18.9; 28.15,22; 29.5-38; 2 Chr.29.21-24; Ezra 8.35; Neh.10.33; Ezek. 40.39; 42.13; 43.19-25; 44.27-29; 45.17-25; 46.20
- Sisera:** Judg.4.2; 5.20; 1 Sam.12.9; Ps.83.9
- Slander:** Mk.7.22; Rom.1.30; 1 Tim.3.11; 2 Tim.3.3; Ti.2.3
- Slaughter, Ritual:** Gen.9.2-6; 37.31; Lev.1.1-13; 3.1-17; 4.4-35; 7.1-7; 8.15,18,23; 14.10-53; 16.11,15; 17.1-17; 22.28-29; Ezra 6.20; Isa.66.3; Mt.22.4; Lk.15.23,27,30; Jn.10.10; Acts 10.13
- Slavery:** Exod.21.2-11,26-27,32; Lev.25.39-46; Deut. 15.12-18; Eccles.33.24-31; 1 Cor.7.21-22; Eph. 6.5-8; Col.3.22-24; Ti.2.9-10; Philem.9-16; 1 Pet.2.18-25
- Sodom and Gomorrah:** Gen.10.19; 13.10-13; 14.2-22; 18.16-19.28; Deut.29.23; 32.32; Isa.1.9-10; 3.9; 13.19; Jer.23.14; 49.18; 50.40; Lam.4.6; Ezek.16.46-56; Amos 4.11; Zeph.2.9; Wis. 10.6-9; Mt.10.15; 11.23-24; Lk.5.12; 17.29; Rom.9.29; 2 Pet.2.6; Jude 7; Rev.11.8
- Solomon:** 1 Kgs.1.10-11.43; Lev.25.39-46; Prov.1.1; 25.1; S. of S.1.1; 3.7-11; 8.11-12; 2 Esd.7.38 [108]; Wis.9.8; 47.12-23
- Sojourners:** *See* Aliens
- Son of God:** Mt.3.17; 11.27; 27.54; Mk.1.11; 15.39; Lk.3.22; 10.22; Jn.1.14; 3.16; Gal.2.20
- Son of Man:** Num.23.18; Ezek.2.1; Dan.7.13; 8.17; Mt.9.6; 10.23; 11.19; 12.8,32,40; 16.13; 17.22-23; 19.28; 20.18-19; 24.27,30,37,44; 26.24,45,64; Mk.2.10,28; 9.31; 10.33; 13.26; 14.21,41; Lk. 7.34; 9.44; 11.30; 12.8,10,40; 17.24,27; 18.31; 19.10; 21.27; 22.22; Jn.1.51; 3.13-15; 5.27; 6.27,53; 12.34; Acts 7.56; Rev.1.13; 14.14
- Sorrow:** *See* Pity
- Sosthenes:** Acts 18.17
- Soul:** Judg.5.21; Job 30.16; Pss.19.7; 23.3; 42.2; 43.5; 57.8; 84.2; 103.1; Prov.21.10; Isa.26.9; 53.12; 2 Esd.8.4-5; Wis.8.19; Mt.10.28; Mk.14.34; Lk.1.46; 12.19; Jn.12.27; 1 Th.5.23; Jas.1.21; 1 Pet.2.25; 3 Jn.2; Rev.20.4; *see also* Spirit
- Spies:** Gen.42.9-34; Num. chs. 13-14; 21.1; Deut. 1.19-25; 2.1-21; Josh.6.23; 1 Sam.26.4; 2 Sam. 15.10; Lk.20.20; Heb.11.31
- Spirit:** 1 Sam.16.14-16,23; 2 Sam.24.1; 1 Kgs.22.21-23; 1 Chr.21.1; Isa.31.3; Jn.3.8; 4.24; 6.63; Rom.2.29; 7.6; 8.9-17; 1 Cor.2.10-16; 2 Cor. 3.6,18; Gal.5.16-24; *see also* Soul, Holy Spirit, Spirit of God
- Spirit of God:** Gen.1.2; 2.7; 6.3; Exod.31.3; 35.31; Num.11.17-29; 24.2; Judg.3.10; 1 Sam.10.6-10; 11.6; 19.20-23; 2 Sam.23.2; 1 Kgs.22.24; 2 Kgs. 2.9,16; Job 33.4; Ps.139.7; Isa.11.2; 42.1; Ezek. 36.26-27; 37.1; Joel 2.28-29; Mic.3.8
- Stephen:** Acts 6.8-8.2
- Stoning:** Exod.21.28-32; Lev.20.2,27; 24.14,16; Num.15.35-36; Deut.13.10; 17.5; 21.21; 22.21, 24; Josh.7.25; 1 Kgs.21.10,13-14; Mt.23.37; Lk.13.34; Jn.8.5,7; Acts 7.58-59; 2 Cor.11.25
- Stranger:** *See* Alien
- Stupid:** *See* Folly/Fool
- Succoth:** *See* Tabernacles, Feast of
- Succoth (place):** Gen.33.17; Num.33.5; Judg.8.5; Pss.60.6; 108.7
- Sychem:** *See* Shechem
- Synagogue:** Mk.1.21; 5.22; Lk.4.16; Jn.9.22; Acts 6.9; 9.2; 18.4,17; 22.19

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Syria: Mt.4.24; Lk.4.27; Gal.1.21; *see also* Aram/  
Aramaean
- Taanach: Josh.12.21; 17.11; 21.25; Judg.5.19; 1 Kgs.  
4.12; 1 Chr.7.29
- Tabernacle (Tent of the Presence): Exod. ch. 26;  
33.7-11; 35.4-40.38; Lev.8.10; 26.11; Num.  
1.50,53; 2.17; 4.21-49; ch. 7; 9.15,18; 17.7;  
18.2; Deut.31.15; Josh.18.1; 1 Chr.21.29; 2 Chr.  
1.3; Wis.9.8; Acts 7.44; Heb.8.2; 9.2
- Tabernacles (booths), Feast of: Exod.23.16; 34.22;  
Lev.23.33-36,39-43; Num.29.12-38; Deut.16.  
13-15; 31.10-11; 1 Kgs.8.2,65; Ezra 3.4; Neh.  
8.13-18; Zech.14.16,18-19; 2 Macc.1.18; 10.6;  
Jn.7.2
- Tablets of the Law: Exod.24.12; 31.18; 32.15-16,19;  
34.1-10,28-29; 40.22; Deut.4.13; 5.22; 9.9-17;  
10.1-5; 1 Kgs.8.9; 2 Cor.3.3; Heb.9.4
- Tabor: Josh.19.22; Judg.4.6; 1 Chr.6.77; Ps.89.12;  
Hos.5.1
- Tamar (a Canaanite woman): Gen. ch. 38; Ruth 4.12  
Tamar (David's daughter): 2 Sam.13.1-32; 1 Chr.3.9  
Tammuz: Ezek.8.14
- Tares: *See* Darnel
- Tarshish: Gen.10.4; 2 Chr.9.21; 20.36; Ps.48.7; Isa.  
2.16; Jer.10.9; Jonah 1.3
- Tarsus: Acts 9.11; 21.39; 22.3
- Tattenai: Ezra 5.3,6; 6.6,13
- Tekoa: 2 Sam.14.2; 23.26; 2 Chr.11.6; Neh.3.5,27;  
Jer.6.1; Amos 1.1
- Temai: Gen.36.34; Jer.49.7,20; Ezek.25.13; Amos  
1.12; Obad.9; Hab.3.3
- Temple (Body of Christ): Mt.12.6; 26.61; Mk.14.58;  
Jn.2.12-22; 1 Cor.3.16-17; 2 Cor.6.14-7.1
- Temple, Jerusalem: Exod.20.22-26; 23.19; 28.42-43;  
Lev.15.16-18; Deut. ch. 12; 27.5; Josh.18.1;  
24.1,26; 1 Sam.1.3; 10.8; Ezra chs. 3-6; 1 Esd.  
chs. 5-7; Acts 21.26-30
- Second: Ezra 2.68-69; 3.1-4.4; 5.1-6.15; Ezek. chs.  
40-48; Hag.1.2-2.8-9; Zech.4.6-10; 1 Macc.  
4.36-61; 2 Macc.10.1-9; Mt.21.12-13; Mk.11.11,  
15-19; Lk.1.8-24; 2.22-52; 19.45-48; Jn.2.13-22
- Solomon's: 1 Kgs. chs. 6-8; 2 Kgs.23.4-25; 25.8-  
17; 2 Chr.3.1-8.16; Ezra 3.8-13; 4.23-5.5; 9.5-9;  
Jer.7.1-15; ch. 26; Hag.1.7-11,13-15; 2.4-9,18-  
19; Zech.4.6-10; 1 Esd.5.47-7.9; 1 Macc.4.36-61;  
2 Macc.10.1-8
- Ten Commandments: Exod.20.2-17; Lev.19.2-4;  
Deut.5.6-21
- Ten Towns: Mt.4.25; Mk.7.31
- Tent of the Presence: *See* Tabernacle  
of the Testimony: *See* Tabernacle  
of the Tokens: *See* Tabernacle
- Teraphim: Gen.31.19,34-35; Judg.17.5; 18.14,17-18,  
20; 2 Kgs.23.24; Ezek.21.21; Hos.3.4; Zech.10.2
- Tertullus: Acts 24.2-8
- Thaddaeus/Labbaeus: Mt.10.3; Mk.3.18
- Thanksgiving: 1 Chr.16.34; Neh.11.17; Pss.50.14;  
75.1; 95.2; 100.4; 106.47; 145.10; 147.7; Dan.  
2.23; Mt.15.36; Mk.8.6; Lk.2.38; Jn.6.11; 1 Cor.  
14.16; Phil.4.6; 1 Th.1.2; 2 Th.2.13; 1 Tim.2.1;  
Rev.4.9; 7.12
- Theophany: Exod.3.1-6; 19.3-25; 24.9-11; 1 Kgs.  
19.11-13; Job 38.1; Ps.18.7-15; Isa. ch. 6; Ezek.  
1.4-28a; 10.1-19,22; Dan.7.9-10
- Theophilus: Lk.1.1-3; Acts 1.1
- Thessalonica: Acts 17.1; 27.2; Phil.4.16; 2 Tim.4.10
- Thomas: Mt.10.3; Jn.11.16; 14.5; 20.24; 21.2; Acts  
1.13
- Thorn: *See* Pain
- Throne, Divine: Pss.11.4; 47.8; 93.2; 103.19; Isa.6.1;  
66.1; Jer.3.17; Heb.1.8; 12.2; Rev.4.4; 7.15;  
20.11; 22.1
- Thunder: Exod.9.23; 19.16; 20.18; 1 Sam.7.10; Job  
26.14; 37.2; Pss.77.18; 93.4; 104.7; Isa.29.6;  
Mk.3.17; Rev.6.1; 14.2
- Tiberias: Jn.6.1,23; 21.1
- Tiberius: Mt.22.17; Mk.12.14; Lk.3.1; 20.22; Jn.19.12
- Tiglath-Pileser III: 2 Kgs.15.19; 16.8; 2 Chr.28.20
- Timothy: Acts 16.1-3; 17.14-15; Rom.16.21; 1 Cor.  
16.10; 2 Cor.1.1,19; Phil.2.19
- Tirzah: Josh.12.24; 1 Kgs.14.17; 16.17; 2 Kgs.15.14,  
16; S. of S.6.4
- Tithe: Gen.14.20; 28.22; Lev.27.30-33; Num.18.21-  
32; Deut.14.22-29; 26.12-14; Neh.10.37-38;  
Amos 4.4; Mal.3.8-10; Mt.23.23; Lk.18.12;  
Heb.7.1-10
- Titus: 2 Cor.2.13; 7.6,13; 8.23; Gal.2.3
- Tobiah: Neh.2.10; 4.3,7; ch. 6; 13.6-9
- Tongues, Speaking in: Acts 2.4-11; 10.46; 19.6;  
1 Cor.12.10,28,30; 13.1,8; ch. 14
- Trachonitis: Lk.3.1
- Transfiguration: Mt.17.1-8; 2 Pet.1.16-18
- Transgression: *See* Sin
- Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge: Gen.2.9; ch. 3;  
Prov.3.18; 11.30; 13.12; 15.4; Ezek.47.1-12;  
2 Esd.2.12; Rev.2.7; 22.2,14
- Trespass: *See* Sin
- Tribes, The Twelve: Gen.35.23; 46.8-25; 49.2-27;  
Exod.6.14-25; Num.1.5-15,20-47; 13.3-15; 26.  
1-62; 34.19-29; Deut.27.11-13; 33.6-29; Acts  
26.7; Rev.21.12
- Triumphal Entry (Palm Sunday): Mt.21.1-9; Mk.  
11.1-10; Lk.19.35-38; Jn.12.12-19
- Troas: Acts 16.8-11; 20.6-7
- Trophimus: Acts 20.4; 2 Tim.4.20
- Trumpet: Exod.19.16,19; Num.10.1-10; Josh.6.4-20;  
Judg.7.8-22; 1 Sam.13.3; 1 Kgs.1.34-39; 2 Chr.  
29.26-28; Neh.4.18-20; Job 39.24-25; Pss.47.5;  
81.3; 150.3; Isa.58.1; Jer.6.17; Joel 2.15; Mt.6.2;  
24.31; 1 Cor.15.52; Heb.12.19; Rev.1.10; 8.2;  
11.15
- Truth: Gen.24.27; 42.16; Exod.34.6; Josh.24.14;  
1 Kgs.17.24; Pss.43.3; 51.6; 108.4; 119.42; Prov.  
8.7; 23.23; Isa.38.18,19; 59.14-15; Jer.4.2; 9.5;  
Zech.8.3,8,16,19; 1 Esd.4.33-41; Jn.1.14,17;  
4.23-24; 8.32,40,44-46; 14.6,17; 16.13; 18.38;  
Rom.1.18; 1 Cor.13.6; 2 Cor.6.7; 13.8; Gal.5.7;  
Eph.4.15,21,25; 6.14; 1 Tim.3.15; 2 Tim.2.15;  
1 Jn.5.7; 3 Jn.8
- Tubal-cain: Gen.4.22
- Tychicus: Acts 20.4; Eph.6.21; Col.4.7; 2 Tim.4.12;  
Ti.3.12
- Tyre: Josh.19.29; 1 Kgs.5.1; 16.31; Ps.45.12; Jer.  
25.22; Ezek. chs. 26-28; Amos 1.9; Mk.7.24-31;  
Acts 21.3-7
- Uncleanness: Lev. chs. 11-15; 17.15; 22.1-8; Num.  
5.1-4; 6.7; ch. 19; Ps.106.39; Isa.6.5; 52.11; Mt.  
10.1; Acts 10.28; Rom.14.14; 2 Cor.6.17; Rev.2.1;  
21.27; *See also* Cleanliness; Defilement
- Unleavened Bread, Feast of: *See* Passover
- Ur: Gen.11.28; 15.7; 1 Chr.11.35; Neh.9.7
- Uriah: 2 Sam.11.3,17; 12.10; 1 Kgs.15.5; Mt.1.6
- Uriel: 2 Esd.4.1-11
- Urim and Thummim: Exod.28.30; Lev.8.8; Num.  
27.21; Deut.33.8; 1 Sam.14.41; 28.6; Ezra 2.63;  
Neh.7.65; 1 Esd.5.40

*Select Index to People, Places, and Themes in the Bible*

- Usury: *See* Interest  
 Uz: Gen.10.23; 36.28; Job 1.1; Jer.25.20; Lam.4.21  
 Uzziah: *See* Azariah
- Vanity (emptiness): Eccles.1.2; 9.1-2; 11.8; 12.8; Isa.40.17,23; 44.9; 2 Pet.2.18
- Vashti: Esther 1.9; 2.1,17
- Vengeance: Gen.4.15; Deut.32.35; Ps.94.1; Isa.35.4; 61.2; Jer.51.6; Ecclus.27.30-28.7; Lk.21.22; Rom.12.19
- Vinegar: *See* Gall
- Virgin Birth: Mt.1.18-25; Lk.1.26-38
- Vows: Gen.28.20-22; Lev.7.16-17; 22.17-25; 27.1-29; Num.21.2; ch. 30; Deut.23.21-23; Judg. 11.30-31; 1 Sam.1.11; Pss.66.13-15; 132.2-5; Acts 18.18; 21.23; *see also* Oaths
- Watch/Watchman: Gen.31.49; Judg.7.19; Job 14.16; Pss.71.10; 90.4; 127.1; 141.3; Isa.21.11; 56.10; Jer.31.28; Ezek.33.6; Hab.2.1; Lk.2.8; 6.7; 14.1
- Water: Gen.1.2,6,9; 6.17; 7.6; 21.19; 26.18-32; Exod. 15.23-25; 17.1-8; 23.25; Num.20.2-13; 21.16-18; Deut.11.11; 1 Sam.26.11; 2 Sam.14.14; 1 Kgs. 18.30-46; 2 Kgs.3.20; 2 Chr.18.26; Job 22.7; Pss. 36.8-9; 46.3-4; 63.1; 65.9; 124.4; Prov.30.4; Eccles.11.1; Isa.1.22; 33.16; 35.6; 41.17-18; 55.1; Jer.2.13; 3.3; Ezek. ch. 47; Joel 3.18; Zech.13.1; 14.5-9; Wis.10.18; Mt.3.11; Mk.1.8; Jn.4.10-15; 7.38; Acts 8.36; Rev.7.17; 21.6; 22.1
- Way, The: Acts 9.2; 18.26; 19.9; 22.4; Heb.10.20
- Wealth: Deut.8.17-18; 2 Kgs.15.20; Job 15.29; 31.25; Pss.49.10-11; 112.3; Prov.10.15; 13.11; 19.4; Eccles.5.19; Isa.60.5; Ezek.28.4; Rev.18.19
- Weeks, Feast of: Exod.23.16; 34.22; Lev.23.15-21; Num.28.26-31; Deut.16.9-12; 2 Macc.12.31; *see also* Feasts/Festivals
- Weary: Gen.27.46; 2 Sam.23.10; Job 16.7; Pss.6.6; 69.3; Isa.7.13; 40.30; 43.23-24; Jer.15.6; Mic. 6.3; Hab.2.13; Mal.2.17; Lk.18.5
- Whoredom: *See* Prostitution
- Widow: Exod.22.22-24; Deut.24.17-21; Ruth 1.21; Acts 6.1; 1 Cor.7.8; 1 Tim.5.3-16; *see also* Levirate Marriage
- Wilderness: Gen.16.7; Exod.13.18; 15.22-17.16; Num.9.15-14.45; 20.1-13; 33.8-48; Deut.1.19-20; 2.1-3; 8.2-4; 32.10; 1 Kgs.19.4; Neh.9.19-21; Pss.29.8; 78.40; 95.8; 107.4; Isa.35.1; 40.3; 2 Esd. 1.17-20; Mt.3.3; 4.1-11; Mk.1.3-5,12-13; Lk. 3.3; 4.1-13; Acts 7.30-44; 1 Cor.10.5
- Wine: Exod.29.40; Lev.23.13; Num.6.3; 15.5; Deut. 29.6; Judg.9.13; 13.14; 19.19; Ps.104.15; Prov. 20.1; 21.17; 23.20,30-31; 31.6; Eccles.10.19; Isa. 5.11; 25.6; 28.7; 55.1; Jer. ch. 35; Hos.3.1-3; Zech.9.15; 10.7; Mt.9.17; 26.27-29; Mk.2.22; 14.23-25; Lk.5.37-39; 22.17-18; Jn.2.1-12; 1 Cor.11.25; Eph.5.18; 1 Tim.3.3; 5.23; 1 Pet.4.3
- Wisdom: Deut.4.6; 1 Kgs.3.4-28; 4.29-34; 10.4-24; Job 12.2-13; ch. 28; Ps.111.10; Prov.8.1-9,18; Eccles.2.3-26; 9.10-18; Jer.10.12; Wis.7.24-8.21; Ecclus.19.20-30; ch. 24; 38.24-39.11; Bar.3.9-4.3; Jas.3.17
- Wise Men: *See* Magi
- Woman, Creation of: Gen.1.27-28; 2.18-25
- Women, Laws Respecting: Lev.12.1-8; 15.19-33; Num.5.11-31; 27.1-11; Deut.15.12-18; 20.14; 21.10-14; 22.13-21; 23.17-18
- Women in the Church: Lk.10.38-42; 1 Cor.11.3-15; 14.34-35; 1 Tim.2.9-14
- Word, The: Gen.1.3; 27.34; Deut.33.9; Pss.33.6; 68.11; Isa.40.6-8; 55.10-11; Amos 3.8; Wis. 9.1-2; 18.15; Jn.1.1-14; Rev.19.13
- Works: Jn.14.12; Rom.3.28; 13.12; Gal.6.4; Phil.1.6; Jas.2.20,26
- Wormwood: *See* Gall
- Worship: Gen.22.5; Exod.8.1; 20.5; Deut.8.19; 29.26; 2 Kgs.17.16; Pss.97.7; 132.7; Isa.19.23; Jer.7.2; Dan.3.10; Zech.14.16-17; Mk.7.7; Jn. 4.20-24; Acts 17.23; Heb.11.23; Rev.13.8-15; 14.7; 15.4; 19.4; 22.8,9
- Yahweh (the Name): Gen.4.26; Exod.3.12-17; 6.2-3; 20.7; 33.19; 34.5-7; Lev.24.10-23; Num.6.22-27; *see also* God, Names for
- Year: Exod.23.17; 30.10; Lev.25.10,53; Esther 9.27; Job 3.6; Pss.65.11; 90.4,10; Eccles.12.1; Isa. 61.2; 63.4; Zech.14.6; Lk.4.19; Heb.9.7; 10.1; 2 Pet.3.8; Rev.20.2
- Zacchaeus: Lk.19.2-8
- Zadok: 2 Sam.8.17; 15.24-36; 20.25; 1 Kgs.1.8-45; 1 Chr.16.39; 29.22; Ezek.40.46; 43.19; 44.15; 48.11
- Zeal: Num.25.13; 2 Sam.21.2; 2 Kgs.10.16; 19.31; Ps.69.9; Isa.9.7; 63.15; Jn.2.17; Rom.10.2; Phil.3.6
- Zebulun: Gen.30.20; 35.23; 49.13; Judg.1.27-30; 4.10-16; 5.18; Ezek.48.33
- Zechariah: 2 Kgs.14.29; 15.8,11
- Zechariah (father of John): Lk.1.5,13,21,64
- Zerubbabel: Ezra 2.2; 3.2,8; 4.2-3; 5.2; Neh.7.7; 12.1; Hag.1.1,12,14-15; 2.2-4,21-23; Zech.4.4-10; 1 Esd.4.58-60; 5.56; 6.29; Ecclus.49.11; Mt.1.12; Lk.3.27
- Zion: 2 Sam.5.7; 1 Kgs.8.1; 1 Chr.11.5; Pss.2.6; 9.11; 48.1-2,11-12; 50.2; 53.6; 78.68; 87.1-2.5; 102.13, 16,21; 128.5; 132.13-14; 133.3; Isa.2.3; 14.32; 18.7; 28.16; 59.20; 60.14; Joel 3.16-17,21; Amos 1.2; Mic.4.2; Zech.8.3; 2 Esd.13.36; Bar.4.5-26; 1 Macc.4.36-38; 5.54
- Zipporah: Exod.2.16-22; 4.24-26; 18.1-8
- Zoan: Ps.78.12,43; Isa.19.11,13; 30.4; Ezek.30.14
- Zobah/Zobah-hamath: 2 Sam.8.3; 1 Chr.18.3,5,7,9; 19.6
- Zophar: Job 2.11; 11.1; 20.1; 42.9



# INDEX TO MAPS

- Abana R. 4, Z1  
 Abarim, Mts. of 1, Y5  
 Abdon 3, X2  
 Abel 1, Y2  
 Abel-beth-maacah 4, Y2  
 Abel-keramim 3, Y5  
 Abel-maim 4, Y2  
 Abel-meholah 3,4, X4  
 Abel-shittim 1, Y5  
 Abila 7,9, Y3  
 Abilene 8, G4  
 Abydos 6, F5  
 Acchabare 9, X3  
 Acco 1,3,4,7, X3; 6, G4  
 Achaia 8, D3  
 Achmetha (Ecbatana) 6, J4  
 Achor, Valley of 3,4, X5  
 Achshaph 1,3, X3  
 Achzib: Phoenicia 1,3,7,9, X2  
 Acrabbein 9, X4  
 Actium 8, D3  
 Adadah (Aroer) 3, W6  
 Adam 3, Y4  
 Adasa 7,9, X5  
 Adhaim, R. 5, H4  
 Adiabene 8, H3  
 Adida 9, W5  
 Admah 1, X6  
 Adoraim 4,7, X5  
 Adramyttium 8, E3  
 Adria, Sea of 8, C2  
 Adullam 1,3,4,7, X5  
 Aduru 1, Y3  
 Aegean Sea 6,8, D3  
 Aelana 8, F5  
 Aenon 9, Y4  
 Africa 8, C4  
 Agrippina 9, Y3  
 Ahlab 3, X2  
 Ai 1,3,4, X5, 7, inset  
 Aialon 9, X5  
 Aiath 7, inset  
 Aijalon: Dan 1,3,4, X5  
 Aila 8, F5  
 'Ain Feshka 7, X5  
 Akrabatta (Akrabattene) 7, X4  
 Akraabim, Ascent of 1,3, X7  
 Alema 7, Z3  
 Aleppo 5,6, G3  
 Alexandria: Egypt 8, E4  
 Alexandria Troas 8, E3  
 Alexandrium 7,9, X4  
 Amalek 4, W6  
 Amanus Mts. 5, G3  
 Amasea 8, G2  
 Amastris 8, F2  
 Amathus: Cyprus 6, F4  
 Amathus: Palestine 9, Y4  
 Amisus 8, G2  
 Ammathus 9, Y3  
 Ammon 1,3,4,7, Z4; 5,6, G4  
 Amorites 1, Y5  
 Anab 3, W6  
 Anaharath 1, X3  
 Ananiah 7, inset, X5  
 Anathoth 3,4,7,9, X5; 7, inset  
 Anathu Borcaeus 9, X4  
 Ancona 8, B2  
 Ancyra 8, F3  
 Anthedon 7, V5  
 Antioch: Galatia 8, F3  
 Antioch: Syria 8, G3  
 Antioch on the Chrysorhoas  
 (Gerasa) 7, Y4  
 Antipatris 9, W4  
 Antium 8, B2  
 Apamea 8, G3  
 Apennine Mts. 8, B2  
 Aphairema 7, X5  
 Aphek: Bashan 4, Y3  
 Aphek (Pegai): Ephraim 1,3,7,  
 W4  
 Aphik 3, X3  
 Apollonia 8, C2  
 Apollonia Sozusa 7,9, W4  
 Appian Way 8, C2  
 Appii Forum 8, B2  
 Aqaba, Gulf of 2, T3  
 Ar 1, Y6  
 Arabah, The 1,3,4, Y4; 2, U2  
 Arabah, Sea of the 1,3,4, X5  
 Arabia 5,6, H5  
 Arabian Desert 8, H4  
 Arad 1,3,4, X6; 2, U1  
 Arad of Beth-yeroham 4, X6  
 Aram (Syria) 4, Z2  
 Araq el-Emir 7, Y5  
 Ararat (Urartu) 5, H3  
 Araxes, R. 6,8, J3  
 Arbatta 7, X3  
 Arbela: Assyria 5,6,8, H3  
 Arbela: Galilee 7,9, X3  
 Arbela: Transjordan 7,9, Y3  
 Arca 8, G4  
 Archelais: Cappadocia 8, F3  
 Archelais: Palestine 9, X5  
 Argob 1,4, Z3  
 Arimathea (Rathamin) 9, X4  
 Ariminum 8, B2  
 Armenia 6,8, H3  
 Arnon, R. 1,3,4,7, Y6; 2, U1  
 Aroer: Moab 1,3,4, Y6  
 Aroer (Adadah): Negeb 1,3, W6  
 Arpad 5,6, G3  
 Arrapkha 5,6, H3  
 Artaxata 8, H3  
 Arubboth 1,4, X4  
 Arumah 3, X4  
 Aruna 1, X4  
 Arus 9, X4  
 Arvad 5,6, G4  
 Ascalon 7, W5  
 Ashan 3, W6  
 Ashdod (Azotus) 1,3,4,7, W5;  
 2, T1; 6, F4  
 Asher: tribe 3,4,5, X2  
 Ashkelon (Ascalon) 1,3,4,7, W5  
 Ashtaroth 1,3,4, Z3  
 Asia 8, E3  
 Asochis 7,9, X3  
 Asor 3, W4  
 Asphaltitis, Lake (Dead Sea) 7,  
 X5  
 Asshur 5,6, H3  
 Assos 8, E3  
 Assyria 5,6, H3  
 Astrabad 6, K3  
 Ataroth: Ephraim 3, X4  
 Ataroth: Moab 1,4, Y5  
 Athens 6,8, D3  
 Athribis 2, Q2; 5, F4  
 Attalia 8, F3  
 Avaris 2, Q2  
 Azekah 2, T1; 3,4, W5  
 Azmaveth 7, inset  
 Azmon 2, T2  
 Azotus 7, W5  
 Baalah 3, X5  
 Baalath 3,4, W5  
 Baal-gad 3, Y2  
 Baal-hazor 4, X5  
 Baal-meon (Beth-meon) 1,4, Y5  
 Baal-peor 4, Y5  
 Baal-shalishah 3,4, X4  
 Baal-zephon 2, R2  
 Babylon: Egypt 8, F5  
 Babylon: Mesopotamia 5,6,8,  
 H4  
 Babylonia 5,6, J4  
 Baca 9, X3  
 Balikh, R. 5, G3  
 Bashan 1,3,4, Y3  
 Baskama 7, Y3  
 Beer 3, X3

*Index to Maps*

- Beeroth (Bene-jaakan) 2, **T2**  
 Beeroth (Berea): Benjamin 3,4,7, **X5**; 7,*inset*  
 Beer-sheba 1,3,4,7, **W6**; 2, **T1**  
 Beerzeth (Berzetho) 7, **X5**  
 Behistun 6, **J4**  
 Belus, R. 9, **W5**  
 Bemesis 9, **X4**  
 Bene-jaakan 2, **T2**  
 Beneventum 8, **B2**  
 Benjamin 3, **X5**  
 Beon 1, **Y5**  
 Berea 7,9, **X5**; 7,*inset*  
 Beroea 8, **D2**  
 Bersabe: Galilee 9, **X3**  
 Berytus 5,8, **G4**  
 Berzetho 7,9, **X5**  
 Besara 9, **X3**  
 Besor, Brook 3,4, **V6**  
 Beth-anath 1,3, **X3**  
 Bethany 9, **X5**  
 Betharamphtha 9, **Y5**  
 Beth-arbel 4, **Y3**  
 Beth-baal-meon 3, **Y5**  
 Beth-basi 7, **X5**  
 Beth-dagon 1,3, **W5**  
 Beth-diblatthaim 4, **Y5**  
 Beth-eden 5, **G3**  
 Beth-eglaim 1, **V6**  
 Bethel 1,3,4,7,9, **X5**; 7,*inset*  
 Beth-gilgal (Gilgal) 7, **X5**  
 Beth-haccherem 7, **X5**  
 Beth-haggan 1,3,4, **X4**  
 Beth-horon, Upper & Lower 1,4,7, **X5**  
 Beth-jeshimoth 1,3, **Y5**  
 Bethlehem: Galilee 3, **X3**  
 Bethlehem: Judah 1,3,4,7, **X5**  
 Bethmaus 9, **X3**  
 Beth-meon 4, **Y5**  
 Beth-nimrah 1,3, **Y5**  
 Beth-peor 3, **Y5**  
 Bethphage 9, **X5**  
 Beth-rehob: *region* 4, **Y2**  
 Beth-rehob: *town* 3, **Y2**  
 Bethsaida-Julias 9, **Y3**  
 Beth-shean (Beth-shan, Scythopolis) 1,3,4,7, **Y4**  
 Beth-shemesh: Judah 1,3,4, **W5**  
 Bethul (Bethuel) 3, **W6**  
 Beth-yerah (Philoteria) 1,7,9, **Y3**  
 Beth-zachariah 7, **X5**  
 Beth-zaith 7, **X5**  
 Bethzatha, Pool of 9  
 Beth-zur 3,4,7, **X5**  
 Betonim 3, **Y5**  
 Beyond the River 6, **G4**  
 Bezek 3, **X4**  
 Bezer 1,3,4, **Y5**  
 Bitun 6, **J4**  
 Bit-adini 5, **G3**  
 Bithynia & Pontus 8, **F2**  
 Black Sea 5,6, **F2**  
 Borim 4, **X4**  
 Borsippa 5,6, **H4**  
 Bosor 7, **Z3**  
 Bosora 7, **Z3**  
 Bosphorus 8, **E2**  
 Bosporan Kingdom 8, **G1**  
 Bozrah (Bosora) 7, **Z3**  
 Bozrah: Edom 2, **U2**  
 Bozrah: Moab 4, **Y5**  
 Brundisium 8, **C2**  
 Bubastis 2, **Q2**  
 Bucolon Polis 9, **W3**  
 Busiris 2,6, **Q2**  
 Byblos 5, **G4**  
 Byzantium 6,8, **E2**  
 Cabul 3,4, **X3**  
 Cadasa 9, **Y2**  
 Caesarea (Mazaca) 8, **G3**  
 Caesarea: Palestine 9, **W3**; 8, **F4**  
 Caesarea Philippi 8, **G4**  
 Calah 5, **H3**  
 Calno 5, **G3**  
 Cana 9, **X3**  
 Canaan 1-; 2, **T1**  
 Canopus 8, **F4**  
 Canusium 8, **C2**  
 Capar Ganaeoi 9, **Y2**  
 Capernaum 9, **Y3**  
 Capharsaba 9, **W4**  
 Capharsalama 7,*inset*; 9, **X5**  
 Caphtor (Crete) 5, **D3**  
 Capitolas 9, **Y3**  
 Cappadocia 6,8, **G3**  
 Capparetaea 9, **W4**  
 Capreae (Capri) 8, **B2**  
 Capua 8, **B2**  
 Carchemish 5,8, **G3**  
 Caria 6, **E3**  
 Cariathiareim 9, **W5**  
 Carmel, Mt. 1,3,4,7,9, **X3**  
 Carmel: *town* 4, **X6**  
 Carnaim (Carnion) 7, **Z3**  
 Carrhae (Haran) 8, **G3**  
 Casphor 7, **Y3**  
 Caspian Sea 5,6, **K3**  
 Caspin 7, **Y3**  
 Caucasus Mts. 6, **J2**  
 Cauda 8, **D4**  
 Cenchræe 8, **D3**  
 Chabulon 9, **X3**  
 Chaspho (Casphor, Caspin) 7, **Y3**  
 Chephirah 3, **X5**; 7,*inset*  
 Cherith, Brook 4,5, 9, **Y4**  
 Chersonesus 8, **F2**  
 Chezib 1, **W5**  
 Chinnereth 1,3, **Y3**  
 Chinnereth, Sea of 1,3,4, **Y3**  
 Chios 8, **E3**  
 Chorazin 9, **Y3**  
 Cilicia 5,6, **F3**  
 Cilicia & Syria 8, **G3**  
 Cilicia Trachea 8, **F3**  
 Cimmerians 6, **F3**  
 Citium 6, **F4**  
 City of Moab 1, **Y6**  
 City of Salt 4, **X5**  
 Cnidus 8, **E3**  
 Colchi 6, **H2**  
 Colchis 8, **H2**  
 Colonia Amasa 9, **X5**  
 Colossæe 8, **E3**  
 Comana 8, **G2**  
 Commagene 5,6,8, **G3**  
 Coptos 6, **F5**  
 Corcyra 8, **C3**  
 Coreae 9, **X4**  
 Corinth 6,8, **D3**  
 Cos 8, **E3**  
 Crete 5,6,8, **D3**  
 Crocodilon Polis 9, **W3**  
 Croton 8, **C3**  
 Ctesiphon 8, **H4**  
 Cush (Ethiopia) 6, **F6**  
 Cuthah 5, **H4**  
 Cyprus: *island* 5,6,8, **F3**  
 Cyprus: Palestine 9, **X5**  
 Cyrenaica 8, **D4**  
 Cyrene 6,8, **D4**  
 Cyrus, R. 6, **J2**  
 Cyzicus 8, **E2**  
 Dabaloth 7, **Y5**  
 Dabaritta 9, **X3**  
 Dabira 9, **X3**  
 Dacia 8, **D1**  
 Dalmanutha 9, **Y3**  
 Dalmatia 8, **C2**  
 Damascus 1,3,4,7, **Z1**; 5,6,8, **G4**  
 Damghan 6, **K3**  
 Dan: *town* 1,3,4, **Y2**  
 Dan: *tribe* 3, **Y2**; **W5**  
 Danube, R. 8, **D2**  
 Daphne 9, **Y2**  
 Dascylium 6, **F2**  
 Dathema (DiatHEMA) 7, **Z3**  
 Dead Sea 7, **X6**  
 Debir: Judah 1,3,4, **W6**; 2, **T1**  
 Decapolis 9, **Y3**  
 Dedan 5,6, **G5**  
 Delphi 6, **D3**  
 Der 6, **J4**  
 Derbe 8, **F3**  
 Diathema 7, **Z3**  
 Dibun 1,3,4, **Y6**; 2, **U1**  
 Diyala, R. 5, **H4**  
 Dok 7, **X5**  
 Dophkah 2, **S3**  
 Dor 1,3,4,7,9, **W3**  
 Dora 9, **W3**  
 Doriscus 6, **E2**  
 Dorylaeum 8, **F3**  
 Dothan 1,4,7, **X4**



*Index to Maps*

- Dumah 5,6,8, **G5**  
 Dura-Europus 8, **H4**  
 Dur-sharrukin 5, **H3**  
 Dyrhachium 8, **C2**
- Eastern Sea 5, **K5**  
 Ebal, Mt. 1,3,4,7,9, **X4**  
 Ecbatana 5,6, **J4**  
 Ecdippa 9, **X2**  
 Edessa 8, **G3**  
 Edfu 6, **F5**  
 Edom 1,3,4, **Y7**; 2, **U2**; 5, **G4**  
 Edomites 6, **G4**  
 Edrei 1,3,4, **Z3**  
 Eglaim 1, **V6**  
 Eglon 1,3,7, **W5**  
 Egnatian Way 8, **D2**  
 Egypt 2, **Q2**; 5,6,8, **F5**  
 Egyptian Port 2, **S3**  
 Egypt, Brook of 2, **S1**  
 Ekron 1,3,4,7, **W5**  
 Elah, V. of 3, **W5**  
 Elam 7, **W5**  
 Elam (Susiana) 5,6,8, **J4**  
 Elasa 7, *inset*  
 Elath 5, **F5**  
 Elealeh 1, **Y5**  
 Elephantine 6, **F6**  
 Elon 4, **X5**  
 Emesa 8, **G4**  
 Emmatha 9, **Y3**  
 Emmaus (Colonia Amasa) 9, **X5**  
 Emmaus (Nicopolis) 7,9, **W5**  
 En-dor 3, **X3**  
 En-gannim 1,3, **X4**  
 En-gedi 3,4,7, **X6**  
 En-haddah 8, **X3**  
 En-rimmon 7, **W6**  
 En-rogel 9  
 Ephesus 6,8, **E3**  
 Ephraim: *town* 9, **X5**  
 Ephraim: *tribe* 3, **X4**  
 Ephrath 1, **X5**  
 Ephron 3,4, **X5**  
 Ephron (Transjordan) 7, **Y3**  
 Epiphania 8, **G3**  
 Erech (Uruk) 5,6, **J4**  
 Esbus 9, **Y5**  
 Esdraelon 9, **X3**  
 Eshnunna 6, **H4**  
 Eshtemoa 3, **X6**  
 Etam 3,4, **X5**  
 Ethiopia 5,6, **F6**  
 Euphrates, R. 5,6,8, **H3**  
 Europus 8, **G3**  
 Euxine Sea 8, **F2**  
 Exaloth 9, **X3**  
 Ezion-geber 2, **T3**; 5, **F5**
- Fair Havens 8, **D4**  
 Farah, Wadi 9, **X4**  
 Forum of Appius 8, **B2**
- Gabae (Hippeum) 9, **X3**  
 Gabae (Isfahan) 6, **K4**  
 Gabaon 9, **X5**  
 Gabata 9, **W3**  
 Gabbath Saul 9, **X5**  
 Gad: *tribe* 1,3, **Y4**  
 Gadara: Decapolis 7,9, **Y3**  
 Gadara: Perea 7,9, **Y4**  
 Galatia 8, **F3**  
 Galilee 4,7, **X3**  
 Galilee, Sea of 9, **Y3**  
 Galilee & Perea 9  
 Gamala 7,9, **Y3**  
 Gangra 8, **F2**  
 Garis 9, **X3**  
 Gath (Gittaim): Benjamin 4,7, **W5**  
 Gath: Philistia 1,3,4, **W6**  
 Gath of Sharon 1,8, **X4**  
 Gath-hepher 4, **X3**  
 Gath-rimmon 3,4, **W4**  
 Gaulanitis 7,9, **Y3**  
 Gaza 1,3,4,7, **V5**; 5,6,8, **F4**; 2, **T1**  
 Gazara 7,9, **W5**  
 Geba 4,7, **X5**; 7, *inset*  
 Gebal 5,6, **G4**  
 Gedor 8, **X5**  
 Gennath Gate 9  
 Gennesaret 10,11, **Y3**  
 Gennesaret, Lake 7, **Y3**  
 Gerar 1,3,4,7, **W6**; 2, **T1**  
 Gerasa 7,9, **Y4**  
 Gergesa 9, **Y3**  
 Gerizim, Mt. 1,3,4,7,9, **X4**  
 Geshur 1,4, **Y3**  
 Gezer 1,3,4, **W5**  
 Gibbethon 3,4, **W5**  
 Gibeah 3,4, **X5**  
 Gibeon 1,3,4,7, **X5**; 7, *inset*  
 Gilboa, Mt. 3,4,9, **X3**  
 Gilead 1,3,4,7, **Y4**  
 Gilgal (nr. Jericho) 1,3,4,7, **X5**  
 Giloh 3,4, **X5**  
 Gimarraï 5, **F3**  
 Gimzo 4, **W5**  
 Ginae 9, **X4**  
 Ginnesar 9, **Y3**  
 Gischala 9, **X2**  
 Gitta 9, **X4**  
 Gittaim (Gath) 7, **W5**  
 Golan 1,3, **Y3**  
 Gomer 5, **F3**  
 Gomorrah 1, **X6**  
 Gophna 7,9, **X5**  
 Gordion 5,6, **F3**  
 Gordium 8, **F3**  
 Gordyene 8, **H3**  
 Gorgan 6, **K3**  
 Goshen: Egypt 2, **Q2**  
 Goshen: Palestine 3, **W6**  
 Gozan 5, **G3**  
 Granicus, R. 6, **E2**  
 Great Arad 4, **X6**
- Great Bitter Lake 2, **R2**  
 Greater Syrtis 8, **C4**  
 Great Plain, The 7,9, **X3**  
 Great Sea, The 1,3,4,7, **W3**;  
 2, **R1**; 5, **E4**  
 Gurbaal 4, **W6**
- Habor, R. 5, **H3**  
 Hadid 7, **W5**  
 Halys, R. 5,6,8, **G3**  
 Ham 1, **Y3**  
 Hamath 5,6, **G3**  
 Hamath, Entrance to 4, **Y1**  
 Hammath 3, **Y3**  
 Hannathon 1,3, **X3**  
 Haran 5,6,8, **G3**  
 Harim 7, **W5**  
 Harosheth-hagoiim 3, **X3**  
 Hattina 5, **G3**  
 Hauran 4, **Z3**; 5, **G4**  
 Havvoth-jair 1,3,4, **Y3**  
 Hazar-addar 2, **T2**  
 Hazar-shual 3,7, **W6**  
 Hazazon-tamar 1, **X7**  
 Hazor: Galilee 1,3,4,7, **Y2**  
 Hazor: near Jerusalem 7, *inset*  
 Hebron 1,3,4,7, **X5**; 2, **U1**  
 Helam 4, **Z3**  
 Helbon 5, **G4**  
 Heliopolis 2, **Q2**; 5,6,8, **F4**  
 Hellespont 6, **E2**  
 Hephher 3,4, **W4**  
 Heraclea 8, **F2**  
 Heracleopolis 2, **P3**  
 Hermon, Mt. 1,3,4,7, **Y2**  
 Hermopolis 5,6, **F5**  
 Hermus, R. 5, **E3**  
 Herod Antipas, Tetrarchy of 9  
 Heshbon 1,3,4,7, **Y5**; 2, **U1**  
 Hill Country of Israel 1,3, **X4**  
 Hill Country of Judah 1,3, **X5**  
 Hippeum (Gabae) 9, **X3**  
 Hippos 7,9, **Y3**  
 Horeb, Mt. 2, **S4**  
 Hormah 1,3,7, **W6**; 2, **T1**  
 Huleh, Lake 9, **Y2**  
 Hyrcania: Asia 6, **K3**  
 Hyrcanian Sea 6, **K2**
- Iadanna (Cyprus) 5, **F3**  
 Ibleam 1,3,4, **X4**  
 Iconium 8, **F3**  
 Ida, Mt. 6, **E3**  
 Idumea 7, **W6**  
 Ijon 1, **Y2**  
 Illyricum 8, **C2**  
 Ilon 9, **X5**  
 Ionia 6, **E3**  
 Isfahan (Gabae) 6, **K4**  
 Israel 4, **X4**; 5, **G4**  
 Issachar: *tribe* 3,4, **X3**  
 Issus 6, **G3**  
 Istros 8, **E2**

## Index to Maps

- Itabyrium 9, X3  
 Italy 8, B2
- Jabbok, R. 1,3,4,7,9, Y4**  
 Jabesh-gilead 3,4, Y4  
 Jabneel (Jamneh, Jamnia):  
   Judah 3,4,7, W5  
 Jahaz 4, Y5  
 Jamneith 9, Y3  
 Jamnia 7, W5  
 Janoah: Naphtali 1,4, X3  
 Japha 9, X3  
 Japhia 1, X3  
 Jarmuth: Judah 3,7, W5  
 Jattir 3, X6  
 Javan 5, E3  
 Jazer 1,4,7, Y4  
 Jebel Helal 2, S2  
 Jebus (Jerusalem) 3, X5  
 Jekabzeel 7, W6  
 Jericho 1,3,4,7,9, X5; 2, U1  
 Jerusalem 1,3,4,7,9, X5; 7, *inset*;  
   5,6,8, G4; 2, U1  
 Jeshanah 4, X4  
 Jeshua 7, W6  
 Jezreel: Judah 3, X6  
 Jezreel, V. of 3,4, X3  
 Jezreel: V. of Jezreel 3,4, X3  
 Jogbehah 1,3, Y4  
 Jokneam (Jokmeam) 1,3,4, X3  
 Joppa 1,3,4,7,9, W4; 8, F4  
 Jordan, R. 1,3,4,7,9, Y4  
 Jotapata 9, X3  
 Judah: *Kingdom & region*  
   4,7, X5; 5,6, F4  
 Judah: *tribe* 3, X5  
 Judah, Wilderness of 4, X5  
 Judea: *region* 9, X5; 8, G4  
 Judea: Roman Empire 9  
 Julius 9, Y5  
 Juttah 2, U1
- Kabzeel 3, W6  
 Kadesh 5, G4  
 Kadesh-barnea 2, T2  
 Kamon 3, Y3  
 Kanah 1, X2  
 Kanah, Brook of 9, W4  
 Karkor 3, Z6  
 Karnaim 1,4, Z3  
 Kedar 5,6, G4  
 Kedemoth 1,3, Y5  
 Kedesh 1,3,4,7, Y2  
 Kedron 7, W5  
 Kedron, R. 9, W5  
 Keilah 1,3,7, W5  
 Khilakku 5, F3  
 Khirbet Qumran 7,9, X5  
 Kidron, Brook 4, X5  
 King's Highway, The 2, U3  
 Kir-hareseth 2, U1; 4, Y6  
 Kiriathaim 1,3,4, Y5  
 Kiriath-arba 1,7, X5
- Kiriath-jearim 3,4,7, W5;  
   7, *inset*  
 Kishon, R. 3,4,9, X3  
 Kue 5, G3  
 Kumukhu 5, G3
- Lacedaemon 8, D3  
 Lachish 1,3,4,7, W5; 2, T1  
 Ladder of Tyre 7, X2  
 Laish (Dan) 1,3, Y2  
 Lakkum 3, Y3  
 Laodicea 8, E3  
 Larissa 8, D3  
 Larsa 5,6, J4  
 Lasea 8, D3  
 Lebanon, Mt. 1,3,4,7, Y1  
 Lebanon: *region* 5, G4  
 Lebanon, V. of 3, Y1  
 Lebonah 3, X4  
 Lehi 3, X5  
 Lepcis Magna 8, B4  
 Lesbos 6,8, E3  
 Lesser Armenia 8, G3  
 Libba 7, Y5  
 Libnah 3,4, W5; 2, T1  
 Libya 5,6,8, E4  
 Little Bitter Lake 2, R2  
 Livias 9, Y5  
 Lod 1,7, W5  
 Lo-debar 4, Y3  
 Lower Beth-horon 3,4,9, X5  
 Lower Sea, 5,6, K5  
 Lower Zab: *riv.* 5, H3  
 Luz 1, X5  
 Lycia 6,8, E3  
 Lycopolis 5, F5  
 Lydda 7,9, W5  
 Lydia 5,6, E3  
 Lystra 8, F3
- Maacah 1,4, Y2  
 Macedonia 6,8, D2  
 Machaerus 7, Y5  
 Madai (Medes) 5, K3  
 Madmannah 3, W6  
 Madon 1,3, X3  
 Maeander, R. 5, E3  
 Magadan 9, Y3  
 Magnesia 6, E3  
 Magnesia-on-Maeander 6, E3  
 Mahanaim 1,4, Y4  
 Mahnayim 9, X4  
 Makaz 4, W5  
 Maked 7, Z3  
 Makkedah 3, W5  
 Malta 8, B3  
 Mamre 1, X5  
 Manasseh: *tribe* 1,3, Y3; 3, X4  
 Mannai 5, J3  
 Maon 3, X6  
 Marathon 6, D3  
 Mare Internum 8, D4  
 Mare Nostrum 8, D4
- Mareshah 3,4, W5  
 Marisa 7, W5  
 Masada 7, X6  
 Mattanah 1, Y5  
 Mazaca 8, G3  
 Medeba 1,3,4,7, Y5; 2, U1  
 Medes 5, K3  
 Media 6,8, J3  
 Media Atropatene 8, J3  
 Mediterranean Sea 7,8  
 Megiddo 1,3,4, X3  
 Melita (Malta) 8, B3  
 Melitene 5,6,8, G3  
 Memphis 2, Q3; 5,6,8, F5  
 Menzaleh, Lake 2, Q1  
 Meribah 2, T2  
 Merom 1,3,4, X3  
 Merom, Waters of 3, X3  
 Meronoth 7, *inset*  
 Meroth 9, X3  
 Mesembria 8, E2  
 Melitene (Moschi) 6, G2  
 Meshech (Mushki) 5, F3  
 Mesopotamia 8, H3  
 Messana 8, C3  
 Michmash 3,9, X5; 7, *inset*  
 Middin 3,4, X5  
 Midian 2, U3  
 Migdal 1, W4  
 Migdol 5, F4  
 Miletus 6,8, E3  
 Milid (Melitene) 5, G3  
 Minni 5, J3  
 Misrephoth-maim 3, X2  
 Mitylene 6,8, E3  
 Mizpah 3,4,7, X5; 7, *inset*  
 Moab 1,3,4,7, Y6; 2, U1; 5,6, G4  
 Moab, Plains of 1, Y5  
 Modein 7,9, X5  
 Moesia 8, D2  
 Moladah 1,7, W6  
 Mons Casius 2, S1  
 Moreh, Hill of 3, X3  
 Moschi 6, G2  
 Mount Baalah 3,4, W5  
 Mushki 5, F3  
 Musri 5, G3  
 Myra 8, F3  
 Mitylene *see* Mitylene
- Naarah 3, X5  
 Nabataean Kingdom 7, Y6;  
   8, G4  
 Nahaliel, R. 1,4, Y5  
 Nahalol 3, X3  
 Nain 9, X3  
 Nairi 5, H3  
 Naissus 8, D2  
 Naphath-Dor 3, W3  
 Naphtali: *tribe* 3,4, X3  
 Narbata 7, X4  
 Naucratis 8, F4  
 Nazareth 9, X3

*Index to Maps*

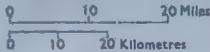
- Neapolis: Italy 8, **B2**  
 Neapolis: Macedonia 8, **D2**  
 Neapolis: Palestine 9, **X4**  
 Neballat 7, **W5**  
 Nebo: Moab 4,7, **Y5**  
 Nebo, Mt. 1,3, **Y5**; 2, **U1**  
 Negeb. The 1,3,4, **W6**; 2, **T1**  
 Netophah 4,7, **X5**  
 Nibshan 3,4, **X5**  
 Nicaea 8, **E2**  
 Nicephorium 8, **G3**  
 Nicomedia 8, **E2**  
 Nicopolis: Greece 8, **D3**  
 Nicopolis: Palestine 9, **W5**  
 Nile. R. 2, **Q3**; 5,6,8, **F5**  
 Nimrim, Waters of 4, **Y6**  
 Nineveh 5,6, **H3**  
 Ninus 8, **H3**  
 Nippur 5,6, **J4**  
 Nisibis 8, **H3**  
 Noph 2, **Q3**; 5, **F5**  
 Novae 8, **E2**
- Oboth 2, **U2**  
 Odessus 8, **E2**  
 Oescus 8, **D2**  
 On (Heliopolis) 2, **Q2**; 5, **F4**  
 Ono 1,7, **W4**  
 Ophrah 3, **X5**  
 Orontes, R. 5,8, **G3**  
 Osroëne 8, **G3**  
 Ostia 8, **B2**  
 Oxyrhynchus 8, **F5**
- Paestum 8, **B2**  
 Palmyra 8, **G4**  
 Pamphylia 6,8, **F3**  
 Paneas 9, **Y2**  
 Pannonia 8, **C1**  
 Panormus 8, **B3**  
 Paphlagonians 6, **F2**  
 Paphos 8, **F4**  
 Paran. Wilderness of 2, **T3**  
 Parsagarda (Pasargadae) 6, **K4**  
 Parthia 6, **L3**  
 Parthian Empire 8, **H3**  
 Patara 8, **E3**  
 Pegai 7,9, **W4**  
 Pehel 1, **Y4**  
 Pekod 5, **J4**  
 Pella 1,7,9, **Y4**  
 Peloponnesus 6, **D3**  
 Pelusium 2, **R1**; 5,6,8, **F4**  
 Penuel 1,3,4, **Y4**  
 Perea, Galilee & 9, **Y5**  
 Perga 8, **F3**  
 Pergamum 8, **E3**  
 Persepolis 6, **K5**  
 Persia (Persis) 6, **K5**  
 Persian Gulf 6, **K5**  
 Persus 8, **B2**  
 Pessinus 8, **F3**  
 Petra 8, **G4**
- Pharaton 7,9, **X4**  
 Pharpar, R. 4, **Z2**  
 Phasaelis 9, **X4**  
 Philadelphia: Asia 8, **E3**  
 Philadelphia (Rabbah):  
     E. of R. Jordan 7,9, **Y5**  
 Philip, Tetrarchy of 9, **Y2**  
 Philippi 8, **D2**  
 Philippopolis 8, **D2**  
 Philistia 4, **W5**  
 Philistia, Plain of 2, **T1**  
 Philistines 3,7, **W5**  
 Philoteria 1,7,9, **Y3**  
 Phoenicia 7, **G4**; 7,9, **X2**  
 Phoenix 8, **D3**  
 Phrygia 5, **F3**  
 Pi-beseth 2, **Q2**  
 Pirathon 3,4,7, **X4**  
 Pisgah, Mt. 1,3, **Y5**  
 Pisidia 8, **F3**  
 Pithom 2, **Q2**  
 Po, R. 8, **B2**  
 Pola 8, **B2**  
 Pompeii 8, **B2**  
 Pontus Euxinus 8, **F2**  
 Prusa 8, **E2**  
 Pteria 6, **F3**  
 Ptolemais 7,9, **X3**; 12, **G4**  
 Punon 2, **U2**  
 Puqudu 5, **J4**  
 Puteoli 8, **B2**
- Qantir 2, **Q2**  
 Qarqar 5, **G4**  
 Qidri 5, **G4**
- Raamses 2, **Q2**  
 Rabbah (Rabbath-ammon):  
     Ammon 1,3,4,7,9, **Y5**;  
     2, **U1**  
 Ramah: Benjamin 3, **X5**;  
     7, *inset*  
 Ramathaim-zophim 3,7, **X4**  
 Ramoth-gilead 1,3,4, **Z3**  
 Raphia 2, **T1**; 4,7, **V6**; 5, **F4**  
 Raphon 7, **Z3**  
 Rathamin 7,9, **X4**  
 Ravenna 8, **B2**  
 Red Sea 5,6,8, **G5**  
 Red Sea (G. of Aqaba) 2, **T4**  
 Rehob 3, **X3**  
 Rehoboth 1, **W6**  
 Reuben: *tribe* 1,3, **Y5**  
 Rezeph 5, **G3**  
 Rhagae 6, **K3**  
 Rhegium 8, **C3**  
 Rhodes 5,6,8, **E3**  
 Rimmon: Benjamin 3, **X5**  
 Rimmon: Galilee 3, **X3**  
 Rogelim 4, **Y3**  
 Roman Empire 8  
 Rome 8, **B2**  
 Rumah 4,9, **X3**
- Saab 9, **X3**  
 Saba (Sheba) 5, **G6**  
 Sagartia 6, **K4**  
 Sais 5,6,8, **F4**  
 Salamis: Cyprus 6,8, **F3**  
 Salamis: *island* Greece 6, **D3**  
 Salecah 5, **G4**  
 Salem (Jerusalem) 1, **X5**  
 Salim 9, **Y4**  
 Salmone 8, **E3**  
 Salonae 8, **C2**  
 Salt, City of 4, **X5**  
 Salt, V. of 4, **W6**  
 Salt Sea 1,3,4, **X5**; 2, **U1**  
 Samaga 7, **Y5**  
 Samal 5, **G3**  
 Samaria: *region* 7,9, **X4**  
 Samaria: *town* 4,7,9, **X4**;  
     5,6,8, **G4**  
 Samos 6,8, **E3**  
 Samosata 8, **G3**  
 Samothrace 8, **E2**  
 Sangarius, R. 5,6, **F2**  
 Sappho 9, **X5**  
 Saqqarah 2, **Q3**  
 Sardica 8, **D2**  
 Sardis 5,6,8, **E3**  
 Scodra 8, **C2**  
 Scopus, Mt. 9, **X5**  
 Scupi 8, **D2**  
 Scythians 8, **F1**  
 Scythopolis 7,9, **Y4**  
 Sebaste 9, **X4**  
 Secacah 3,4, **X5**  
 Sela 2, **U2**; 5,6, **G4**  
 Selame 9, **X3**  
 Seleucia: Asia Minor 8, **F3**  
 Seleucia: E. of R. Jordan 7,9, **Y2**  
 Seleucia: Mesopotamia 8, **H4**  
 Selo (Shiloh) 9, **X4**  
 Semechonitis. L. 9, **Y2**  
 Senaah 7, **X5**  
 Senir (Mt. Hermon) 1, **Y2**  
 Sennabris 9, **Y3**  
 Sepharad 5, **E3**  
 Sepph 9, **X3**  
 Sepphoris 9, **X3**  
 Serabit el-Khadim 2, **S3**  
 Shaalbm 3,4, **W5**  
 Sharon, Plain of 1,4,9, **W4**  
 Sharuhin 1,4, **V6**  
 Sheba (Saba) 5, **G6**  
 Shechem 1,3,4,7, **X4**  
 Shephelah, The 1,3,4, **W6**  
 Shihin (Asochis) 7, **X3**  
 Shikkeron 3,4, **W5**  
 Shiloh 3,4,7,9, **X4**  
 Shimron 1,3, **X3**  
 Shittim 1,3, **Y5**; 2, **U1**  
 Shunem 1,3,4, **X3**  
 Shur, Wilderness of 2, **S2**  
 Shushan 5,6, **J4**  
 Sicily 8, **B3**

*Index to Maps*

- Siddim, V. of *I*, **X6**  
 Side **8**, **G2**  
 Sidon *1,3,4,7*, **X1**; *5,6,8*, **G4**  
 Sidonians *4*, **X2**  
 Sigoph *9*, **X3**  
 Simeon: *tribe* *3*, **W6**  
 Simonias *9*, **X3**  
 Sin (Pelusium) *2*, **R1**  
 Sin, Wilderness of *2*, **S3**  
 Sinai, Mt. (Jebel Helak) *2*, **S2**  
 Sinai, Mt. (Mt. Horeb) *2*, **S4**;  
*8*, **F5**  
 Sinai: *region* *2*, **S3**; *5,6*, **F5**  
 Singidunum *8*, **D2**  
 Sinope *6,8*, **G2**  
 Siptan *4*, **X4**  
 Sippar *5*, **H4**  
 Sirbonis, Lake *2*, **S1**  
 Sirion (Mt. Hermon) *1*, **Y2**  
 Sirmium *8*, **C2**  
 Siscia *8*, **C1**  
 Siut *5*, **F5**  
 Skudra *6*, **E2**  
 Smyrna *8*, **E3**  
 Socoh: Israel *1,3,4*, **X4**  
 Socoh (Soco): Judah *1,3,4*, **W5**  
 Sodom *1*, **X6**  
 Sogane: E. of R. Jordan *9*, **Y3**  
 Sogane: Galilee *9*, **X3**  
 Soli *6*, **F3**  
 Sorek *3,4*, **W5**  
 Sparta *6,8*, **D3**  
 Strato's Tower *7*, **W3**  
 Succoth: Egypt *2*, **R2**  
 Succoth: Palestine *1,3,4*, **Y4**  
 Suez Gulf of *2*, **R3**  
 Susa (Shushan) *5,6*, **J4**  
 Susiana (Elam) *6*, **J4**  
 Susithah *7,9*, **Y3**  
 Sycaminum *9*, **W3**  
 Sychar *9*, **X4**  
 Syene *5,6*, **F6**  
 Syracuse *8*, **C3**  
 Syria *1,4*, **Z2**; *5*, **G4**  
 Syria, Province of *9*, **X2**
- Taanach *1,3,4*, **X3**  
 Tabbath *3*, **Y4**  
 Tabal (Tubal) *5*, **G3**  
 Tabor *9*, **X3**  
 Tabor, Mt. *3,4*, **X3**  
 Tadmor (Tadmar) *5,6*, **G4**  
 Tahpanhes *5,6*, **F4**  
 Tamar *4*, **X7**  
 Tanis *2*, **Q2**; *5*, **F4**  
 Tappuah *3,4,7*, **X4**
- Tarentum *8*, **C2**  
 Taricheae *7,9*, **Y3**  
 Tarracina *8*, **B2**  
 Tarsus *6,8*, **F3**  
 Taurus *9*, **X5**  
 Tavium *8*, **F3**  
 Tekoa *4,7*, **X5**  
 Tell el-Yahudiyeh *2*, **Q2**  
 Tema *5,6,8*, **G5**  
 Teman *2*, **U2**  
 Tephon *7,9*, **X4**  
 Thamna (Timnath) *9*, **X4**  
 Thapsacus *6*, **G3**  
 Thebes: Egypt *5,6*, **F5**  
 Thebes: Greece *6*, **D3**  
 Thebez *3,4*, **X4**  
 Thella *9*, **Y2**  
 Thermopylae *6*, **D3**  
 Thessalonica *8*, **D2**  
 Thessaly *6*, **D3**  
 Thrace *6,8*, **E2**  
 Three Taverns *8*, **B2**  
 Thyatira *8*, **E3**  
 Tiber, R. *8*, **B2**  
 Tiberias *9*, **Y3**; *8*, **G4**  
 Tigranocerta *8*, **H3**  
 Tigris, R. *5,6,8*, **H4**  
 Til-garimmu *5*, **G3**  
 Timnah: Hill Country of Judah  
*1,3*, **X5**  
 Timnah: Dan *3,4*, **W5**  
 Timnath (Thamna) *9*, **X4**  
 Timnath-serah (Timnath) *3,7*,  
*X5*  
 Timsah, Lake *2*, **R2**  
 Tiphseh *5*, **G3**  
 Tirathana *9*, **X4**  
 Tirzah *1,3,4*, **X4**  
 Tjaru (Zilu) *2*, **R2**  
 Tob *3,4*, **Z3**  
 Togarmah *5*, **G3**  
 Tomi *8*, **E2**  
 Tower of Aphek *9*, **W4**  
 Trapezus *6,8*, **G2**  
 Tripolis *8*, **G4**  
 Troas (Alexandria Troas) *8*, **E3**  
 Tubal (Tabal) *5*, **G3**  
 Turang Tepe *6*, **K3**  
 Turushpa (Tuspar) *5*, **H3**  
 Tyre *1,3,4,7,9*, **X2**; *5,6,8*, **G4**  
 Tyre, Ladder of *9*, **X2**  
 Tyrrhenian Sea *8*, **B3**
- Ulatha *9*, **Y2**  
 Upper Beth-horon *3,4,9*, **X5**  
 Upper Sea *5,6*, **E4**
- Upper Zab: *riv.* *5*, **H3**  
 Ur *5,6*, **J4**  
 Urartu (Ararat) *5,6*, **H3**  
 Urmia, Lake *5,6,8*, **J3**  
 Uruk (Erech) *5,6*, **J4**  
 Ushu *5*, **G4**  
 Usiana *5*, **F3**  
 Uzu *1*, **X2**
- Van, Lake *5,6,8*, **H3**  
 Viminacium *8*, **D2**
- Waters of Nimrim *4*, **Y6**  
 Western Sea, The *1*, **W4**; *5*, **E4**
- Xanthus *6*, **E3**
- Yanoam *1*, **Y3**  
 Yarmuk, Wadi *9*, **Y3**  
 Yazith *4*, **X4**  
 Yeb *6*, **F6**  
 Yehem *1*, **X4**  
 Yiron *3*, **X2**  
 Yishub *9*, **X4**  
 Yurza *1*, **V6**
- Zadrakarta *6*, **K3**  
 Zair *4*, **X5**  
 Zanoah *7*, **W5**  
 Zaphon *3*, **Y4**  
 Zarephath *4*, **X2**  
 Zarethan *3,4*, **Y4**  
 Zeboiim *1*, **X6**  
 Zebulun: *tribe* *3*, **X3**  
 Zela *3*, **X5**  
 Zemaraim *4*, **X5**  
 Zephathah, V. of *4*, **W5**  
 Zered, Brook *1,3,4*, **Y7**  
 Zeredah: Ephraim *4*, **X4**  
 Zeredah (Zarethan): Jordan  
 Valley *3*, **Y4**  
 Zererah: Jordan Valley *3*, **Y4**  
 Zereth-shahar *3*, **Y5**  
 Zeugma *8*, **G3**  
 Zia *9*, **Y4**  
 Ziklag *3,4,7*, **W6**  
 Zilu (Tjaru) *2*, **R2**  
 Zin, Wilderness of *2*, **T2**  
 Ziph: Hill Country of Judah  
*3,4*, **X6**  
 Ziph: Negev *1,3*, **W7**  
 Ziz, Ascent of *4*, **X5**  
 Zoan *2*, **Q2**; *5,6*, **F4**  
 Zoar *1,4*, **X6**  
 Zobah *4*, **Z1**  
 Zorah *3,4,7*, **W5**

# The Land of Canaan Abraham to Moses

- GAD, etc. Tribes of Israel
- EDOM, etc. Kingdoms encountered by the Israelites in the 13th century, B.C.
- Cities mentioned in Numbers and Deuteronomy, but not in Genesis.



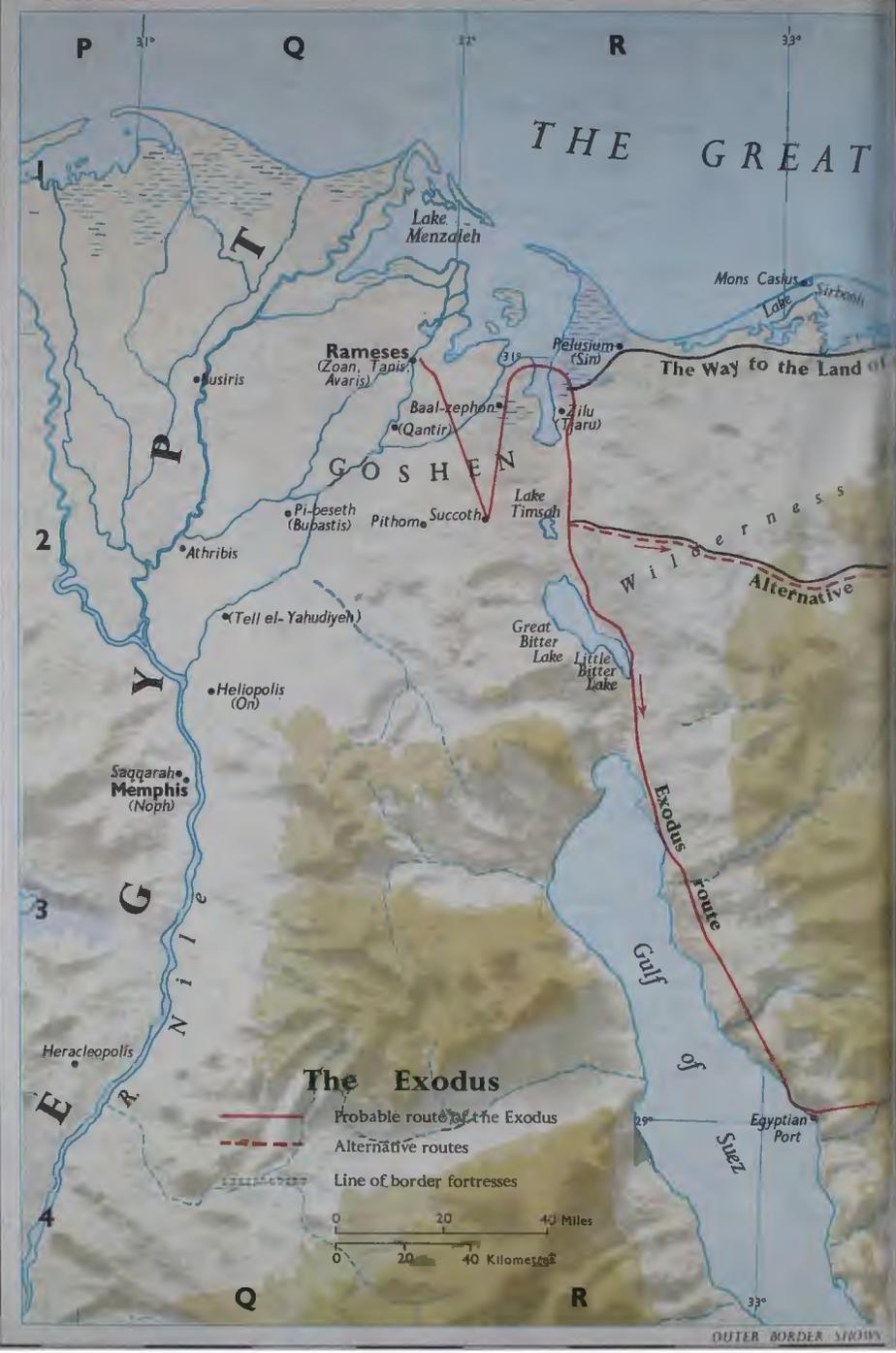
THE  
G R E A T  
S E A

(The Western Sea)



MAP 1

Possible location of Valley of Siddim, and the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zebolim, now covered by shallow waters.



**E G Y P T**

**G O S H E N**

**W I L D E R N E S S**

**THE GULF OF SUZ**

**THE WAY TO THE LAND OF**

**EXODUS ROUTE**

**Alternative**

**Line of border fortresses**

**Probable route of the Exodus**

**Alternative routes**

**Line of border fortresses**

**0 20 40 Miles**

**0 20 40 Kilometers**

**OUTER BORDER SHOWN**

- Busiris
- Athribis
- (Tell el- Yahudiyeh)
- Heliopolis (On)
- Saqqarah
- Memphis (Nopri)
- Heracleopolis
- Ramses (Zoan, Tapis, Avaris)
- Baal-zephon (Qantir)
- Pi-beseth (Bubastis)
- Pithom
- Succoth
- Lake Menzaleh
- Pelusium (Sin)
- Zilu (Tjaru)
- Lake Timsah
- Great Bitter Lake
- Little Bitter Lake
- Egyptian Port
- Suez
- Mons Casius
- Lake Sirbonis

P 31° Q 32° R 33°

Q R 33°



20 MILE SUBDIVISIONS







OUTER BORDER SHOWS 10 MILE SUBDIVISIONS









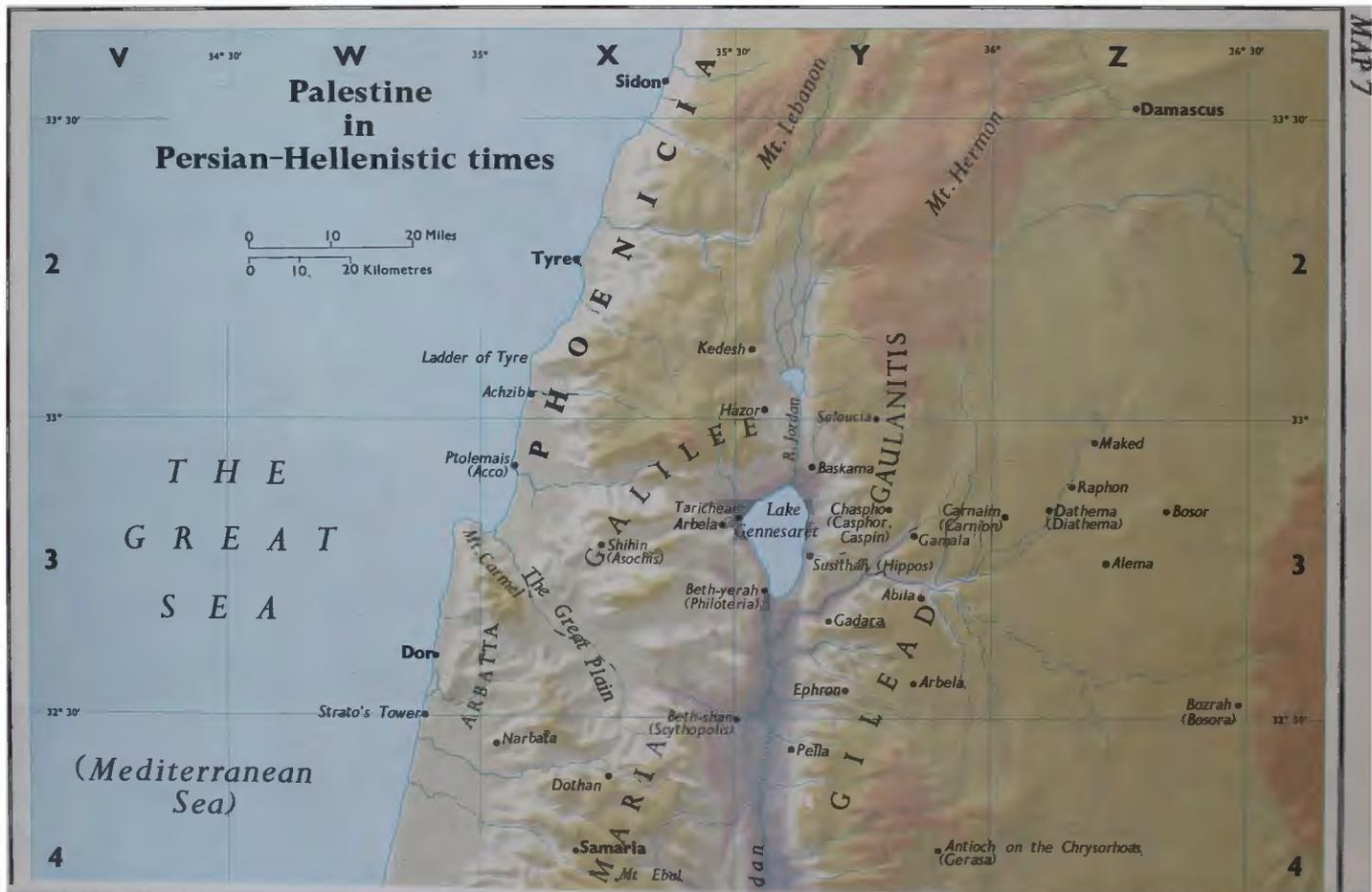
**The Near East  
 in the time of the  
 Assyrian Empire**

Approximate extent of Assyrian domination  
 in the latter part of the 8th century.  
 (Later, under Esarhadon (681-669), Assyria conquered Egypt.)

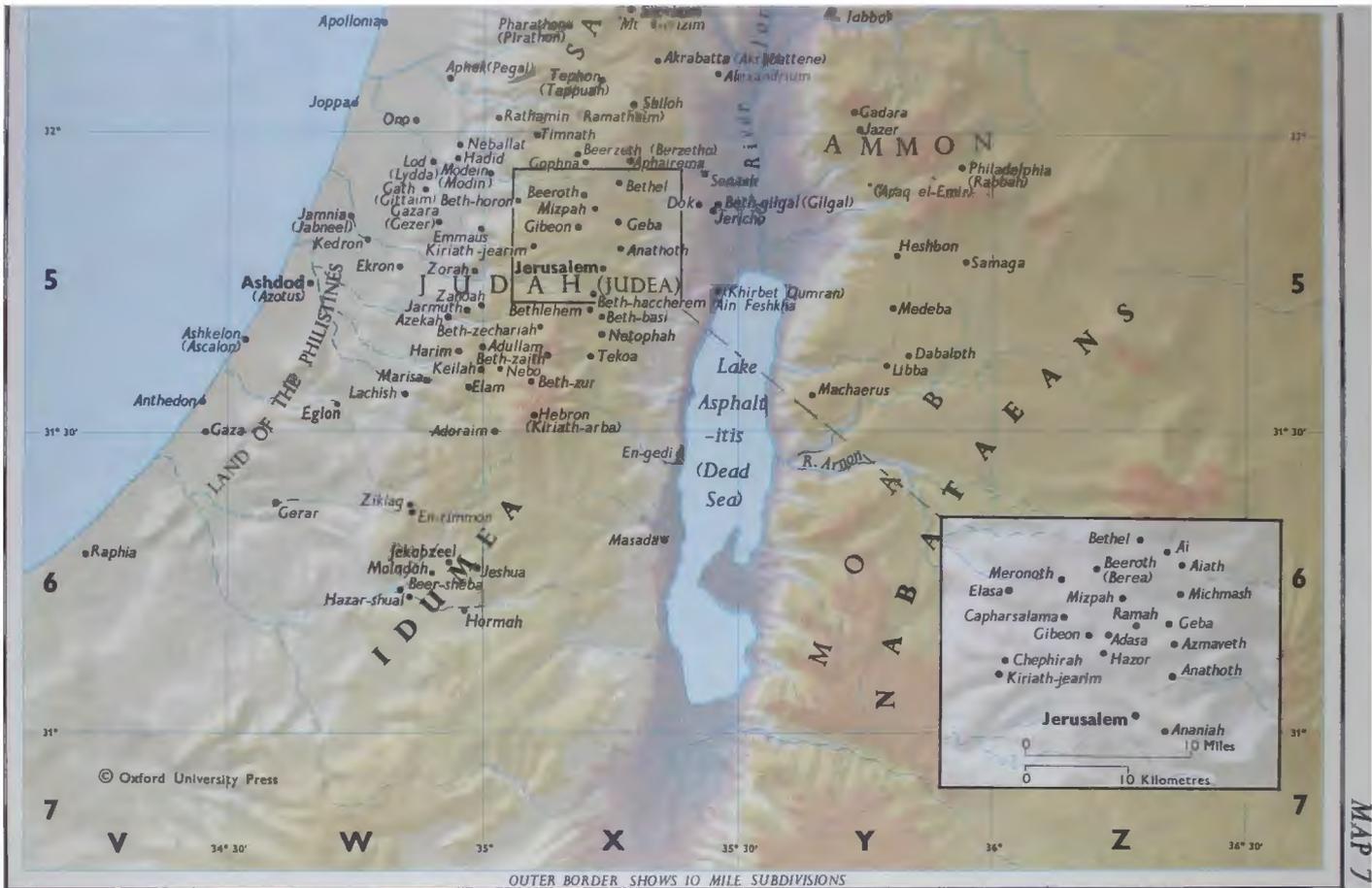


The Near East in the time of the Persian Empire











OUTER BORDER SHOWS



**The Background of the New Testament Rome and the East (including Paul's Journeys)**

© Oxford University Press

W

35°

Tyre

X

35° 30'

Daphné

Caesarea Philippi  
(Panaeus)

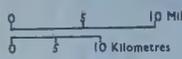
# MAP 9

## North & Central Palestine in the Time of Jesus

--- Political boundaries

**JUDEA** Political units

- Places mentioned in the New Testament
- ▲ Cities of the Decapolis
- ▲ " " mentioned in the New Testament
- Fortresses



3

Dora (Dor)

Caesarea

4

Joppa

Lydda

5

Accaron (Ekron)